



Tübingen Korean Studies Lecture Series

Summer Semester 2025, Wednesdays 18:00 c.t., Wilhelmstraße 133, R. 30

***Polarizing Dreams* of Gangnam and Their Desolate Beauty in Ferroconcrete**

Pil Ho Kim

The Ohio State University

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Pil Ho Kim is Associate Professor of Korean Studies at The Ohio State University. He is the author of *Polarizing Dreams: Gangnam and Popular Culture in Globalizing Korea* (University of Hawai'i Press, 2024). His next book project investigates the trans-Pacific cultural impact of Black freedom movements on modern Korean history.



In his book *Polarizing Dreams*, Pil Ho Kim presents South Korea's Gangnam-style urban development as a unique case of cultural globalization in the age of social polarization. He will start with the novelist Cho Sehüi's ecocriticism of Chamsil, an integral part of Gangnam, which used to be a sandy beach on the Han River before the construction of reinforced concrete high-rise apartments. Following Cho's lead, this talk will explore the ferroconcrete dreams of Han River development, paying particular attention to the materiality of urban construction represented by the concrete infrastructure and buildings along the southern banks of the Han. As a counterpoint to Cho's ecocriticism, the photographer Young June Lee finds "desolate beauty" (*sangmangmi*) in the same concrete-laden landscape, singing the praises of urban infrastructure that bears the weight of "the modern world on its shoulders" and without which, indeed, everything would return to sand.