

5CLIR Fall Winter 2020

2020 General Election: Presidential, Congressional and State Elections

By the time of this seminar's first meeting in September, the 2020 general election campaign (perhaps conducted differently than in the past because of the coronavirus crisis?) will be in full swing. Will the presidential race, as now appears likely, be Biden-? vs. Trump-Pence? In the wake of the current health and economic crises, what will be the key drivers of vote choice? How will the presidential campaign and the crises affect "down ballot" races? In the battle for control of Congress, will the Democrats succeed in their efforts to regain a majority in the Senate and maintain their majority in the House? At the state level, with redistricting looming, will the Democrats recapture governorships and state legislatures? After November 3rd, what do the results portend for 2021 and beyond?

This seminar will offer members an opportunity to explore and analyze these questions, the major issues and various aspects of the electoral process in 2020. Each seminar member will give a 20-30 minute presentation on a topic relevant to the election. Each week there will be two presentations, each followed by a brief question and answer period, and, after a break, a roundtable discussion of campaign developments and participant responses to a survey circulated by the moderators prior to each session.

The moderators will provide an extensive list of possible presentation topics for them to analyze and discuss from (as much as possible) objective and non-partisan perspectives. In addition to presentations that compare and contrast the candidates' positions on the issues, presentations may also examine a particular swing state, one or two key Senate races or contested House seats. Other topics such as changes made to the voting process in the wake of the coronavirus crisis and their impact on voter participation, the relationship between Presidential approval and voting intention, or the impact of the "fundamentals" (partisanship and the economy) on voting intention will be suggested.

Suggested reading: *Identity Crisis: The 2016 Presidential Campaign and the Battle for the Meaning of America* by John Sides, Michael Tesler and Lynn Vavreck. The moderators will also provide a list of resources (including magazines, websites, blogs and think tanks) from which members can glean information and a variety of perspectives for their presentations and weekly discussions.