Criminology, Sociology, Politics and International Relations
RESEARCH SEMINAR SERIES 2025-26

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AUTUMN SEMESTER

Thu Oct 2nd – Robin West
Seminar title: *Memory of 'War' and the Imaginaries of Korean Trauma: An Emergent Assembly of Meanings?*
Location: TM3-03
Time: 16:00-17:30

Abstract:
This article addresses war in the context of Korea's "war against the enemy within". Frequently referred to today in the language of genocide, the brutal suppression of a perceived communist armed uprising on Jeju Island by counter-insurgency forces between 1948-53 resulted in the massacre of an estimated thirty-thousand civilian deaths. What has become known as Jeju 4.3, reflecting the date of the initial uprising on the third of April, can be understood not only in the framework of the developing civil war that would eventually engulf the peninsula, but also as a key event in the emergence of the Cold War ideological struggle that consumed much of the twentieth century. The scale of the killings was systematically supressed by successive governments until 1987 when, under pressure from grassroots social movements, discussion of the massacre re-entered the public sphere through a process of government apologies and state-endorsed memorialisation. As South Korea comes to terms with the atrocities committed across its successive authoritarian regimes prior to democratisation, the country's inherited trauma has been reframed through innovative forms of symbolic expression, many of which have been generated in the civil sphere alongside, and at times challenging, the state narrative. The article's initial focus is the development of dark tourism in South Korea, a practice that, I argue, should be understood as a distinct cultural phenomenon. However, one in which its aims increasingly overlap with, and consequently is supported by, other forms of cultural production: in particular the global reach of South Korean popular culture, or *Hallyu*. As film and literary retellings of Korean conflict (for example in the novels of recent Korean Nobel laureate, Han Kang) take their place in *Hallyu*'s global reach, international audiences potentially become aware of long-silenced atrocities. The article approaches this by developing an assemblage model. The argument is made that whereas the South Korean truth and reconciliation process is directly concerned both with the formal establishing of 'truth' and reconstruction of collective identities, dark tourism and other components of the assemblage can be understood in terms of reparative, and latent collaborative, processes between cultural phenomena. In conclusion, the question is raised of the extent to which, what amounts to South Korea's own attempts to derive new meanings from its difficult past, are translated, extended, or transformed into new configurations of meanings beyond the Korean peninsula. Theoretically, these could carry the potential for the development of new ethical sensibilities grounded in a cosmopolitan recognition of the repetitious nature of atrocity and the longevity of personal and cultural trauma: not only relating to the past but in solidarity with those committed in the present. The article is based on fieldwork conducted between 2018-2024 consisting of interviews with civil society actors involved in the

memorialisation of Jeju 4.3, the South Korean Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and site visits.

Tue Oct 21st – Angelos Chryssogelos
Seminar title: *Conflict of interest: justifying international cooperation in populist discourse*
Location: TM1-41
Time: 16:00-17:30

Abstract:
Contrary to the stereotypical assumption that the foreign policy of populists is geared toward conflict, much of the literature in recent years has converged on the understanding that populism results in a complex and often seemingly incoherent mix of cooperation and confrontation. Populist leaders often adopt a confrontational stance toward other states and international institutions, yet they are also capable of striking deals, defusing tensions and reconciling with multilateral settings. This inconsistency is due to a variety of factors like geopolitical and economic pressures or the thick-ideological proclivities of populists. But in this article, we are interested in how populists reconcile the contradictory trend to antagonize internationally but end up striking deals. Drawing on the literature on populist discourses and a view of foreign policy as political management of state-society relations, we argue that this reconciliation takes place primarily at a discursive level, as populists deploy a discourse of cooperation that remains consistent with the binary and Manichean logic of populism. We identify three populist discursive strategies of justifying cooperation after conflict: elite-splitting, issue-bundling and audience-hopping. We demonstrate our argument by comparing two cases of populist compromising with the EU following a protracted period of confrontation: Greece's acceptance of a third bailout from the Eurozone under Alexis Tsipras in 2015; and Britain's signing of a final Brexit deal under Boris Johnson in 2020.

Thu Nov 6th – Mark Wheeler
Seminar title: *The MAGA world — Political Fandom: Rational or Irrational debate/consensus or stratification?*
Location: TM3-03
Time: 16:00-17:30

Abstract:
The paper considers whether, within modern democracies, political supporters are exhibiting the characteristics of fans? As there has been an increasing fluidity of political identities and leaders have taken on the attributes of celebrities, it asks how far are these forms of participation, allegiance and agency being defined as forms of fandom? And what, indeed, does this mean for the positive or negative functioning of democracies. Thus, there will be an examination of the extent to which the proliferation of celebrity politicians has, with the hybridisation of social and legacy media, enabled 'outsider' candidates to be elected into high office.

Consequently, this analysis will demonstrate how and why United States President Donald J. Trump gained traction with his 'Make America Great Again' (MAGA) support base. In 2024, he created a coalition of different right wing and reactionary constituencies within the wider American electorate wherein, unlike his victory against Hilary Clinton in 2016, he won the popular vote as well as the electoral college against his Democratic opponent then incumbent Vice-President Kamala Harris. Through the lens political fan studies, this may be seen to have occurred through his construction of a consistent public image wherein he he connected with a fan-like

group of supporters within his MAGA and among right wing Tech Bros including Elon Musk and Peter Thiel.

Mon Dec 1st – Zorana Novakovic
Seminar title: *Two Kinds of Political Reasoning*
Location: TM1-44
Time: 16:00-17:30

Abstract: