Abstract:
“Insider Activists: Personal Connections and Political Action in China”, co-authored by Lily Tsai and Yiqing Xu, PhD Candidate in the Department of Political Science at MIT.

This project finds that in both rural and urban China, political "insiders" are actually more likely to make complaints about the government to local officials, including complaints about public goods provision, than political outsiders. We argue that personal connections to government officials may constitute an important resource for political action in nondemocratic systems such as China by providing information about how to participate effectively and protection against reprisal for making complaints.

About the speaker:
Lily L. Tsai is an Associate Professor of Political Science at MIT. Her research focuses on issues of accountability, governance, and political participation in developing countries with a particular emphasis on Chinese politics. Her book, Accountability Without Democracy: Solidary Groups and Public Goods Provision in Rural China, was published in Cambridge University’s Studies on Comparative Politics and received the 2007-08 Dogan Award from the Society of Comparative Research for the best book published in the field of comparative research. Tsai has also published articles in The American Political Science Review, Studies in Comparative International Development, The China Quarterly, and The China Journal. Tsai is a graduate of Stanford University, where she graduated with honors and distinction in English literature and international relations. She received a M.A. in political science from the University of California, Berkeley, and a Ph.D. in government from Harvard University in 2004.