

Thursday, October 15, 2020 / 4:00 PM - 5:15 PM



WITH
KYUNG HYUN KIM
(East Asian Studies
and Visual Studies,
UC Irvine)

**CARSEY-WOLF
CENTER**
UC SANTA BARBARA

PARASITE



After faking his way into a job as a tutor for the wealthy Park family, Kim Ki-woo (Choi Woo-shik) begins looking for employment opportunities for his family members as well. Gradually, the affluent Park family and the street-smart Kim family become increasingly enmeshed in work and life. With its shrewd depiction of class conflict and darkly hilarious narrative, Bong Joon-ho's *Parasite* has met with enormous critical and commercial success.

Kyung Hyun Kim (East Asian Studies and Visual Studies, UC Irvine) will join moderator Sowon S. Park (English, UCSB) for a virtual discussion that examines the film's complex cultural critiques and subversive themes.

Parasite can be streamed on Amazon Prime Video, Google Play, Hulu, and Vudu.

This event is sponsored by the Carsey-Wolf Center.



Guest Biographies: Kyung Hyun Kim (East Asian Studies and Visual Studies, UC Irvine)

Kyung Hyun Kim is a creative writer, a scholar, and a film producer. He has worked with internationally-renowned film directors such as Lee Chang-dong and Marty Scorsese. Kim is author of *The Remasculinization of Korean Cinema*, *Virtual Hallyu: Korean Cinema of the Global Era*, *Hegemonic Mimicry: Korean Popular Culture of Twenty-first Century*, all of them published by Duke University Press, and a Korean-language novel entitled *In Search of Lost G* (*Ireo beorin G-reul chajaso*, 2014) about a Korean mother combing through the U.S. in search of her missing son during his junior year in a Massachusetts prep school. He has coproduced two award-winning feature films: *Never Forever* (2007, Sundance Film Festival's U.S. Main Competition) and *The Housemaid* (2010, Cannes Film Festival Main Competition), and his co-scripted film screenplay, *The Origins of a Detective* (*Hyeongsa eui kiwon*), won a cash prize (US\$ 30,000) for being selected for the 2019 Best Film Development Project by the Korean Film Commission. His first theatre screenplay, *Pan-Damn-It!*, will be featured as a staged reading and directed by Jane Page (Drama, UC Irvine) in fall 2020.



Moderator Sowon S. Park

Sowon S. Park teaches neurocognitive literary criticism, world literature, and European modernism in the English department at UCSB. She has worked as a journalist and TV presenter in Korea and blogs about K-Pop.





DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

For people of different circumstances to live together in the same space is not easy.

It is increasingly the case in this sad world that humane relationships based on co-existence or symbiosis cannot hold, and one group is pushed into a parasitic relationship with another.

In the midst of such a world, who can point their finger at a struggling family, locked in a fight for survival, and call them parasites?

It's not that they were parasites from the start. They are our neighbors, friends and colleagues, who have merely been pushed to the edge of a precipice.

As a depiction of ordinary people who fall into an unavoidable commotion, this film is:
a comedy without clowns,
a tragedy without villains,

all leading to a violent tangle and a headlong plunge down the stairs.

You are all invited to this unstoppably fierce tragicomedy.

INTERVIEW WITH THE DIRECTOR

What is the meaning of the title *Parasite*?

At first, everyone expected that *Parasite* would be a creature movie or SF film. Even more so because the title forms a connection with my previous film *The Host*. But as I have said before, this film's protagonists are family members living in the real world. There are people who hope to live with others in a co-existent or symbiotic relationship, but that doesn't work out, so they are pushed into a parasitic relationship. I think of it as a tragicomedy that depicts the humor, horror and sadness that arise when you want to live a prosperous life together, but then you run up against the reality of just how difficult that can be. It's an ironic title, not unlike the original Korean title of *Memories of Murder*, which carries the connotation of "warm, pleasant memories." How can one hold warm, nostalgic memories of a murder? Is it wrong to do so? In the same way that film depicts the memories of an era through the Hwaseong serial murder case, *Parasite* too carries an ironic nuance in its title.

How would you categorize the genre of *Parasite*?

It's a human drama, but one that is strongly imbued with the contemporary. Although the plot consists of a string of unique and distinctive situations, it is nonetheless a story that could very well take place in the real world. One can see it as taking an incident that was on the news or on social media, and putting it on the screen. So in that sense it's a quite realistic drama, but I wouldn't object if one were to call it a crime drama, a comedy, a sad human drama, or a horrific thriller. I always try my best to overturn viewer expectations, and I hope *Parasite* succeeds in this way.



Who are the families at the center of *Parasite*?

They are a lower-class family living in a squalid semi-basement flat who just hope for an ordinary life, not anything special – but even that proves hard to achieve. The father has accumulated numerous business failures, the mother who trained as an athlete has never found particular success, and the son and daughter have failed the university entrance exam on multiple occasions.

In contrast the family of Mr. Park, who works as the CEO of an IT firm (not connected with any of Korea's chaebol business conglomerates) is a competent, newly rich family. Mr. Park is something of a workaholic. There is his beautiful young wife, and his cute high school aged daughter and young son. They can be seen as an ideal four-member family among the modern urban elite.

Tell us about how you cast the roles in the film, and your reasoning behind it.

For this film it was important to assemble a cast that would play off each other well and form an effective ensemble, as with a soccer team. They needed to project the air of a family at first sight, so I gave it a lot of thought. The first one I cast was Song Kang Ho, and then as I was shooting *Okja* with Choi Woo Shik I thought it would be fun to cast him as Song Kang Ho's thin son. After that, the similar-looking Park So Dam, who has great acting skills and projects a distinctive, vague sense of reality, was cast as his sister. It was important that they resemble each other to express the physical connection between the family members. As for the actress Chang Hye Jin, I liked the understated, everyday strength she projected in the film *The World of Us* and so I placed her in the role of Song Kang Ho's powerful wife.



As for the Park family, I didn't want the typically clichéd portrayal of the upper class that you see in Korean TV dramas, so instead I needed actors who projected a cultured and kind image. I've always been impressed by the multifaceted charm of Lee Sun Kyun, so he was cast as Mr. Park. In the case of Cho Yeo Jeong, she strikes me as resembling an incredibly deep diamond mine that has yet to be fully explored, and so I cast her in the hopes of revealing even a part of it. This isn't a film with a single protagonist, so the way the actors all responded to each other was extremely important. In the end I was really thankful to them for each playing their part so well, like a well-coordinated soccer team.

What kind of image of contemporary society did you want to project through this film?

I think that one way to portray the continuing polarization and inequality of our society is as a sad comedy. We are living in an era when capitalism is the reigning order, and we have no other alternative. It's not just in Korea, but the entire world faces a situation where the tenets of capitalism cannot be ignored. In the real world, the paths of families like our four unemployed protagonists and the Park family are unlikely ever to cross. The only instance is in matters of employment between classes, as when someone is hired as a tutor or a domestic worker. In such cases there are moments when the two classes come into close enough proximity to feel each other's breath. In this film, even though there is no malevolent intent on either side, the two classes are pulled into a situation where the slightest slip can lead to fissures and eruptions.

In today's capitalistic society there are ranks and castes that are invisible to the eye. We keep them disguised and out of sight, and superficially look down on class hierarchies as a relic of the past, but the reality is that there are class lines that cannot be crossed. I think that this film depicts the inevitable cracks that appear when two classes brush up against each other in today's increasingly polarized society.

What do you hope viewers will get out of this film?

I just hope that it gives audiences a lot to think about. It is in parts funny, frightening, and sad, and if it makes viewers feel like sharing a drink and talking over all the ideas they had while watching it, I'll wish for nothing more



SUBVERSIVES

FALL 2020 & Winter 2021



Sorry to Bother You: 10/13
Parasite: 10/15
The Great Dictator: 10/22
Pee-wee's Playhouse: 11/5
Blood Quantum: 11/12

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tickets & info:
www.carseywolf.ucsb.edu

SUBVERSIVES

Throughout film history and across the globe, mediamakers have resisted social conventions and attracted the ire of governments and censorship boards. The Carsey-Wolf Center's fall 2020 and winter 2021 screening series will showcase films and TV shows considered politically, socially, culturally, and ideologically subversive. From mischievous caricatures to biting social critiques, the events in this series invite discussion of the efficacy of subversion and the historical contexts that have rendered these works subversive in the first place.

