

JNST 0001

Mon. & Wed., 11:00am-12:20pm

4 units

Prof. Youna Kwak

Viral

Course Description:

virus (n.): An infectious, often pathogenic agent or biological entity which is typically smaller than a bacterium, which is able to function only within the living cells of a host animal, plant, or microorganism, and which consists of a nucleic acid molecule (either DNA or RNA) surrounded by a protein coat, often with an outer lipid membrane.

viral (n.): of, designating, or involving the rapid spread of information (esp. about a product or service) amongst customers by word of mouth, e-mail, etc.

(OED)

These days the words “viral” and “virus” are used not only (or not even primarily) to describe illness but rather to identify the rapid and widespread propagation of information, as in: viral marketing, viral video, viral image, viral film, viral tweet, “*24 hours later it went viral.*” Our source texts for this seminar include novels, films, journalism, and critical theory. We’ll read and watch fictional accounts of viral pandemics; delve into theories of alternative, non-linear forms of dissemination and relation, including the rhizome (Deleuze & Guattari) and contagion (Artaud); and explore articles, essays, podcasts, videos, and more, to explore how *viral transmission* has become such a potent metaphor for contemporary methods of sociality and communication, as well as networks of support, and avenues of damage and harm.