Why did right-wing populist candidates have so much success in the late 2010s? How did they fare electorally after taking power? Between 2016 and 2019, a wave of populist victories shocked political observers and upended the existing political order. These events included Donald Trump's 2016 US presidential election win, the "Leave" vote in the 2016 UK Brexit referendum, and Boris Johnson's landslide Conservative victory in the 2019 UK general election on a slogan of "Get Brexit Done." My summer research project, funded by the Theodore Samuel Danzig '22 Memorial Fellowship, examined these questions to lay the groundwork for an honors project I plan to complete during the 2024-2025 academic year.

My first major task in conducting this research was defining right-wing populism in the context of the two nations I am considering—what are its characteristics, what is its history in both nations   in?   y H   , justifying the

"common sense" solutions protecting "the people" (Müller 2016, Levitsky and Ziblatt 2018, Eatwell and Goodwin 2018, Norris and Inglehart 2019, Judis and Teixeira 2023). The Great Recession decimated many communities, especially those in post-industrial former heartlands of the US Democrats and UK Labour Party, as "elites"—those working on Wall Street and in the City—recovered more comfortably from the crash, creating the feeling of "crisis" on which right-wing populists thrive (Eatwell and Goodwin 2018, Rosenthal 2020). US and UK voters have come to support right-wing populists for country-specific reasons as well, such as racial resentment of President Obama in the US and feelings of abandonment as "austerity," heavy government spending cuts following the recession, hollowed British communities (Gonyea 2016, Fetzer 2019). This research has enabled me to pinpoint specific questions in the American National Elections Study (for the US) and British Elections Study (for the UK) to measure how voters' attitudes toward right-wing populist parties shift as they take power.

The recent UK general election, held in early July, provided an excellent context through which I could examine these motivations and processes, as the governing Conservative Party, elected in 2019 on a right-wing populist platform, lost nearly half of its vote share, with its former supporters backing center-left oppositions parties (Labour and the Liberal Democrats) as well as hard-right Reform UK, led by Brexit champion Nigel Farage. The re-elections of high-profile Conservative candidates such as Jeremy Hunt and Iain Duncan Smith in July's election that defied the massive national tide against their party sparked a new question I have begun exploring: can prominent members of Congress or Parliament stem the anti-populist tide against them by performing especially well for their constituents at the local level (e.g., pioneering local initiatives, focusing on local issues in their chamber speeches)? Although my research on this topic is still in progress, literature in the British case has suggested that focusing on local issues in Parliament may indeed help vulnerable candidates (Auel and Umit 2018, McKay 2020).

Another challenge I confronted was how to quantify and operationalize political rhetoric, specifically that of right-wing populist candidates. Reviewing literature on quantitative approaches to examining the persuasiveness of political rhetoric, such as Blumenau and Lauderdale (2024), yielded seven broad rhetorical devices, the prevalence of which I will track through speeches given by Republicans (in the US) and Conservatives (in the UK) before taking office, while office, and when running for re-election. These devices are invo

election campaign periods.

As I proceed with this research, I continue to uncover new, fascinating questions. I am excited and hopeful to more fully discover the answers to some of these questions and generate further areas of inquiry as this academic year—and our presidential election campaign—progress. I am grateful to Professor Henry Laurence for his continued mentorship as well as to Andrew and Nancy Danzig and Professor Paul Franco for establishing the Theodore Samuel Danzig '22 Memorial Fellowship which has funded my research this summer.