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Parallel Politics: Chinese Diaspora on YouTube and the 2024 U.S. Election

Dr. Yongjun Zhang
Stony Brook University

3:30 – 5:00 p.m. EDT, Thursday, April 2, 2026
3310 Sangren Hall

Dr. Yongjun Zhang is an Assistant Professor of Sociology and the Institute for Advanced Computational Science at Stony Brook University. He is also affiliated with the Department of Asian and Asian American Studies, the AI Innovation Institute, and the Center for Changing Systems of Power. As a computational social scientist, Dr. Zhang leverages large-scale data, natural language processing, and computer vision to investigate social, political, and organizational behavior, focusing on topics such as racial segregation, political polarization, and organizational inequality. His research has been published in leading journals, such as American Journal of Sociology and Demography. He is also the co-editor of *Computational Social Science: Applications in China Studies* and serves on the editorial boards of several journals, including *Nature Scientific Data, Journal of Mathematical Sociology, Socius, Social Science Computer Review*, and *The Sociological Quarterly.*

Abstract: Chinese American voters exhibited a notable shift in the 2024 U.S. presidential election, with support for Donald Trump increasing from 27 percent in 2020 to 39 percent in 2024. This talk presents an ongoing project that examines the information environment shaping these trends by focusing on political discourse within the Chinese diaspora on YouTube. Using a comparative design, the study analyzes Chinese-language political YouTube videos alongside English-language political content during the 2024 election period, comparing their dominant topics, affective tones, and patterns of audience engagement. Drawing on a large-scale video dataset and combining computational text analysis with qualitative content analysis, the project maps a "parallel" political information environment oriented toward Chinese-speaking audiences. The findings highlight distinctive narratives, frames, and mobilizing logics that differ from mainstream English-language political media, shedding light on how immigrant-focused social media spaces shape political attitudes, identities, and partisan alignments among Chinese Americans in the context of intensifying U.S.–China geopolitical tensions.