Your opportunities may be limited by the candidates that get elected into office, and if you don’t vote you have no say in that, a professor said during a forum on Oct. 5.

The form was the first in a two-part series by political science professors Dr. Ben Gonzalez and Dr. T.M. Sell that aim to inform students about the elections this November.

“In all likelihood either Donald Trump or Hillary Clinton is going to be president,” Dr. Gonzalez said. “Regardless of whether you love or hate either of them one of them is actually going to play a pretty significant role in helping to define the opportunities you have down the road.”

Trump and Clinton have very different backgrounds and qualifications to consider.

Clinton was the First Lady to President Bill Clinton from 1993 to 2001. Since then she been a New York senator, a presidential candidate in 2008 against Barak Obama, and Secretary of State for the first term of the Obama administration, Dr. Gonzalez said.

“She’s one of the most experienced candidates in U.S. presidential history,” Dr. Gonzalez said.  
On the other side of the isle, Trump was born into a wealthy family and inherited a construction and real estate firm from his father, Dr. Sell said. Trump claims to be worth $10 billion, but there are questions as to whether this is true.

Trumps lack of experience in politics is at least something to question.

“Can you think of another line of work where saying ‘I have absolutely no experience in this’ can somehow be a virtue? I can’t,” Dr. Sell said.

Clinton and Trump have very different stances on the way the government should be run in many areas including the way the United States should tax, environmental issues, and immigration.

“She [Clinton] wants to reform the tax code so that wealthy Americans actually pay a greater share of taxes,” Dr. Gonzalez said. “Specifically she wants to add what she calls the ‘fair share surcharge’ that would … add an additional 4 percent in taxes to incomes above $5 million.”

“[Trump’s stance is to have] lower taxes and less regulation,” Dr. Sell said. “Tax cuts have a really bad record for economic stimulus.”

Clinton has plans to reduce oil consumption by a third, reduce energy waste, and create enough renewable energy to power every home in America, Dr. Gonzalez said.

Trump appears to have a much different stance on environmental issues.

“The easiest way to sum up trumps energy policy, ‘drill baby drill, but protect the environment,’” Dr. Sell said. “There should at least be some conflict there -- it will be a challenge to do both.”

Where immigration is concerned, Clinton wants comprehensive immigration reform, Dr. Gonzalez said.

“That’s a bit of a fuzzy term -- usually what that means is you favor some combination of increased boarder security, usually some kind of process or path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants who are already in the United States,” Dr. Gonzalez said. “Because despite what Donald Trump may say …. You can’t really deport the estimated 12 million people who are in the United States right now -- it’s not economically feasible.”

Clinton also plans to invest in low-income communities, Dr. Gonzalez said. As much as $125 million.

“This would be to increase business investment to help build up the educational opportunities and job opportunities in these communities,” Dr. Gonzalez said.

Both Trump and Clinton plan to invest money into education, however, those planes are targeted towards very different groups of students. Trump wants to federally fund charter schools to the tune of $20 billion, Dr. Sell said. Clinton wants to allow for student loan refinancing, and to make undergraduate school debt-free for everyone, Dr. Gonzalez said.

While it is likely that either Clinton or Trump will win the presidency, there are other candidates to choose from as well. The other two highest polling candidates are Dr. Jill Stein who is running for the Green Party, and Gary Johnson for the Libertarian Party.

“The problem with third parties in this country is because we assume that they have no chance of winning nobody votes for them or bothers looking at their platforms,” said Dr. Gonzalez. “[This] insures that they can’t win.”

Other problems facing third party candidates are a lack of money available to their parties, a less polished policy plan, and the fact that candidates with low polling percentages don’t get invited to the presidential debates, Dr. Gonzalez said.

Dr. Stein is only polling at 2.6 percent, which makes it hard to see her as a viable candidate, Dr. Gonzalez said. However, she ran in 2012 and to date she is the female who has received the most votes in a presidential election, with a total of only 396,684 votes. However, Clinton is bound to steal this title from Stein in November.

“She has run for multiple state and federal offices in the past,” Dr. Gonzalez said of Dr. Stein. “She hasn’t won any of those elections. She is an activist and a former medical doctor -- and … she is to the left of Hillary Clinton.”

Dr. Stein has put renewable energy, environmental issues, medical, education, and minimum wage on her agenda.

By 2030 Dr. Stein wants to transition the United States to 100 percent renewable energy, Dr. Gonzalez said. She also wants to end fracking, oil extraction and offshore drilling.

“She wants a single payer health care system, this would be Medicare for all, so government funded, automatic -- everybody would have healthcare,” Dr. Gonzalez said.

On top of her stances on environmental issues, she also has plans for changes that could potentially improve the lives of many low income individuals.

Dr. Stein wants to make kindergarten through undergraduate school free for everyone, and to increase the federal minimum wage to $15 an hour, Dr. Gonzalez said.

“She also wants to create a truth and reconciliation committee to address the legacy of slavery in the United States,” he said. “And you could even say that even just addressing the legacy of segregation and Jim Crow would be a good start.”

“This is something that we really haven’t done in the United States,” Dr. Gonzalez said. “In terms of having that reckoning -- having that conversation about what is owed the black community for the injustices it suffered under both slavery and segregation.”

Unlike Dr. Stein, Johnson, the other third-party candidate discussed, who is running for the Libertarian Party, has served in public office.

“In 2000 Gary Johnson started a construction company that became the largest construction firm in New Mexico,” Dr. Sell said. “[He] used that to catapult himself into the governorship of New Mexico.”

“Libertarians believe in the least amount of government possible,” Dr. Sell said. “To their credit they extend that to social issues by and large.”

“On the other hand, they espouse an economic philosophy that we tried in the 1800s which is when we had no 40-hour work week, no overtime, no workplace protection -- we had child labor,” he said.

Johnson wants to see a more balanced budget, which is something he strived for through an record number of vetoes while he was Governor, Dr. Sell said.

He supports rights for the LGBTQ community, including gay marriage, Dr. Sell said.

“[He] wants criminal justice to reform including endings mandatory minimums and decriminalizing the war on drugs -- because the war on drugs has been a failure,” he said.

Johnson wants to do away with Common Core and national standard, and like Trump, he supports charter schools, Dr. Sell said.

He also wants to do away with income taxes and replace it with a sales tax, Dr. Sell said.

“Sales tax effects the poor more than the rich, so it would shift the tax burden onto lower income Americans,” he said.

Johnson take a pro-choice stance, but doesn’t want the government to pay for it, Dr. Sell said.

“Libertarians don’t think we should be the world’s policemen,” he said. “They’re fairly consistent about that.”

Johnson said it should be easier to become a U.S. citizen, but doesn’t support amnesty, and doesn’t think we should focus on the effects of climate change, Dr. Sell said.

“the chances of Johnson or Stein winning the election would basically be premised on the democratic party and republican party ceasing to exist this election, but that doesn’t mean you shouldn’t look at them,” Dr. Gonzalez said. “Regardless of who you want to vote for, please vote.”