
Course Introduction

Session 1

Professor Devin Caughey

MIT Department of Political Science
17.263: American Elections

Welcome to 17.263: American Elections!
I am Professor Devin Caughey (ko-ee).

What's at Stake in 2020

2020 is a presidential election year, but in addition to the presidency and vice presidency, many other elections will occur (not all in November).

- ▶ National
- ▶ State
- ▶ Local

What's at Stake in 2020

2020 is a presidential election year, but in addition to the presidency and vice presidency, many other elections will occur (not all in November).

- ▶ **National**
 - ▶ All 435 seats in the U.S. House of Representatives
 - ▶ 35 of 100 seats in the U.S. Senate
- ▶ **State**
- ▶ **Local**

What's at Stake in 2020

2020 is a presidential election year, but in addition to the presidency and vice presidency, many other elections will occur (not all in November).

- ▶ National

- ▶ State

- ▶ 11 of 50 governorships

- ▶ 86 of 99 state legislative chambers (5,876 of 7,383 seats)

- ▶ State supreme court seats in 35 states

- ▶ Various other state offices, ranging from lieutenant governor to insurance commissioner

- ▶ Initiatives, referenda, and other forms of **direct democracy**

- ▶ Local

What's at Stake in 2020

2020 is a presidential election year, but in addition to the presidency and vice presidency, many other elections will occur (not all in November).

- ▶ National
- ▶ State
- ▶ Local
 - ▶ City councilors and mayors
 - ▶ Sheriffs and other county officials
 - ▶ School board members and other special district officials
 - ▶ More direct democracy: bond issuances, tax levies, . . .

What's at Stake in 2020

2020 is a presidential election year, but in addition to the presidency and vice presidency, many other elections will occur (not all in November).

- ▶ National
- ▶ State
- ▶ Local

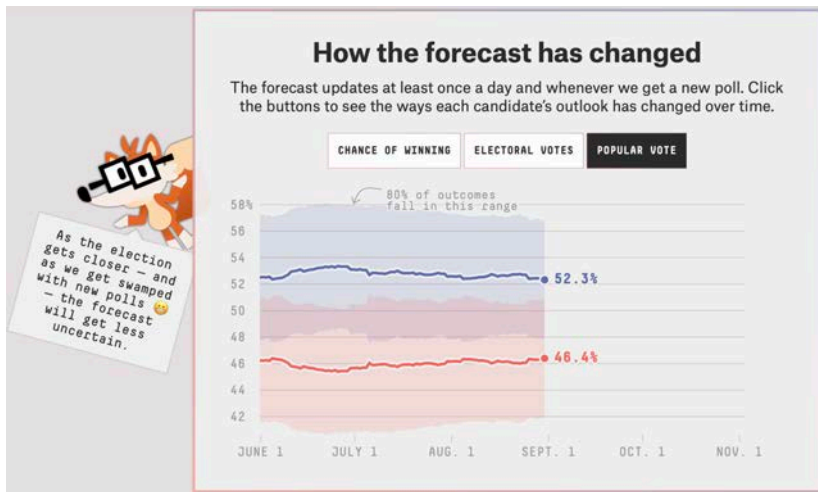
In addition, there will be (or have been) government-administered **primary elections** to select the party's nominee for each office.

(As you can see, the USA holds *lots* of elections.)

The Presidential Race

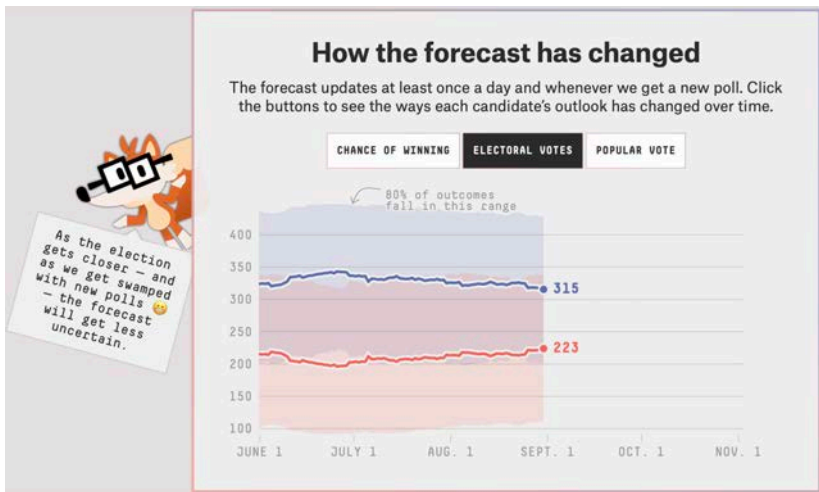
- ▶ Let's take a look at where the presidential race between Republican Donald Trump and Democrat Joseph Biden stands right now.
- ▶ We'll use the popular forecasting site, Nate Silver's [FiveThirtyEight.com](https://www.fivethirtyeight.com) (there are 538 votes in the Electoral College).

FiveThirtyEight Forecast (Aug 31, 2020): Popular Votes



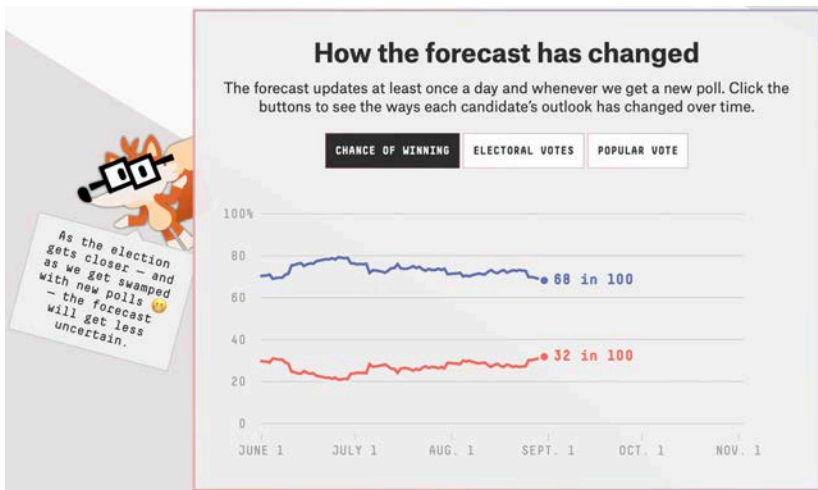
© ABC News Internet Ventures. All rights reserved. This content is excluded from our Creative Commons license. For more information, see <https://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/>.

FiveThirtyEight Forecast (Aug 31, 2020): Electoral Votes



© ABC News Internet Ventures. All rights reserved. This content is excluded from our Creative Commons license. For more information, see <https://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/>.

FiveThirtyEight Forecast (Aug 31, 2020): Win Probability



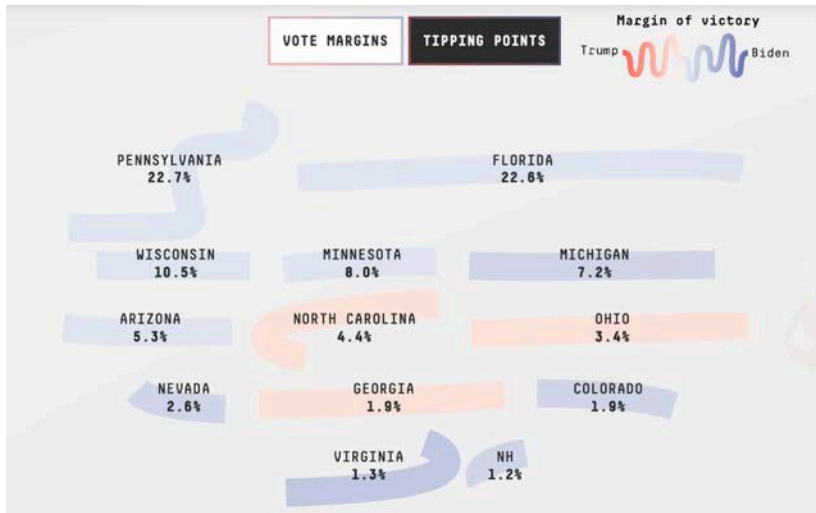
© ABC News Internet Ventures. All rights reserved. This content is excluded from our Creative Commons license. For more information, see <https://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/>.

FiveThirtyEight Forecast (Aug 31, 2020): Snake Plot



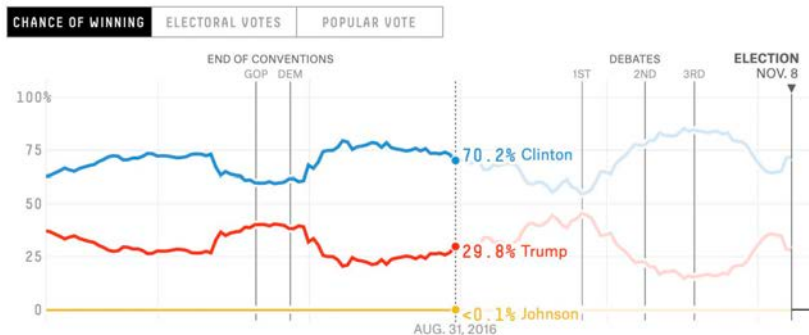
© ABC News Internet Ventures. All rights reserved. This content is excluded from our Creative Commons license. For more information, see <https://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/>.

FiveThirtyEight Forecast (Aug 31, 2020): Tipping Points



© ABC News Internet Ventures. All rights reserved. This content is excluded from our Creative Commons license. For more information, see <https://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/>.

FiveThirtyEight Forecast (Aug 31, 2016): Win Probability



© ABC News Internet Ventures. All rights reserved. This content is excluded from our Creative Commons license. For more information, see <https://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/>.

MIT OpenCourseWare
<https://ocw.mit.edu>

17.263 American Elections
Fall 2020

For information about citing these materials or our Terms of Use, visit: <https://ocw.mit.edu/terms>.