

COURSE OUTLINE
Introduction to Premodern Korean Literature and Culture

This course surveys the literary and cultural traditions in the Korean peninsula from antiquity to 1800. We will read closely a selection of canonical works in translation, develop awareness for the mediating influence of later interpretations, and understand the texts as a product of their social, intellectual, and cultural milieu. Students will be encouraged to think critically about conceptual divides such as native/foreign, Sinitic/Korean, written/oral, and elite/popular.

Module 1. “Native Antiquity”

foundation myths, Buddhist influence, reaction to Neo-Classicism, *hyangga* 鄉歌
as a medieval construction, as a twentieth-century reinvention

Module 2. Early Medieval Literature

parallel prose, prose in neoclassical style, regulated verse, engagement with Sinitic culture
head-rank academicians: Ch’oe Ch’iwŏn’s writings in the Tang
Buddhist clergy: writings attributed to Tosŏn, Ŭich’ŏn
literary scene in the middle Koryŏ: Yi Kyubo, Im Ch’un, Yi Illo, Ch’oe Cha

Module 3. Later Medieval Literature

biography (historical, fictional, satirical), legacy of Mongol rule, invention of native script
servants of both Yuan and Koryŏ courts: An Hyang, Yi Chehyŏn, Yi Saek, Kwŏn Kŭn
founding of the Chosŏn dynasty: A Song of Dragons Flying to Heaven 龍飛御天歌
promulgation of han’gŭl 韓契: state building and standardization of language

Module 4. Lyric Poetry

court elegy, *kyŏnggich’ega* 景幾體歌, *kasa* 歌詞, *sijo* 時調
as twentieth-century inventions: genre? form?
Chinese theories of lyric poetry: “The Record of Music” 樂記, *yuefu* 樂府
sijo and Neo-Confucianism: possible origins of the form, Yŏngnam region, T’oegyŏ
kasa and court politics: possible origins of the form, Honam region, Chŏng Ch’ŏl, Song Sun

Module 5. Urban Culture, I: Sinitic Literature

court/province division, early-Ming archaism, late-Ming romanticism and fiction
late-Chosŏn factionalism: court politics and intellectual-literary divisions
Noron oligarchy: Andong Kims as political conservatives, literary innovators, patrons of the arts
Wang Yangming philosophy, Gong’an school: overt rejection, evident popularity
spread of late-Ming fiction and King Chŏngjo’s literary style reform

Module 6. Urban Culture, II: “Popular Literature”

later *kasa* and *sijo*, *p’ansori* 판소리, unofficial histories, antiquarianism
“popular literature” as a twentieth-century invention: nationalist-Marxian “history from below”
methodological strategies: Peter Burke, Carlo Ginzburg, Natalie Zemon Davis
unofficial histories: urban/provincial as an alternative frame, curiosities, self-fashioning
antiquarianism: origins in the Northern Song, proto-archaeologists, Cho Hŭiryong