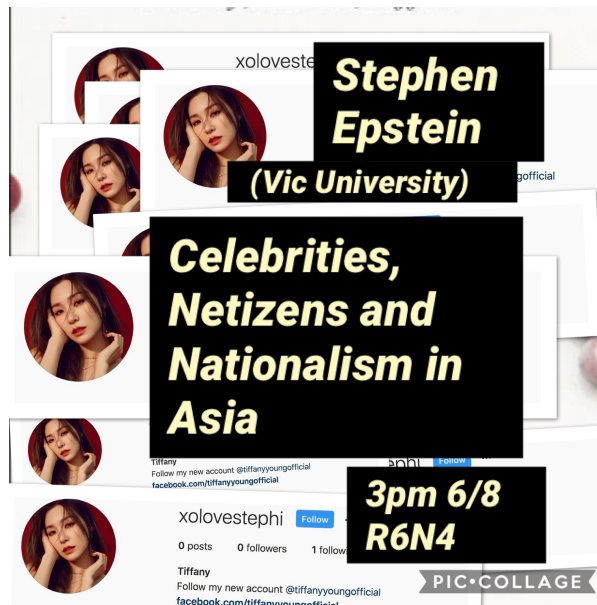


The Departments of Languages and Cultures  
and Media, Film and Communication

present a talk by

Dr Stephen Epstein, Victoria University of Wellington



***Fly the Flag...At Your Own Risk: Celebrities, Netizens and Nationalism in East Asia***

On August 15, 2016, Liberation Day in South Korea, American-born Tiffany of K-pop icons Girls' Generation uploaded a picture to her Instagram account that paid tribute to the group's concert the previous night: applying a filter available in the social media platform, she added the locale "Tokyo, Japan" to caption the photo in a font style that recalled Japan's rising sun flag. Netizen reaction was swift and harsh in condemning the "ignorant" action of the star, and her gaffe ultimately led to her dismissal from a popular Korean TV show.

Tiffany, however, was far from the first star to be attacked for the display, almost always unwitting, of another nation's symbols in East Asia's highly sensitive internet environment. Conversely, celebrities have also been criticized in neighbouring countries for flying a flag associated with their own land. Use of any flag at all has become a perilous activity.

In this talk, Stephen Epstein will address such incidents in order to underline how nationalism intersects with the process of increasing mediatisation, personalisation and commodification of celebrity as well as media consumption, democratised fan production and evolving relations between fans and celebrities. In particular, Epstein interrogates why celebrities are experiencing such panoptic policing by fan communities and being invested with increasing values as vessels of national sentiment, and asks what meaning this growing tendency holds for Japanese-South Korean relations.

**3:00 pm Monday 6 August - Richardson R6N4**