U.S. presidential election 2008
Mann, D.

Citation

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)
License: Creative Commons CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 license
Downloaded from: https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3211765

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).
After almost two years, the long campaign for the U.S. presidency is over. On November 4, about 127 million Americans cast their votes for president (59.5% of eligible voters – the highest level of voter participation since the 1960’s). Although there were multiple candidates on many ballots (for example, Ralph Nader ran as an independent candidate; Cynthia McKinney ran on the Green Party platform; and Bob Barr was the Libertarian Party candidate), the real contest was between Senator Barack Obama of Illinois, the Democratic candidate, and Senator John McCain of Arizona, the Republican (or GOP – Grand Old Party) candidate. “He fashioned his victory with strong support among young, minority and well-to-do voters.”

This was the 56th time the U.S. had held its presidential election and was the first election since 1952 in which neither a sitting president nor vice president was running. This situation attracted a large number of candidates from the start – 7 for the Democratic nomination and 9 for the Republican. There was an unprecedented amount of interest and enthusiasm this election cycle – more people engaged with his campaign. Voters could log onto any candidate’s website to get information about particular issues. We also witnessed an enlarged role for political satire with candidates appearing on the Daily Show with Jon Stewart, the Colbert Report and Saturday Night Live among other network shows.

After the nominating conventions in late summer, the race between Senators Obama and McCain was close. In mid-September, however, the looming financial crisis made the economy the predominant issue/concern of the election and voters, by a narrow margin, started to prefer Senator Obama (as measured by opinion polls). On election day, Senator Obama was elected, receiving 52.7% of the vote (and 365 electoral votes, projected – the State of Missouri still has not been declared for either candidate although Senator McCain is leading in the vote count) to Senator McCain’s 46% (and 162 electoral votes, projected). Sixty-two percent of voters said the economy was their top concern.

Senator Obama, one of the youngest men to be elected president, becomes the first Democrat to receive more than 50% of the vote since Governor Jimmy Carter ran and won in 1976. He fashioned his victory with strong support among young, minority and well-to-do voters.

Among other issues, President-elect Obama campaigned on bringing U.S. troops home from Iraq, providing increased personnel and resources for Afghanistan (with a greater contribution from U.S. allies), closing the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay and enacting a cap-and-trade program to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Other than exchanges about Iraq and Afghanistan, foreign policy was not discussed frequently during the campaign. Nonetheless, much of U.S. foreign policy will remain the same – continued strong support for Israel; commitment to the transatlantic relationship; engagement with emerging powers such as Russia, India and China; and commitment to pursue nuclear non-proliferation vigorously.

In fact, this was probably the first election in which the internet played a significant role. More than any other candidate, Senator Obama harnessed the internet to encourage people to contribute money and to remain engaged with his campaign. Voters could log onto any candidate’s website to get information about particular issues. We also witnessed an enlarged role for political satire with candidates appearing on the Daily Show with Jon Stewart, the Colbert Report and Saturday Night Live among other network shows.

To get into the election mood everybody had a laugh with a short film called “Time for some campaigning”. A very fun and short summary of the election period, with all the cliché’s and flaws of both candidates. After that the students could make their vote, because of this we could easily find the one, very proud, McCain supporter and quite a few indecisive voters. This led to a discussion about the elections itself and the choices the two candidates made during their campaign. “Why did McCain choose Palin as a vice-president?” and “Is Obama up for the job?” where questions easily made. We only missed a comment about Joe the Plumber. What was his role in the Campaign?

The only conclusion that was made was that the new president cannot change too much concerning the war. With a last check if people had changed their opinion about their vote, we ended the debate. All students had the opportunity to have a drink at the café downstairs and talk informally with Drew Mann. Now fully prepared for the coming days!