

Penn State Institute for Korean Studies

“Waving a Korean Flag: Between Hallyu, Fandom, and Nationalism”

Thursday, February 26 | 7:00–8:00 p.m. | [Register via Zoom](#)



Irina Lyan is an assistant professor and the head of the Korean Studies Program at the Department of Asian Studies, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. She is a sociologist who explores South Korea's national images, imagery, and imagination, and their impact on its economic miracle, also known as the “Miracle on the River Han,” and its cultural miracle, also known as “the Korean Wave” or Hallyu. Irina's academic papers have appeared both in leading critical management studies journals such as *Organization, Culture and Organization*, and *Critical Perspectives on International Business*; and in cultural and media studies outlets such as *International Journal of Communication*, *Pacific Affairs*, and *Cross-Currents: East Asian History and Culture Review*.

This talk suggests a rethinking of the empirical focus of Hallyu fandom studies on a geographical logic of “Hallyu in place X.” Rather than understanding non-Korean Hallyu fans as representatives of their respective nations, I ask: “How do fans themselves use nation and nationalism to rationalize their motivations and identification routes?” To answer this question, I look at the configuration between Hallyu, fandom, and nationalism, in what I call fan nationalism—that is, when fans choose to wave a Korean flag to act as ambassadors, patriots, or political activists for the sake of their local communities, global issues, or even Korea itself. Akin to other long-distance nationalisms, fans negotiate their social position vis-à-vis their fandom, being emotionally invested in building their social capital and constructing transnational imagined communities beyond their existing geographical and national belongings. Such attempts at theorizing fan nationalism strive to shed brighter light on fans' engagement and fascination with Korea's underdog status.

