



서울대학교 현대한국종합연구단
SNU Contemporary Korean Studies

Seoul National University Contemporary Korean Studies



Table of Contents

Why Contemporary Korean Studies?

Key Timeline and Future Plans

Research Center Composition

Research Team Introductions

Political Economy | K-Future | Values & Identity | Global Hallyu Studies | K-Narratives
Modernity & Developmental History | Contemporary Korean Music | K-Tech
Statehood & Civil Society | Democracy & Democratization

Overview of Research Achievements

Research Achievements by Research Teams | Publications | International Conferences

Why Contemporary Korean Studies?

New Demand for Korean Studies

Growing global interest in **contemporary Korea**

Increasing demand for **interdisciplinary research** spanning across topics such as culture, economy, and politics

Rising number of students majoring in **Korean studies** and expanding educational demand

Current Landscape of Korean Studies Research

Existing research remains heavily concentrated on **premodern and early modern Korea**

An overemphasis on **historical research** and **limited interdisciplinary research**

Need expansion of educational infrastructure, including faculty and teaching materials, for Korean Studies

Strategic Direction of Seoul National University Contemporary Korean Studies

Toward a Global Hub for Comprehensive Research on Contemporary Korea



01. Changes in Global Demand

Growing Demand for Korean Studies

Number of Universities Teaching Korean Language and Korean Studies

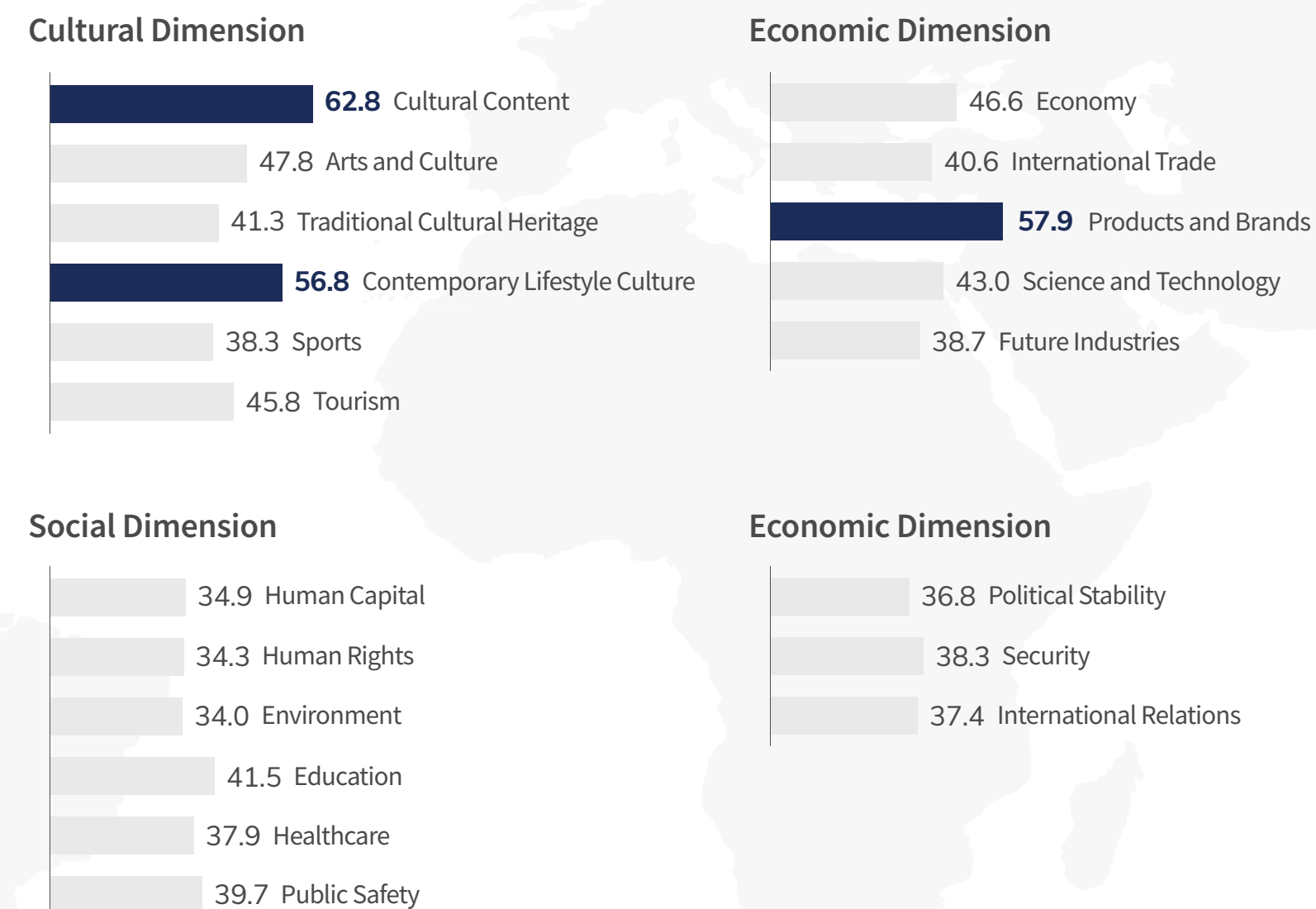


115 universities offering Korean Studies degree programs (BA, MA, PhD) (as of 2026)

Source: Korea Foundation, Global Map of Korean Studies

Interest in Contemporary Korea

Percentage of Respondents Who Say They Are Familiar with Each Area of Korea



Source: Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism (South Korea), 2025 National Image Report

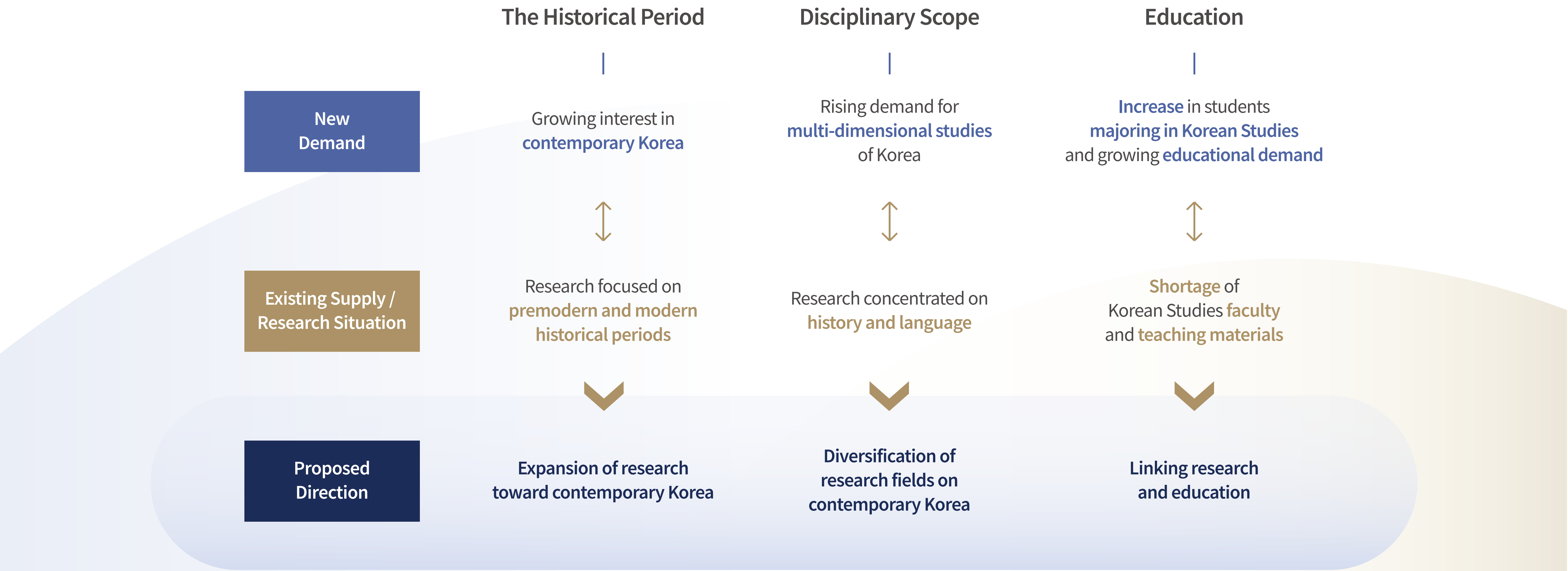
Broad and Varied Interest

Major Subfields by Number of Courses



Source: Korea Foundation, KF Global e-School Course Statistics

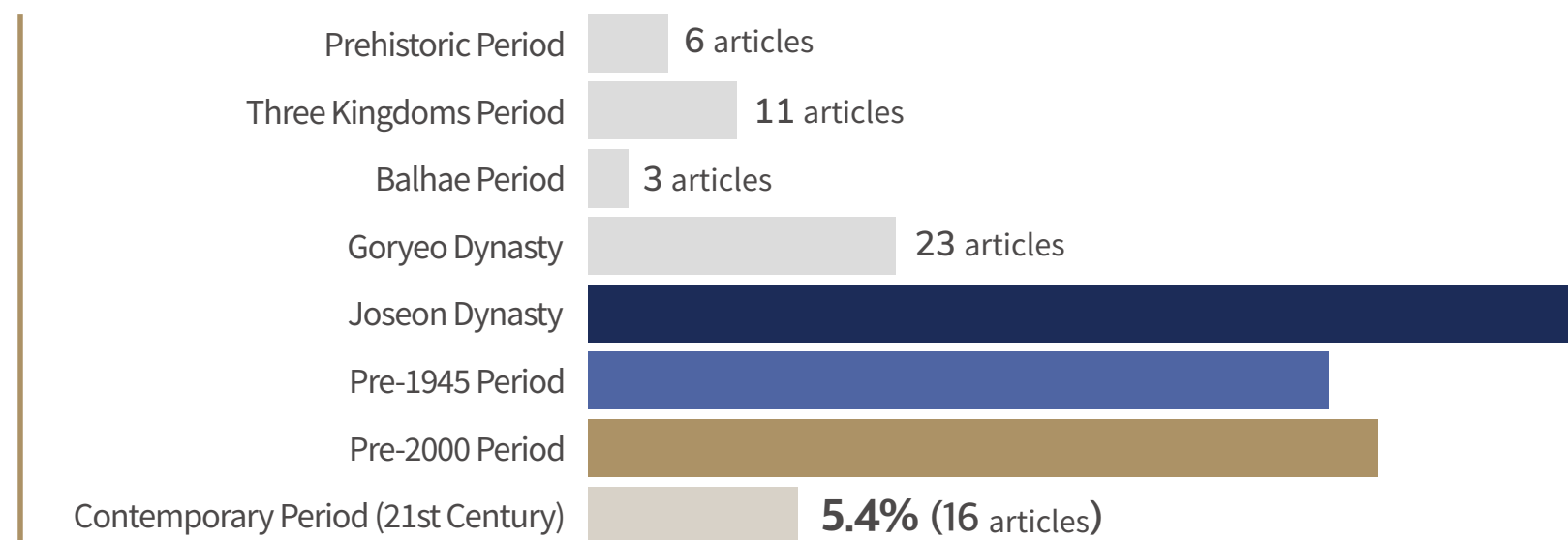
02. The Current State of Korean Studies: Three Mismatches in Korean Studies Research



02. The Current State of Korean Studies: Three Mismatches in Korean Studies Research

Mismatches in terms of Research

A Mismatch at the Historical Period

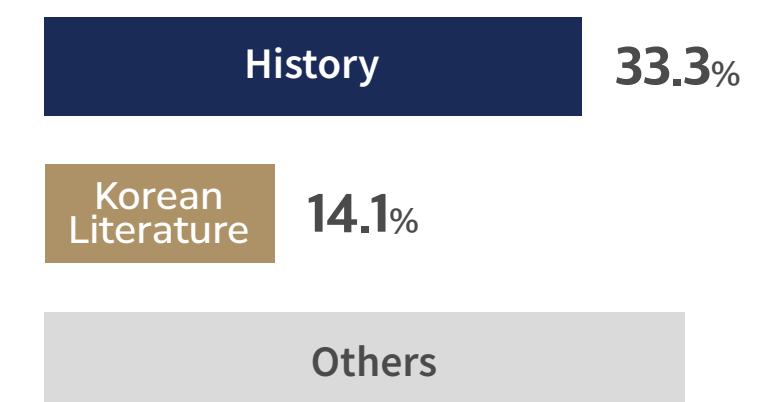


Research Period of SJKS Publications



Key SJKS Keywords (Provided by KCI)

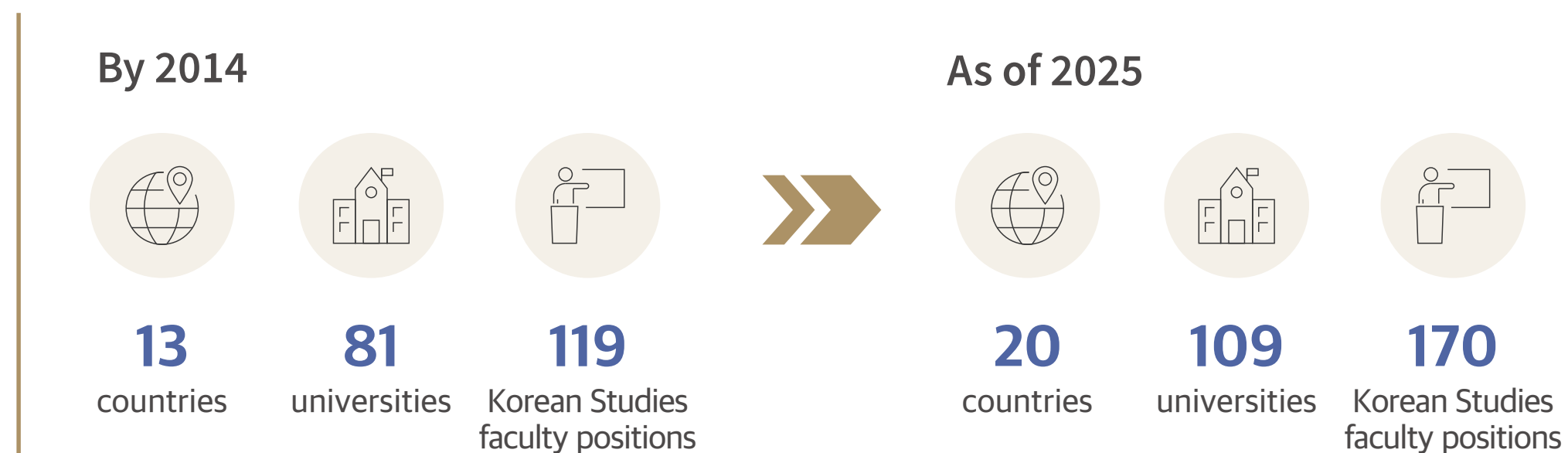
A Mismatch at the Disciplinary Scope



SJKS-Related Research Fields Based on KCI Classification

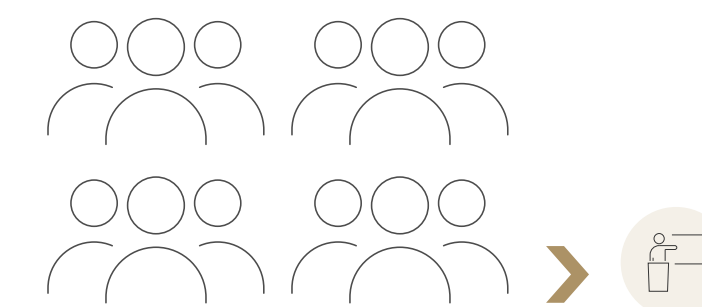
Mismatches in terms of Education

Rapid Growth in Demand for Education in Contemporary Korean Studies



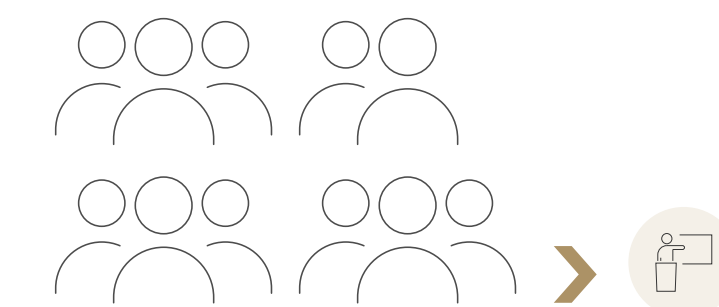
Source: Korean Foundation

Lack of Supply for Education in Contemporary Korean Studies



Approximately **400** students
majoring or minoring in Korean Studies

➤ 1 professor dedicated to Korean Studies



Approximately **350** students across
BA-MA-PhD programs in Korean Studies

➤ 1 professor, 8 associate professors

03. Vision of Seoul National University Contemporary Korean Studies



Key Timeline and Future Plans

2023

April

Launch of the research survey on strategies for developing Seoul National University Contemporary Korean Studies

September

Internal university forum on strategies for developing contemporary Korean Studies

2024

March

Official launch of Contemporary Korean Studies as a research team

August

The 1st International Conference for Contemporary Korean Studies

September

Addition of the Statehood and Civil Society Research Team

2025

May

Addition of the Democracy and Democratization Research Team

July

Publication of the first volume in the *Palgrave Series in Contemporary Korean Studies, Reimagining Korea*

August

The 2nd International Conference for Contemporary Korean Studies

2026

April

Publication of the second volume in the *Palgrave Series in Contemporary Korean Studies, Contemporary Korean Music in Context*

August

The 3rd International Conference for Contemporary Korean Studies (scheduled)

 Publication of the third volume in the *Palgrave Series in Contemporary Korean Studies, Global Perspectives on Hallyu: History, Theory, and Postcoloniality* (scheduled)

 Publication of the fourth volume in the *Palgrave Series in Contemporary Korean Studies, Korean Political Economy from a Comparative-Historical Perspective* (scheduled)

2027

August

The 4th International Conference for Contemporary Korean Studies (scheduled)

-

Publication of the fifth volume in the *Palgrave Series in Contemporary Korean Studies, Narrating Contemporary Korea* (scheduled)

-

Publication of the sixth volume in the *Palgrave Series in Contemporary Korean Studies, Towards a Symptomatology of K-Futurity* (scheduled)

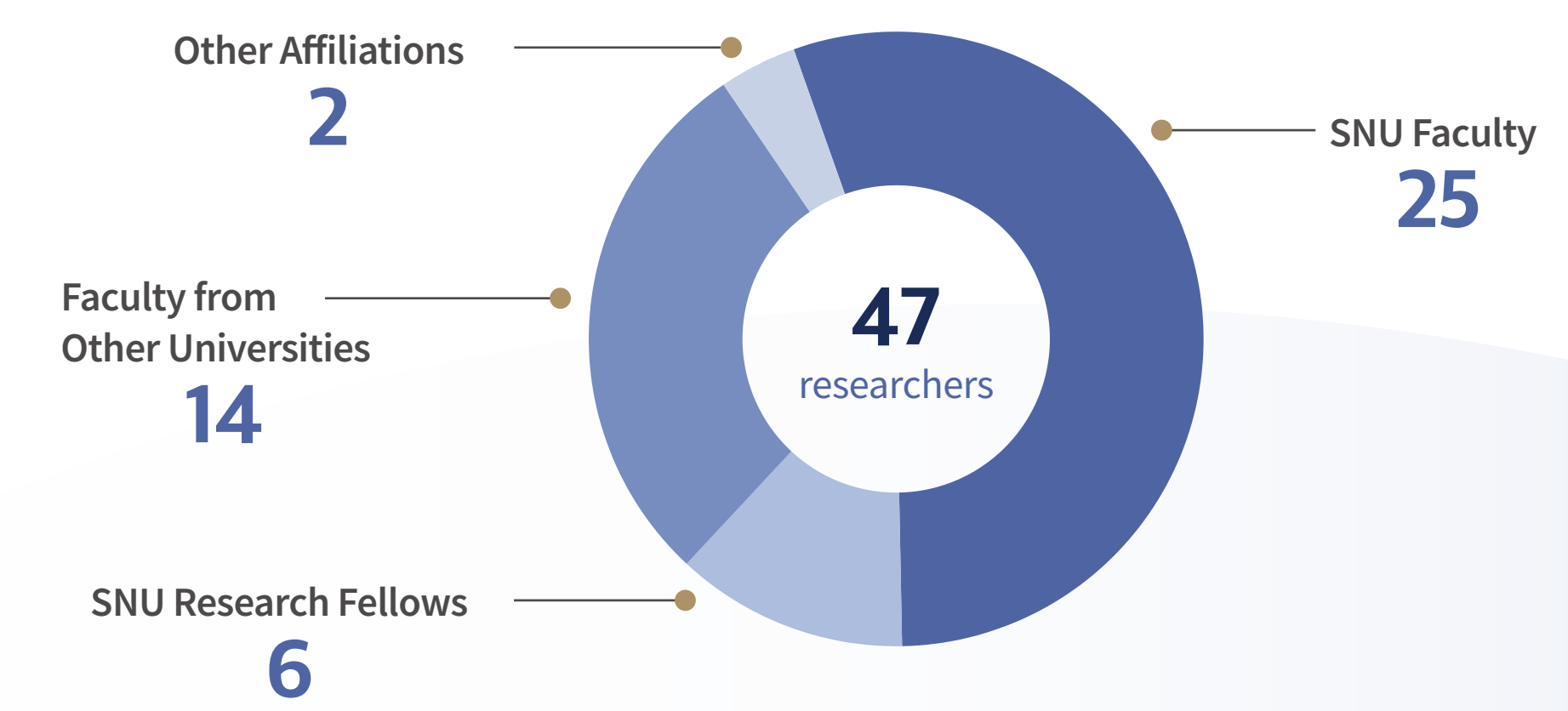
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Publication of the sixth volume in the *Palgrave Series in Contemporary Korean Studies, The Statehood in Modern and Contemporary Korea* (scheduled)

Research Center Composition



Scale & Institutional Affiliations of the Researchers



Faculty Composition by Field



Research Team Introductions

Political Economy

We study the structure of Korea's politics and economy to suggest directions for change

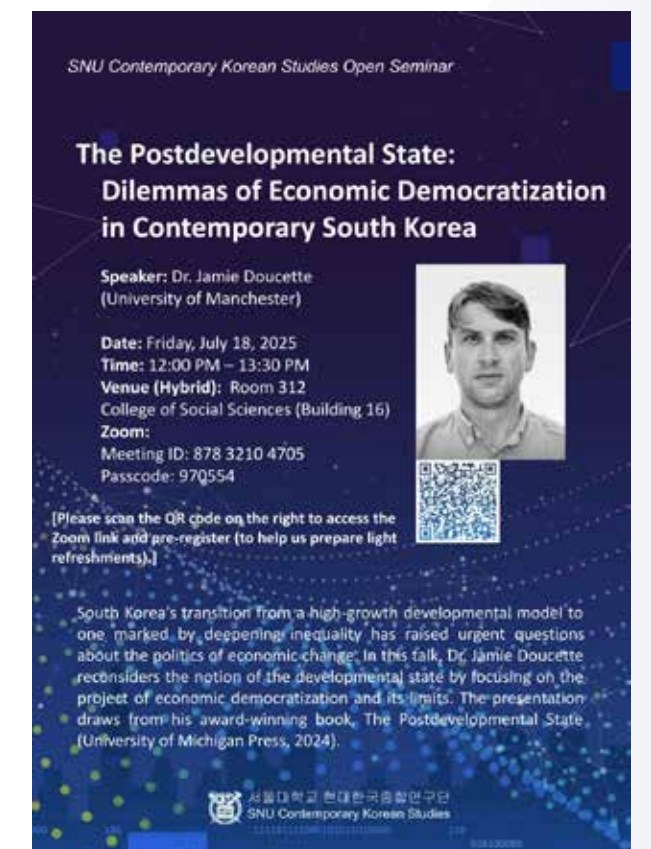
Research Team

Members	Affiliation	Research Field
Kwon HyunJi	Seoul National University	Sociology of labor, employment relations, and inequality
Kwon Hyeong-Ki	Seoul National University	Political Theory, Comparative Politics
Kim KyungMi	Sapienza University of Rome	Korean Political Economy, East Asian Political Economy
Park Hyeon Seok	National Assembly Futures Institute	Political Economy, Legislative Politics
Song Jiyeoun	Seoul National University	Comparative Political Economy, Social Welfare Policy, East Asian Studies
Shin Jin Wook	Chung-Ang University	Political Sociology, Social Movements, Civil Society

Research Achievements

Regular Open Seminar Series

The open seminar series brings together scholars from Korea and abroad to foster in-depth understanding of contemporary Korean society and to promote academic exchange



Research Team Introductions

K-Future

Traversing theory and symptom, reflection and lived realities—we experiment with the futures of Korean studies.

Research Team

Members	Affiliation	Research Field
Hong Jung KIM	Seoul National University	Social Theory, Sociology of the Future
Jaeho Kang	Seoul National University	Critical Theory, Media Theory
Jungha Kim	Seoul National University	Contemporary American Literature
Dongshin Yi	Seoul National University	Contemporary American Fiction
Seung Cheol LEE	Seoul National University	Economic Anthropology, Critical Theory
Munyoung Cho	Yonsei University	Cultural Anthropology, Poverty Studies

Research Achievements

Theory Atelier

A forum for academic exchange and dialogue that brings together leading theorists from Korea and abroad, creating a space for new theoretical experimentation within Korean Studies

Invited Lecture by International Scholar

A forum for scholarly exchange that draws on the research and theoretical perspectives of an invited international scholar to shed new light on cultural, religious, and economic transformations in Korean society



Research Team Introductions

Values & Identity

Exploring the new values and identities emerging in 21st-century Korean society

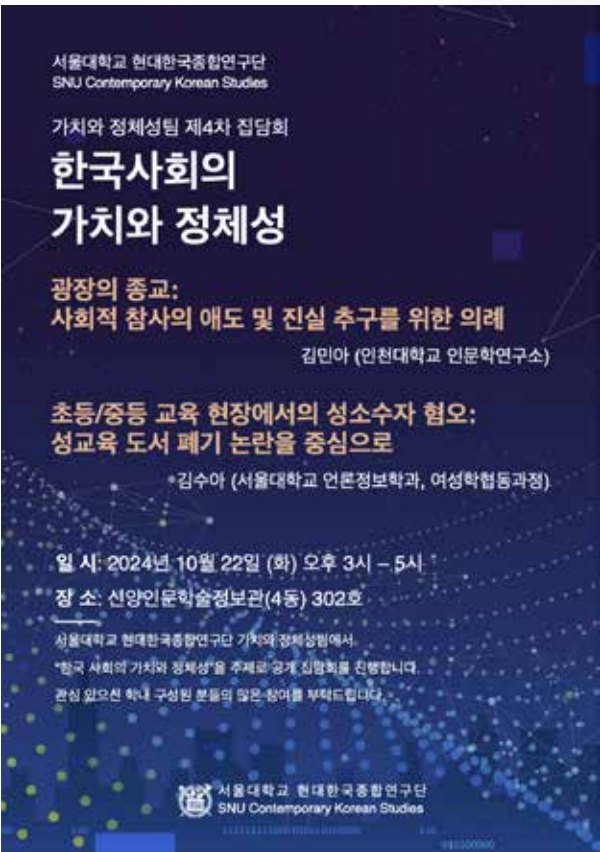
Research Team

Members	Affiliation	Research Field
Yohan Yoo	Seoul National University	Comparative Studies of Religions
Hyunjoo Jung	Seoul National University	Migration and Multiculturalism, Urban Studies and Gender
Hae-young Seong	Seoul National University	Psychology of Religion, Mysticism
Soo-Ah Kim	Seoul National University	Women's Studies, Popular Culture Studies
Song Chong Lee	Seoul National University	Religion and Society
Minah Kim	Incheon National University	Contemporary Religion, Sociology of Religion

Research Achievements

Values and Identity in Korean Society Colloquium

A colloquium addressing key issues surrounding values and identity in Korean society



Research Team Introductions

Global Hallyu Studies

Exploring Korea in the world through Hallyu as a transnational cultural phenomenon

Research Team

Members	Affiliation	Research Field
Seok-Kyeong Hong	Seoul National University	Cultural Studies and Visual Communication
Sojeong Park	Hanyang University	Popular Culture and Cultural Studies
Jiyoung Suh	Seoul National University Asia Center	Popular Arts and Popular Culture History
Younghan Cho	Hankuk University of Foreign Studies	Cultural Studies and East Asian Popular Culture

Research Achievements

Active voice related to ongoing research projects and collaborations with scholars based at overseas universities

Reflecting the interdisciplinary nature of Hallyu studies, we are building a global research network, sharing information on educational practices, and developing diverse forms of academic activities to identify emerging global research agendas.



Research Team Introductions

K-Narratives

Exploring narratives in contemporary Korean literature and cultural content

Research Team

Members	Affiliation	Research Field
Hyong Cheol Shin	Seoul National University	Comparative Literature
Youkyung Son	Seoul National University	Modern Korean Literature
Hyeongguk Song	KBS	Film Criticism
Kyung Hee Youn	Seoul National University	Comparative Literature, Creative Writing

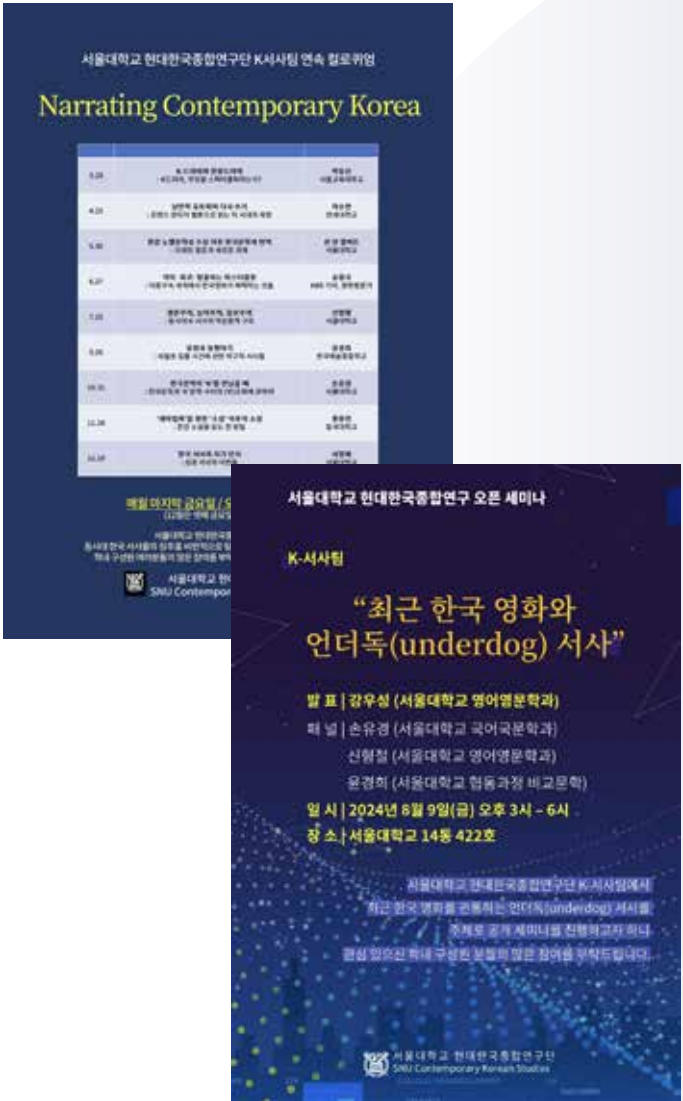
Research Achievements

Narrating Contemporary Korea

A colloquium series critically exploring the symptoms of narratives in contemporary Korea

Open Seminar

Irregular open seminars inviting domestic and international researchers to foster understanding and engagement with contemporary phenomena in Korea



Research Team Introductions

Modernity & Developmental History

Exploring Korean modernity beyond colonial modernity and the developmental state

Research Team

Members	Affiliation	Research Field
Lee Dongwon	Seoul National University	East Asian Cold War History and Economic History
Han Bongseok	Pukyong National University	Modern Korean History
Lee Jung-Eun	Sunchon National University	Modern Korean History
Lee Jongwook	Seoul National University	Development Economics and International Development Cooperation
Lee Changkeun	KDI School of Public Policy and Management	Economic History and Labor Economics

Research Achievements

Korean Modernity and Developmental History: The Aporia of the Formation of Korean Modernity and Development

A continuing lecture series examining the formation and characteristics of Korean modernity from multiple disciplinary perspectives, and critically reflecting on the meaning of “development” in the context of modern Korean history

Cold War and Development in East Asia: Traversing Militarism, Science, Technology, and Local Communities

A doctoral dissertation lecture series exploring Cold War and development in East Asia through the intersections of militarism, science and technology, and local communities



Research Team Introductions

Contemporary Korean Music

Exploring the sensibilities of Korean society and culture through music and generate discourse oriented toward the future

Research Team

Members	Affiliation	Research Field
Anna Yates-Lu	Seoul National University	Ethnomusicology
Oh Hee-sook	Seoul National University	Music Aesthetics and Contemporary Music
Kim Hee-Sun	Seoul Women's University	Music Aesthetics and East Asian Contemporary Music
Hyejin Lee	Kookmin University	Ethnomusicology
Jiyoung Yi	Seoul National University	Gayageum Performance

Research Achievements

Contemporary Korean Music Research Network Seminar

A seminar examining the role of music in contemporary Korean society and highlighting its international significance

Contemporary Korean Music Research Colloquium

A monthly colloquium bringing together scholars from Korea and abroad to discuss diverse musical discourses at the intersection of tradition and innovation



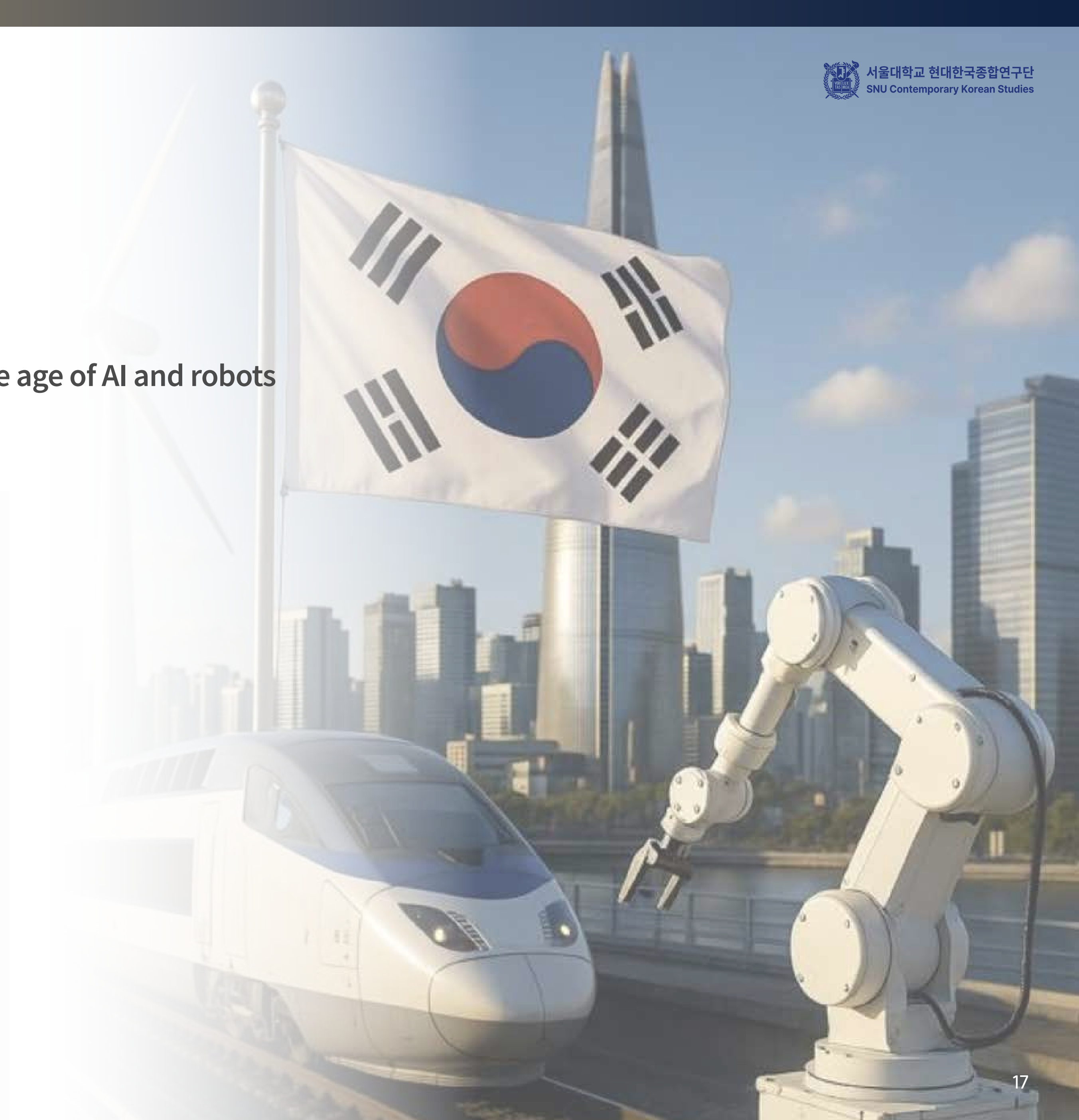
Research Team Introductions

K-Tech

Exploring Korean pathways of technological development in the age of AI and robots

Research Team

Members	Affiliation	Research Field
Park Yong-Lae	Seoul National University	Robotics Engineering
Koo Yoon-Mo	Seoul National University	Energy and Environmental Policy



Research Team Introductions

Statehood & Civil Society

Exploring the transformations of Korean statehood within the modern and contemporary international order

Research Team

Members	Affiliation	Research Field
Jong-Hak Kim	Seoul National University	Modern Korean Diplomatic History
Joon Young Jung	Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies, Seoul National University	Historical Sociology and Social History of Knowledge
Hong Jong-Uk	Institute of Humanities, Seoul National University	History of Social Thought and North Korean History
Jeanhyoung Soh	Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies, Seoul National University	Historical Sociology and Social History of Knowledge
Choongyeol Kim	Institute of Social Sciences, Seoul National University	East Asian Political Thought and Modern Political Thought History
Jeeye Song	Institute for International Studies, Seoul National University	History of International Relations and International Political Theory

Research Achievements

Japan-Korea Modern Korean History International Seminar

A comparative exploration of historical understanding in Korea and Japan through an international seminar on modern Korean history



Research Team Introductions

Democracy & Democratization

Comprehensively analyzing the characteristics and development of Korean democracy through theoretical, historical, and comparative perspectives

Research Team

Members	Affiliation	Research Field
KIM Joohyung	Seoul National University	Political Thought and Democratic Theory
Hong Taiyoung	Korea National Defense University	Political Thought and European Politics
Hannes Mosler	University of Duisburg-Essen	East Asian Politics and Korean Politics

Publications

Palgrave Macmillan Series in Contemporary Korean Studies

A publication contract has been concluded with a globally renowned academic publisher to release eight volumes focusing on contemporary Korea.

The 1st Series ‘**Reimagining Korea**’ (July 2025)

The 2nd Series ‘**Contemporary Korean Music in Context**’ (April 2026)

The 3rd Series ‘**Global Perspectives on Hallyu: History, Theory, and Postcoloniality**’ (scheduled for publication in August 2026)

The 4th Series ‘**Korean Political Economy from a Comparative-Historical Perspective**’ (scheduled for publication in August 2026)

The 5th Series ‘**Narrating Contemporary Korea**’ (scheduled for publication in the first half of 2027)

The 6th Series ‘**Towards a Symptomatology of K-Futurity**’ (scheduled for publication in the second half of 2027)

The 7th Series ‘**The Statehood in Modern and Contemporary Korea**’ (scheduled for publication in the second half of 2027)



Publications

Publication in an Academic Journal

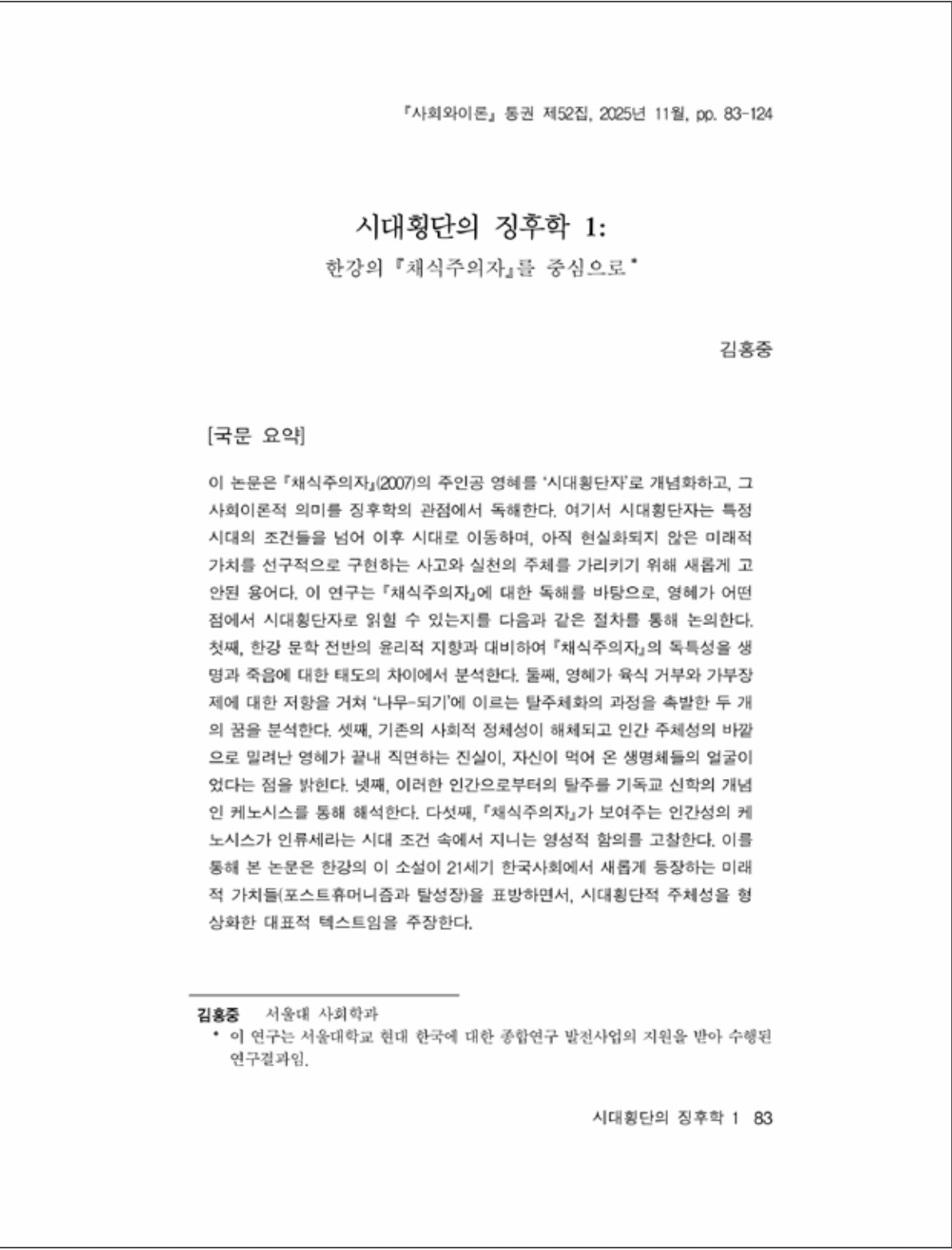
Society and Theory, 52nd, November 2025, pp.83-124

Symptomatology of Epoch-traverser: Centering on Han Kang’s *The Vegetarian*

Hong Jung KIM

This paper conceptualizes the protagonist Yeong-hye in Han Kang’s *The Vegetarian* (2007) as an ‘epoch-traverser’ and reflects on the sociological significance of this figure from the perspective of the symptomatology.

Key Words: Han Kang, The Vegetarian, epoch-traversing, symptomatology, kenosis, patency, Anthropocene



Organization of International Academic Conferences

2024 SNU International Conference for Contemporary Korean Studies

The 1st International Conference (2024)

SNU Contemporary Korean Studies

2024 1st International Conference for Contemporary Korean Studies

• Date: August 23 (Friday), 2024, 9:30 am~6:50 pm
August 24 (Saturday), 2024, 10:00 am~6:10 pm
• Venue: Youngwon Hall, Seoul National University Asia Center

Welcome Address, August 23, 9:30-10:00 am
Honglim Ryu, President, Seoul National University

Session 1 **Reimagining Korea: Identity and Values in a Changing World and Korea in Transition**, August 23, 10:00-11:50 am

Session 2 **Political Economy from a Comparative-Historical Perspective**, August 23, 1:00-3:00 pm

Session 3 **The Masterplots of K-Narrative**, August 23, 3:10-5:00 pm

Session 4 **K-Future**, August 23, 5:10-6:50 pm

Session 5 **Korean Modernity and the History of Development**, August 24, 10:00-11:50 am

Session 6 **Global Perspectives on Hallyu**, August 24, 1:00-3:00 pm

Session 7 **Exploring Contemporary Korean Music: From Traditional to Classical to K-Pop and Everything in Between**, August 24, 3:10-4:40 pm

Roundtable Discussion, August 24, 4:50-6:20 pm

Contact: SNU Contemporary Korean Studies (snucks@snu.ac.kr)

The 2nd International Conference (2025)

2025
SNU International Conference for Contemporary Korean Studies

Korea as Symptom
Perspectives on the Future

August 22-23, 2025 (Fri-Sat)
Asia Center (Building 101) 2F
Seoul National University

The 2025 SNU International Conference for Contemporary Korean Studies (ICCKS) explores the diverse phenomena of contemporary South Korea under the theme **Korea as Symptom: Perspectives on the Future**. By reading South Korea's current issues—from democratic crisis to cultural innovation—as interconnected symptoms of broader historical and global processes, the conference invites critical reflection and seeks to develop new perspectives on Korea's past, present, and future.

QR Code

Conference Program and Proceedings
snucks2025@gmail.com

서울대학교
SNU Contemporary Korean Studies

Participants

236 researchers from **15** countries
(including Korea, USA, Canada, the UK, Germany, France, China, and India)

Program

68 presentation in **22** sessions
(including roundtables)

2025 SNU International Conference for Contemporary Korean Studies

Session Highlights

- Closing Roundtable

Through a symptom-oriented reading, the Center offered a comprehensive theoretical and philosophical reflection on the theme “Korea as Symptom,” and on this basis, articulated the need for future research that is multi-layered and interdisciplinary.

- K-Future

**Walking as Object-Method in Korean Studies:
Modeling Future Trends for Conducting Fieldwork in the Social Sciences**

The session, through the everyday practice of walking, introduced an “object–method” approach and proposed a social-scientific methodology for exploring the landscapes, technologies, and communities of Korean society.

- Political Economy

Korean Political Economy

The session examined and discussed key issues in Korean political economy — including gender, labor, and digitalization — from an international perspective.

- Values & Identity

Religion, Culture, and Political Identity in Korea II

The session explored the intersection of religion and Korean politics and proposed a new analytical framework for understanding contemporary Korean politics through religion.



Session Highlights

- **Global Hallyu Studies**

Hallyu in Global Context

By examining Hallyu in an international context, the session analyzed how Korean popular culture is received abroad.

- **Modernity & Development**

Migration Issues and Gender Inequality in Korea

By analyzing Korean migration narratives, the session examined the intersections of migration, gender, disability, generation, and race.

- **K-Narratives**

Queer Representation in Contemporary Korean Fiction

Focusing on representations of queerness in Korean literature, the session examined how queerness is represented and its social and cultural meanings.

- **Statehood & Civil Society**

Perspectives on the Statehood of Modern and Contemporary Korea

The session explored the formation of the modern Korean state from multiple perspectives and highlighted the complexity of modern Korean statehood.



Thank you

Publication Date

June 30, 2026

Official Website

<https://cks.snu.ac.kr>

Official YouTube Channel

www.youtube.com/@SNUCKS2025

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snucks2025@gmail.com