

Teaching about China, Japan, and Korea through Popular Culture



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Sample syllabi:
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Why look at popular culture?

- lens to examine other issues: globalization, politics, economics, religion
- making the exotic familiar (and making the familiar exotic)
- integral part of contemporary East Asian social practices
- any disciplinary perspective can be used – anthropology/sociology, political science, economics, history, literature

Sample of topics that comprise popular culture

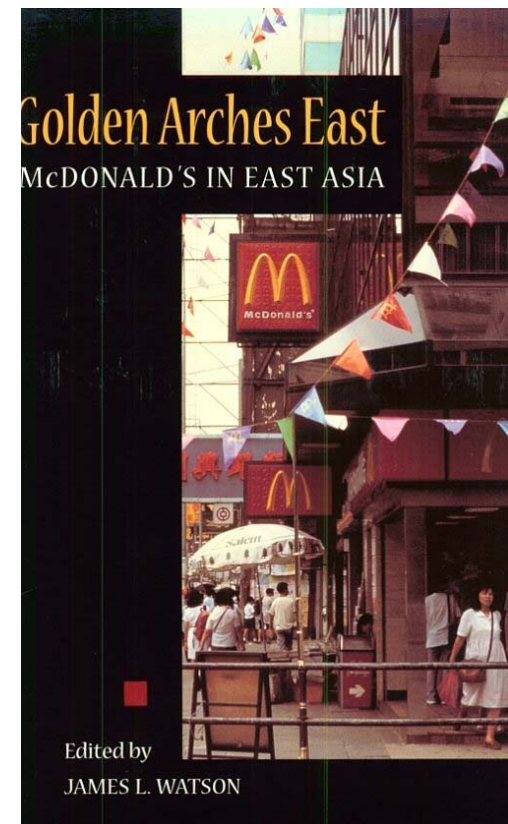
- food
- music, television, movies
- the internet and video games
- sports and leisure
- fashion
- love and romance



South Korean models wearing gas masks perform during an anti-war street fashion show held by a store selling jeans in Seoul, South Korea, Friday, April 4, 2003.

Exploring Food in East Asia

- fast food – James Watson's *Golden Arches East*
- globalization – Ted Bestor's study of sushi
- ethnographic studies of food and identity – Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney's *Rice as Self*
- food etiquette – Steve Smith's drinking culture in Japan



Exploring Food in East Asia

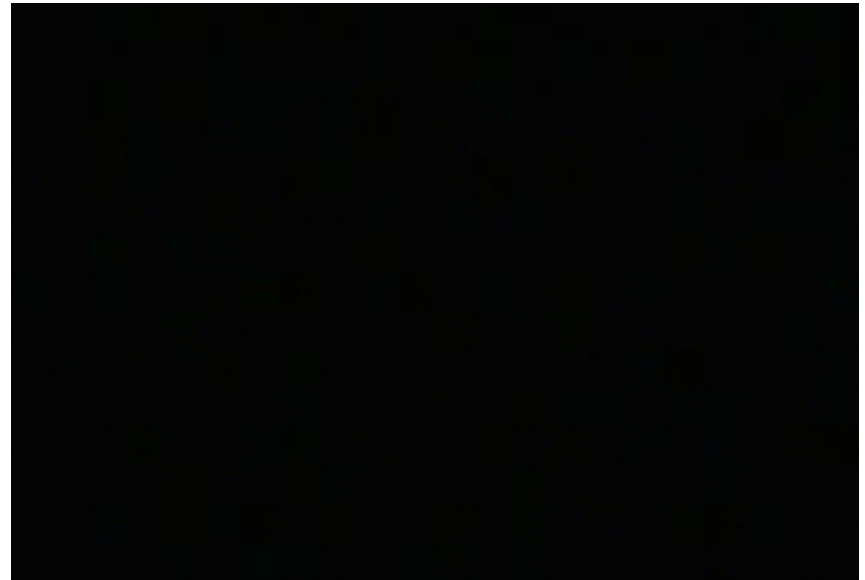


Eating Peking Duck flavored 'Chicken Roll of Old Beijing' in a Beijing KFC.

- regional foodways can show diversity in China, Japan, and Korea – example from Chinese Muslims
- linked to other issues such as health, body image, social stratification, agriculture and biotechnology, families, childhood, gender

Exploring Mass Media in East Asia

- music – good way to explore globalization and regional transnationalism
- essays by Ian Condry, Robert Eford, and others
- television and film – includes political conflict over intellectual property, ideology, social change; see Lisa Rofel, James Lull



Exploring Mass Media in East Asia



- anime, manga, role-playing games – readings by Allison, Kinsella
- case studies of non-Western globalization
- Pokemon, YuGiYo, Legend of the Five Rings, Hello Kitty
- objectification of culture: Joseph Bosco's McDonalds' Snoopies

Exploring Sports in East Asia

- variety of different topics to explore: gender, nationalism, globalization, commodification of culture
- example of Brownell work links together women athletes and women models
- sports – links together “body” literature, food, beauty, discipline
- sports as providing basis for civil society

Exploring Sports in East Asia

- specific events: 2002 Japan/Korea World Cup; Chinese NBA; 2008 Beijing Olympics / 1988 Seoul Olympics
- traditional sports: gateball (Japan), martial arts – connection to qigong and Falungong

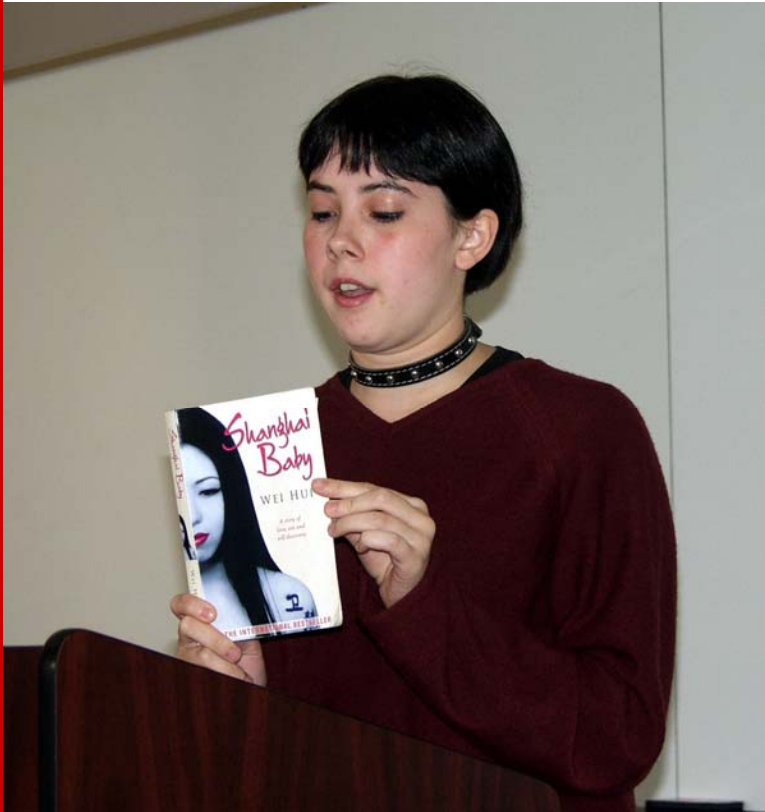


Exploring Love and Romance

- thematic focus of much of popular culture
- love and romance reveals specifics of youth culture
- good contrast with traditional literature, arranged marriages (see Kendall), state intervention



Exploring Love and Romance



- literature in translation – example of *Shanghai Baby*
- newspaper column – “People’s Republic of Desire” in South China Morning Post
- commodified love, prostitution – Allison’s Nightwork, comfort women issue, mail-order brides and transnational romances

Pedagogy Example: Advertisements



- Orientalism – tendency for exoticization; the cure is self-reflection (this ad is not really Chinese)
- can find shared baseline, then start to explore differences
- example: Lozada 2000 article on KFC in Beijing

Pedagogy Example: Advertisements

- why look at advertisements?
reflections of contemporary issues
- advertisement as created culture (Benjamin's mechanical reproduction?)
- high level of student interaction, when combined with readings



Sample Bibliography

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