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[Keith Hamm](#)

Global studies professor wins Fulbright to study energy geopolitics in Taiwan

Jia-Ching Chen, an assistant professor of global studies at UC Santa Barbara, will spend the 2026–27 academic year in Taiwan on a [Fulbright U.S. Scholar Award](#) to study the geopolitical intersections of energy transition and environmental governance.

Chen will headquarter his research project, “Green Dependency and Local Politics,” at Taiwan's national academy, Academia Sinica, and he will also collaborate with colleagues at National Taiwan University, plus community activists and leaders.

“I've been paying attention to energy sovereignty and dependency for many years as I studied the exponential build out of the solar energy industry in China,” Chen said. “I became particularly interested in how land dispossession in rural China enabled the rapid deployment of grid-connected solar around the world.”

As that work became the centerpiece of Chen's forthcoming book, [“Ecological Demolition: Dispossession and Sustainable Futures in the Chinese Countryside”](#) (UC Press, 2027), he has also focused on what has become the Fulbright-funded project, including “a so-called ‘nuclear renaissance’ that is emerging in a context of geopolitical and environmental uncertainty,” he said. “The destabilization of fossil fuel supply chains and markets because of wars, and the rapid surge in electricity

demand from AI, data centers, and cryptocurrency have been a primary driver behind the shifting public opinion in the US, Taiwan, and Japan toward nuclear energy.”

“At the same time,” he added, “notions of energy sovereignty have historically come at the expense of Indigenous peoples — waste dumping on Tao lands in Taiwan and Ainu lands in Japan, and uranium mining in Ute and Dineh territories in the United States, for example. In Taiwan, all these issues are further compounded by its contentious relationship with China, which claims the island as its territory.”

On a personal note, Chen said the award includes support for his family to move with him to Taiwan for the year. “We'll all get to connect with extended family and many people I haven't seen for over a decade. Moreover, I see this as important recognition of the foundational relationships that make important work in any field possible. I think I'm most grateful for that.”

Tags

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