

Zhaotian Luo (罗兆天)

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Academic Positions

University of Chicago

Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, 2019–

Faculty Member, Ph.D. Program in Political Economy, 2021–

Education

New York University

Ph.D. in Politics, 2014–2019

New York University

M.A. in Politics, 2012–2014

University of International Business and Economics

B.A. in Politics, 2008–2012

Research Interests

Political Economy, Organizational Economics, Formal Theory, Comparative Politics

Publications

10. “Institutional Change and Development from a Dynamic Perspective.” *China Economic Journal* Forthcoming (2025) (with Tianyang Xi)
9. “[Lying in Persuasion.](#)” *Games and Economic Behavior* Forthcoming (2025) (with Arturas Rozenas)
8. “[Is There Really a Dictator’s Dilemma? Information and Repression in Authoritarian Regimes.](#)” *American Journal of Political Science* Forthcoming (2025) (with Scott Gehlbach, Anton Shirikov, and Dmitriy Vorobyev)
7. “[Theories of Democratic Backsliding.](#)” *Annual Review of Political Science* 67, no. 1 (2024): 71–88. (with Edoardo Grillo, Monika Nalepa, and Carlo Prato)

6. “Ruling the Ruling Coalition: Information Control and Authoritarian Power-Sharing.” *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 18, no. 2 (2023): 183–213. (with Arturas Rozenas)
5. “Democracy and Its Vulnerabilities: Dynamics of Democratic Backsliding.” *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 18, no. 1 (2023): 105–130. (with Adam Przeworski)
4. “Leadership Styles and Survival Strategies of Chinese Communist Party Elites.” *Journal of Politics* 83, no. 2 (2021): 125–139. (with Junyan Jiang)
3. “Why Are the Fastest Growing Countries Autocracies?” *Journal of Politics* 81, no. 2 (2019): 663–669. (with Adam Przeworski)
2. “Strategies of Election Rigging: Tradeoffs, Determinants, and Consequences.” *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 13, no. 1 (2018): 1–28. (with Arturas Rozenas)
1. “The Election Monitor’s Curse.” *American Journal of Political Science* 62, no. 1 (2018): 148–160. (with Arturas Rozenas)

Working Papers

11. “(In)excusable Backsliding under Contested Oversight.” (with Robert Gulotty, revise and resubmit at *Political Science Research and Methods*)
10. “Sustaining Democracy under the Shadow of Force.” (with Adam Przeworski and Hongding Zhu)
9. “Governing Local Bureaucracy in a Centralized State.” (with Zanhui Liu, Yucheng Qiu, Tianyang Xi, and Hongding Zhu)
8. “A Relational Theory of Power Alternation.” (with Zanhui Liu, Yucheng Qiu, and Shuyi Yu)
7. “Relational Contracts and the Theory of Autocracy.” (with Scott Gehlbach and Spencer Pantoja)
6. “Great Divergence and Great Convergence: a Theory of Power Dynamics and Social Evolution.” (with Shuyi Yu)
5. “Corrupted Meritocracy: A Model of Bureaucratic Politics.” (with Shuyi Yu)
4. “Self-Enforcing Power Dynamics.”
3. “Discriminatory Persuasion.”
2. “Political Stake and Policy Experimentation.” (with Shuo Chen and Tianyang Xi)
1. “One-Party State.” (with Adam Przeworski)

Conferences and Invited Talks

American Political Science Association Annual Conference (2015–2025)

Midwest Political Science Association Annual Conference (2018–2025)

Great Lakes Political Economy Theory Conference, UPitt (2025)

1st Asian Conference on Organizational Economics, HKU Business School (2025)

Utah Conference on Organizational Economics and Political Economy, Utah (2025)

Organizational Economics Seminar, MIT Sloan (2025)

Comparative Politics Seminar, UW Madison (2025)

Political Economy Lunch, UChicago Harris (2022–2024)
7th World Congress of the Game Theory Society (2024)
Society for Institutional and Organizational Economics Annual Conference (2024)
Yale Conference on “The Political Economy of Authoritarianism and Democratic Backsliding” (2024)
Microeconomic Theory Seminar, UPitt/CMU (2023)
CASBS Summer Institute: Organizations and Their Effectiveness, Center for Advanced Study in Behavioral Sciences, Stanford (2023)
Workshop of Political Economy and Governance, PKU (2023)
Comparative Politics and Formal Theory Conference, Rochester (2023)
Microeconomics Theory Workshop, PKU (2022)
Formal and Quantitative Seminar, UNC (remote, 2022)
CP/PE Seminar, Columbia University (2022)
Comparative Politics Workshop, UChicago Political Science (2022, 2023)
Political Economy Conference in the Chicago Area (2020, 2021)
Virtual Workshop on Authoritarian Regimes (remote, 2021)
Models, Experiments, and Data Workshop, UW Madison (remote, 2021)
USC Marshall China Workshop (remote, 2020)
Virtual Formal Theory Seminar (remote, 2020)
NYU Political Economy Seminar (2020)
Quantitative China Studies Seminar, NYU (2020)
New Faces in China Studies Conference, Duke (2018)
China Center for Economic Research Summer Institute (2017–2018)
Yale Conference on “Democratic Backsliding and Electoral Authoritarianism” (2018)

Teaching Experience

University of Chicago

Game Theory 1

Game Theory 2

Formal Political Theory 3

New Directions of Formal Theory

Politics of Authoritarian Regimes

History of Government and Political Institutions

Social Science Inquiry: Formal Theory

New York University

Game Theory, Teaching Assistant for Steven Brams (2017)

Political Economy: Models, Teaching Assistant for Adam Przeworski (2015–2017)

Comparative Politics: Regimes, Teaching Assistant for Adam Przeworski (2015–2016)

Professional Service

Journal referee for *American Political Science Review*, *American Journal of Political Science*, *Quarterly Journal of Political Science*, *Journal of Politics*, *Political Science Research and Methods*, *Comparative Political Studies*, *Politics and Economics*, *Reviews of Economics Studies*, *Games and Economic Behavior*, *The Economic Journal*

Dissertation Committee member, Giorgio Farace, UChicago Political Economy

Dissertation Committee member, Benjamin Shaver, UChicago Political Economy

PhD Admission Committee, UChicago Political Science (2025)

PhD Admission Committee, UChicago Political Economy (2024)

PhD Admission Committee, UChicago Political Science (2022)

PhD Placement Committee, UChicago Political Science (2020–2021)

Co-organizer, Democratic Backsliding Conference at Columbia University (2023)

Co-organizer, Political Science Speaker Series (2020–)

Co-organizer, Quantitative China Studies Seminar, NYU (2017–2019)