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### Introduction

1. On Wednesday, 9 November 2016 (Adelaide time), voters in the United States will determine whether control of the greatest military the world has ever seen will be handed to:
  - a. a dangerous narcissist (just like every other time); or
  - b. a howlingly ignorant bigot with authoritarian tendencies and messianic delusions of self-worth<sup>1</sup>.
2. This paper sets out the timetable of key events by means of which observers will probably learn the outcome of that decision.

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<sup>1</sup> See *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* by Bertolt Brecht

3. People uninterested in American electoral politics should read no further. I hope that you will, however, forgive my own fascination with the process, which started with the 1980 contest and was sharpened by later reading<sup>2</sup>. This is the greatest spectator sport in the world not played with a ball (or two<sup>3</sup>) and, should the outcome at paragraph 1.b. above come to pass, this may well be my last chance to watch.
4. Official results will not be known until late in the day (or even later, in the event that the election is, God help us, close). However, a good handle on things will be obtainable from the major American news networks who traditionally call state races soon after polling closes on the basis of exit polls and other data. Accordingly, the close of polls in each state is the time to start watching each race to see what emerges. Note that the “close of polls” is not synonymous with the end of voting, because people lined up to vote when the polls “close” must be given the chance to vote. Sometimes this can take quite a long time, which frequently happens in majority black areas in Republican-controlled states where quite by chance the only electoral official on hand is a man called Wade who has a mullet and believes in the Constitution as the unaltered Word of God, especially the bit about guns which is all of it.
5. The outcome will, as always, depend on the vote in fewer than a dozen states in which the result is not a foregone conclusion. Each of these is often called, tediously, a swing state, although obviously “state of uncertainty” would be way cooler but unfortunately people are:
  - a. boring<sup>4</sup>; and
  - b. stupid<sup>5</sup>.
6. You know this already, right, but Americans don’t elect their president directly. Every state has allocated a number of spots for delegates to an Electoral College, which then elects the president. Bigger state population, more delegates. California has 55, because there are more Californians than there are Australians.
7. Almost every state allocates all of its delegates to the winner of the state-wide vote. A couple of titchy ones allocate on some other basis, but we’re talking maybe six College votes in total decided this way out of 538, so I never bothered to learn the details. Maine, I think, has an apple-bobbing contest and in Nebraska they toss a pig in the air and see which way up it lands, or something. You need 270 votes overall to win.
8. It is, of course, possible for a nominee to win the Electoral College vote (and thus secure the presidency) without winning the popular vote. Al Gore won the popular vote in 2000. It also happened three times in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. If that should happen this time, particularly if the Republican nominee were to win the popular vote but not the Electoral College, people like Wade are going to blow some shit up. Those people will then be called “mentally ill” or “militia”, because they’re not terrorist-coloured.

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<sup>2</sup> See *Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail* by Hunter S Thompson

<sup>3</sup> See [www.pornhub.com](http://www.pornhub.com)

<sup>4</sup> See country music

<sup>5</sup> See hip hop and this election

9. Actually, people like Wade are going to blow some shit up regardless of the outcome, but if Trump comes close to winning but falls short they are going to lose their fucking minds.
10. Also, just to make things weirder, occasionally a “faithless elector” fails to vote in the College the way they’re supposed to. I read somewhere about at least one Democratic delegate-nominee this year saying he wouldn’t vote for Clinton no matter what because she was insufficiently boo-yah on the question of whatever the fuck was knotting his Y-fronts so he’d rather watch it all burn. So, yay, democracy, and if the College vote is really close it might still not be over until the College actually meets and does its thing. And even then ... but I’m assuming there will be a winner on the day. If it ends up being a draw and going to the House of Reps to sort out, we’re looking at a complete mess.
11. All times below are in Australian Central Daylight Time, as my current time zone is inelegantly called.

### **10.30 am**

#### **Florida**

12. The big early one (29 Electoral College votes – fourth biggest, behind California, Texas (34) and New York (31)), although not all polls close until an hour later, because Floridians cannot even agree on a time zone to cover the whole state. Won by the eventual winner in every poll since I could be bothered checking, even if the second George Bush had to use the Supreme Court to do so in 2000, when the decision to stop the recount handed the state (and thus the election) to Bush. If Clinton can hang on in Florida, Trump’s climb starts to look steep, but if Trump looks like taking it, the fight is really on.

#### **New Hampshire**

13. In New England, and basically a hair’s breadth left of dead centre (NH voted for Kerry in 2004, but otherwise has lined up with the winner in recent years). If Clinton loses NH, it’s not a good sign for her, even though only 4 electoral votes hang on it. If Trump wins FL and North Carolina (see below) and the rest go as expected, he only needs one or two little states to get him over the line. In that event NH and Nevada are two distinct possibilities to be those final deciders.

#### **Virginia**

14. Once again, has lined up with the winner since at least 2000. 13 votes up for grabs. Should be in Clinton’s bag this time around. If Trump’s competitive in VA, it is on, big time.

### **11.00 am**

#### **North Carolina**

15. Like a slightly smaller (15 votes) Florida, electorally speaking. If Clinton wins, Trump’s chances narrow dramatically. If Clinton wins both NC and FL, it’s probably all over for Trump.

## Utah

16. Interesting, because usually a rock solid Republican state, however this time it turns out the Mormons actually seemed to remember some of those Christian values Republicans traditionally bang on about and Evan McMullin is running as basically a Proper Republican Not Like Wiggy The Grope, and getting polling numbers up towards 30%. Trump will win the state but the strength of McMullin's vote might be a pointer to how the Republican base will divide in the post-election are-we-or-aren't-we-going-to-keep-running-as-overt-racist-dingbats self-reflection period. Assuming Clinton gets up overall, of course. If Trump wins, overt racist dingbattery becomes the national ethos.

## 11.30 am

### Pennsylvania

17. 21 votes up for grabs. Like NH, Kerry won it in 2004, but otherwise usually lines up behind the eventual winner. If Clinton loses this, Trump's looking good.

## 12.30 pm

### The rest of Florida

18. See above.

### Wisconsin

19. Clinton's to lose. If Trump's in the running here, shit's very real indeed.

### Colorado

20. See Wisconsin.

### Texas

21. Second most populous state in the Union with 34 votes. Usually solidly Republican. If Trump manages to lose this (a very remote possibility, but the state does have an increasing Hispanic population), it should start World War 3 among Republicans and a worldwide spike in popcorn sales.

## 1.30 pm

### Nevada

22. See New Hampshire, above. By now we should know, one way or the other, but if it's tight it might be decided right here.

## **Iowa**

23. Usually safe Republican. If Clinton's up here, she's the next president, but by then we'll have known that for some time.

## **3.00 pm**

### **Polls close nationally**

24. ...so the TV networks will feel free to declare the outcome.