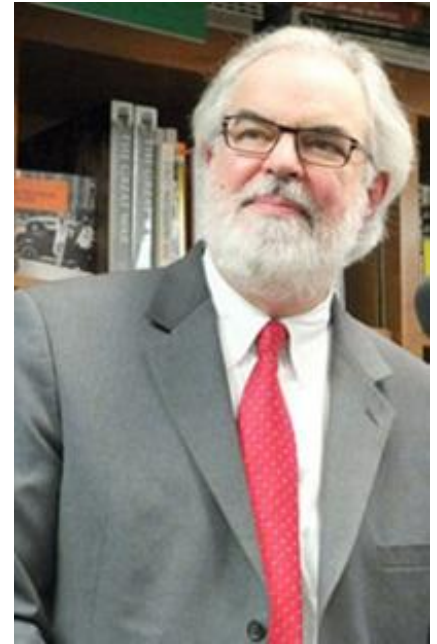


# TV, Radio, and Media Myth: Reassessing the First-Ever Presidential Debate

**W. Joseph Campbell, Ph.D.**  
**School of Communication**  
**American University**



You've heard or read it many times: People who watched the first-ever presidential debate on television thought the winner was the cool, collected John F. Kennedy. But radio listeners had a decidedly different opinion, believing that Richard Nixon came out ahead: They couldn't see that Nixon perspired heavily or wore an ill-fitting suit. Viewers had one impression, listeners had quite another. Or so the story goes.

In a talk featuring clips from the legendary Kennedy-Nixon debate, American University professor W. Joseph Campbell discusses why the narrative of viewer-listener disagreement is a media myth, and why factors other than appearance were decisive in the outcome of that debate in 1960. Campbell, the author of the media-mythbusting book *Getting It Wrong*, also explores the enduring relevance of the first Kennedy-Nixon encounter and why its lessons and misconceptions resonate in the presidential debates this fall.

*W. Joseph Campbell, Ph.D., is a professor at American University's School of Communication in Washington, DC. He is the author of six books and numerous journal articles, book chapters, and op-ed commentaries. An expanded second edition of his media-mythbusting book, Getting It Wrong, is being published this month by the University of California Press. Getting It Wrong addresses, and debunks, prominent media-driven myths — including the notion that the Washington Post's reporting on Watergate brought down Richard Nixon's presidency. The first edition of Getting It Wrong came out in 2010 and won the Society of Professional Journalists' national award for research about journalism. One critic wrote of Getting It Wrong: "It may be the best book about journalism in recent memory; it is certainly the most subversive."*

*Campbell earned his doctorate in mass communication at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1997 and soon thereafter joined the American University faculty. He entered the academy after 20 years as a professional journalist in a career that took him across North America to Europe, West Africa, and parts of Asia. Campbell is a past winner of the "Faculty Member of the Year" award, which is given by American University's student government. He also is a past recipient of the "Teaching with Research" award, presented by the University's Center for Teaching, Research, and Learning. He and his wife, Ann-Marie Regan, live in suburban Maryland.*

**Tuesday, October 18, 7-8 p.m. Fife Theatre, Moss Arts Center**  
**Open to the Public Free of Charge**

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