

Public Presentation of Two Extended Essays by Yuji Zhang

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Our dear colleague, Yuji Zhang, will defend her two MA extended essays on Thursday, January 14th, 2016 at Harbour Centre, Room HC 1415 (2:30-4:30). Here are the abstracts of the two extended essays:

1. "China's Quest for Soft Power: A Comparative Study of Chinese Film and Online Gaming Industries' Going-out Efforts"

Abstract China's rapid growth over the last several decades has reshaped the international economic and political order. Against the backdrop of an ongoing global power shifts, China's steps to develop and increase its soft power have attracted intensive attention. This essay continues Zhao's study of communications in China and the global power shifts, which locates China's quest for soft power within its historical and geopolitical contexts and examines the complexities of Chinese cultural industries' global integration through the lenses of political economy of communication (Zhao, 2013; Zhao, 2014). By providing a comparative study of two cultural sectors -- China's film and online gaming industries, this analysis foregrounds the identical nature of capital accumulation behind their domestic and global developments. Even though the global commercial expansion of China's online gaming industry is more successful than that of the film industry, it still cannot be seen as a breakthrough in China's cultural revitalization, if the latter is to be understood as offering an alternative to the current capitalist order. Rather, it represents the market imperatives and business strategies underpinning China's cultural integration into global capitalism.

Keywords: soft power; China; film industry; online gaming industry; global integration; capitalism

2. "Re-examining Herbert Schiller's Cultural Imperialism Thesis with cases in Korea and China's Cultural industries"

In the climate of a new orthodoxy foregrounding de-centralization and cultural diversification as featured in globalization since 1990s, Herbert Schiller's theory of cultural imperialism has been largely discredited in communication studies. Schiller's cultural account of U.S. imperialism is considered unsatisfactory for explaining emerging markets and rapid developments in global cultural industries. Both the Korean wave and the rise of China's soft power seem to support this proposition. This article goes back to Schiller's thesis with the challenge represented in the successes of China and Korea. To be sure, real-world developments and current global power shifts challenge Schiller's state-centric analysis of "imperialism". However, Schiller's core-periphery framing of "domination" and "subordination" in power relations is still adaptable to today's environment. His observation of the global cultural dominance of transnational corporate authorities and their dependence on class exploitation is still valid. Cultural imperialism successors need to position both the role of the state and of class relations when studying contemporary cultural and economic exchanges among established powers and new powers.

Keywords: Cultural Imperialism; China; Korea; cultural industry; soft power; transnational capitalism

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