

Ruilin (Ray) LAI

Department of Political Science, Washington University, One Brookings Drive, St. Louis, MO 63130

✉ ruilin.lai@wustl.edu | 🌐 ruilintai.com | 📞 0000-0001-5930-8550

Last updated: May 2026

Education

Washington University in St. Louis

Ph.D. in Political Science *expected 2027*

Committee: Margit Tavits (Chair), Deniz Aksoy (Co-Chair), Christopher Lucas, and Carlo Horz

Graduate Research Fellow, Weidenbaum Center 2025-2027

M.A. in Political Science 2024

Hong Kong University of Science and Technology

M.Phil. in Social Science (*on study leave in 2021*) 2022

Committee: Jean Hong (Chair), Li Han, and Han Zhang

M.Sc. in Global China Studies 2019

Hong Kong Baptist University

B.Soc.Sc. (First Class Honors) in Government and International Studies 2018

L'Institut d'Études Politiques de Paris (Sciences Po Paris)

One-year exchange study 2016-2017

Additional Training

University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

ICPSR Summer Program in Quantitative Methods of Social Research 2019

Interests

Substantive: Authoritarian politics, judicial politics, political communication

- Propaganda and (judicial) repression in autocracies
- Media bias and media capture in democracies
- Comparative judicial behavior
- Chinese politics; Hong Kong politics; American politics

Methodological: Text-as-data

Publication

- [1] “Can Autocratic Power Influence Media in Democracies? Evidence from China’s Expulsion of American Journalists” [\[Link\]](#)
2026, *Political Science Research and Methods* 14(1)
- [2] “Capturing the Fourth Estate: Government Influence on U.S. Newspaper Coverage of Foreign Leaders” [\[Link\]](#)
2025, *British Journal of Political Science* 55
- [3] “Who Funds Whose Infrastructure: Country Dyadic Analysis of Global Project Finance Loans” with Jean Hong (Michigan) and Ilker Karaca (Iowa State) [\[Link\]](#)
2024, *Review of International Political Economy* 32(2)
- [4] “Political Institutions and Global Project Finance Loans” with Jean Hong (Michigan) and Ilker Karaca (Iowa State) [\[Link\]](#)
2023, *International Studies Quarterly* 67(2)

Working Paper

- [1] “Judicial Repression and Opposition to Autocracy: Evidence from Hong Kong”
 - *Young Scholar Best Paper Award*, APSA Conference Group on Taiwan Studies
 - *Best Graduate Student Paper*, Department of Political Science, WashU
- [2] “Prosecutors, Lawyers, and Repression in Autocratic Courts” with Jean Hong (Michigan)
- [3] “After Repression: The Impacts of Confession Propaganda upon Failed Uprisings” with Eddy Yeung (Emory) and Matthew Gabel (WashU) *Under Review*
- [4] “Liberal Education and Illiberal Judgments” with Jean Hong (Michigan) **R&R**
- [5] “Brand Cues as a Source of Perceived Media Bias” with Leonid Peisakhin (NYU Abu Dhabi) and Greg Chih-Hsin Sheen (Academia Sinica) *Under Review*
- [6] “Judicial Involvement and Public Reactions to Repression” with Deniz Aksoy (WashU) *Under Review*
- [7] “Dissidents’ Acquittals in Autocratic Courts”

Other Writing

- [1] “China’s Vaccine Scandal 2018: Pharmaceutical Companies Facing Heightened Regulatory Risks” with Gang Chen
2018, *East Asian Institute Background Brief* 1386.

Honours, Grants, and Fellowships

External

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| [1] Humane Studies Fellowship (US\$5,000) Institute for Humane Studies | 2026 |
| [2] Academic Mentoring Grant (US\$8,000) Institute for Humane Studies | 2024 |

Internal

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| [1] Arts & Sciences Conference Travel Grant (US\$4,783) WashU | 2023-2026 |
| [2] Weidenbaum Center Research Grant (with Matt Gabel) (US\$15,000) WashU | 2026 |
| [3] Global Futures Small Grant (US\$1,500) WashU | 2025 |
| [4] Weidenbaum Center Graduate Research Grant (US\$5,000) WashU | 2025 |
| [5] LSQ Research Grant (US\$5,000) WashU | 2025 |
| [6] Department Seed Grant (US\$2,500) WashU | 2024 |
| [7] Weidenbaum Center Research Grant (with Matt Gabel) (US\$13,720) WashU | 2024 |
| [8] Weidenbaum Center Research Grant (with Deniz Aksoy) (US\$15,000) WashU | 2023 |
| [9] Arts & Sciences Graduate Fellowship WashU | 2022-2028 |

Pre-doctoral (Total: ~US\$162,000)

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| [1] Li Po Chun Charitable Trust Fund Scholarship (HK\$8,000) HKUST | 2022 |
| [2] Dr Charles Chan Postgraduate Scholarship (HK\$54,090) HKUST | 2020 |
| [3] Postgraduate Studentship (HK\$415,920) HKUST | 2019-2022 |
| [4] EITM Certification Scholarship for ICPSR Summer Program (US\$3,700) | 2019 |
| [5] MGCS Program Scholarship (HK\$20,000) HKUST | 2019 |
| [6] MGCS Program Conference Grant (HK\$11,000) HKUST | 2019 |
| [7] Scholarship for Global Attachment Opportunities (HK\$6,000) HKBU | 2018 |
| [8] Reaching Out Award (HK\$10,000) Hong Kong SAR Government | 2018 |
| [9] Social Sciences Scholarship for Global Exchange (HK\$4,000) HKBU | 2018 |
| [10] Exchange Sponsorship (HK\$34,000) HKBU | 2017 |
| [11] Full Admission Scholarship (HK\$680,000) HKBU | 2014-2018 |

Conferences & Talks	Annual Meetings	
	American Political Science Association	2021, 2024-2026 (Scheduled)
	International Studies Association	2021-2022
	Midwest Political Science Association	2019-2026
	Western Political Science Association	2020
	Small Conferences and Workshops (* = invited)	
	APSA Mini-Conference on Chinese Politics	2026 (Scheduled)
	Emerging Scholars Conference in Public Law, University of Texas at Austin	2026
	Authoritarian Institutions and State Dynamics,* Arizona State University/IHS	2026
	Protests and Politics Around the World,* Yale University	2025
	Virtual Workshop on Authoritarian Regimes (VWAR)	2025
	SPSA Mini-Conference on The Politics of Authoritarian Regimes	2025
	Pacific International Politics Conference (<i>co-author presented</i>)	2021
	Talks	
Weidenbaum Center Interdisciplinary Workshop Series, WashU	2026	
Online Seminar, Global Research Association of Politics in Hong Kong (GRAPH)	2025	
Service	Assistant Authoritarian Political Systems Group	11/2023-05/2024
	Editorial Assistant <i>American Political Science Review</i>	10/2023-05/2024
Research Experience	Research Assistant Division of Social Science, NYU Abu Dhabi PIs: Leonid Peisakhin and Peter van der Windt	01/2021-08/2022
	Research Assistant East Asian Institute, National University of Singapore PIs: Gang Chen and Wei Shan	06/2018-08/2018
	Fieldwork in townships of Guangdong Province, China PI: Guojun He	05/2018-06/2018
Teaching Experience	Assistant Instructor Department of Political Science, WashU The Politics of Law and Order (advanced undergraduate)	Spring 2026
	The Politics of the U.S. Supreme Court (advanced undergraduate)	Fall 2025
	Research Design and Methods (advanced undergraduate)	Spring 2025
	Data Science for Politics (undergraduate)	Fall 2024
	Senior Thesis Research (advanced undergraduate)	Spring 2024
	Political Violence (advanced undergraduate)	Fall 2023
	Teaching Assistant Division of Social Science, HKUST Quantitative Data Analysis for Social Research (undergraduate)	Spring 2022
	Politics Through Films (undergraduate)	Fall 2020
Skills	Language Mandarin Chinese (Native), English (Advanced), Cantonese (Intermediate)	
	Software R, Python, Java, Stata, \LaTeX , Gephi, Visone	
Other	Citizenship: Hong Kong	