

Study Outline

Chapter 10: The Media

- I. Journalism in American political history
 - A. The party press
 - 1. Parties created and subsidized various newspapers
 - 2. Circulation was small, newspapers expensive, advertisers few
 - 3. Newspapers circulated among political and commercial elites
 - B. The popular press
 - 1. Changes in society and technology made the press self-supporting and able to reach mass readership.
 - a. High-speed press
 - b. Telegraph
 - c. Associated Press, 1848; objective reporting
 - d. Urbanization allowed large numbers to support paper
 - e. Government Printing Office; end of subsidies in 1860
 - 2. Influence of publishers, editors created partisan bias
 - a. "Yellow journalism" to attract readers
 - b. Hearst foments war against Spain
 - 3. Emergence of a common national culture
 - C. Magazines of opinion
 - 1. Middle class favors new, progressive periodicals
 - a. *Nation, Atlantic, Harper's* in 1850s and 1860s on behalf of certain issues
 - b. *McClure's, Scribner's, Cosmopolitan* later on
 - 2. Individual writers gain national followings through investigative reporting
 - 3. Number of competing newspapers declines, as does sensationalism
 - 4. Today the number of national magazines focusing on politics accounts for a small and declining fraction of magazines.
 - D. Electronic journalism
 - 1. Radio arrives in the 1920s, television in the 1940s
 - 2. Politicians could address voters directly but people could easily ignore them
 - 3. But fewer politicians could be covered
 - a. President routinely covered
 - b. Others must use bold tactics
 - 4. Recent rise in the talk show as a political forum has increased politicians' access to electronic media
 - a. Big Three networks have made it harder for candidates by shortening sound bites
 - b. But politicians have more sources: cable, early morning news, news magazine shows
 - c. These new sources feature lengthy interviews
 - 5. No research on consequences of two changes:
 - a. Recent access of politicians to electronic media
 - b. "Narrowcasting," which targets segmented audiences
 - 6. Politicians continue to seek visuals even after they are elected
 - E. The Internet
 - 1. Ultimate free market in political news
 - 2. Voters and political activists talk to one another
- II. The structure of the media
 - A. Degree of competition
 - 1. Newspapers
 - a. Number of daily newspapers has declined significantly
 - b. Number of cities with multiple papers *has* declined
 - 1. 60 percent of cities had competing newspapers in 1900
 - 2. Only 4 percent in 1972
 - c. Newspaper circulation has fallen since 1967
 - d. Most people now get most of their news from television
 - 2. Radio and television
 - a. Intensely competitive, becoming more so

- b. Composed mostly of locally owned and managed enterprises, unlike Europe
 - c. Orientation to local market
 - d. Limitations by FCC; widespread ownership created
- B. The national media
 - 1. Existence somewhat offsets local orientation
 - 2. Consists of
 - a. Wire services
 - b. National magazines
 - c. Television networks
 - d. Newspapers with national readerships
 - 3. Significance
 - a. Washington officials follow it closely
 - b. Reporters and editors different from the local press
 - 1. Better paid
 - 2. From more prestigious universities
 - 3. More liberal outlook
 - 4. Do investigative or interpretive stories
 - 4. Roles played
 - a. Gatekeeper: what is news, for how long
 - 1. Auto safety
 - 2. Water pollution
 - 3. Prescription drugs
 - 4. Crime rates
 - b. Scorekeeper: who is winning, losing
 - 1. Attention to Iowa, New Hampshire
 - 2. Gary Hart in 1984 and John McCain in 2000
 - c. Watchdog: investigate personalities and expose scandals
 - 1. Hart's name, birth date, in 1984; Donna Rice in 1987
 - 2. Watergate (Woodward and Bernstein)
- III. Rules governing the media
 - A. Newspapers versus electronic media
 - 1. Newspapers almost entirely free from government regulation; prosecutions only after the fact and limited: libel, obscenity, incitement
 - 2. Radio and television licensed, regulated
 - B. Confidentiality of sources
 - 1. Reporters want right to keep sources confidential
 - 2. Most states and federal government disagree
 - 3. Supreme Court allows government to compel reporters to divulge information in court if it bears on a crime
 - 4. Myron Farber jailed for contempt
 - 5. Police search of newspaper office upheld
 - C. Regulating broadcasting
 - 1. FCC licensing
 - a. Seven years for radio
 - b. Five years for television
 - c. Stations must serve "community needs"
 - d. Public service, other aspects can be regulated
 - 2. Recent movement to deregulate
 - a. License renewal by postcard
 - b. No hearing unless opposed
 - c. Relaxation of rule enforcement
 - 3. Radio broadcasting deregulated the most
 - a. Telecommunications Act of 1996 permits one company to own as many as eight stations in large markets (five in smaller ones)
 - b. Results:
 - 1. Few large companies now own most of the big-market radio stations
 - 2. Greater variety of opinion on radio
 - 4. Other radio and television regulations
 - a. Equal time rule
 - b. Right-of-reply rule

- c. Political editorializing rule
- 5. Fairness doctrine was abolished in 1987
- D. Campaigning
 - 1. Equal time rule applies
 - a. Equal access for all candidates
 - b. Rates no higher than least expensive commercial rate
 - c. Debates formerly had to include all candidates
 - 1. Reagan-Carter debate sponsored by LWV as a "news event"
 - 2. Now stations and networks can sponsor
 - 2. Efficiency in reaching voters
 - a. Works well when market and district overlap
 - b. Fails when they are not aligned
 - c. More Senate than House candidates buy TV time

IV. The effects of the media on politics

- A. Studies on media influence on elections
 - 1. Generally inconclusive, because of citizens'
 - a. Selective attention
 - b. Mental tune-out
 - 2. Products can be sold more easily than candidates
 - 3. Newspaper endorsements of candidates
 - a. Often of Republicans locally, whereas of Democrats nationally
 - b. But worth 5 percent of vote to endorsed Democrats
- B. Major effect is on how politics is conducted, not how people vote
 - 1. Conventions scheduled to accommodate television coverage
 - 2. Candidates win party nomination via media exposure, for example, Estes Kefauver
 - 3. Issues established by media attention
 - a. Environment
 - b. Consumer issues
 - 4. Issues that are important to citizens similar to those in media
 - a. TV influences political agenda
 - b. But people less likely to take media cues on matters that affect them personally
 - 5. Newspaper readers see bigger candidate differences than do TV viewers
 - 6. TV news affects popularity of presidents; commentaries have short-term effect

V. Government and the news

- A. Prominence of the president
 - 1. Theodore Roosevelt: systematic cultivation of the press
 - 2. Franklin Roosevelt: press secretary a major instrument for cultivating press
 - 3. Press secretary today: large staff, many functions
 - 4. White House press corps is the focus of press secretary
 - 5. Unparalleled personalization of government
- B. Coverage of Congress
 - 1. Never equal to that of president; members resentful
 - 2. House quite restrictive
 - a. No cameras on the floor until 1978
 - b. Sometimes refused to permit coverage of committees
 - c. Gavel-to-gavel coverage of proceedings since 1979
 - 3. Senate more open
 - a. Hearings since Kefauver; TV coverage of sessions in 1986
 - b. Incubator for presidential contenders through committee hearings

VI. Interpreting political news

- A. Are news stories slanted?
 - 1. Most people believe media, especially television, from which they get most news
 - a. But the percentage that thinks the media is biased is increasing
 - b. Press itself thinks it is unbiased
 - 2. Liberal bias of national media elite
 - 3. Various factors influence how stories are written
 - a. Deadlines
 - b. Audience attraction
 - c. Fairness, truth imposed by professional norms
 - d. Reporters' and editors' beliefs

4. Types of stories
 - a. Routine stories: public events regularly covered
 1. Reported similarly by all media; opinions of journalists have least effect
 2. Can be misreported: Tet offensive
 - b. Selected stories: public but not routinely covered
 1. Selection involves perception of what is important
 2. Liberal and conservative papers do different stories
 3. Increasing in number; reflect views of press more than experts or public
 - c. Insider stories: not usually made public; motive problem
 5. Studies on effects of journalistic opinions
 - a. Nuclear power: antinuclear slant
 - b. School busing: probusing
 - c. Media spin almost inevitable
 6. Insider stories raise questions of informant's motives
 - a. From official background briefings of the past
 - b. To critical inside stories of post-Watergate era
- B. Why do we have so many news leaks?
1. Constitution: separation of powers
 - a. Power is decentralized
 - b. Branches of government compete
 - c. Not illegal to print most secrets
 2. Adversarial nature of the press since Watergate
 - a. Press and politicians distrust each other
 - b. Media are eager to embarrass officials
 - c. Competition for awards
 - d. Spurred by Iranagate: arms for hostages
 3. Cynicism created era of attack journalism
 - a. Most people do not like this kind of news
 - b. Cynicism of media mirrors public's increasing cynicism of media
 - c. People believe media slant coverage
 - d. Public support for idea of licensing journalists or fines to discourage biased reporting
 4. Public confidence in big business down and now media are big business
 5. Drive for market share forces media to use theme of corruption
 6. Increased use of negative advertising
- C. Sensationalism in the media
1. Prior to 1980, sexual escapades of political figures not reported
 2. Since 1980, sex and politics extensively covered
 3. Reasons for change
 - a. Sensationalism gets attention in a market of intense competition.
 - b. Sensational stories are often cheaper than expert analysis and/or investigation of stories about policy or substantive issues.
 - c. Journalists have become distrusting adversaries of government.
 - d. Journalists are much more likely to rely on unnamed sources today and, as a result, are more easily manipulated.
 4. Impact of September 11
 - a. Public interest in national news
 - b. Greater confidence and trust in news organizations
- D. Government constraints on journalists
1. Reporters must strike a balance between
 - a. Expression of views
 - b. Retaining sources
 2. Abundance of congressional staffers makes it easier
 3. Governmental tools to fight back
 - a. Numerous press officers
 - b. Press releases, canned news
 - c. Leaks and background stories to favorites
 - d. Bypass national press for local
 - e. Presidential rewards and punishments for reporters based on their stories

