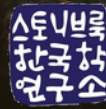




CKS NEWSLETTER



2025 - 2026

**CENTER FOR
KOREAN STUDIES**

STONY BROOK UNIVERSITY

Advancing education, research, and global understanding of Korea

The Center for Korean Studies at Stony Brook University was established in 1989, building on Korean Studies courses offered since 1982—among the earliest in the United States. Since then, it has served as a dynamic academic and cultural hub dedicated to advancing education, research, and global understanding of Korea.



The Center promotes excellence in teaching and scholarship while fostering intercultural communication through the study of Korea's language, culture, history, and philosophy. Central to this mission is the advancement of Korean Humanism, with a strong emphasis on premodern Korean intellectual traditions. By highlighting Korea's humanistic heritage and linking it to modern and contemporary developments, the Center seeks to bring deeper balance and perspective to Korean Studies in North America.

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DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



Dr. Heejeong Sohn

*Director, Center for Korean Studies
Professor of Practice, Department of Asian
and Asian American Studies*

As we conclude another productive academic year at the Center for Korean Studies, I am proud to reflect on the many accomplishments and moments of growth that shaped 2025–2026. Most notably, we successfully secured a major multi-year funding from the Academy of Korean Studies to launch our new M.A. track in Korean Humanism—an exciting milestone that reflects years of shared vision, collaboration, and dedication. Although recruitment began later than anticipated, we were greatly encouraged by the strong interest and enthusiastic response from prospective students and colleagues at universities around the world. We now look forward with great anticipation to welcoming the inaugural cohort in Fall 2026.



*Korean Studies Directors' Meeting at George
Washington University, May 2, 2026*

This year also showcased the vibrancy of our community through a wide range of academic and cultural events. From our colloquium series featuring distinguished scholars, to Poongmul workshops, K-Connect programs, film screenings, and outreach events with local schools, the Center continued to foster meaningful engagement both on and off campus.

None of this would have been possible without the dedication of our faculty, staff, students, alumni, and supporters. Thank you for helping us continue to build a dynamic and inclusive Korean Studies community at Stony Brook University. We look forward to another exciting year ahead.

EVENTS AND PROGRAMS

Here's a quick look into the programs we ran this year:

2025 - 2026 CKS COLLOQUIUM SERIES

Every semester, CKS invites experts from around the world to deliver talks on a wide range of topics in Korean Studies.

"Early Korea and Japan in the Sinographic Cosmopolis"

Guest speaker Dr. Marjorie Burge explored how early Korea and Japan adapted Sinographs between the 6th and 8th centuries, highlighting Korean influences on Japan's earliest writing culture.

"The Other Legacy of the Korean War: Okinawa and the Fear of World War Three"

Dr. Pedro Iacobelli examined how the Korean War reshaped Okinawa under early U.S. military rule, highlighting its impact on local society and relations with the United States and Japan.

"Musical Populism: From the Korean Division to North Korean State Music."

Dr. Peter Moody explored how Korean musicians who migrated north influenced early North Korean cultural policy through their writings, compositions, and populist ideals, previewing his book, *Music in the Mobilization of North Korea*.

SCHOLARSHIPS

Every semester, CKS gives scholarships to outstanding students minoring in Korean studies. Recipients receive \$1,000 (undergraduate) and \$3,000 (graduate) Congratulations to the following winners: Tyler An, Christina Bennett, Elizabeth Kim, Ellie Kwak, Kayli Parham, and Alaleh Zafar!

Fieldtrip Opportunities



During the fall semester, students enrolled in Korean studies courses had the opportunity to attend LG North American Headquarters in New Jersey. The field trip included a guided tour on LG Electronics USA

campus, a conference on consumer trends, and an HR conference regarding internship and hiring opportunities.



INTERVIEW WITH GUEST SPEAKER

DR. PETER MOODY

*Professorial Lecturer (PhD, Columbia University)
George Washington University*

Dr. Moody gave a talk titled, “MUSICAL POPULISM: FROM THE KOREAN DIVISION TO NORTH KOREAN STATE MUSIC” on April 2, 2026.



What piqued your interest in North Korean studies?

After moving to South Korea post graduation, I learned about juche ideology in a book and became interested in North Korea. During my masters degree, I took a North Korean history colloquium and I learned how significant the impact of America had been on the Korean peninsula. I also came to realize how critical music was in North Korean society, not just politically but also in daily life.

How do you research a country that faces heavy censorship?

I try to look at North Korean primary sources from the 1940s to 1960s as there was a degree of pluralism pertaining to culture and art. I also draw significantly on expertise from South Korean researchers who are more familiar with Korean language sources. Additionally, there is a significant amount of diplomatic sources that shed a light on certain social conditions in North Korea.

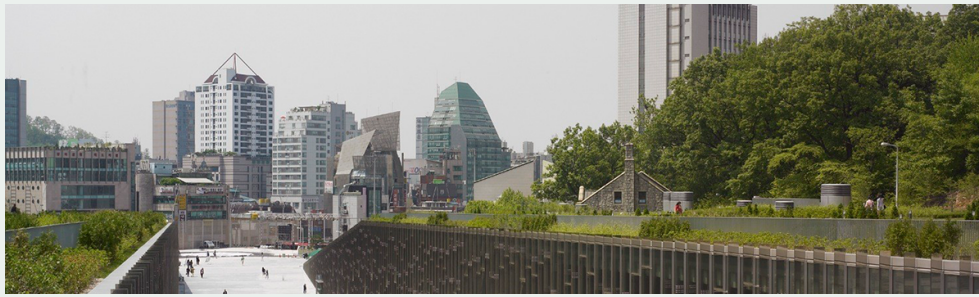
Hallyu culture has become popular internationally. Has this impacted how people approach North Korean studies?

Because of Hallyu, there has been a shift toward more of a South Korean academia focus. At the same time there are also opportunities for using hallyu as an entry point to have people understand North Korea in a more comprehensive way rather than just reacting to images people see on international media

Do you have any advice for students who would like to pursue a path along cultural studies?

A useful class to take would be a colloquium on an area of study that you would like to pursue. Through this you can inform yourself of the scholarship that is available and pinpoint research trends, theoretical material, and how you can contribute to it.

****** Dr. Moody is scheduled to teach at Stony Brook beginning in Fall 2026 as part of our new M.A. track in Korean Humanism.



STUDY ABROAD

Study Abroad Experiences

Stony Brook University offers more than 30 study abroad programs in South Korea through partnerships with various institutions. Read on to learn about a student's experience at Ewha University.



Information session on Korea study abroad programs



Meadow in traditional dress at a Korean national monument.

Interview with Study Abroad Student: Meadow Buitrago

Tell me about your experience!

Studying abroad at Ewha Woman's University in South Korea was such an eye-opening experience. Being in a place I had always dreamed about since I was a kid made me realize how exciting it is to be somewhere completely new. I'm not going to lie, it was hard to make friends at times, I had the freedom to explore, eat, and go wherever I wanted, whenever I wanted.

What is one memorable person you met abroad?

One memorable person I met was a girl from Mexico in my Korean class. We didn't hang out all the time, but when we did, it was always fun. We would try new food places and check out historical sites/neighborhoods.

What advice would you give to other students who are interested?

My advice is to just take the risk, even if you're really scared. Eat that new food, explore that new place, talk and make mistakes because that's the only way to learn a new language. It helped me grow a lot and I'm really proud of myself for doing it.

INTERVIEW WITH FACULTY

DR. SOHL LEE

Associate Professor

Areas of Specialization: Contemporary East Asian Art and Visual Culture, Global Contemporary Art, Eco-Aesthetics, Decolonial Visual Cultures

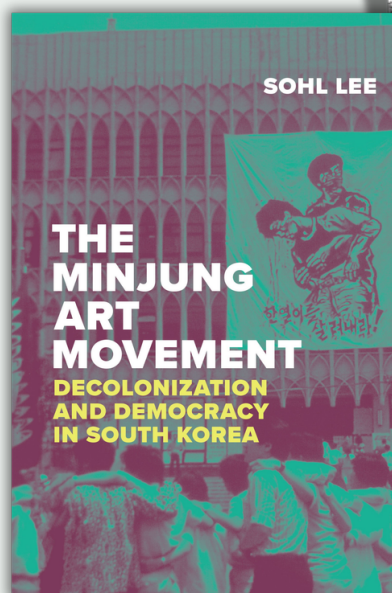
Please tell me about your new book!

Yes! *The Minjung Art Movement: Decolonization and Democracy in South Korea* came out in April. It's a book about a period in South Korea when a lot of Korean artists and students participated in the pro-democracy movement to change the authoritarian regime and promote an equal democratic society. People found different ways of joining the social movement as activists in a multi-artistic form.

How does curatorial work influence your teaching and research, and what role do you think exhibitions play in public scholarship?

For me as a researcher and scholar, making an exhibition and working with artists really deepens my understanding of artmaking today. You get to learn about what the artist is thinking, what they desire, what they're ambitions are, and how they actually come up with these different aesthetic forms simply by talking and working with them. I can be a scholar who also understands what is going on in the art scene. It bridges the two together, as the scholarly scene is usually separate from the art scene.

Another way of mixing my scholarship and teaching, is by devising learning methods that are based on experience. For example, I had my students who took my class, "Arts of Asia," create a banner performance for the water festival. They had hands-on experience making art, but also learned what it meant to work with their bodies and making performance art by turning it three-dimensional.



Dr. Sohl Lee's new book, *"The Minjung Art Movement: Decolonization and Democracy in South Korea,"* (Duke University Press, 2026)

COMMUNITY NEWS AND EVENTS

Harlem Students Explore Korean Studies at Stony Brook

On April 22, students from Democracy Prep High School in Harlem visited Stony Brook University to tour campus and learn about the Korean Studies program. As the only high school in New York with a Korean language program, they also spoke with Korean Studies minors about campus life and academic opportunities.



Students Dive Into Korean Café Culture and Squid Game Fun

CKS hosted fall cultural events introducing Korean pop culture. One featured Squid Game-inspired traditional games like ddakji and marbles, fostering fun, community engagement across campus.



K-Connect Brings Korean Culture to Campus

K-Connect, led by Professor Jungmin Kang, is a semesterly series that promotes engagement with Korean culture through discussions, study abroad talks, traditional games, and cooking activities



MORE COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

A HEARTFELT FILM SCREENING

For Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month, CKS screened Jinyoung Lee's documentary on early Korean immigrants and other migrant communities in Hawai'i, highlighting themes of love, identity, and belonging through music and personal stories.



HANBOKS AND HANOKS

On April 10, the Center for Korean Studies participated in Stony Brook's AAPI Heritage Month with an interactive cultural event. Students tried on hanbok, posed in front of a hanok backdrop, and took part in arts and crafts activities, celebrating Korean heritage and cultural diversity.



POONGMUL WORKSHOPS

During spring 2026, students participated in poongmul, a traditional Korean drumming ensemble. After seven weeks of practice, they performed around campus to share Korean culture with the community. Special thanks to instructor Song Hee Lee for leading the group and to Elizabeth Kim for launching the practice Sessions



HEAR FROM THE STUDENTS

Interview with two student poongmul players: Daniela Dynnik and Christina Wong:

Why did you decide to join the poongmul group?

Daniela:

I really love music and learning about new cultures, so this was the perfect mix of both! At that time, I didn't know what poongmul was, but I was looking to learn and try something new.

What is your favorite part about doing poongmul?

Christina:

Poongmul keeps me on my toes—quite literally. I always get to learn something new about Janggu, footwork, and movement. I am always pleasantly surprised by the different pairing orientations that the instructor comes up with; to me, they symbolize harmony and balance when players lean in with their left shoulders while playing their instruments.



Daniela in traditional performance wear



Daniela and Christina performing

Interview with Korean Studies Graduate Sophia Yoon

What inspired you to pursue a minor in Korean studies?

Growing up Korean American, I always felt connected to Korean culture, but I wanted to understand Korea on a deeper academic and historical level as well. The Korean Studies minor allowed me to explore topics like history, language, media, in a much more interdisciplinary way.

Tell me about your future plans!

I was invited to serve as a Primary Education Teacher in Lesotho through the Peace Corps. Throughout the process, I realized how much I value cultural exchange. My Korean Studies background has definitely influenced my future goals because many of my experiences through the Center for Korean Studies involved cultural outreach, communication, and working across different communities.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

EXPRESSING OUR GRATITUDE

Our gratitude goes to the faculty and instructors whose teaching, mentorship, and programming continue to sustain a vibrant Korean Studies community. We also thank everyone featured in this newsletter, our long-serving student assistants—Sophia Yoon, Ellie Kwak, Liz Cruz, and Amber McLeod—for their dedicated contributions, and the department’s administrative staff for their steadfast support behind the scenes.

We are deeply appreciative of Dr. Hongkyung Kim, who now leads the new M.A. track in Korean Humanism beginning in Fall 2026, and of Dr. Heejeong Sohn, who has assumed the directorship of the Center for Korean Studies. We also extend our heartfelt thanks to our donors, whose generosity makes all CKS programs possible.

To our students pursuing Korean Studies, thank you. This program thrives because of your enthusiasm, commitment, and continued support.

Finally, we extend special thanks to CKS student assistant Amber McLeod for conducting interviews and compiling this year's newsletter.

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