

**Edwards, Wattenberg, and Lineberry**  
**Government in America: People, Politics, and Policy**  
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## **Chapter 7**

# **The Mass Media and the Political Agenda**



# Monday 11/19

- **New Unit- Unit 3=Linkage Institutions**
- Intro Ch 7 Media
- What is a linkage institution?
- What is the media? What role do they play in a democracy?
- What is broadcast v. print media?

# What are Linkage Institutions?

- **Connect citizens / voters to government and politics**
- **Encourage participation**
- **FOUR Main Types**
  - Media
  - Interest Groups
  - Political Parties
  - Elections



# Quote

■ **“Our liberty depends on the freedom of the press, and that cannot be limited without being lost.” Thomas Jefferson**

# EQ # 14- What is the Media & how do they affect politics?

## ■ Mass Media:

- Television, radio, newspapers, magazines, the Internet and other means of popular communication that influences ALL (the “masses” not just the elite)

## ■ High-Tech Politics:

- Describes the significant influence of technology on the political behavior of citizens and policymakers and the political agenda itself.

# Big Paper Activity- Free Press

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- **Form a team of FOUR; read the article.**
- **Respond silently in writing to the questions at the end of the article AND to each other's comments. (15 minutes)**
  - What is the purpose of journalism? What is its role?
  - What values and ideals do you think quality journalism should uphold?
  - How important is a free press to the US and world?

# Big Paper- Part 2 & 3

- **Students now get up and walk around to view other groups' papers.**
- **READ and ADD comments to new posters (10 min)**
- **Part 3- Return to your group's paper. Read new comments and discuss**



# Debrief

■ **Is a free press important? Should it be limited or have absolute power?**



# Key Questions- Media

- **How does the media shape the policy agenda?**
- **Why is it important to review multiple news sources today?**
- **How have trends in the way we consume news changed our understanding of politics?**

# Why Free Press?

- In the US, the guarantee of a free press is written into the First Amendment.
- It is closely related to Free Speech.
- How important is it to the world that there be a free press?

# The Development of Media Politics

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## ■ Background...media history-

- The news media wasn't always so important.
- Daily newspapers and radio- mid 19<sup>th</sup> Century
- Television has only been widespread since 1950's

\*Until the 1960's, reporters submitted questions in writing and Presidents responded in writing

# The Development of Media Politics

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- **FDR invented media politics**-viewed media as an ally to his message
- **Press Conferences:** Controlled meetings of public officials with reporters.
  - Franklin Roosevelt held over 1,000;

**\*Until 1961, many reporters saw themselves as an extension of government and accepted what gov't told them.**



# TUESDAY

- **Broadcast and print media- differences and pros / cons**
- **Trends in news**
- **Activity- Primary Source analysis**

# What is Investigative Journalism?

**What changed?** The relationship between media and government changed during Vietnam War and Watergate

- **Investigative Journalism:** Use of in-depth reporting to unearth scandals & problems putting reporters & politicians opposite each other.
- Coverage of presidential candidates has become less favorable.
- Media today has a more cynical view of government
- Media plays role of critic

# How does government use the Mass Media Today?

## ■ Effective communication through media is key to political success.

- **Media Events:** events purposely staged for the media that nonetheless look spontaneous.
  - Media events can be staged by almost anybody.
- Image making and news management is important, especially for presidents.

# The History of Media Politics

## ■ Two types of media-

- PRINT and BROADCAST

## ■ The Print Media

- Newspapers and magazines
- **“Yellow journalism”**: A sensational style of reporting characterized newspapers at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.
- **Sensationalism**- Use of shocking stories and language at the expense of accuracy



# Print Media – Newspapers

Why Read Newspapers?

- \* Newspaper reporting is more in-depth and substantive.
- \* Newspaper readers tend to be politically informed and active.

# Print Media

## TRENDS-

- \*Far FEWER daily newspapers (since recession of 2008)
- \*Far FEWER newspaper readers.
- Newspaper and newsweekly circulation has declined sharply in the last decades.
- More people use Internet and television to get their news than read it.
- **Show Graphic-**  
<http://www.journalism.org/2016/06/15/newspapers-fact-sheet/>

# Newspapers Today

**Newspaper Chains:** Are newspapers produced by massive media conglomerates

\*They account for over 75% of the nation's daily newspaper circulation today

- Also control broadcast media

\*Most influential newspapers today-

**New York Times** (considered most in-depth)

**Washington Post** (best for Washington coverage)

\*Most small and medium sized cities depend on Associated Press newswire service.

# Article Analysis- How News has Changed

- Form a team of THREE
- Read handout about how News has changed. There are TWELVE key questions. Divide them so each student reads and reports back about FOUR Q's.
- After reading, **REPORT** and **RECORD ONE** key point for EACH Q about media in your INB LEFT Side.



Wednesday

# What is Broadcast Media?

## ■ The Broadcast Media

- Television and radio
- Brought government and politics into peoples' homes.
  - Vietnam War
- Politicians' appearances and mannerisms became more important.
  - Kennedy-Nixon presidential debate

# Broadcast Media

- Broadcast media have displaced print media as Americans' principal source of news and information.
- **More people rely on T.V. for news than newspaper**
- **By 2-1 margin, people think t.v. reports are more believable than newspaper stories.**

# How is broadcast news reported?

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- Mainstream broadcast news reports tend to be
- BRIEF (less than 2 minutes)
- Lack substance
- Feature sensational stories



# What about Cable News?

- The Rise of Cable News Channels has led to ***narrowcasting***.
  - **Narrowcasting**: Media programming on cable TV or Internet that is focused on one topic or aimed at a particular audience,
  - e.g., C-SPAN, CNN, FOX
  - Potential of cable to report on news as it happens and offer myriad choices
  - Yet resources are limited and stories are not thorough

# Reporting the News

- Newscasting seeks high ratings and profits
- This can be detrimental for political agendas AND for informing Americans about politics.
- Unusual and negative events receive more attention than the everyday
- This leads public to think politics is scandalous and to distrust politicians

# Media Regulation

## ■ Who Regulates the Broadcast Media?

– The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) regulates the use of airwaves in three ways:

- Prevent near monopoly control of market
- Reviews performance of stations
- Issues fair treatment rules for politicians

# The Development of Media Politics

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## ■ The Impact of the Internet

- Potential to inform Americans about politics
- Internet is purposive—people *choose* what to learn about.
- Since Americans are generally disinterested in politics, they will not necessarily use the Internet for political information.
- **Blogs** provide additional information about news stories; can increase narrowcasting.

# Reporting the News

**TABLE 7.1**

The Top 25 Lycos Searches for the Week Before the 2008 Presidential Election

RANK	SEARCH TERM	RANK	SEARCH TERM
1.	Clay Aiken	14.	Naruto
2.	Paris Hilton	15.	WWE
3.	YOUTUBE	16.	Kanye West
4.	Travis Barker	17.	Lance Armstrong
5.	Pamela Anderson	18.	Biggest Loser
6.	Kim Kardashian	19.	Bristol Palin
7.	Facebook	20.	Lehman Brothers Bankruptcy
8.	DJ AM	21.	RUNESCAPE
9.	Britney Spears	22.	Kendra Wilkinson
10.	Dragonball	23.	Carmen Electra
11.	Lindsay Lohan	24.	Jennifer Hudson
12.	Sarah Palin	25.	Eva Mendes
13.	Megan Fox		

Source: <http://50.lycos.com/>.

# The Development of Media Politics

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## ■ Private Control of the Media

- Only a small number of TV stations are publicly owned in America.
- Independent in what they can report, media are totally dependent on advertising revenues.

# How is News Reported?

## ■ Finding the News

- **Beats:** specific locations which generate news, such as the courthouse, Congress or the White House
- **Trial Balloons:** an intentional news leak for the purpose of assessing the political reaction

# How is the News Presented?

- To sell!
- News stories have to fit a short time segment (broadcast news)
- Or fit in among advertisers (newspapers).

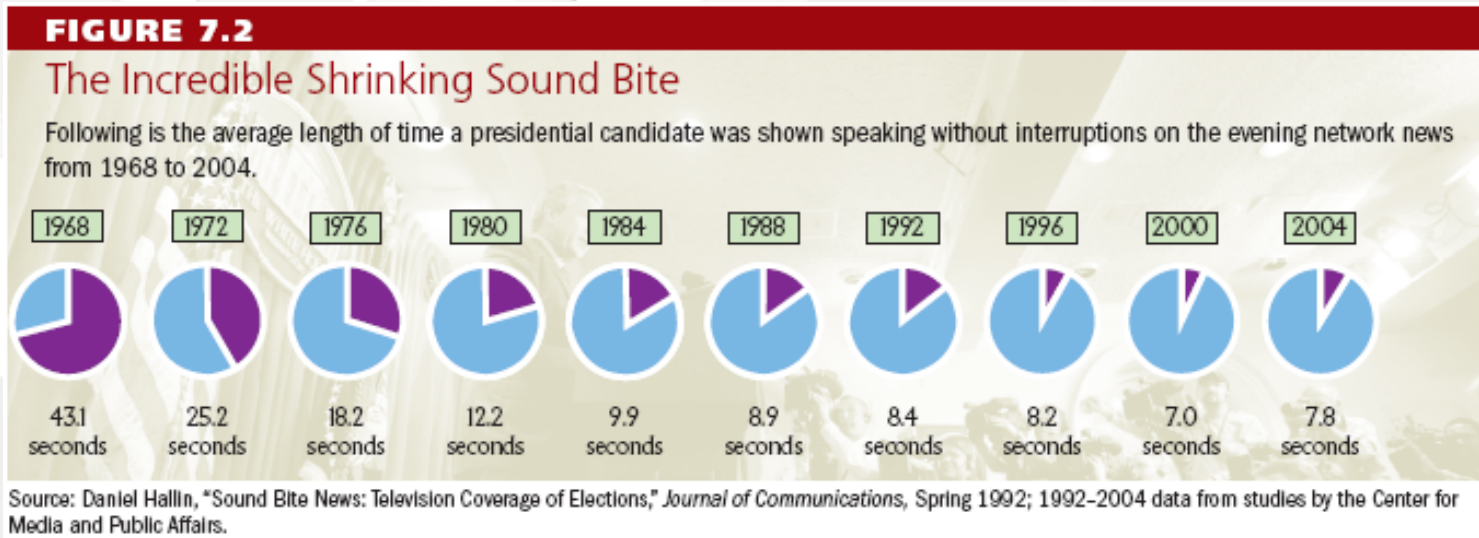




# How is the News Reported?

## ■ Presenting the News

- **Superficial** describes most news coverage today.
- **Sound Bites**: short video clips of approximately 15 seconds are all that is shown from a speech or activity



- Major TV networks devote less time to covering political candidates

# Activity- Cartoon Analysis

- Work in PAIRS
- Each take TWO cartoons / four total
- Follow prompts to analyze
- Look deeply at cartoon #1. Note shapes, colors, textures and position of people or objects.
- Write down what you see
- What questions do you have?
- What do you think it is saying? Interpret.
- Discuss with partner.
- Pick a new cartoon and do this together.









# Monday 11/26

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- Is the news biased?
- What role does bias play in how the news is received?
- What is the policy agenda?
- How does the media affect the policy agenda?



# Warm-Up

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- 1. Describe TWO major trends affecting PRINT media.**
- 2. List TWO reasons that broadcast news is more superficial than print?**
- 3. Which has more viewers/readers—print or broadcast news? WHY?**
- 4. How has the relationship between the press and government changed?**

# Is the News Biased?

## ■ Bias in the News

- Many people believe the news has a liberal bias
- There is some limited evidence to support this claim...such as
  - Reporters are twice as likely to call themselves liberal than the general public
  - In 1992, 44% of reporters said they were Democrats as opposed to 16% who identified as Republicans

# Is Media Biased

- **Liberals** – Say chief ownership of broadcast news outlets are owned by conservatives (Westinghouse, GE, Disney, Murdoch).
- **Conservatives**- Say major newspapers in the US have a liberal editorial board and reporters are liberal. It's been this way for decades (NY Times, Washington Post)



# Is the News Biased?

**It's hard to prove news is biased.**

**Why is the news typically characterized as politically neutral?**

- Most reporters are committed to journalistic objectivity, regardless of their personal opinions.
- Media outlets have a direct financial stake in attracting viewers/readers and don't want to appear biased

# Media Bias Activity

- **Answer the first question ALONE-  
Where do you go to read the news?**

- **Watch Media Bias film clip together**

<http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/lessons-plans/decoding-media-bias-lesson-plan/>

- **Now Work with a partner**

- **Do Media Bias handout with your partner**

- **Class Debrief**

# Where is the media bias?

- Research shows that reporting is *not* overly biased toward a particular ideology (liberal or conservative)
- But news reporting IS biased towards what will draw the largest audience—good pictures and negative reporting.
- People like **negative stories, conflict, violence and disaster**
- Good news is boring!!

# Reporting the News

**TABLE 7.2**

## Stories Citizens Have Tuned In and Tuned Out

The explosion of the space shuttle <i>Challenger</i> in 1986	80%
Terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon	74%
Impacts of hurricanes Katrina and Rita	73%
Los Angeles riots	70%
Rescue of baby Jessica McClure from a well	69%
School shootings at Columbine High School in Colorado	68%
Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990	66%
Start of hostilities against Iraq in 2003	57%
Supreme Court decision on flag burning	51%
Opening of the Berlin Wall	50%
Arrest of O. J. Simpson	48%
Nuclear accident at Chernobyl	46%
Capture of Saddam Hussein	44%
Controversy over whether Elián González should have to return to Cuba	39%
2000 presidential election outcome	38%
Impeachment trial of President Clinton in the Senate	31%
Confirmation of John Roberts as Chief Justice	28%
Prescription drug benefit added to the Medicare program	25%
2004 Republican National Convention	22%
Release of President Bush's education plan in 2002	21%
Congressional debate about NAFTA	21%
Jack Abramoff's admission that he bribed members of Congress	18%
Ethnic violence in the Darfur region of Sudan	16%
Passage of the Communications Deregulation Bill	12%
Violent protests in Tibet against the Chinese government in 2008	12%
2003 Supreme Court decision upholding campaign finance reform	8%

Source: Pew Research Center for the People and the Press.

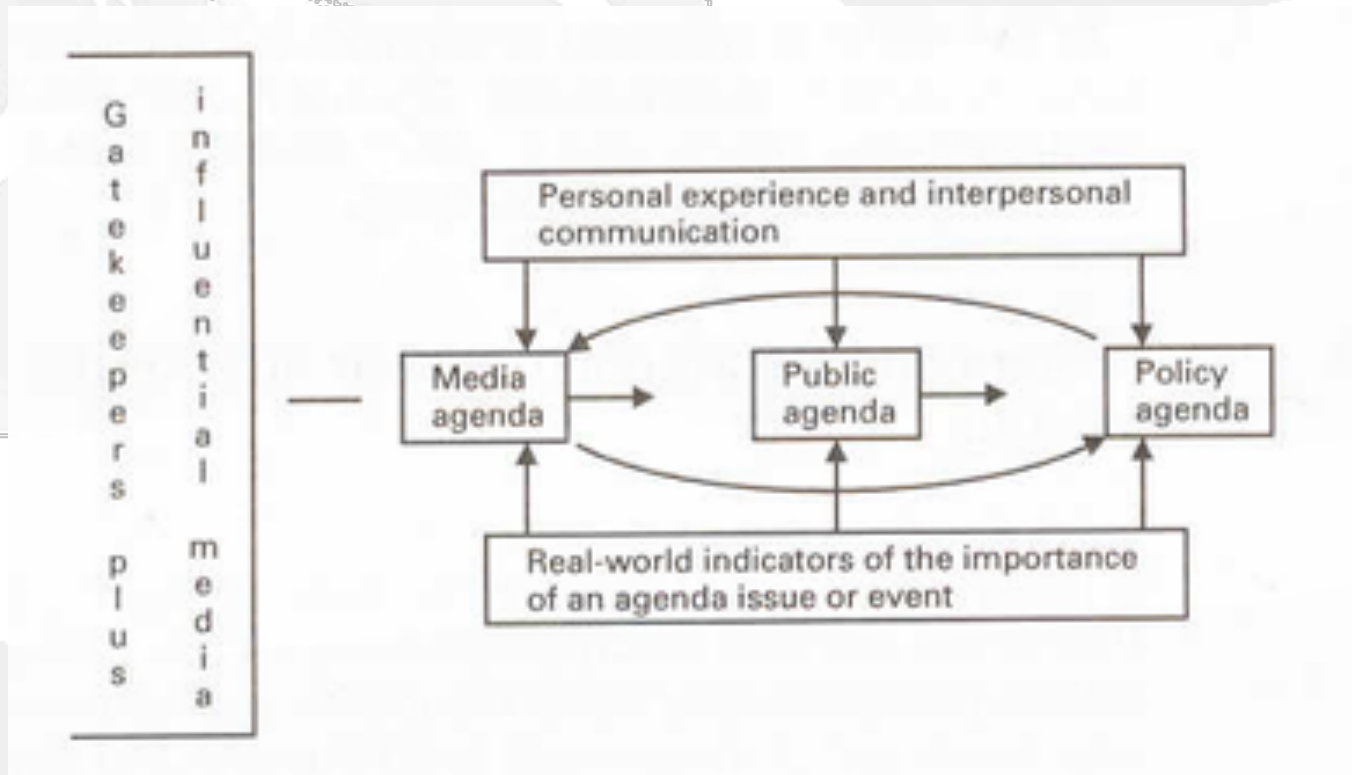
# What is the Agenda Setting Effect of News Reporting?

“The press may not be successful much of the time telling people *what* to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers *what to think about*.” Bernard Cohen, 1963.

# What is the Agenda Setting Effect of News Reporting?

- News reporting affects what people think is important because of what's covered.
  - **This is the Agenda-Setting Effect**
- Some stories or events can be made more or less important depending on their coverage.
- This affects public opinion and eventually what government acts on or ignores.

# What is the Agenda Setting Effect of News Reporting?



# The Media's Agenda-Setting Function

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## ■ Policy Agenda

- The list of subjects or problems to which government and citizens pay close attention
- Interest groups, political parties, & activists try to influence it.

## ■ Policy Entrepreneurs

- People who invest their political “capital” in an issue to get it placed high on the policy agenda
- **Use media to raise awareness of issue**



# What is the role of media in a democracy?

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## ■ The Media and the Scope of Government

- Media serves as a watchdog or critic.
- Media is an important check on government;
- This role is crucial to democracy-- demands that government be open and scrutinized.
- If media identifies a problem, it forces government to address it, which **EXPANDS** the scope of government

# Summary

- **EQ #14- What is media? Describe its role as a linkage institution.**
- **Summary-**
- **Write up THREE important points about media and politics that we have learned from this chapter.**

# Summary

- Media shape public opinion on political issues and influence the policy agenda.
- **Broadcast** media have replaced print media over time.
- **Narrowcasting** and the **Internet** are further shifting media. Voters select their own news sources and biases.
- Seeking profits, media are biased in favor of stories with high drama.



# FRQ Write

- **Read and Mark Up the prompt**
- **Discuss the prompt with a partner and outline your answer**
- **Write the prompt (alone)**