Now that the third presidential debate is over, pundits and pollsters are examining data from each debate. The Applied Policy Research Institute at Wright State University (APRI) is also examining debate-related data using Twitris, a Twitter sentiment and emotion tracking technology developed at Wright State.

The following screen shots were taken at the end of each presidential debate showing the national sentiment and sentiment in Ohio for each candidate. (Note: Sentiment scores are assigned by giving individual tweets a score of -1 or +1 to denote a negative or positive tweet about a candidate. Those scored tweets are then aggregated for an overall sentiment score for the candidate.)

The first presidential debate was held on September 26, 2016. According to Nate Silver's site FiveThirtyEight, Clinton polled at 42% and Trump at 41% on September 26. At this time, it was statistically a dead heat. Using Twitris during the debate, APRI captured national Twitter user sentiment for the two candidates. Trump dominated the volume of tweets with a ratio of more than 2 to 1. The map above shows the sentiment at the end of the debate and it clearly shows more states had a negative sentiment toward Clinton than Trump. This negative sentiment was also generally stronger against Clinton than Trump. Conversely, Trump had more Ohio counties express strong negative sentiment as compared to Clinton. Despite this sentiment map, numerous polls declared Clinton the winner of the first debate.
The second debate was held on October 9, 2016. According to FiveThirtyEight, Clinton moved ahead in the polls to 44.8% and Trump remained steady at 39.7%. As in the first debate, Trump dominated Twitter traffic at a rate of about 2 to 1. However, the end of the debate did not result in the strong negative sentiment toward the candidates. In this debate, both candidates were able to decrease the negative sentiment and in the case of Clinton actually move states to a positive sentiment. Conversely, the positive sentiment Trump had at the end of the first debate disappeared at the end of the second debate. Post-debate polls indicated that Clinton won this second debate.

The third debate was held on October 19, 2016. The polls at this point showed Clinton beginning to move ahead slightly and in some states, increase her lead. FiveThirtyEight showed Clinton at 45.4% and Trump declining to 38.8%. Trump again dominated Twitter traffic although his overall sentiment remained negative, moreso compared to the second debate. Clinton maintained her mix of negative and positive sentiment from the end of the second debate. According to the sentiment analysis, Ohio remained a tossup as is consistent with current polls of Ohio.