

## How to Use Presidential Debates to Engage Students

1. **Integrate the study of the debates in the course.** Plan for debate-related lectures, discussions, readings, and/or assignments when planning syllabi. A number of resources are available here [link], including a list of discussion questions and a PowerPoint Presentation, "The history, strategy, and impact of U.S. Presidential Debates," with detailed lecture notes for each slide.
2. **Use scholarly research.** Discuss seminal publications and recent research with students. Talk about the findings, the research design, and each study's shortcomings. Encourage students to think about what questions remain unanswered. An annotated bibliography of selected research on debates is available here [link].
3. **Get students to watch the debate.** Students might need some gentle encouragement to do so. Consider hosting a debate watch party, offering extra credit, or making debate viewing a required assignment.
4. **Use technology.** In 2012, we offered a free app where students could register their reactions to the candidates' debate behaviors in real time. By 2016 and beyond there are likely to be many more ways to engage with the debates through technology and social media. An annotated list of useful websites dealing with presidential debates is available here [link].
5. **Discuss the debate.** Debrief during the class meeting after the debate. Discuss important moments, illustrations of concepts studied earlier in the course, and media and popular reactions to the debate.
6. **Be enthusiastic.** If the students see that you think the debates are interesting and important, they will be more likely to engage with them as well.

A paper on our presidential debate app project was presented at the 2013 Teaching and Learning Conference and is available at SSRN: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=2210745> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2210745>.