(Online Book Talk) Marriage Unbound: State Law, Power, and Inequality in Contemporary China by Ke Li

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Zoom Link: https://ucdavis.zoom.us/j/9328529016

Abstract: On a hot summer day, Wang Guiping attended her divorce trial at the Xiqing People’s Tribunal. Taking an unfaithful spouse to court would, Guiping thought, help her end a hopeless relationship and actualize her lawful rights upon divorce. Later that day, Guiping would find herself betrayed not only by her husband, but by the court system and her own legal counsel. Taking this case as a point of departure, Ke Li recounts decades-long research on divorce litigation in rural China. Marriage Unbound shows how women’s legal mobilization and rights contention can forge new ground for our understanding of law and politics, culture and the state, and power and inequality in an authoritarian context. Ultimately, this talk articulates a firm belief: divorce, seemingly prosaic, offers a unique window onto phenomena of great importance to sociologists, political scientists, sociolegal researchers, and China scholars.

Ke Li is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Political Science at the John Jay College of the City University of New York. Her research focuses on law, legal professions, courts, and contentious politics, and women’s rights in contemporary China. In 2022, her book, Marriage Unbound: State Law, Power, and Inequality in Contemporary China, was published by Stanford University Press.

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