

Missouri debate experts size up tonight's season finale

18 hours ago • [Bill Lambrecht blambrecht@post-dispatch.com](mailto:blambrecht@post-dispatch.com) 202-298-6880

WASHINGTON — First off, there's baseball captivating the St. Louis region. Then there's the topic of tonight's last presidential debate — foreign policy, not exactly a front-of-the-mind issue for a lot of folks.

So does that mean people won't tune in?

Nationwide there likely will be a drop-off from the estimated 65.6 million viewers who tuned into the second debate last week; the final presidential debate in a series almost always is less of a draw.

But don't expect whole-scale abandonment of the debates because this year's debate season hasn't followed the script. Presidential debate performances don't normally track so closely to candidates' rise and fall in polls. And not in recent memory has the race been so close this late.

"We typically see the last debate in a series as the least consequential and it usually has the least viewership. But in this cycle, with the stakes so high and the candidates literally tied, I don't know that the normal patterns hold," said Mitchell McKinney, who teaches courses in political communication at the University of Missouri Columbia.

Indeed, when **Barack Obama** and **Mitt Romney** share a stage tonight for the last time before the election, they will do so in a dead heat rare at this stage in elections. On Sunday, an NBC News/Wall Street Journal survey found each candidate with 47 percent of likely voters.

What also is different this year is the level of conflict and attacks in the debates — with Romney usually the aggressor.

McKinney said he expects candidates to pick up where they left off last week in arguing over U.S. failure to protect the consulate in Libya and the confusing explanations that followed. There's also the new report of Iran's willingness to hold direct talks with the U.S. on its nuclear program, which could play into Romney's assertions that the Obama administration has been too passive when it comes to Iranian weapons.

But the former Massachusetts governor could be impeded by the debate format, McKinney noted, in which candidates are seated in a setting designed to promote reasoned conversation rather than attacks.

Eric Morris, who directs debate programs at Missouri State University, noted that that candidates' approaches to key foreign policy issues like Afghanistan is similar and that Romney has been vague on what he would do different.

But in dealing with complex matters such as long-term national security strategy, being vague and thematic rather than specific could be of value to Romney, who has stumbled on occasion when dealing with foreign policy, Morris said.

The key for Obama, he added, is not reverting to the passive nature he displayed in the first debate.

"He was on cruise control and I don't think his advisers will let him retreat to that cautious approach because they know he won't get the chance to recover," he said.

In Missouri, Morris predicted, baseball may well trump politics. "I think those who do tune in will be watching the debate in a much more selective manner, maybe switching over from the game during commercials," he said.

Will it matter that the topic is foreign policy? Both experts expect candidates to stray regularly back to the economy and their talking points.

When China is the subject, for instance, Romney, a self-styled trade warrior, is likely to press his case that the Obama administration has been lax in trade matters. And that may open the door for Obama to talk about Romney's tenure at Bain Capital and his foreign investments.

McKinney observed that viewers still making up their minds tend to focus more on style and then relate their views to substantive issues.

"They'll say something like 'I kind of got the feeling that this guy cared more about me'. The predominant takeaway is a sense of what kind of person they are and what's important to them," he said.



The AAU's Science News Website

After cancer, exercise eases swollen limbs

U. MISSOURI / VANDERBILT / NYU (US) — New research identifies the two best options for managing a chronic swelling condition that affects almost 40 percent of breast cancer survivors.

A cure for lymphedema does not exist, so individuals with the condition must find ways to manage the symptoms throughout their lifetimes. The condition causes body limbs to swell from fluid buildup as a result of lymph node removal and radiation therapy.

Now, a team of researchers and clinicians working with a University of Missouri lymphedema expert has found that full-body exercise and complete decongestive therapy (CDT) are the best ways for patients to minimize their symptoms and maintain their quality of life.

“There’s a sense of empowerment—of autonomy—that comes from meeting the challenge of living with lymphedema,” says Jane Armer, nursing professor.

“Some breast cancer survivors say that they’ve become a new person after cancer because they met a challenge, and they like the stronger person they’ve become. The challenge of lymphedema is similar. It’s something that is pervasive in every part of life. It takes problem solving and persistence to manage the condition without letting it interfere with their goals.”

Armer and her colleagues reviewed published research about lymphedema self-management in order to determine which practices were most effective in managing the condition.

The researchers found that full-body exercise, such as weight lifting and stretching, was likely to be effective in minimizing lymphedema symptoms.

In addition, the researchers concluded that complete decongestive therapy (CDT), a comprehensive treatment approach that incorporates skin care, exercise, manual lymphatic drainage and bandaging of swollen limbs, also helps patients effectively manage the condition.

“Previous research suggests that, the earlier the interventions, the better the outcomes,” Armer says. “If patients can learn how to successfully manage the condition early on, then they can continue those processes throughout their lives, and their outcomes will be better than those of individuals who resist participating in self-care.”

Armer is a professor in the MU Sinclair School of Nursing and director of nursing research at Ellis Fischel Cancer Center. The literature review is published in *Nursing Research*, and was led by nurse colleagues Sheila Ridner of Vanderbilt University School of Nursing, and Mei Fu, associate professor at New York University College of Nursing.

theman eater

MU professors partner with RJI in Twitter analysis

Among the 65.6 million Americans who tuned into the second presidential debate Tuesday night were a team of MU researchers who were as glued to their laptops as they were to the TV.

The researchers, who were working in the Reynolds Journalism Institute's Microsoft Application Development Lab, are studying the use of social media during presidential debates.

As candidates Mitt Romney and Barack Obama gave opening remarks, the team, including professors and graduate students, listened to the candidates but were eagerly waiting to see how viewers would react on Twitter.

Mitchell McKinney and Brian Houston, fellows at the institute and associate professors of communication, are trying to make sense of the chorus of tweets. They are heading a team of graduate student researchers in order to study how debate viewers use Twitter to respond to candidates' performances. The professors and researchers will study all three presidential debates as well as the vice presidential debate.

The professors hope to eventually use the tweets to study how social media usage affects political engagement.

"There seems to be something going on where this capacity to use social media while watching these events is engaging, getting people to pay attention and getting people to participate in a way that we haven't had before," Houston said. "That seems to be quite promising."

The team kept an eye on the computer monitor that displayed Greenwich Mean Time as they listened for 'zingers' that might excite Twitter users. When President Obama brought up Big Bird, a reference to Romney's plan to cut PBS funding, a team member groaned as he waited for another spike in tweets. Romney's Oct. 3 mention of Big Bird brought in 21,124 tweets, making it the most tweeted-about moment of the first debate.

In addition to examining national trends, the research team has partnered with the Dallas Morning News, the Seattle Times and the Florida Times Union in Jacksonville, Fla., to specifically study tweets sent from these areas. Each newspaper has its own hashtag, which it promotes to its readers. The researchers analyze tweets with the newspaper hashtags, compare the regional tweets with national trends and then send reports on regional tweet activity back to each newspaper.

As the debate began, researchers were excited as tweets containing the Dallas hashtag, #DMNdebate, poured in almost immediately. They continued to flow steadily throughout the 90-minute debate. By the end of the night, Dallas had sent 979 tweets.

The partnership with newspapers in Texas, Washington and Florida was deliberately set up so the team could examine how tweets in a Republican-dominated state, a Democrat-dominated state and a swing state might differ. So far, the professors have found that certain topics excite tweeters in certain regions more than others.

During Tuesday's debate, tweeters in Dallas sent the most tweets about gas prices, while nationwide gas prices were the second most tweeted about topic. In Jacksonville, a comment Romney made about China generated the biggest response of the night. Nationwide, Obama's 47 percent remark at the end of the debate excited Twitter users the most, according to the researchers' latest summary of findings.

McKinney said tweets nationwide are sometimes less serious than tweets coming from specific regions.

"Some of the national spikes tend to be more around off-the-cuff moments that may be regarded as humorous," he said. "In the local communities, they tend to stick more to issue discussion."

The researchers are particularly interested in tweets and conversations that focus on campaign issues, but those tweets can be hard to find amid reactionary tweets that dominate the national feed.

"(Reaction tweets) are the easiest thing to see," Houston said. "The challenge is to try to dig deeper and find instances and examples of when people are really talking about policies and proposals related to the debate."

To sift through the millions of tweets sent during each debate, the team uses Topsy and DataSift, two data mining programs that allow users to track and analyze specific terms and hashtags.

At the debate's conclusion, the team gave tweeters three minutes to tweet final thoughts, and then stopped collecting data. Though the programs stopped running, the researchers were just beginning their jobs for the night. They immediately began to search for the terms that made their feeds explode that night: pensions, women and Libya, among many others. Each word that produced a spike was recorded, along with the time that the spike occurred and the number of tweets it produced. The information would be used in the next day's reports.

McKinney and Houston said they were both surprised by the volume of tweets sent at each debate. Nationally, Twitter reported that more than 10 million tweets were sent during the first presidential debate, and more than 7 million were sent in the second.

"The overall levels of activity have been huge," Houston said. "It probably isn't surprising ... but it is impressive nonetheless."

Columbia approves \$3.3M for expanded air service

15 hours ago • Associated Press

The Columbia City Council has approved a \$3.3 million revenue guarantee for American Airlines in exchange for expanded service from Columbia Regional Airport.

KRCG-TV reports (<http://bit.ly/Pmj1dZ>) the council approved the tentative agreement Monday, clearing the way for final negotiations.

American plans to add two daily nonstop flights between Columbia and Dallas/Fort Worth plus one daily nonstop route to Chicago O'Hare starting in mid-February.

Funding for the revenue guarantee has been pledged by Columbia, Jefferson City, Boone and Cole counties, the University of Missouri and area businesses.

The guarantee would let American dip into the funds if it fails to make a profit on the Columbia service.

Delta Air Lines already serves Columbia Regional and has said it wants a similar deal.

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Homecoming Blood Drive collects 4,643 units at Hearnes

Students gathered at the Hearnes Center this week to participate in the annual Homecoming Blood Drive. The drive began Monday and finished Thursday with 4,643 units of blood. That number does not represent the final total, as outside donations are still being counted.

According to the Mizzou Homecoming website, the goal of the blood drive was to collect 5,000 units of blood over the four-day drive at the Hearnes Center.

"They (5,000 units of blood) potentially can save 15,000 lives," said Cale Roberts, an MU Homecoming Blood Committee member. "The blood collected in this drive serves about 80 hospitals in Missouri, and 5,000 units of blood we collected here will last about for a week for these hospitals."

Last year, the drive exceeded their goal of 5,000 at 5,264 units at the Hearnes Center and satellite drives. This year the drive's goal was 5,000 units of blood from the Hearnes Center alone, MU Homecoming Blood Committee member Maggie Omastiak said.

By Wednesday, 3,502 units of blood had been collected in the drive.

Students participating in the drive could donate for three types of organizations; a residence hall, a Greek organization and another campus organization.

"First day, we collected 1,079 (units of blood)," Omastiak said. "Second day was 1,210 (units of blood). Yesterday (Wednesday), we had collected 3,502."

"The three categories donate for three separate competitions," Roberts said. "For example, people in Greek organizations compete with each other and people in residence halls compete with each other."

Participants in the drive expressed enthusiasm for donating blood.

"I think this kind of donation is great and is a great opportunity for me to help others," said John Gable, a student who took part in the donation.

Roberts said he hopes participants in the drive "feel great" for donating.

"I just tell them that giving blood is the easiest way to help people out," he said.

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Editorial: Sifton earns nod in 1st Senate District

7 hours ago • [By the Editorial Board](#)

MU MENTION P. 2

There is a decidedly nonpartisan feel to the state Senate race in Missouri's 1st District between incumbent Republican [Jim Lembke](#) and Democrat state Rep. [Scott Sifton](#).

That's a good thing. The district is one of the few in the state that hasn't been gerrymandered so that it's overwhelmingly tilted toward one party or the other. It's a district that includes Democratic enclaves in Webster Groves and solid working-class Republican votes in South St. Louis County.

Mr. Sifton, 38, didn't get the support of many of the most liberal Democrats in his primary.

And Mr. Lembke, 51, has some strong union support, because he's one of the few Missouri Republicans willing to make it clear that he opposes right-to-work laws in the state.

That single stance will be enough for some Democrats and independents to choose Mr. Lembke on Nov. 6. The political reality is that his anti-right-to-work vote is more valuable than Mr. Sifton's identical vote on the same issue.

Why?

The Missouri Senate is going to stay under the firm control of the Republican Party no matter what happens in the 1st District. Workers need all the allies they can get.

Here's the rub, though, when it comes to Mr. Lembke:

His views on right-to-work aside, he's not pro-worker. Last legislative session, Mr. Lembke helped lead one of the most destructive and anti-worker filibusters of the year, standing in the way of Missouri accepting federal money for the long-term unemployed at a time when they needed the money the most. Real Missourians who had been chronically unemployed, who needed that money, had to wait for it while Mr. Lembke and three of his hard-headed friends played political games.

What did they get for their act?

X

Nothing. Members of Mr. Lembke's own party forced him to sit down by promising they'd consider cutting some more federal money out of the budget later (they didn't), and by offering businesses a savings on future unemployment costs.

In other words, Mr. Lembke's silly charade cost workers twice.

Mr. Sifton is a serious man who demonstrated in his single term in the Missouri House that he won't play such games. We endorse him for Senate.

An attorney and partner with Husch Blackwell, Mr. Sifton has built a solid resume as an elected official, first serving nearly a decade on the Affton School Board and in the state House in the past two years.

The highlight of his campaign is an ethics proposal that brings attention to one of Mr. Lembke's weaknesses. Mr. Sifton seeks to ban lobbyists gifts. Mr. Lembke lives high on the lobbyists' hog.

In 2011, this so-called conservative accepted more than \$7,300 in gifts from lobbyists. Meals, golf outings, hotel stays, bottles of wine, and, of course, \$158 worth of cigars on his birthday.

Mr. Lembke says he can't be bought.

The evidence suggests otherwise. Last session, Mr. Lembke blocked the appointment of a respected Columbia attorney to the University of Missouri Board of Curators the very day after attending a fund-raiser put on by one of that attorney's critics.

Perhaps that's just a coincidence.

But it's clear in public records that Mr. Lembke has fallen in love with the lifestyle that lets him kick up his feet drinking port and smoking fine cigars while the unemployed have to stand in line for their checks.

That image, and it's very real, doesn't fit the working-class 1st District.

Mr. Sifton hasn't accepted gifts during his time in Jefferson City. And when lobbyists have paid for an occasional meal, he's paid them back, using his money, not that of campaign donors.

The Missouri Legislature needs more of that. Also, because term limits so quickly rob the Legislature of institutional knowledge, it could use a few more attorneys who have the training and expertise to understand the fine points of proposed laws. Bills generally are written by lobbyists; sometimes they don't do what their sponsors intend. Often lawmakers have to go back and fix what they messed up.

Scott Sifton is the smart, solid, ethical choice in the 1st District.

Former MU assistant Christensen punished for tirade after Wyoming loss

Star News Services

No one will accuse former Missouri offensive coordinator Dave Christensen of hiding his thoughts. But candor can prove costly.

Christensen, now the head coach at Wyoming, was suspended and fined \$50,000 on Monday for his profanity-pocked tirade after the Cowboys' 28-27 loss to Air Force on Oct. 13 — a lambasting he leveled at Air Force coach Troy Calhoun for allegedly having his quarterback pretend to be hurt in order to avoid burning a late-game timeout.

Whether the injury was fake is debatable, but there's no disputing that Christensen, who served on Gary Pinkel's staff at Mizzou from 1997-2008, responded with one of the most scalding tongue-lashings in college football history.

A 38-second YouTube clip of the incident, which by late Monday had garnered well over 100,000 hits, opens with Christensen swearing in the direction of several Air Force players as he marches toward Calhoun.

The two shake hands at midfield ... and then the fireworks begin.

"Nice ethics, man!" Christensen shouts at Calhoun. "I'd be (expletive) scared to death if I had a (expletive) like you defending me!"

An unidentified man keeps Christensen and the stunned Calhoun separated as they continue to walk off the field in Laramie, Wyo. Christensen is held back and then led away by his daughter, but not before calling Calhoun "Howdy Doody" and adding:

"Go get in your (expletive) press conference, flyboy!"

Did we mention that the bizarre scene played out at Wyoming's War Memorial Stadium, on Military Appreciation Day?

Christensen, who is 19-25 since arriving at Wyoming in 2009, last week apologized to the university, its fans and his players, and was quickly reprimanded by the Mountain West Conference.

Monday's suspension by the school, which includes this week's home game against No. 21 Boise State, goes a step further: Wyoming assistant Pete Kaligis will coach the 1-5 Cowboys on Saturday.

"It is important to send the right message to players for their actions," Wyoming athletics director Tom Burman said in a story posted on the Casper Star-Tribune's website.

Perhaps the only thing that could make this tale stranger still was the rambling response Calhoun issued during last week's conference call with the Mountain West's football coaches.

"For our guys, I think anytime you are an officer candidate, there are different scenarios in life from which you must learn," Calhoun said. "I'm not saying it's the same. But there's definitely some learning experiences that can occur. When Jane Fonda, in 1972, went and was cozy with the North Vietnamese and denounced those that were in the Air Force, there's something drawn from that.

"I think (regarding the Oct. 13 game), there's something you can draw from different instances in life. Certainly that's the case. I think as you go through and you progress forward, as an officer, you are going to fight for those freedoms, for the First Amendment. And that First Amendment can be used in various ways."