

Overall, Kanter and Ferri have produced a highly readable and thoughtful anthology which will be of great use to legal scholars. One area that I think warrants future attention is the role played by teachers' unions in the accommodation process. There is a rich and controversial history on the questionable role played by many American trade unions during the long struggle against Jim Crow (Hill 1998). It stands to reason that teachers' unions, often overwhelmed with their own struggles, did not necessarily always enthusiastically support inclusion of students with disabilities. Scholars working at the intersection of disability studies, law, and education are ideally placed to analyze this history. The editors might have also divided the book into sections. Nonetheless, this volume poses many questions for future generations of scholars to answer and deserves to be read widely.

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Environmental Litigation in China: A Study in Political Ambivalence.

By Rachel E. Stern. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2013. 300 pp. \$99 cloth.

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Why would anyone read a book on environmental litigation in China? The obvious answer seems to be China's increasingly serious environmental problems, from polluted air in cities to

contaminated water and soil in the countryside. But Stern's book *Environmental Litigation in China: A Study in Political Ambivalence* goes far beyond documenting a few major pollution cases. Using environmental litigation as an empirical case, the book provides an excellent panoramic overview of both China's legal system and its political, social, and international contexts. With an elegant organizational structure and a smooth writing style, the author paints a multilayered and colorful picture of how law works in a highly ambivalent political environment.

The concept of political ambivalence offers both a theoretical lens and an empirical background for the study on environmental litigation. Political ambivalence "reflects state incoherence and the reality that political signals are as likely a mishmash as a 'harmonious mesh'" (p. 100), but it is different from arbitrariness and ambiguity because it is neither solely discretionary nor calculatedly vague. In China's political system, local agents, such as lower court judges, often receive ambivalent signals from above. Consequently, the judicial decisions of Chinese judges vary in two dimensions: legal formalism and individual autonomy. To what extent they strictly adhere to written law and to what extent they have autonomy beyond political influence determine the outcomes of environmental lawsuits in China. Legal innovation is most likely to occur when judges enjoy both a higher degree of individual autonomy and a balance between legalism and rough justice (p. 128). This is an analytical framework on judicial decisionmaking in one-party states that can be generalized beyond China and environmental law.

Political ambivalence also affects the work of those Chinese lawyers who do public interest cases, regularly or occasionally. For these activist lawyers, environmental litigation falls into a gray area between highly sensitive cases (e.g., defending for Falun Gong practitioners) and mundane civil or criminal cases. As the author comments, "The environment is a flexible cause, broad enough to encompass concerns about inequality and an overbearing government as well as pollution and nature conservation" (p. 156). The environmental activism of lawyers is facilitated by the financial support and capacity building effort of international nongovernmental organizations such as the American Bar Association or the Ford Foundation. Even Hollywood films like *Erin Brockovich* play a part in the international sources of China's environmental activism.

Despite all the efforts of legal professionals and international actors, however, environmental litigation remains difficult and rare in China. The vast majority of environmental problems are resolved outside the judicial system and, as the book shows, even filing a case or finding a lawyer can be extremely difficult (see Chapter 2). This leads to an important critique of the book, that is, it leaves out the "forest" of China's environmental grievances for

the “tree” of the small number of cases that make to the court. For readers who are primarily interested in China’s environmental pollution problems rather than its legal remedies, the book can be a good starting point, but it is by no means a comprehensive picture. Shifting the sites of research from courts to rural villages and urban neighborhoods would generate richer empirical findings and perhaps different theoretical insights regarding China’s daunting tasks of environment protection.

For students of China’s legal system, however, this book presents a great example of using a concrete legal issue to tell a much larger story of how judges, lawyers, litigants, and other actors in the legal system work in practice. This rich and compelling story begins with the micro social construction of environmental cases, proceeds to macrostructural analyses of different actors in the political-legal field, and ends with visions for the future of rights activism and political change in China. The concept of political ambivalence nicely ties the whole book together and reminds the readers that the author is a political scientist above all.

In addition to the author’s extensive data collection through interviews, observation, and archival research, the book draws on a large number of social science studies on Chinese law and politics. It strikes a good balance between primary and secondary data, as well as between empirical findings and theoretical innovations. Focusing on litigation, this pioneering study opens up many questions regarding the prospects of China’s environmental protection and the rule of law. For instance, a comparison between the legal and administrative channels of environmental dispute resolution would lead to a better understanding of how law and politics interact in the Chinese context. A more systematic comparison between environmental law and other areas of law, such as criminal law or commercial law, would also enable the author to further develop the theory of political ambivalence in China and beyond.

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The Humanities and Public Life. By Peter Brooks (ed.) with Hilary Jewett. New York: Fordham Univ. Press, 2014. 172 pp. \$18.00 paper.

Reviewed by Anna Offit, Department of Anthropology, Princeton University

The Humanities and Public Life is the ambitious beginning of a much-needed conversation on the practice of ethical reading, and the