

Claim The Vote, Claim The Country: York's Scholar's Hub and Library to dissect U.S. Election

When it comes to the upcoming United States Presidential Election, the only thing that is certain at the moment is uncertainty – and that might still be the case after Election Night itself.

Nobody knows what the outcome will be at this point, but York University and the Aurora Public Library will be on hand – virtually – the following morning to dissect the outcome in the latest installment of York's Scholars' Hub program.

On November 4, from 12 noon – 12.45 p.m., Scholars' Hub will welcome Dr. Anna Agathangelou, Professor in York's Department of Politics and PHD Candidate Adam Churchard in "Claim the vote, claim the country: On the question of 2020 US elections and the commons."

The presentation will look at how the US political system functions, examples of voter suppression – against people of colour, the poor and women voters – and critical contestations by different populations to claim the vote.

The speakers will also examine the impact of the US Presidential Election on Canada and the world, as well as concepts of democracy within and beyond the United States.

"I am doing a bit of a wait-and-see approach before finalizing the topics I will be discussing," says Churchard. "I think it has really gotten to the point where this is an American election unlike any before it. So much is happening and so much keeps changing in such unpredictable ways. Even over the last few weeks with the debates, Trump's COVID diagnosis and his ramped up attacks on the illegitimacy of the election it will be hard to say exactly how the next several weeks is going to go down, but at the same time I think having this talk the day after Election Day is a really good time to take stock of where we are."

"The big question is going to be, 'What is going to happen on Election Night? What are the candidates going to say? What is the voting process going to look like going into November?' Americans are very used to having their presidential race decided on Election Night, so what is going to be the reaction when that doesn't happen and how are the campaigns and the public going to respond?"

Churchard isn't prepared to venture any bets on what the outcome might be. While he says Democratic candidate Joe Biden has a "very commanding lead" over Republican Donald Trump, even more than Hillary Clinton had when facing the same rival in 2016, "there is still so much volatility" in the race and voter suppression tactics, including attacks on mail-in voting, continue to be amplified.

"That is going to effect the results in ways polling isn't really going to capture," says Churchard. "While the polling should be making Biden confident, what the result is going to be when the votes are counted, and what votes are counted, is still very much up in the air."

Uncertainty regarding the outcome, however, is not solely an issue for the United States. Churchard says Canada has seen nationalist groups become emboldened since the last time Americans went to the polls and, in his view, a Trump victory could keep that trend marching on.

"In the event of a Trump victory, that should be extremely concerning to people and what that would mean for emboldening the white nationalists and conspiracy theory movements," he says. "There is a caveat I want to put on that because we can't just say it is all coming from the United States. We saw a recent report that was backed by Public Safety Canada that saw on [white nationalist forums] Canadians actually punch above their weight in terms of contributing to that."

In the lead-up to the November 3 election and the virtual discussion hosted by York University and the Aurora Public Library the

following afternoon, Churchard urges attendees ? and, indeed, the public at large ? to sit up, gather your information and think critically about the state of the world.

?Watch the news and think critically about what is going on in the U.S.,? he says. ?If you're registered for Scholars' Hub, come prepared to ask critical questions about both candidates, about the state of the race, and also about the wider political and social implications of whatever is happening [in the next few weeks],? he says. ?Come with an open mind about how you feel about the election, and come informed, ready to learn and have a discussion.?

The Scholars' Hub @ Home Speaker Series features discussions on a broad range of topics with engaging lectures from some of York University's best minds. Every Wednesday at noon, a different topic will be presented. All are welcome and you do not have to be a student or alumni of York to participate.

To register, visit
aurorapl.ca/events/2020-11-04-120000-2020-11-04-124500/claim-vote-claim-country-question-2020-us-elections-and.

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