Wendy Leutert Receives Fulbright-Hays Fellowship

A 2015-2016 Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad Fellowship has been awarded to Wendy Leutert, PhD student in government and international relations at Cornell University, and a native of Naples, Florida.

Leutert holds an MA (2010) from Tsinghua University, China, where she was the first American student to graduate with a master's degree in international relations. Her undergraduate degree is in political science and philosophy (Wellesley College).

The title of her doctoral dissertation project is “Shades of Red: State-Owned Enterprise Reform in China.” Leutert will be conducting elite interviews and archival research at Peking University in Beijing and the Chinese University of Hong Kong to inform her analysis of the domestic politics behind China’s economic reform.

“My research addresses economic transition in post-communist states, the role of interest groups in non-democracies, and the evolving relationship between the state and market in China,” Leutert explains.

She credits her faculty mentor, Peter J. Katzenstein, the Walter S. Carpenter Jr. Professor of International Studies at Cornell, and the government department’s strengths in comparative politics and political economy, for inspiring her to consider her research about China with a comparative perspective. “Ultimately,” she says, “this led me to focus my research on the reform of China’s state-owned companies.”

“Wendy’s dissertation is informed by a comparative perspective, while retaining its primary focus on China,” Katzenstein adds. “The hope is that some of the insights that she will glean from her work will be useful for making us understand the dynamics of state-owned enterprises in other parts of the world.”

Leutert explains that she first became interested in Chinese politics during college when she interned at the Hong Kong Legislative Council, through a summer internship program funded by the Luce Foundation. “But further study,” she says, “would have been impossible without Cornell’s support a decade ago, when I received a fellowship to complete the FALCON Program [Full-Year Asian Language Concentration] in Mandarin Chinese. Language skills provide a foundation for building international experiences.”

“International study and collaboration make contemporary issues come alive,” she says. “By working with other experts, you develop a broader and more accurate sense of what is really happening in the world.”

Leutert plans to build an academic career based on innovative, field-based research and collaboration with scholars in the United States and China.

Her recent past awards include, in 2015: a C.V. Starr Fellowship from Cornell’s East Asia Program, a research travel grant from Cornell’s Graduate School; in 2014: a Brookings-Tsinghua U.S.-China Exchange Fellowship; in 2013: a Lee Teng-Hui Fellowship in World Affairs by Cornell’s East Asia Program.
The Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad Fellowship is a prestigious national program awarded by the U.S. Department of Education. The fellowship award supports research in modern foreign languages and area studies for periods of six to 12 months. Priority is given to projects that deepen research knowledge on and help the United States develop capability in areas of the world not generally included in U.S. curricula.