

Curriculum Vitae

Kevin J. O'Brien

Mailing Address

Charles and Louise Travers Department of Political Science
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Education

Ph.D. Yale University, 1987
B.A. Grinnell College, 1979

Academic Positions

Jack M. Forcey Chair in Political Science, UC-Berkeley, 2021-
Walter and Elise Haas Chair in Asian Studies, UC-Berkeley, 2013-2023
Alann P. Bedford Chair of Asian Studies, UC-Berkeley, 2006-2021
Professor of Political Science, UC-Berkeley, 2000-2006
Visiting Associate Professor of Political Science, UC-Berkeley, 1997-1999
Assistant and Associate Professor of Political Science, Ohio State University, 1987-2000
Lecturer, Northeast Forestry Institute (Harbin, China), 1983-1984

Some Administrative Positions

Director, Institute of East Asian Studies, 2013-2023
Acting Director, Institute of East Asian Studies, 2011
Chair, Center for Chinese Studies, 2005-2008
Director of Graduate Studies, Department of Political Science, 2002-2006

Teaching Fields and Research Interests

Comparative Politics, Chinese Politics, Social Movements, Protest Policing, Peasant Politics, Local Elections, Political Power, Policy Implementation, Comparative Legislatures, Law and Politics, Political Reform

Books

Rural Politics in Contemporary China (ed. with Emily T. Yeh and Jingzhong Ye)
(London: Routledge, hardcover 2014, paperback, 2015)

Grassroots Elections in China (ed. with Zhao Suisheng) (London: Routledge, hardcover 2011, paperback 2013)

Popular Protest in China (ed.) (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, hardcover and paperback, 2008)

Rightful Resistance in Rural China (with Lianjiang Li) (New York: Cambridge University Press, hardcover and paperback, 2006)

Engaging the Law in China: State, Society and Possibilities for Justice (ed. with Neil J. Diamant and Stanley B. Lubman) (Stanford: Stanford University Press, hardcover 2005, paperback, 2010)

Reform Without Liberalization: China's National People's Congress and the Politics of Institutional Change (New York: Cambridge University Press, hardcover 1990, paperback, 2008)

Articles and Book Chapters

"Observing US-China Relations Since the Start of the Reform Era," *East Asian Studies: China and its Neighboring Regions*, 57:1, in press, 10pp.

"Everyday Forms of Resistance in Theory and Practice," *Journal of Peasant Studies*, Online, March 1, 2026. DOI:10.1080/03066150.2026.2630677.

"Whither China?" (Book Symposium on Slater and Wong, *From Development to Democracy*), *Asian Perspective*, 48:3 (Summer 2024), pp. 508-513

"Understanding the Xi Effect: Structure versus Agency," in Ashley Esarey and Rongbin Han, eds., *The Xi Jinping Effect* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2024), pp. 249-254

"Neither Withdrawal nor Resistance: Adapting to Increased Repression in China," *Modern China*, 49:1 (January 2023): 3-25

"Adapting in Difficult Circumstances: Protestant Pastors and the Xi Jinping Effect," (with Sarah Lee), *Journal of Contemporary China*, 30:132 (November 2021): 902-14

"Value Clashes, Power Competition, and Community Trust: Why an NGO's Earthquake Recovery Program Faltered in Rural China," (with Yanhua Deng), *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 48:6 (September 2021): 1187-1206

"Understanding Experimentation and Implementation: A Case Study of China's Government Transparency Policy," (with Jieun Kim), *Asian Survey*, 61:4 (July/August 2021): 591-614

"How Grassroots Cadres Broker Land Taking in Urbanizing China," (with Yanhua Deng and Li Zhang), *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 47:6 (September 2020): 1233-1250

"Bureaucrat-Assisted Contention in China," (with Lianjiang Li and Mingxing Liu), *Mobilization*, 25:5 (SI) (2020): 661-74. Reprinted in In Hank Johnston and Sheldon Zhang (eds.) *Protest and Resistance in the Chinese Party State* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2022), pp. 120-141

- "Phantom Services: Deflecting Migrant Workers in China," (with Alexsia T. Chan), *China Journal*, 81 (January 2019): 103-22
- "Speaking to Theory and Speaking to the China Field," *Issues & Studies*, 54:4 (December 2018): 1-11
- "Enthusiastic Policy Implementation and its Aftermath: The Sudden Expansion and Contraction of China's Microfinance for Women Programme" (with Yanhua Deng and Jiajian Chen), *China Quarterly*, 234 (June 2018): 506-26
- "China's Disaffected Insiders," *Journal of Democracy*, 28:3 (July 2017): 5-13
- "Preventing Protest One Person at a Time: Psychological Coercion and Relational Repression in China," (with Yanhua Deng), *China Review*, 17:2 (June 2017): 179-201
- "China's Unhappy Police," (with Suzanne E. Scoggins), *Asian Survey*, 56:2 (March/April 2016): 225-42
- "Contentious Veterans: China's Retired Officers Speak Out," (with Neil J. Diamant), *Armed Forces & Society*, 41:3 (July 2015): 563-81
- "The Reach of the State: Work Units, Family Ties and 'Harmonious Demolition,'" (with Yanhua Deng) *China Journal*, 74 (July 2015): 1-17
- "Repression Backfires: Tactical Radicalization and Protest Spectacle in Rural China," (with Yanhua Deng), *Journal of Contemporary China*, 24:93 (May 2015): 457-70. Reprinted in Suisheng Zhao, *Debating Regime Legitimacy in Contemporary China: Popular Protests and Regime Performances* (London: Routledge, 2017), pp. 214-227
- "Veterans' Political Activism in China," (with Neil J. Diamant), *Modern China*, 41:3 (May 2015): 278-312
- "Societies of Senior Citizens and Popular Protest in Rural Zhejiang," (with Yanhua Deng), *China Journal*, 71 (January 2014): 172-88
- "Rightful Resistance Revisited," *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 40:6 (November 2013): 1051-62
- "Rural Politics in Contemporary China," (with Emily T. Yeh and Ye Jingzhong), *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 40:6 (November 2013): 915-28
- "Relational Repression in China: Using Social Ties to Demobilize Protesters," (with Yanhua Deng), *China Quarterly*, 215 (September 2013): 533-52
- "Petitioning Beijing: The High Tide of 2003-2006," (with Lianjiang Li and Liu Mingxing), *China Quarterly*, 210 (June 2012): 313-34
- "Politics at the Boundary: Mixed Signals and the Chinese State," (with Rachel E. Stern), *Modern China*, 38:2 (March 2012): 174-98

"Studying Chinese Politics in an Age of Specialization," *Journal of Contemporary China*, 20:71 (September 2011): 535-41. Translated in *Guowai Lilun Dongtai* (Foreign Theoretical Trends), No. 8 (August 2011): 50-56. Reprinted in William Glover and Ken Kollman, eds., *Relevant/Obsolete? Area Studies in the U.S. Academy* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan International Institute, 2012), pp. 86-98. Also reprinted in Anthony Saich, ed., *Political Governance in China* (Edward Elgar, 2015).

"Understanding China's Grassroots Elections," in O'Brien and Zhao (eds.), *Grassroots Elections in China* (London: Routledge, 2011), pp. xi-xvi

"How Authoritarian Rule Works," *Modern China*, 36:1 (January 2010): 79-86. Translated in *Kaifang Shidai* (Open Times) (December 2009): 56-60

"Rural Protest," *Journal of Democracy*, 20:3 (July 2009): 25-28. Reprinted in Andrew J. Nathan, Larry Diamond, Marc Plattner (eds.), *Will China Democratize?* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), 152-55

"Path to Democracy? Assessing Village Elections in China," (with Rongbin Han), *Journal of Contemporary China*, 18:60 (June 2009): 359-78. Reprinted in O'Brien and Zhao (eds.), *Grassroots Elections in China* (London: Routledge, 2011), pp. 1-20. Also in Anthony Saich, ed., *Political Governance in China* (Edward Elgar, 2015). Translated in *Guowai Lilun Dongtai* (Foreign Theoretical Trends), No. 7 (July 2011): 59-70. Recipient of the 3rd Annual John and Vivian Sabel Award for the Best Article Published in the *Journal of Contemporary China* (2018)

"Local People's Congresses and Governing China," *China Journal*, 61 (January 2009): 131-41. Translated in *Guowai Lilun Dongtai* (Foreign Theoretical Trends), No. 6 (2010): 44-47

"Studying Contention in Contemporary China," (with Rachel E. Stern), in O'Brien, (ed.), *Popular Protest in China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), pp. 11-25, 219-25.

"Protest Leadership in Rural China," (with Lianjiang Li), *China Quarterly*, 193 (March 2008): 1-23. Reprinted in Peter Hays Gries and Stanley Rosen (eds.), *Chinese Politics: State, Society, and the Market* (London: Routledge, 2010), pp. 85-108. Chinese version in Xiao Tangbiao, (eds.), *Quntixing Shijian Yanjiu* (Research on Mass Incidents), Series on Research in Chinese Social Stability, Vol. 2, (Shanghai: Xuelin Chubanshe, 2011), pp. 126-41

"Tactical Escalation in Rural China," (with Lianjiang Li), *Études Rurales*, 179 (January-July 2007): 169-192. Chapter 4 of O'Brien and Li, *Rightful Resistance in Rural China*

"Attraction Without Networks: Recruiting Strangers to Unregistered Protestantism in China," (with Carsten T. Vala), *Mobilization*, 12:1 (March 2007): 79-94. Reprinted as "Recruitment to Protestant House Churches," in O'Brien (ed.), *Popular Protest in China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), pp. 108-25, 241-49

"Discovery, Research (Re)Design, and Theory Building," in Maria Heimer and Stig Thøgersen (eds.), *Doing Fieldwork in China* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006), pp. 27-41. Excerpted in *NIAS nytt Asia Insights* (Copenhagen) No. 1 (April 2007).

Translated in *Zai Zhongguo Zuo Tianye Diaocha* (Doing Fieldwork in China) (Chongqing: Chongqing Daxue Chubanshe, 2012), pp. 23-38

"Popular Contention and Its Impact in Rural China" (with Lianjiang Li), *Comparative Political Studies*, 38:3 (April 2005): 235-259. Reprinted in Andrew Kipnis, Luigi Tomba, and Jonathan Unger (eds.), *Contemporary Chinese Society and Politics*, Vol. 4 (New York: Routledge, 2009), pp.121-142; Yongnian Zheng, Yiyi Lu, and Lynn T. White Jr. (eds.), *Politics of Modern China*, Vol. 3 (London: Routledge, 2009). Translated in Jean Hung and Hsin-chi Kuan (eds.), *Zhongwai Ming Xuezhelun Ershiyi Shiji chude Zhongguo* (Studies on Early 21st Century China by Chinese and Western Scholars) (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2009), pp. 657-676. Co-winner of The Sage Award for Best Paper in Comparative Politics delivered at the 2004 American Political Science Association Meeting

"Law and Society in the People's Republic of China" (with Neil J. Diamant and Stanley B. Lubman). In Diamant, Lubman, and O'Brien (eds.), *Engaging the Law in China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), pp. 3-27

"Suing the Local State: Administrative Litigation in Rural China," (with Lianjiang Li), *China Journal*, 51 (January 2004): 76-96. Reprinted In Diamant, Lubman, and O'Brien (eds.), *Engaging the Law in China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), pp. 31-53; also in *The Evolution of Law Reform in China: An Uncertain Path*, Stanley B. Lubman (eds.) (Edwin Elgar Publishers, 2012), Chapter 13

"Neither Transgressive nor Contained: Boundary-Spanning Contention in China," *Mobilization*, 8:1 (February 2003): 51-64. Reprinted in Peter H. Gries and Stanley Rosen (eds.), *State and Society in 21st Century China* (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 105-22

"Collective Action in the Chinese Countryside," *China Journal*, 48 (July 2002): 139-54

"China's Contentious Pensioners," (with William Hurst), *China Quarterly*, 170 (June 2002): 345-60

"Villagers, Elections, and Citizenship in Contemporary China," *Modern China*. 27:4 (October 2001): 407-35. Reprinted in Merle Goldman and Elizabeth J. Perry (eds.), *Changing Meanings of Citizenship in Modern China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), pp. 212-31, 421-31, and in Lowell Dittmer and Guoli Liu (eds.), *China's Deep Reform: Domestic Politics in Transition* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006), pp. 381-403

"Accommodating 'Democracy' in a One-Party State: Introducing Village Elections in China," (with Lianjiang Li), *China Quarterly*, 162 (June 2000): 465-89. Reprinted in Larry Diamond and Ramon Myers (eds.), *Elections and Democracy in Greater China* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 101-25 and Yongnian Zheng, Yiyi Lu, and Lynn T. White Jr., eds., *Politics of Modern China*, Vol. 4 (London: Routledge, 2009)

"Campaign Nostalgia in the Chinese Countryside," (with Lianjiang Li), *Asian Survey*, 39:3 (May-June 1999): 375-93

"The Struggle over Village Elections," (with Lianjiang Li), in Merle Goldman and Roderick

MacFarquhar (eds.), *The Paradox of China's Post-Mao Reforms* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), pp. 129-44, 382-89. Excerpted in *Human Rights Dialogue*, No. 9 (June 1997): 9-11. Expanded and translated in Chen Mingtong and Zheng Yongnian (eds.), *Liang'an Jiceng Xuanju yu Zhengzhi Shehui Bianyi* [Grassroots Elections on Both Sides of the Straits and Political and Social Change] (Taipei: Yuedan Chubanshe, 1998), pp. 325-48

"Selective Policy Implementation in Rural China," (with Lianjiang Li), *Comparative Politics*, 31:2 (January 1999):167-86. Reprinted in Stephen P. Osborne (ed.), *Public Management: Critical Perspectives, Volume 4: Expanding the Scope of Public Management* (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 227-48, and Kjell Erik Brodsgaard (ed.) *Critical Readings on the Chinese Communist Party* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), pp. 437-60. Translated in *Renda Zhengzhixue Pinglun* (People's University Political Science Review) 1:1 (January 2003): 21-44, and Thomas Heberer, Gunter Schubert and Yang Xuedong (eds.), *Zhudongde Difang Zhengzhi: Zuowei Zhanlue Qunti de Xianxiang Ganbu* [Pro-active Local Politics: County and Township Cadres as a Strategic Group] (Beijing: Central Compilation Bureau, 2013), pp. 341-69

"Hunting for Political Change," *China Journal*, 41 (January 1999): 159-69

"Institutionalizing Chinese Legislatures: Trade-offs Between Autonomy and Capacity," (with Laura M. Luehrmann), *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 23:1 (February 1998): 91-108

"Dangdai Zhongguo Nongmin de Yifa Kangzheng" [Rightful Resistance by Contemporary Chinese Peasants], (with Lianjiang Li), in Wu Guoguang (ed.), *Jiuqi Xiaoying: Xianggang, Zhongguo yu Taipingyang* [The 1997 Effect: Hong Kong, China and the Pacific], (Hong Kong: The Pacific Century Institute, 1997), pp. 141-69. Reprinted in Wu Yi (ed.), *Xiangcun Zhongguo Pinglun* [Rural China Review] (Jinan: Shandong Chubanshe, 2008), pp. 1-18

"Rightful Resistance," *World Politics*, 49:1 (October 1996): 31-55

"Villagers and Popular Resistance in Contemporary China," (with Lianjiang Li), *Modern China*, 22:1 (January 1996): 28-61. Reprinted in Frank N. Pieke (ed.), *People's Republic of China, Volume 2* (Hampshire, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 2003): 351-84

"The Politics of Lodging Complaints in Rural China," (with Lianjiang Li), *China Quarterly*, 143 (September 1995): 756-83

"Implementing Political Reform in China's Villages," *Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, 32 (July 1994): 33-59. Translated in *Shehuizhuyi Yanjiu* 5 (October 1995): 61-65, and 6 (December 1995): 59-63. Reprinted in *Villager Committee Elections in China: A Selected Collection of Essays*, comp. James A. Robinson, (Atlanta and Pensacola: The Carter Center and the Florida-China Institute, 2000), pp. 6-32.

"Agents and Remonstrators: Role Accumulation by Chinese People's Congress Deputies," *China Quarterly*, 138 (June 1994): 359-80. Translated in Chen Mingming and He Junzhi (ed.), *Zhongguo Minzhu Zhidu de Jiegou* (The Structure of China's Democratic System) (Shanghai: Shanghai Renmin Chubanshe, 2008), pp. 1-21 (*Fudan Political Science Review*, no. 6 (2008))

"Chinese People's Congresses and Legislative Embeddedness: Understanding Early Organizational Development," *Comparative Political Studies*, 27:1 (April 1994): 80-107. Reprinted in Lin Chun, (ed.), *The International Library of Politics and Comparative Government -- China, Volume I: Modernizing Chinese Polity* (Hampshire, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 2001); also Yongnian Zheng, Yiyi Lu, and Lynn T. White Jr. (eds.), *Politics of Modern China, Vol. 1* (London: Routledge, 2009)

"Chinese Political Reform and the Question of 'Deputy Quality,'" (with Lianjiang Li), *China Information*, 8:3 (Winter 1993-1994): 20-31

"Bargaining Success of Chinese Factories," *China Quarterly*, 132 (December 1992): 1086-1100

"Is China's National People's Congress a 'Conservative' Legislature?" *Asian Survey*, 30:8 (August 1990): 782-94

"Legislative Development and Chinese Political Change," *Studies in Comparative Communism*, 22:1 (Spring 1989):57-75. Reprinted in Tahirih V. Lee (ed.), *Basic Concepts of Chinese Law* (New York: Garland Publishers, 1997), pp. 369-88

"China's National People's Congress: Reform and Its Limits," *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 13:3 (August 1988): 343-74

Selected Professional Activities

Editorial or Advisory Board, *Asian Survey*, *China and the World* (Singapore), *China Journal*, *China Quarterly* (2011-2021), *Chinese Sociological Dialogue* (Wuhan, China), *Comparative Politics*, *Cross-Currents: East Asian History and Culture Review* (2013-2020), *Issues and Studies* (Taipei), *Journal of Agrarian Change* (2007-2024), *Journal of Contemporary China*, *Journal of Chinese Political Science*, *Modern China*, *Rural China/Zhongguo Xiangcun Yanjiu*, *World Politics* (1999-2007)
Advisory Board, Routledge Series on the Politics and Sociology of China
Board of Directors, National Committee on US-China Relations
Editor, special issue of *Journal of Contemporary China*
Co-editor, special sections of *Journal of Contemporary China*
Co-editor, special issue of *Journal of Peasant Studies*
Member, Comparative Politics Section Article Award Committee of the APSA
Chair, Div. of Communist and Post-Communist Politics, APSA Meeting
Participant, Carter Center Local Elections Observation Teams
Member, Screening Committee, SSRC-ACLS IDFR Fellowship Program
Member, Standing Review Board, Research Grants Council (Hong Kong)
Referee of proposals for the NSF, the MacArthur Foundation and others

External Grants and Awards

Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation Conference and Seminar Grant
Co-winner of the John and Vivian Sabel Award for the Best Article Published in the *Journal of Contemporary China*
Japanese Society for the Promotion of Science Overseas Fellowship
Co-winner of the Sage Award for Best Paper in Comparative Politics delivered at the

2004 American Political Science Association Meeting
Hong Kong Research Grants Council, Research Grant
Asia Foundation Research Grant
Luce Foundation, United States-China Cooperative Research Program Award
MacArthur Foundation, Program on Peace and Cooperation Research Grant
Pacific Cultural Foundation Research and Writing Grant
Ford Foundation/Chinese Ministry of Civil Affairs Joint Chinese-Foreign Field Research
Fulbright-Hays Faculty Research Abroad Grant
CSCPRC National Program for Advanced Study and Research in China
American Philosophical Society Research Grant
UC-Berkeley Institutional Grants, PI: Luce Foundation; Top University Strategic Alliance
(Ministry of Education, Taiwan); East Asia Foreign Language and Area Studies
Fellowships (Dept. of Education); East Asia National Resource Center (Dept. of
Education); The Berkeley K-16 Bridge (Dept. of Defense), Taipei Economic and
Cultural Office (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Taiwan); Summer Institute on China (Dept. of
Education); Open Society Foundation
Member, Phi Beta Kappa

Advisees (Chair or Co-Chair of Ph.D. Committee)

Lianjiang Li, Laura Luehrmann, James Lee, Kenneth Foster, Peter Gries, Tuong Vu,
William Hurst, Justin Hastings, Carsten Vala, Rachel Stern, Jonathan Hassid, Rongbin
Han, John Yasuda, Margaret Boittin, Sara Newland, Alexsia Chan, Suzanne Scoggins,
Daniel Mattingly, Denise van der Kamp, Jieun Kim, Sarah Lee, Philip Rogers, Junius
Brown, Yuhang Zhang, Jiali Li