



## **Make America Great Again? Evangelical support for Donald Trump**

**Nikki Lin (COL 2019)**

**Advisor: Michele Margolis**

When I applied to work with Professor Michele Margolis on her project titled ‘Make America Great Again? Evangelical support for Donald Trump’ I hoped to further understand the 2016 election and the rise of Donald Trump, and more importantly explore my interest in political science. What I got out of my work was that and so much more.

Throughout the summer I worked closely with her other research assistant and Professor Margolis to investigate why Evangelical Christians were supporting the candidacy of Donald Trump. We additionally wanted to tighten the meaning of the term ‘evangelical’ since it is loosely used in the media to describe groups of Christians. In order to do this, we first turned to various media outlets to see what reasons they were presenting to the public to explain Evangelical support. Once we had compiled various reasons and explanations to our question, we started combing through literatures to further explore these reasons and to find ways to test these reasons in a survey. This was my favorite part about my work. Everything was up in the air about what we might find, and the hours I spent reading through literature on anything from the ways to test anti-intellectual beliefs to the correlations between nativism and ones’ religiosity fascinated me. The weekly meetings we had with Professor Margolis further expanded on my new found knowledge because of her expertise in these areas. As the weeks progressed I went from someone who knew little to nothing about the research done on religion and American politics to someone who was able to hold a conversation on the possible impact of Christian nationalism on American politics and attitudes towards immigrants.

What was equally great about my work was that we then got to apply the knowledge from our readings to create an extensive survey to be released to a national sample of people. I learned through hands on experience how to route a survey so it was more personalized to accommodate for the answers people submitted. For instance, I made it so that questions and their wording differed based on what religion a person identified with. We also held discussions about each questions’ value and wording.

I gained first-hand experience in the whole research process under a mentor who encouraged me to grow as a researcher and be passionate about what I was doing. My work taught me how to balance focusing on the tiniest details with seeing the bigger picture. I used to always get caught up in the small details of my work and was unable to do my work to the best of my ability as a result. Here I was challenged to see those details but also see the bigger picture to create a survey people realistically would complete. I am happy to say that I even plan on continuing to work for Professor Margolis this upcoming semester so I can learn to analyze the data that our survey produces.