

YA-WEN LEI

Harvard University
Department of Sociology
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EMPLOYMENT

Harvard University, Department of Sociology

Professor July 2023 – present
Associate Professor July 2020 – June 2023
Assistant Professor July 2016 – June 2020

– Faculty Affiliate: Asia Center; Committee on Degrees in Social Studies; Committee on Regional Studies East Asia; Fairbank Center for Chinese Studies; Weatherhead Center for International Affairs

Sciences Po, Centre d'études européennes and Centre de recherches internationales

Visiting Professor September 2018 – June 2019

Harvard University, Society of Fellows

Junior Fellow July 2013 – June 2016

EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATION

PhD, Sociology, University of Michigan 2007 – 2013

– Committee: Greta Krippner (Chair), Mark Mizruchi, Peggy Somers, Yu Xie, and Mary Gallagher

– Dissertation: “Uncovering the Roots of the Nationwide Counterpublic Sphere in China”

** Winner of the 2014 American Sociological Association Best Dissertation Award*

JSD, Yale Law School 2006 – 2011

– Dissertation: “Twin Challenges to Legitimacy: China’s Informal Handset Industry Economy in the Globalized Knowledge and Information Economy”

MA, Sociology, University of Michigan 2007 – 2009

LLM, Yale Law School 2005 – 2006

LLB, College of Law, National Taiwan University

– Major in law with a secondary in economics (class ranking: 1/62)

– Passed the National Bar Exam (ranking: 14/3915), the National Exam for Judges and Prosecutors (ranking: 8/3732), and the National Exam for Judicial Administration (ranking: 8/1991) upon graduation

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Political sociology; sociology of media and information technologies; sociology of work and labor; economic sociology; law and society; sociology of development; science and technology studies; Chinese studies

BOOKS

Lei, Ya-Wen. 2023. *The Gilded Cage: Technology, Development, and State Capitalism in China*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

- Bronze medal, 2024 Axiom Business Book Award, the International Business/Globalization category
- 2024 Max Weber Book Award, Organizations, Occupations, and Work (OOW) Section of the American Sociological Association, Honorable Mention
- 2024 Asia/Transnational Book Award, Asia and Asian America (AAAS) Section of the American Sociological Association
- 2024 Best Book Award, Communication, Information Technologies, and Media (CITAMS) Section of the American Sociological Association
- 2024 Robert K. Merton Book Award, Science, Knowledge, and Technology (SKAT) Section of the American Sociological Association
- 2024 Walter Channing Cabot Fellowships, Harvard’s Faculty of Arts and Sciences
- Covered by *The New York Times*

Lei, Ya-Wen. 2018. *The Contentious Public Sphere: Law, Media, and Authoritarian Rule in China*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

- 2018 Distinguished Book Award, Sociology of Law Section of the American Sociological Association
- 2018 Gordon Hirabayashi Human Rights Book Award, Human Rights Section of the American Sociological Association
- Reviews: *American Journal of Sociology*; ASA Section on Human Rights Newsletter Fall 2018; *Choice*; *Contemporary Sociology*; *Foreign Affairs*; *Governance*; *Pacific Affairs*; *The China Journal*; *The China Quarterly*; *Taiwanese Sociology*
- TV Interview: The Open Mind at PBS

EDITED SPECIAL ISSUES

Hoang, Kimberly Kay, Jessica Cobb, and Ya-Wen Lei (2017). De-centering ‘Globalized’ Asia, *positions: asia critique*, Duke University Press.

ARTICLES AND BOOK CHAPTERS

Lei, Ya-Wen and Kim, Rachel. 2024. “Automation and Augmentation: AI, Robots, and Work.” *Annual Review of Sociology* 50:251-272.

Lei, Ya-Wen. 2022. “Upgrading China through Automation: Manufacturers, Workers and the Techno-Developmental State.” *Work, Employment and Society* 36(6):1078–1096.

- Covered by *The Wire China* and the Blog of the Montreal AI Ethics Institute

Lei, Ya-Wen. 2021a. “Delivering Solidarity: Platform Architecture and Collective Contention in China’s Platform Economy.” *American Sociological Review* 86(2):279-309.

- 2022 Distinguished Contribution to Scholarship Article Award, Collective Behavior and Social Movements (CBSM) Section of the American Sociological Association

- 2022 The W. Richard Scott Award for Distinguished Scholarship, Organizations, Occupations and Work (OOW) Section of the American Sociological Association, Honorable Mention
- 2022 The Law and Society Association Article Prize, Honorable Mention
- 2021 Best Paper Award, Communication, Information, Technologies, and Media Sociology (CITAMS) Section of the American Sociological Association
- Covered by *The Stanford Social Innovation Review*, *Il Manifesto*, *The Rest of the World*, *Initium Media* (*duan chuanmei*), and *The Paper* (*pengpai xinwen*)

Lei, Ya-Wen. 2021b. “Publics, Scientists and the State: Mapping the Global Human Genome Editing Controversy.” *The China Quarterly* 246:400-27.

- 2021 The Gordon White Prize. The Gordon White Prize is awarded annually for the most original article published in *The China Quarterly*.

Lei, Ya-Wen. 2020. “Revisiting China’s Social Volcano: Attitudes toward Inequality and Political Trust in China.” *Socius* 6:1-21. doi: 10.1177/2378023120915382.

Lei, Ya-Wen. 2018. “Social Protest under Hard Authoritarianism.” *China Leadership Monitor*, 58(4), 1-10.

Lei, Ya-Wen. 2018. “What Should We Know about Public Opinion in China?” Pp. 43-50 in *The China Questions: Critical Insights into a Rising Power*, edited by M. Szonyi and J. Rudolph. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Hoang, K. K., Cobb, J., and Lei, Y. W. 2017. “Guest Editors’ Introduction: Inter-Asian Capital Circulations, Cultural Transformations, and Methodological Positions.” *positions: east asia cultures critique*, 25(4), 633-644.

Lei, Ya-Wen. 2016. “Freeing the Press: How Field Environment Explains Critical News Reporting in China.” *American Journal of Sociology*, 122(1), 1-48. Lead Article.

- 2017 Best Research Paper Award, Asia and Asian America (AAAS) Section of the American Sociological Association
- 2017 Best Paper Award, Communication, Information, Technologies, and Media Sociology (CITAMS) Section of the American Sociological Association, Honorable Mention
- 2012 Outstanding Student Paper Award, Communication, Information, Technologies, and Media Sociology (CITAMS) Section of the American Sociological Association
- 2012 Graduate Student Paper Award, Human Rights Section of the American Sociological Association
- 2012 Katherine Luke Graduate Student Paper Award, Department of Sociology, University of Michigan

Lei, Ya-Wen and Zhou, D. Xiaodan. 2016. “Embedding Law into Politics in China’s Networked Public Sphere.” Pp. 106-128 in *The Internet, Social Media, and a Changing China*, edited by Jacques deLisle, Avery Goldstein, and Guobin Yang, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Lei, Ya-Wen and Zhou, D. Xiaodan. 2015. “Contesting Legality in Authoritarian Contexts: Food Safety, Rule of Law, and China’s Networked Public Sphere.” *Law and Society Review*, 49(3), 557-593. Lead Article.

Lei, Ya-Wen. 2011. “The Political Consequences of the Rise of the Internet: Political Beliefs and Practices of Chinese Netizens.” *Political Communication*, 28(3), 291-322.

- The First Prize in the Graduate Student Paper Competition of the 37th Research Conference on Communication, Information and Internet Policy

REVIEW ESSAYS

Lei, Ya-Wen. 2018. Criminal Defense in China: The Politics of Lawyers at Work. *American Journal of Sociology*, 124(3), 961-962.

SELECTED FELLOWSHIPS, GRANTS, AND AWARDS

External

- 2024 Max Weber Book Award, Organizations, Occupations, and Work (OOW) Section of the American Sociological Association, Honorable Mention
- 2024 Asia/Transnational Book Award, Asia and Asian America (AAAS) Section of the American Sociological Association
- 2024 Best Book Award, Communication, Information Technologies, and Media (CITAMS) Section of the American Sociological Association
- 2024 Robert K. Merton Book Award, Science, Knowledge, and Technology (SKAT) Section of the American Sociological Association
- 2022 Distinguished Contribution to Scholarship Article Award, Collective Behavior and Social Movements (CBSM) Section of the American Sociological Association
- 2022 The Law and Society Association Article Prize, Honorable Mention
- 2022 The W. Richard Scott Award for Distinguished Scholarship, Organizations, Occupations and Work (OOW) Section of the American Sociological Association, Honorable Mention
- 2021 The Gordon White Prize. The Gordon White Prize is awarded annually for the most original article published in *The China Quarterly*.
- 2021 Best Paper Award, Communication, Information, Technologies, and Media Sociology (CITAMS) Section of the American Sociological Association
- 2021 Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation Research Grant
- 2018 D. Kim Foundation for the History of Science and Technology in East Asia Fellowship
- 2018 Distinguished Book Award, Sociology of Law Section of the American Sociological Association
- 2018 Gordon Hirabayashi Human Rights Book Award, Human Rights Section of the American Sociological Association
- 2018 Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation Research Grant
- 2017 Best Research Paper Award, Asia and Asian America (AAAS) Section of the American Sociological Association
- 2017 Best Paper Award, Communication, Information, Technologies, and Media Sociology (CITAMS) Section of the American Sociological Association, Honorable Mention
- 2014 American Sociological Association Best Dissertation Award
- 2012 Outstanding Student Paper Award, Communication, Information, Technologies, and Media Sociology (CITAMS) Section of the American Sociological Association
- 2012 Graduate Student Paper Award, Human Rights Section of the American Sociological Association
- 2011 NSF Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Grant (Law and Social Science Program)
- 2011 Dissertation Fellowships, Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation for International Scholarly Exchange
- 2010 First Prize in the Graduate Student Paper Competition of the 37th Research Conference on Communication, Information and Internet Policy
- 2009-2011 Study Abroad Scholarship, Ministry of Education, Taiwan

Internal

Harvard University

- 2024 Walter Channing Cabot Fellowships, Harvard's Faculty of Arts and Sciences
- 2024 Weatherhead Center Faculty Research Grant
- 2024 The China Fund Research Grant
- 2023 The Dean's Competitive Fund for Promising Scholarship

- 2022 Weatherhead Center Faculty Research Grant
- 2021 George Kahrl Teaching Award in Sociology
- 2021 Nominee, Star Family Prize for Excellence in Advising, Harvard College
- 2021 Weatherhead Center Sabbatical Leave Grant
- 2021 The China Fund Research Grant
- 2020 Faculty of Arts and Sciences Clark Award
- 2019 Weatherhead Center Faculty Research Grant
- 2019 The Dean’s Competitive Fund for Promising Scholarship
- 2018 Weatherhead Center Faculty Research Grant
- 2017 Mindich Program in Engaged Scholarship
- 2016 Harvard Asia Center Research Grant
- 2016 The Dean’s Competitive Fund for Promising Scholarship
- 2016 Harvard Global Institute Grant
- 2014 William F. Milton Fund

University of Michigan

- 2012 Rackham Predoctoral Fellowship
- 2012 Rackham Outstanding Graduate Student Instructor Award
- 2012 Katherine Luke Graduate Student Paper Award, Department of Sociology, University of Michigan
- 2011 U-M Center for Chinese Studies Research Grant
- 2011 Barbour Scholarship for Asian Women
- 2010 U-M Center for Chinese Studies Research Grant
- 2008 Rackham International Student Fellowship

Yale Law School

- 2006 Lillian Goldman Scholarship
- 2005 Yale Tuition Fellowship

SELECTED INVITED PRESENTATIONS AND TALKS

“Upgrading the Nation: The Promise and Peril of Techno-Development in China” ”The Gilded Cage: Technology, Development, and State Capitalism in China”

- Yale University, The Council on East Asian Studies, March 2025 (scheduled).
- Colby College, Department of Sociology, March 2025 (scheduled).
- University of Pennsylvania, Center for the Study of Contemporary China, October 2024 (scheduled).
- Cornell University, Department of History, September 2024 (scheduled).
- Koç University, Department of Sociology, May 2024.
- The Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy at the University of Toronto, April 2024.
- Simon Fraser University, Smythe Memorial Lecture, March 2024.
- The Asian Studies Development Program National Conference, Keynote Speaker, March 2024.
- Princeton University, Fung Global Fellows Program, February 2024.
- University of Michigan, Lieberthal-Rogel Center for Chinese Studies, January 2024.
- National Taiwan University, Department of Sociology, January 2024.
- King’s College London, November 2023.
- The University of Oxford, Oxford Internet Institute, November 2023.
- Microsoft New England Research and Development Center, November 2023.
- Rutgers University, Rutgers Center for Chinese Studies, November 2023.
- Berlin Contemporary China Network, November 2023.
- Stanford University, Management Science and Engineering, October 2023.
- Worcester Polytechnic Institute, April 2023.
- Harvard University, Dean’s Symposium (invited by the Social Science Division Dean), March 2023.
- Wellesley College, East Asian Studies, March 2023.
- Georgetown University, Department of Sociology, Departmental Colloquium, January 2023.

- Boston College, Department of Sociology, Departmental Colloquium, November 2022.
 - Duke Law School, November 2022.
 - Princeton University, Center on Contemporary China, November 2022.
 - Columbia University, Department of Sociology, Departmental Colloquium, October 2022.
 - Harvard University, Department of Sociology, Culture, History, and Society Workshop, October 2022.
 - The University of Chicago, Department of Sociology, Departmental Colloquium, April 2022 (zoom).
 - Brown University, Waston Institute, March 2022.
 - Harvard Kennedy School of Government, The Program on Science, Technology and Society, March 2022 (zoom).
 - Workshop co-hosted by the Centre for Asian and Transcultural Studies at Heidelberg University and the East Asian Studies (SEAS) at Freie Universität Berlin, December 2021 (zoom).
 - Harvard Law School, East Asian Legal Studies, February 2021 (zoom).
- “Telling China Stories on YouTube: Digital Labor, Transnational Publics, and the Platform Economy”
- École des hautes études en sciences sociales, Paris, June 2024.
- “Developmental States, Semiconductor Firms, and Tech Labor in the New Phase of Globalization”
- The University of Michigan, China Reading Group, January 2024.
- “Techno-Capitalism: Social Challenges and Fissures in Today’s China”
- Harvard University, Fairbank Center for Chinese Studies, November 2023.
- “Rewiring the Chinese Techno-Nation”
- WZB Berlin Social Science Center, July 2022 (zoom).
- “Overwork and Class Origin among Coding Elites in China”
- Cornell University, ILR School, October 2022.
 - Peking University, Center for Social Research, October 2002 (zoom).
- “Delivering Solidarity: Platform Architecture and Collective Contention in China’s Platform Economy”
- Taiwanese Sociological Association, Keynote Speech, November 2021.
 - York University, The Korean Office for Research and Education, October 2021 (zoom).
 - Yale Law School and University of Toronto, East Asian Legal Studies Series, October 2021 (zoom).
 - University of Minnesota, Charles Babbage Institute, October 2020 (zoom).
 - Yale University, Department of Sociology, Comparative Research Workshop, December 2019.
 - University of Michigan, Lieberthal-Rogel Center for Chinese Studies, October 2019.
- “Revisiting China’s Social Volcano: Attitudes toward Inequality and Political Trust in China.”
- Harvard University, Fairbank Center for Chinese Studies, October 2019.
- “Publics, Scientists, and The State: Mapping The Global Human Genome Editing Controversy, 2015–2019”
- University of Michigan, Lieberthal-Rogel Center for Chinese Studies, October 2021 (zoom).
 - Stanford University, Department of Sociology Colloquium, October 2019.
 - Harvard University, Society of Fellows, July 2019.
- “From Factories to Food Delivery Platforms: Contingent Contractual Relationships in China’s Platform Economy”
- Columbia University, Department of Sociology Colloquium, April 2019.
- “Humans vs. Robots: (Re) Valuating The Worth of Work in The Age of Automation”
- University of British Columbia, Centre for Chinese Research, October 2018.
 - University of Pennsylvania, Center for the Study of Contemporary China, September 2018.
- “Class-Based Discontents in The Shadow of Development and Law”

- Sciences Po, Centre d'études européennes, November 2018.
- National Taiwan University, Department of Sociology Colloquium, June 2018.

“The Contentious Public Sphere in China: Law, Media and The Dilemma of Authoritarian Rule”

- New York University, Department of Media, Culture, and Communication, April 2020 (zoom).
- Boston University, Department of Sociology, April 2020 (zoom).
- École des hautes études en sciences, centre de recherches historiques, February 2019.
- Simon Fraser University, Department of History workshop, October 2018.
- Yale Law School, Paul Tsai China Center, April 2018.
- Duke University, Center for International and Global Studies, April 2018.
- Cornell University, East Asia Workshop, November 2017.
- National Taiwan University, Department of Sociology Colloquium, July 2017.
- Brandeis University, Department of Sociology Colloquium, November 2016.
- Duke University, Department of Sociology, November 2016.
- University of California at Berkeley, Department of sociology Colloquium, April 2015.
- Brown University, Department of Sociology, November 2014.

“Political Apathy in China, 1992-2012”

- Harvard Law School, East Asian Legal Studies, April 2017.

“Freeing The Press: How Field Environment Explains Critical News Reporting in China”

- Harvard University, Department of Economics workshop, February 2016.

“Contesting Legality in Authoritarian Contexts: Food Safety, Rule of Law and China’s Networked Public Sphere”

- Duke Law School Colloquium, November 2016.

“Embedding Law into Politics in China’s Networked Public Sphere”

- University of Pennsylvania, Center for the Study of Contemporary China, February 2014.

TEACHING

*** 2021 George Kahrl Teaching Award in Sociology**

*** 2017 Faculty Curricular Innovation Award, the Mindich Program for Engaged Scholarship at Harvard College**

Soc 1141 Contemporary Chinese Society (undergraduate and graduate levels)

- 2016 Fall; 2017 Fall; 2019 Fall; 2020 Fall; 2023 Spring; 2024 Spring
- Mindich Program in Engaged Scholarship

Soc 182 Law and Society (undergraduate level)

- 2017 Spring; 2018 Spring; 2023 Fall; 2024 Fall
- Mindich Program in Engaged Scholarship

Soc 98 Junior Tutorial: Media, Society, and Social Change (undergraduate level)

- 2017 Fall

Soc 2209 Qualitative Social Analysis (graduate level)

- 2020 Spring; 2021 Spring

Soc 3317 Soc Culture, History, and Society Workshop (graduate level; co-teach with Orlando Patterson)

- 2016 Fall; 2017 Spring; 2017 Fall; 2018 Spring; 2020 Fall; 2021 Spring; 2021 Fall; 2022 Spring; 2022 Fall; 2023 Spring; 2023 Fall; 2024 Spring; 2024 Fa

DEPARTMENTAL AND UNIVERSITY SERVICE

Departmental Service

- Admission Committee: 2016-2017; 2019-2020; 2022-2023
- Colloquium Committee: 2016-2017; 2022-2023
- Committee on Inclusion and Professionalism: 2020-2021
- Committee on Undergraduate Degrees: 2017-2018
- Fall Dissertation Proposal Workshop: 2023-2024
- General Written Exam: 2019-2020; 2024-2025
- Tenure Review Committee: 2023-2024
- Junior Search Committee: 2024-2025
- Senior Search Committee (chair): 2024-2025

University Service

- Admission Committee, A.M. Degree in Regional Studies-East Asia (RSEA): 2019-2020
- An Wang Postdoctoral Fellowship Selection Committee, Fairbank Center: 2019-2020; 2023-2024
- Advisory Committee, Fairbank Center: 2023-2024
- Council Committee, Asia Center: 2017-present
- Executive Committee, Weatherhead Center: 2024-2027
- Fellowship Selection Committee, Harvard Yenching: 2017-2018; 2019-2020; 2021-2022
- Hoopes Prize Selection Committee: 2016-18; 2019-2021; 2022-2024
- Hou Family Fellowship Selection Committee, Fairbank Center: 2016-2017
- Mid-dissertation Grant Committee, Weatherhead Center: 2020-2021
- Panel Organizing Committee for Fairbank Center's Sixtieth Year Anniversary Symposium, Fairbank Center: 2016-2017
- Research Travel Grants for Graduate Students, Asia Center: 2019-2020
- Scholars Program Selection Committee, Weatherhead Center: 2023-2024
- Second Year Review Committee (Jamie Martin), Department of History and Social Studies: 2023-2024
- Senior Advisers and Executive Committee, Weatherhead Center: 2024-2025
- Senior Lectureship Review Committee (Daniel Koss), East Asian Languages and Civilizations: 2022-2023
- Senior Scholar, Harvard Academy for International and Area Studies, Weatherhead Center: 2024-2025
- Standing Committee on the A.M. Degree, Regional Studies-East Asia (RSEA): 2019-2020
- Standing Committee on the Degrees in Social Studies: 2023-2025
- Steering Committee, Harvard China Fund: 2018-2024
- Steering Committee, Weatherhead Center: 2024-2027
- Steering Committee, Harvard Yenching: 2019-2020; 2021-2022
- Trustee, Harvard Yenching: 2024-2028

Professional Service

- Chair of the Best Paper Award Committee, Communication, Information, Technologies, and Media Sociology Section (CITAMS) of the American Sociological Association, 2022
- Chair of the Distinguished Book Award, Sociology of Law Section of the American Sociological Association, 2019
- Editorial Board of Johns Hopkins University Press's Studies in Computing and Culture series, 2021-2024
- Editorial Board of *Law and Social Inquiry*, 2019-2022
- Editorial Board of *American Sociological Review*, 2025-2028
- Member of the Distinguished Contribution to Scholarship Article Award Committee, Collective Behavior and Social Movements Section (CBSM) of the American Sociological Association, 2023
- Member of the Graduate Student Paper Award Committee, Human Rights Section of the American Sociological Association, 2017
- Member of the National Screening Committee, US Fulbright Program, 2024-2025
- Public Intellectual Program, National Committee on US-China Relations, 2019-2020

- Service to media (e.g., CNBC, CNN, The New York Times, etc)
- Academic review

Tenure promotion and promotion to full professorship:

I have reviewed tenure, full professorship, and distinguished professorship promotion cases for academic institutes and universities in Australia, the United States, Singapore, and Taiwan.

Journal articles in sociology, political science, law and society, communication studies, Chinese studies, industrial relations, and science and technology studies:

American Journal of Sociology, American Political Science Review, American Sociological Review, Current Sociology, East Asian Science, Technology and Society, International Journal of Communication, International Journal of Law and Context, International Journal of Press/Politics, Industrial and Labor Relations Review, Journal of Chinese Political Science, Law and Society Review, Law and Social Inquiry, Political Behavior, Political Communication, Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, The China Quarterly, Theory and Society, Socio-Economic Review, Sociology of Development, Sociological Forum, Sociological Perspectives, Socius, Studies in Comparative International Development, Qualitative Inquiry, and Qualitative Sociology

Book proposals and manuscripts:

Columbia University Press, Harvard University Press, Oxford University Press, and Routledge

Grant proposals:

Academia Sinica (Taiwan), Swiss National Science Foundation (Switzerland), and the University of Strasbourg Institute for Advanced Study (France)

Job applications in law, sociology, and political science:

The Institutum Iurisprudentiae, Academia Sinica (Taiwan), The Institute of Sociology, Academia Sinica (Taiwan), and the National Taiwan University (Department of Political Science)

LANGUAGES

- Mandarin Chinese (native)
- Taiwanese (native)
- English (proficient)
- French (limited working proficiency)