

Ruilin (Ray) LAI

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Last updated: September 2026

Education	Washington University in St. Louis	
	Ph.D. in Political Science	<i>expected 2027</i>
	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	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
	Sciences Po (Institut d'études politiques de 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 • Hong Kong politics; Chinese politics; Taiwanese politics Methodological: Text-as-data	
Publications	[1] "Can Autocratic Power Influence Media in Democracies? Evidence from China's Expulsion of American Journalists" [Link] 2026, <i>Political Science Research and Methods</i> 14(1) [2] "Capturing the Fourth Estate: Government Influence on U.S. Newspaper Coverage of Foreign Leaders" [Link] 2025, <i>British Journal of Political Science</i> 55 [3] "Who Funds Whose Infrastructure: Country Dyadic Analysis of Global Project Finance Loans" with Jean Hong (Michigan) and Ilker Karaca (Iowa State) [Link] 2025, <i>Review of International Political Economy</i> 32(2) [4] "Political Institutions and Global Project Finance Loans" with Jean Hong (Michigan) and Ilker Karaca (Iowa State) [Link] 2023, <i>International Studies Quarterly</i> 67(2)	
Working Papers	R&R [1] "Liberal Education and Illiberal Judgments" with Jean Hong (Michigan)	

Under Review

- [1] “After Repression: The Impacts of Confession Propaganda upon Failed Uprisings” with Eddy Yeung (Emory) and Matthew Gabel (WashU)
- [2] “Brand Cues as a Source of Perceived Media Bias” with Leonid Peisakhin (NYU Abu Dhabi) and Greg Chih-Hsin Sheen (Academia Sinica)
- [3] “Judicial Involvement and Public Reactions to Repression” with Deniz Aksoy (WashU)

Available Upon Request

- [1] “Judicial Repression and Opposition to Autocracy: Evidence from Hong Kong”
 - *Young Scholar Best Paper Award*, APSA Conference Group on Taiwan Studies
 - *Best Graduate Paper Award*, Department of Political Science, WashU
- [2] “Prosecutors, Lawyers, and Repression in Autocratic Courts” with Jean Hong (Michigan)
- [3] “Dissidents’ Acquittals in Autocratic Courts”
- [4] “Populist Rhetoric Engages but Does Not Persuade: Evidence from 90 Countries and Three Experiments” with Christopher Lucas (WashU), Jacob M. Montgomery (WashU), Margit Tavits (WashU)
- [5] “Public Reactions to Judicial Resistance during Democratic Backsliding” with Hsu Yumin Wang (NTHU) and Matthew Gabel (WashU)

Other Writing

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

Honours, Grants, and Fellowships

External

Academic Mentoring Grant (US\$8,000) Institute for Humane Studies	2026
Humane Studies Fellowship (US\$5,000) Institute for Humane Studies	2026
Academic Mentoring Grant (US\$8,000) Institute for Humane Studies	2024

Internal

Arts & Sciences Conference Travel Grant (US\$4,783) WashU	2023-2026
Weidenbaum Center Small Grant (with Matthew Gabel) (US\$15,000) WashU	2026
Global Futures Small Grant (US\$1,500) WashU	2025
Weidenbaum Center Graduate Fellowship (US\$5,000) WashU	2025
LSQ Research Grant (US\$5,000) WashU	2025
Department Seed Grant (US\$2,500) WashU	2024
Weidenbaum Center Small Grant (with Matthew Gabel) (US\$13,720) WashU	2024
Weidenbaum Center Small Grant (with Deniz Aksoy) (US\$15,000) WashU	2023
Arts & Sciences Graduate Fellowship WashU	2022-2027

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

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

Awards

Department Nominee, Dean’s Award for Graduate Research Excellence WashU	2026
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Conferences & Talks	Annual Meetings ([†] = discussant)	
	Association of Chinese Political Studies	2026 [†] (Scheduled)
	American Political Science Association	2021, 2024, 2025 [†] , 2026
	Midwest Political Science Association	2019-2026
	International Studies Association	2021-2022
	Western Political Science Association	2020
	Small Conferences and Workshops (* = invited, [†] = discussant)	
	APSA Mini-Conference on Chinese Politics	2026
	New Faces in Chinese Politics Conference, MIT	2026
	Comparative Politics Annual Conference, [†] WashU	2026
	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	Student Coordinator Comparative Politics Annual Conference XIV	09/2026-
	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 (Fluent), Cantonese (Intermediate)	
	Software	
	R, Python, Java, Stata, $\LaTeX$, Gephi, Visone	

References**Margit Tavits**

Dr. William Taussig Professor in Arts and Sciences
Washington University in St. Louis
Email: tavits@wustl.edu

Deniz Aksoy

Associate Professor of Political Science
Washington University in St. Louis
Email: denizaksoy@wustl.edu

Matthew Gabel

Professor of Political Science
Washington University in St. Louis
Email: mgabel@wustl.edu

Jean Hong

Associate Professor of Political Science
and Korea Foundation Professor of Korean Studies
University of Michigan
Email: jeanhong@umich.edu

Christopher Lucas

Associate Professor of Political Science
Washington University in St. Louis
Email: christopher.lucas@wustl.edu

Other

Citizenship: Hong Kong