

## Education

**The University of Texas at Austin** (Expected May 2026)

Ph.D. Candidate in Government

- **Dissertation:** *Surviving and Reviving: Religion and Politics under Authoritarian China*

- **Committee:** Xiaobo Lü, Kenneth F. Greene, John Gerring, Fenggang Yang (External), and Anna Grzymala-Busse (External)

**Duke University** (2019)

M.A. in Political Science

**Wuhan University** (2017)

B.A. in Political Science

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## Research Interests

Religion and politics; Authoritarian politics; Chinese Politics, Experimental methods

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## Dissertation

My three-essay dissertation addresses the puzzle of how Christianity—a religion long marginalized in China—has grown to become a major religious force despite ongoing hostility from the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). I argue that this surprising growth stems from the unintended consequences of regime action and strategic accommodation by religious leaders. The CCP's early revolutionary campaigns to restructure society, which disrupted the existing religious field and dismantled entrenched institutions, created space for new religious actors. In response to this opportunity, Christian leaders have strategically adapted their messaging to navigate social hostility and broaden their appeal. I test this argument through original experiments and surveys, extensive archival research, and qualitative evidence from fieldwork.

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## Publications

Brownlee, Jason and **Kenny Miao**. 2022. “*Why Democracies Survive*” **Journal of Democracy**, 33(4), 133.

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## Working Papers

**Miao, Kenny.** Consequences of Pro-Regime Propaganda by Religious Leaders (*Under Review*)

-Presented at APSA (2024), Texas Comparative Circle Conference (2024), and Annual Meeting of Society for the Scientific Study of Religion (2024)

- Awarded Best Student Paper at the Annual Meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion (2024)

**Miao, Kenny.** Revolutions and Christian Growth: How State-Building Sparks New Religious Movements.

-Presented at MPSA (2025)

**Miao, Kenny.** Analyzing Religious Trends in Authoritarian Countries with Internet Data: An Empirical Application

-Presented at MPSA (2024)

**Miao, Kenny.** The Religious China Shock: How Import Competition Affects the Religious Field in the US?

- Presented at Annual Meeting of Society for the Scientific Study of Religion (SSSR) (2023)

**Miao, Kenny**, Jay Kao. Secondary Education and Political Liberalism: Evidence from a Natural Experiment.

- Presented at IPSA (2025)

**Miao, Kenny**, Jay Kao. Does Researcher Identity Affect Responses in Online Surveys? Experimental Evidence from China.

Gerring, John, Andres Cruz, **Kenny Miao**, Erzen Öncel, and Harunobu Saijo. Leader Tenure and Leader Power (*Under Review*)

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## Teaching

### University of Texas at Austin

#### As (Co-)instructor:

Math Camp for Grad Students, 2022 & 2021  
Math in Politics, Fall 2023

#### As Teaching Assistant:

Chinese Politics, Spring 2024  
Introduction to American Government, Spring 2022 & Spring 2021  
Suicide Terrorism, Fall 2021  
U.S. Foreign Policy, Fall 2020 & Spring 2020 & Fall 2019

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## Awards and Fellowships

### External

Best Student Paper, Society for Scientific Studies of Religion (2024)  
PhD Research Grant, Society for Scientific Studies of Religion (2023)  
PhD Research Grant, Institute for Humane Studies (2023)

### University of Texas at Austin

Graduate School Semester Fellowship, 2025  
Graduate School Summer Fellowship, 2024  
Texas Politics Project Grant, 2024  
Graduate School Summer Fellowship, 2023

Pre-dissertation Fellowship, 2022

ICPSR Sponsorship, 2022

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## Professional Experience

**American Political Science Review**

*Editorial Assistant, 2024 - 2026*

**Elephant Magazine**, Peking, China

*Columnist, 2019 - 2020*

**Caixin Media**, Peking, China

*Columnist, 2018 - 2020*

## Leadership Experience

**Co-president**, GOV Graduate Student Organization, 2023-2024

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## Additional Training

- Text Analysis, ICPSR, Summer 2022

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## Skills

Languages: Chinese (native), English (fluent)

Software: R, Stata, Latex, Qualtrics

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## References

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John Gerring (Co-Chair)  
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