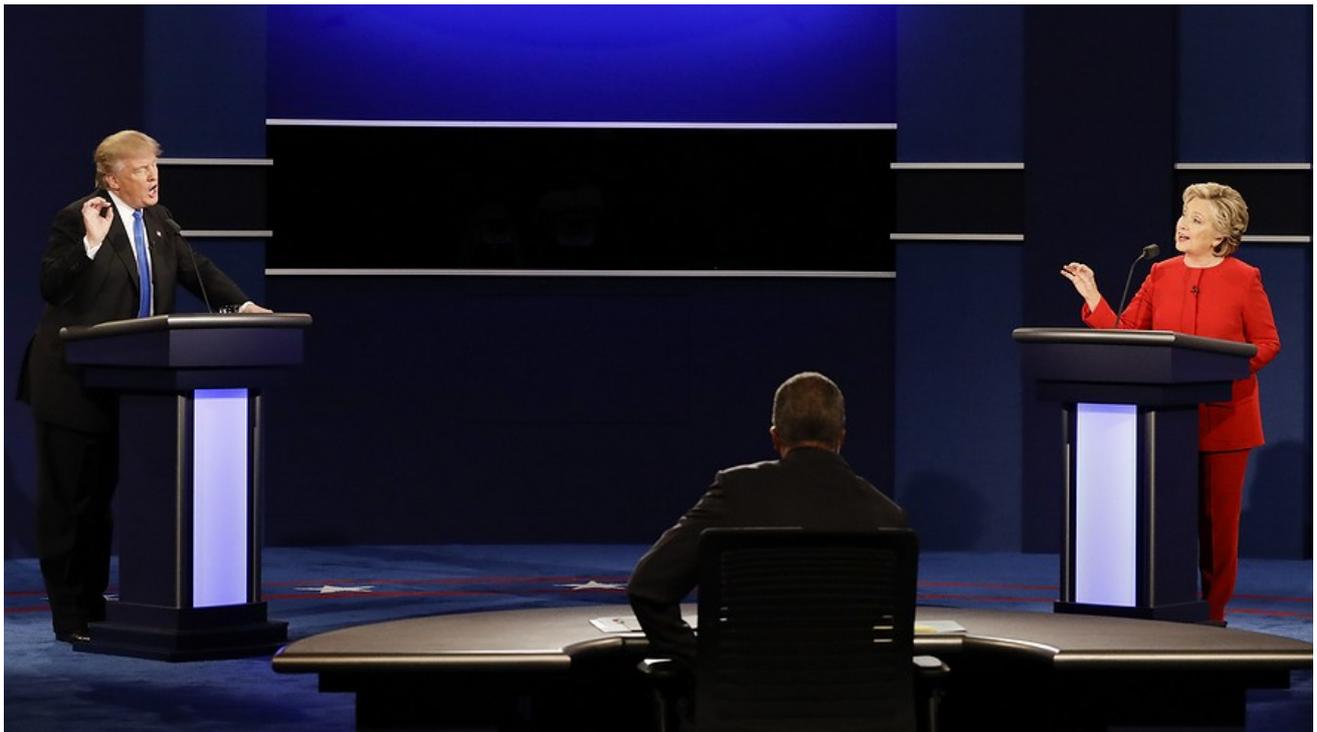


Clinton and Trump tangle in their first presidential debate

By Associated Press, adapted by Newsela staff on 09.27.16

Word Count **1,006**



Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump (left) and Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton spar during the presidential debate at Hofstra University in Hempstead, New York, Sept. 26, 2016. Photo: AP Photo/David Goldman

HEMPSTEAD, N.Y. — In a combative first debate on Monday night, Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton emphatically criticized Donald Trump. She denounced him for keeping his personal tax returns and business dealings secret from voters. She also said he spread a "racist lie" about President Barack Obama. Meanwhile, businessman and Republican candidate Trump repeatedly cast Clinton as a "typical politician" as he sought to capitalize on Americans' frustration with Washington politics.

Two Visions For America

The two candidates are locked in an incredibly close race for the presidency. They argued for 90 minutes over their vastly different visions for the nation's future. Clinton called for lowering taxes for the middle class, while Trump focused more on changing past trade deals that he said have caused companies to move jobs out of the country. Trump supported the controversial "stop-and-frisk policing" tactic, where officers in New York City stopped people on the street and searched their person, as a good way to bring down crime. Clinton, meanwhile, said the policy was unconstitutional and ineffective.

Heated Exchanges Cover Scandals, Voter Concerns

The debate was heated from the start. Trump frequently tried to interrupt Clinton and spoke over her answers. Clinton was more measured and restrained, but also needled the sometimes thin-skinned Trump over his business record and wealth.

"There's something he's hiding," Clinton declared. She scoffed at his repeated excuse that he will not release his tax returns because he is being audited, or being investigated by the Internal Revenue Service.

Trump aggressively tried to turn the transparency questions around on Clinton. Throughout her campaign, she has struggled to overcome voters' concerns about her honesty and trustworthiness. Not long ago, she faced a scandal over using her personal email server for her government work.

Trump said he would release his tax information when Clinton releases more than 30,000 emails that were deleted.

Tax experts say his audit should not affect his releasing his tax information.

Clinton was remorseful in addressing her controversial email use. She said simply that it was a "mistake." Notably, she did not fall back on many of the excuses she has often used for failing to use a government email during her four years as secretary of state.

"If I had to do it over again, I would obviously do it differently," she said.

The televised debate was the most anticipated moment in an election campaign that has been both historic and unpredictable. Both sides expected a record-setting audience for the showdown at Hofstra University in suburban New York, reflecting the intense national interest in the race to become America's 45th president.

Candidates Clash On Economic Ideas

The candidates debated about trade, taxes and how to bring good-paying jobs back to the United States.

Clinton said her Republican rival was promoting a "Trumped-up" version of trickle-down economics — a philosophy used by President Ronald Reagan that focused on tax cuts for the wealthy. She called for increasing the national minimum wage. She argued that the government should spend more on infrastructure projects, such as roads and parks, and guarantee equal pay for women.

Trump attacked policies that he said have led to American jobs being moved overseas. He said the jobs were moved, in part, because of international trade agreements that Clinton has supported. He pushed Clinton aggressively on her past support for the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade pact while she was serving in the Obama administration. She has since said she opposes the sweeping deal in its final form.

"You called it the gold standard of trade deals," Trump said. "If you did win, you would approve that."

Disputing his version of events, Clinton said, "I know you live in your reality."

Trump Dodges Questions On Birther Shift

Trump struggled to answer repeated questions about why he only recently acknowledged that Obama was born in the United States. For years, Trump has been the chief promoter of questions that falsely suggested the president was born outside of the U.S.

"He has really started his political activity on this racist lie," Clinton charged.

Clinton aides spent the days leading up to the debate appealing for the media and voters, asking them to hold Trump to a higher standard than they believe he has faced for much of the campaign. Their concern was that if the sometimes bombastic Trump managed to keep his cool onstage, he'd be rewarded — even if he failed to explain his policies or tell the truth about his past statements.

Trump's campaign has said the concerns of Clinton's team showed she was worried about her debating skills.

Differing Approaches Highlight Contrasting Campaigns

The centerpiece of Trump's campaign has been a push for restrictive immigration measures. Trump has called for the construction of a physical wall along the U.S.-Mexico border. He also had an early proposal to temporarily bar foreign Muslims from coming to the U.S. Still, he has been less detailed about other ideas, including his plan for stamping out the Islamic State extremist group in the Middle East.

Clinton, a former senator and secretary of state, is hoping voters see her as a steady hand who can build on the record of President Obama, whose popularity is rising as he finishes his second term in office. She's called for expanding Obama's executive orders if Congress won't pass laws to overhaul the nation's immigration system and for stronger gun control laws. Overseas, she's called for airplanes to not fly over war-torn Syria but has promised to keep the military out of a large-scale ground war to defeat the Islamic State group.

For Clinton, victory in November largely depends on rallying the same young and diverse group that elected Obama. This group, though, has yet to fully embrace her.

Trump has tapped into deep-seated fears among some Americans, particularly white, working-class voters who feel left behind in a changing economy and diversifying nation. The real estate developer lacks the experience Americans have traditionally sought in a commander in chief, but he's using the frustration many Americans have with career politicians, including Clinton, to push him toward victory.

Possible prompts to guide your reflection include: What issues being raised by the candidates affect you the most? Are there any one or two issues that are most dominant? What issues would you like to see debated? What stances are the candidates taking and what would be the benefit of such a stance? What policy proposals are being offered in conjunction with each candidate's position on the issues? Does the candidate's position