

MU expert says presidential debates likely to be as significant as 1960 Kennedy-Nixon debate

September 23 2008

With many polls showing presidential candidates Democrat Barack Obama and Republican John McCain in a dead heat, many are predicting that the first presidential debate on Sept. 26 could be a turning point in the election. In addition, with the surprising selection of Alaska Governor Sarah Palin as John McCain's running mate, the St. Louis vice presidential debate could be the most viewed in U.S. history.

Mitchell McKinney, University of Missouri associate professor of communication and internationally recognized scholar of presidential debates, has identified the specific conditions necessary for debates to be influential in the outcome of an election. McKinney assessed key elements in the current presidential race:

- voters' familiarity or comfort level with the candidates
- how close the race remains at the outset of a debate series
- the number of undecided or leaning voters
- the strength – or weakness – of traditional party allegiances

McKinney says the upcoming presidential debates have the potential to be as significant as the 1960 Kennedy-Nixon debates and the 1980 Reagan-Carter encounters.

Source: University of Missouri-Columbia

Citation: MU expert says presidential debates likely to be as significant as 1960 Kennedy-Nixon debate (2008, September 23) retrieved 19 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2008-09-mu-expert-presidential-debates-significant.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.