

## Meet Prof. Jianchun Wang, Thieme Chemistry Journals Awardee 2026!



**Prof. Jianchun Wang** undertook PhD studies at the University of Chicago (USA), completing his degree in 2019. He then spent two years as a postdoctoral scholar at the California Institute of Technology (USA). He is currently an associate professor at the Southern University of Science and Technology (SUSTech; P. R. China).

**Thieme: Which field of organic chemistry are you interested in the most and why?**

**Prof. Wang:** I am most interested in synthetic electrochemistry. Green chemistry has become increasingly important, especially in the context of China's carbon neutrality goals. What attracts me most is that electrochemistry uses electrons as traceless reagents, which makes it especially appealing from the perspectives of sustainability, safety, and selectivity. Also, to be honest, I like that electrochemistry refuses to stay in one box. It sits at the intersection of organic, physical, analytical, and materials chemistry, so it always keeps me learning.

**Thieme: Following that, what is the focus of your current research activity?**

**Prof. Wang:** Right now, I am particularly interested in what happens at interfaces. For electrochemistry, the electrode is not just a source of electrons, it is really where the chemistry begins. I feel that, in organic synthesis especially, we still do not fully understand interfacial processes as well as we should. So much of our current work is driven by a simple question: if the electrode is the defining feature of electrochemistry, can we learn to control it better, and then use that control to unlock new reactivity?

**Thieme: What do you think about the modern role and prospects of organic chemistry?**

**Prof. Wang:** I think organic chemistry will continue to play a central role in developing new medicines, new materials, and new energy-related technologies. In many ways, modern organic chemistry is already powerful enough to make almost any molecule we can reasonably design. That part is amazing. The real challenge now is not only whether we can make something, but whether we can make it in a more atom-economical, step-economical, and practical way. In that sense, I think the future of organic chemistry is not just about complexity, but about efficiency and elegance.

**Thieme: Which difficulties are there for young upcoming chemists in your field? Do you have any tips?**

**Prof. Wang:** One obvious difficulty is that there is so much exciting chemistry happening every day, and the level of competition is very high. I am honestly still figuring things out myself, so I would not dare to offer advice. But one thing I do believe is that young chemists should not be afraid to try something new.

**Thieme: What is your most important scientific achievement to date and why?**

**Prof. Wang:** Since my group is still quite young, I would be a little cautious about calling anything a “most important achievement” yet. We are only at the beginning, and I hope the most exciting work is still ahead of us.

That said, one project I am especially fond of is our use of chemically modified electrodes to achieve the first example of electrocatalytic cyclic deracemization. I like this work because the core idea is actually quite simple: by localizing the catalyst at the interface, we can suppress undesired side reactions. I always appreciate chemistry when the concept is simple.

Still, if I may say so, my favorite project is probably the next one. We have several exciting directions going on in the group now, and that sense of possibility is what keeps me motivated.

**Thieme: Could you tell us something about yourself outside the lab, such as your hobbies or extra-work interests?**

**Prof. Wang:** Outside the lab, I enjoy creative things in general, whether that is books, films, or new tech gadgets. I also try to spend as much time as I can with my family.

More broadly, I just enjoy learning. I like the feeling of systematically understanding a new subject from the ground up. For example, last semester I spent time learning medicinal chemistry and then taught it to graduate students. That was a lot of work, of course, but also a lot of fun.