

Homophobic COVID-19 Surveillance on South Korean Social Media

**Tuesday 30 March 2021 via Zoom at 4pm AWST
(5pm Korea, 7pm AEDT)**

As the COVID-19 pandemic began to sweep over the world, LGBTQ+ people in South Korea experienced harsh homophobia. A new COVID-19 cluster broke out in May 2020 in a multicultural and club district, Itaewon in South Korea. This 'Itaewon outbreak' shined unwanted attention on the Korean LGBTQ+ community (gay community in particular) and sparked homophobic backlash, as news outlets reported that the infected person had visited gay clubs. In turn, homophobic discourses proliferated online: e.g., blaming "selfish" gays who refuse COVID-19 test for fear of being outed, and stereotyping male gays as "sexual predators" referring to the "AIDS=gay disease" discourse. Consequently, Korean LGBTQ+ Influencers responded to the homophobic COVID-19 discourses in different manners, while showing some extent of self-policing their behaviors online.

In this talk, media scholar Jin Lee will explore how homophobic COVID-19 discourses have shaped a network of surveillance against LGBTQ+ people on South Korean social media, and how LGBTQ+ Influencers have coped with the surveillance. In particular, she will trace how news, started from a Christian-affiliated news outlet, has circulated feelings of anger and fear, targeted at LGBTQ+ people in particular, in tandem with attention economies. Then by visiting a few famous LGBTQ+ YouTubers' strategies and practices to cope with surveillance, she will show how queer politics has been depoliticized in the pandemic. This talk will shed light on key issues around the COVID-19 pandemic in South Korea, where social minorities are doubly burdened across the offline and online spaces, on the contrary to the story of South Korea's successful management of COVID-19.

Bio



Dr Jin Lee studies media intimacies in social media cultures, particularly focusing on media practices and visibility of social minorities across the "old" and "new" media. She has published a few government reports and several articles in peer-reviewed journals including *Media International Australia*, *Social Media and Society*, *Critical Studies in Media Communication*. She is a Research Fellow in Internet Studies at Curtin University, Australia. Prior to her academic career, she worked as a researcher at the Korean-government's affiliated think tank, Korea Information Society Development Institute. Reach her jin.lee@curtin.edu.au or [@jinlee_media](https://twitter.com/jinlee_media) on Twitter.

This seminar will be conducted online with Zoom. To join click the registration link:

<https://uwa.zoom.us/join/91234567890>

For further enquiries, please email: krc@uwa.edu.au

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