Chapter 7: The Mass Media and The Political Agenda

- The Mass Media Today
- The Development of Media Politics
- Reporting the News
- The News and Public Opinion
- Policy Entrepreneurs and Agenda Setting
- Understanding the Mass Media
- Summary

Chapter Outline and Learning Objectives

- The Mass Media Today
  - LO 7.1: Describe how American politicians choreograph their messages through the mass media.
- The Development of Media Politics
  - LO 7.2: Outline the key developments in the history of mass media and American politics.

Chapter Outline and Learning Objectives

- Reporting the News
  - LO 7.3: List the major criteria that determine which news stories receive the most media attention.
- The News and Public Opinion
  - LO 7.4: Analyze the impact the media has on what policy issues Americans think about.

Chapter Outline and Learning Objectives

- Policy Entrepreneurs and Agenda Setting
  - LO 7.5: Explain how policy entrepreneurs employ media strategies to influence the public agenda.
- Understanding the Mass Media
  - LO 7.6: Assess the impact of the mass media on the scope of government and democracy in America.
The Mass Media Today
LO 7.1: Describe how American politicians choreograph their messages through the mass media.

• Mass Media
  - Television, radio, newspapers, magazines, the Internet, and other means of popular communication.

• Media Events
  - Events that are purposely staged for the media and that are significant just because the media are there.

The Development of Media Politics
LO 7.2: Outline the key developments in the history of mass media and American politics.

• The Print Media
  - Yellow Journalism – Sensational style of reporting characterized newspapers at the turn of the century.

  - Chains - Groups of newspapers published by media conglomerates and today accounting for over four-fifths of the nation’s daily newspaper circulation.

The White House press secretary battles deals with the press corps, as correspondents attempt to obtain ever more information with the president’s spokesperson trying to control the press’s agenda and spin stories in the administration’s favor. Reporters try to ensure that the president’s words are clear, while the president’s press secretary Robert Gibbs offered to give members of the press a chance to ask their questions. Gibbs and two correspondents tried to answer their questions.

A recent editorial survey of journalists in America asked: What do you rate the importance of a number of things about the press? Of the American journalists surveyed, the percentages of journalists who rated each of these media roles as ”extremely important.”

Source: Adapted from David N. Weaver et al., The American Journalist in the 21st Century, MA: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2007, 148.

The Development of Media Politics
LO 7.2

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The Development of Media Politics

**LO 7.2**

**The Emergence of Radio and Television**
- Brought government and politics into peoples’ homes with events like the Vietnam War.
- Politicians’ appearances and mannerisms more important like events such as the Kennedy-Nixon presidential debates.

**Government Regulation of Electronic Media**
- The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) regulates the use of airwaves to (1) prevent near monopoly control of market, (2) review the performance of stations, and (3) issue fair treatment rules for politicians.

**The Impact of the Internet**
- Internet facilitates communication about politics in every conceivable direction.
- Potential to inform Americans about politics.
- Internet is purposive – People choose what to learn about.
- Blogs provide additional information about news stories.

**From Broadcasting to Narrowcasting: The Rise of Cable and Cable News**
- Narrowcasting - Media program on cable TV or Internet that is focused on one topic and aimed at a particular audience.
- Cable TV news channels can bring the news to people and political leaders as it happens.
The Development of Media Politics

LO 7.2

• Private Control of the Media
  • Media is independent in what they can report, and totally depend on advertising revenues.
  • Primary objective is getting the biggest possible audience.
  • Chains – Massive media conglomerates that account for over 80% of the nation’s daily newspaper circulation.

Reporting the News

LO 7.3: List the major criteria that determine which news stories receive the most media attention.

• Finding the News
  • Presenting the News
  • Bias in the News

Reporting the News

LO 7.3

• Finding the News
  • Beats – Specific locations from which news frequently emanates, like Congress or White House.
  • Trial Balloons – An intentional news leak for the purpose of assessing political reaction.
  • Reporters and their sources depend on each other for stories and to get them out.

Reporting the News

• Presenting the News
  • Superficial describes most news coverage today.
  • Sound Bites – Short video clips of approximately 10 seconds.
  • Major TV networks devote less time to covering political candidates.

Reporting the News

• Bias in the News
  • Many people believe the news is biased in favor of one point of view.
  • Generally is not very biased toward a particular ideology.
  • News reporting is biased towards what will draw the largest audience, such as good pictures and negative reporting.
The News and Public Opinion
LO 7.4: Analyze the impact the media has on what policy issues Americans think about.

- The media can affect what Americans think about.
  - By increasing public attention to specific problems, the media influence how the public evaluates political leaders.
  - By emphasizing one event over others, the media can have an effect on how the public evaluates specific events.

Policy Entrepreneurs and Agenda Setting
LO 7.5: Explain how policy entrepreneurs employ media strategies to influence the public agenda.

- Policy Agenda
  - Issues that attract the serious attention of public officials and other people involved in politics at the time.
- Policy Entrepreneurs
  - People in or out of government who invest their political "capital" in an issue they want on the policy agenda.

Understanding the Mass Media
LO 7.6: Assess the impact of the mass media on the scope of government and democracy in America.

- The Media and the Scope of Government
- Individualism and the Media
- Democracy and the Media

- The Media and the Scope of Government
  - Media as watchdog restricts politicians.
  - New proposals are met with skepticism which restricts scope of government, what it can do.
  - Media reports problem and force government to address it, which expands the scope of government.
• Individualism and the Media
  • Candidates run on their own by appealing to people on television.
  • Easier to focus on one person like the president, than groups, Congress, or the courts.

• Democracy and the Media
  • “Information is the fuel of democracy.”
  • But news provides more entertainment than information; it is superficial.
  • News is a business, giving people what they want.

LO 7.1
Summary

• The Mass Media Today
  • Politicians stage media events for the primary purpose of getting attention from the media.
  • These events are artfully stage-managed to present the intended message.
  • Campaign commercials are also carefully crafted to convey specific images and information.

Media events are purposely staged for the media and are significant just because the media are ________.

A. high-tech.
B. there.
C. technology.
D. politics.

LO 7.2
Summary

• The Development of Media Politics
  • Newspapers were long the dominant media for news.
  • Since the emergence of television they have been on the decline.
  • Internet accelerated the decline of newspaper reading, and newspapers failed to establish profitability for their online editions.
LO 7.2 Summary

• The Development of Media Politics (cont.)
  • Nightly network news broadcasts on CBS, NBC, and ABC were the #1 means by which Americans got their news from the 1960s through the 1980s.
  • Since cable and cable news they have seen their audiences shrink, as TV has moved from broadcasting to the narrowcasting era.

• The Internet provides more access to political information than ever possible before.
• Campaigns and political activists have been able to use the Internet to organize for political action and to get specially targeted messages out.

The trend toward more negative and cynical news coverage began during the __________.
A. Great Depression.
B. Korean War.
C. Vietnam War.
D. Persian Gulf War.

LO 7.3 Summary

• Reporting the News
  • The media define “news” largely as events that are unusual and out of the ordinary.
  • Because of economic pressures, the media are biased in favor of stories with high drama that will attract people’s interest instead of extended analyses of complex issues.

Which of the following factors best account(s) for what is considered newsworthy?
A. A story’s high entertainment value.
B. A story’s high informational value.
C. A story’s high political value.
D. All of the above.
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**LO 7.3**

Summary

- The News and Public Opinion
  - Media shapes the political agenda.
  - What issues Americans think about is much influenced by which issues the media choose to cover.
  - The media are like a searchlight, bringing one episode and then another out of darkness and into the public eye.

Which of the following characterizes how media affect public opinion?

A. Media affect which issues the public finds to be important.  
B. Media affect the public’s evaluation of elected officials.  
C. Media affect knowledgeable citizens’ policy agendas.  
D. All of the above.

**LO 7.4**

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**LO 7.4**

Summary

- Policy Entrepreneurs and Agenda Setting
  - Policy entrepreneurs seek to influence the policy agenda by getting the media to pay attention to the issues that concern them.
  - They use strategies to obtain media coverage, including press releases, press conferences, letter writing, and staging dramatic events.

Policy entrepreneurs’ arsenal of weapons includes __________.

A. press releases.  
B. press conferences.  
C. letter writing.  
D. all of the above.

**LO 7.5**
Policy entrepreneurs’ arsenal of weapons includes __________.

A. press releases.
B. press conferences.
C. letter writing.
D. all of the above.

LO 7.6 Summary

• Understanding the Mass Media
  • The media’s role as a watchdog over government sometimes constrains expansions of the scope of government by being skeptical about what government can accomplish.
  • On the other hand, media crusades against injustices sometimes serve to encourage government to take on increased responsibilities.

Television’s emphasis on the individual has the effect of encouraging __________.

A. greater news coverage of the Supreme Court.
B. greater news coverage of Congress.
C. greater news coverage of ordinary voters.
D. greater news coverage of the presidency.

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