

2016-10-14

Linkage Institutions

Big Ideas

- Media and its influence on politics
- Media role in public discourse and how it changes
- Media's role in changing majority opinion

What is a “Linkage Institution”?

- **Linkage Institution** = some organized body that connects subjects of the government with the government itself
 - Examples
 - Mass media
 - * Television
 - * Radio
 - Who the f&%# listens to *radio*?
 - * Newspapers
 - *Wat.*
 - * Internet publications
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2016-10-17

The Development of Media

- Herbert Hoover(1929-1933)
 - Little to no media involvement in politics
- Franklin Delano Roosevelt(1933-1945)
 - Modern media becomes intertwined with politics
 - “Fireside chats”
 - * Press conferences twice per week
 - * Based on radio
 - * Press thought highly of FDR
 - Personality is FDR's greatest asset

- Uses media to help mental health of nation
 - * Morale booster
 - * Sympathizes with issues Americans face
 - 1960's see beginning of scornful media
 - Watergate scandal lampoons Nixon
 - Vietnam war creates sense of disillusionment with government
 - **Investigative journalism** = The use of in-depth study of a case to reveal the details of a particular subject
 - * Helps to reinforce negative view of government
 - * Media is seen as limiting force on government
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Media Coverage

- Media holds a lot of leverage in what gets airtime
- ↑Coverage = ↑Public engagement
- Can also affect tone
- **Policy Agenda** = the collection of issues the media brings into focus that the government can address
 - “spin” = a unique framing of a problem that leads people towards a certain view
 - **Political Capital** = reputation among other politicians and the public that can be expended for policy
 - * Almost like a currency

Practice FRQ

One of the most important ways the news media influence politics is through agenda setting.

- a. Define policy agenda
- b. Explain how the national news media engage in agenda setting
- c. Explain the primary reason the president tends to have an advantage over Congress in gaining media attention

Answer

- a. **Policy agenda** is the collection of issues the media chooses to focus on through selective airing and tone.
- b. Media sources only have a limited amount of time they can expect their audience to consume their media. Through selectively choosing to give airtime to certain issues and putting a “spin” on their presentation, they can develop the issues that are prevalent in the common consciousness.
- c. Electoral elections get much higher voter turnout than do congressional elections; more people pay attention to the president. Additionally, the president is easier to tie into a narrative; individual intentions become clearer when they are directed by a single person as opposed to a body of elected officials.

Bias in the Media

- Two types of bias
 - **Ideological bias** = some media outlets exhibit a right-left lean
 - * CNN(Clinton News Network)
 - * Fox News
 - **Structural bias** = stories are chosen and presented in order to get good ratings—not necessarily to present the truth
 - * “If it bleeds, it leads.”
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2016-10-20

Political Parties as Linkage Institutions

- **Political Party** = an organization that strives for maintaining political office
- Can be thought of as three parts
 - The electorate
 - The organization
 - Elected officials
- Actions
 - Nominate political candidates

- Run and administer campaigns
 - Coordinate policy-making
 - **Incumbent** = an official seeking re-election
 - **Grassroots Mobilization** = a political movement organized with a bottom-up approach
 - For example, an Anarchist revolution :D
 - **Ticket-Splitting** = in an election where multiple ballots are cast for different positions, the voter votes for different parties for each position
 - causes **divided government**
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Divided Government

- Caused by a number of factors
 - Development of social issues over last 4 decades
 - * Gay marriage
 - * Abortion
 - * Women's rights
 - * Civil rights

Emergence of Political Parties

- Political machines emerged in the early 1800's
 - Exchanged favors for votes
 - * Especially immigrants
- **Patronage** = elected officials giving benefits to loyal party supporters
 - Giving jobs to campaigners
- **Pendleton Civil Service Act** = an attempt to make civil service meritocratic
 - Hurt power of political machines
- Local parties have better organization than national parties
- **Primary**
 - An election orchestrated by a political party that selects a candidate
 - **Closed Primary** = only voters registered as that party can vote

- **Open Primary** = independents and those registered as that party can vote
- Inhibits parties from *choosing* the candidate they want
 - * Unless you're the DNC; in which case, *screw that lol*
- **Coalition** = a group of voters that share a common interest
 - Typically support one party over a period of time
 - Voting in blocks makes endorsements important for candidates

Party Eras

- **Party Era** = a period of time when one political party is dominant
 - Caused by coalitions growing and shrinking in size
 - **Critical Election** = an election that serves as boundaries between party eras
 - e.g. FDR in 1932
 - **Party Realignment** = new issue redraws coalition bounds, changing the political parties in the process
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Party Eras in History

- **New Deal Coalition** = 1932-1968
 - Voted consistently for Democratic party
 - Groups included
 - * Urban working class
 - * African Americans
 - * Catholics and Jews
 - * Lower-income families
 - * Southerners
- **Divided Government Coalition** = 1968-present
 - Presidential elections typically don't align with Congressional results
 - Caused by number of things
 - * Distrust in government
 - Vietnam war
 - Watergate scandal

- Investigative journalism
- * Social issues emerge
 - Abortion
- **Dealignment** = party coalitions start to shift, many people disengage

Third Parties

- Can serve to spread messages into the popular consciousness
 - “Splinter”, “Economic Protest”, “Charismatic Leader”
 - Disenfranchised by our electoral system
 - First Past the Post/Single Member District voting
 - * Winner takes all, nothing for loser
 - * “Democracy is nothing more than mob rule, where 51% of the people may take away the rights of the other 49%.” – Jefferson
 - **Proportional Representation** = seats in Congress are distributed based on votes received by each party
 - **Coalition Government** = multiple parties come together to make policy
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2016-10-27

What Are Interest Groups?

- **Interest Group** = a body of people who organize under similar policy goals
- *How is that different from a “political party”?*
 - Political parties offer candidates for president
 - Interest groups are **policy specialists**
 - * Means they write legislation on a very specific issue
 - Political parties are **policy generalists**
 - * Means they write legislation for broad purposes

Negative Perception of Interest Groups

- Generally, interest groups are seen as a negative influence on politics
- *Why?*
 - Framers of the constitution looked down on “factions”?
 - * James Madison, Federalist Paper #10

- Warns against factions
- Corrupt lobbyists get a lot of attention by the media
- “Lobbying” seen as corporate influence on politics

Iron Triangles

- **Iron Triangle** = a relationship formed between Congress, interest groups, and federal agencies(the Bureaucracy)
 - **Issue Network** = groups of entities that are connected through the effort to get a law passed
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2016-10-28

What Makes an Interest Group Successful?

- **Free-Rider Problem** = people can benefit from activities of interest groups without supporting them
 - Unions face a similar problem with collective bargaining
 - The larger the group, the more significant this problem is
- Group Size
 - Smaller groups are easier to manage than large groups
 - Larger groups offer faster spread of information
 - * *Propaganda*
 - **Consumer Advocacy Group** = an interest group composed of consumers that aims to shape policy that benefits said consumers
 - **Selective Benefits** = only giving certain benefits to members of the interest groups
 - * Helps to curb the Free-Rider Problem
- Intensity
 - **Single-Issue Groups** = interest groups that organize behind one particular stance on one particular issue
 - * Members can focus on their *unity*, rather than their differences
 - Emotionally charged subjects tend to unite like-minded people
 - * Psychological advantage
 - More likely to act directly
 - * Protests
 - * Petitions

- Financial Backing
 - We live in a capitalist dystopia
 - If you want to reach people, you'll need money
 - * Results in corporate speech being heard much more loudly than individual speech

How Do Interest Groups Shape Policy?

- **Lobbying** = the process of hiring a person to go to Congress and affect policy-making
 - Lobbyists provide information to Congresspeople
 - Allows politicians to take credit for advancing that policy position
 - **Electioneering** = direct influence on electoral process
 - **Political Action Committee(PAC)** = organizations funded by corporations and unions that donate to candidates directly
 - * 527's and 501(c)3's are used to file donations as **independent expenditures**
 - **Independent Expenditure** = an expense that is eligible for write-off
 - Makes rich people's incomes *look* smaller(less tax), while being able to influence the political process
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2016-11-02

Running for President

- **Presidential Primary** = election through which candidates for president are selected
 - **Caucus** = people gather in a room and vote with their feet, each candidate has a chance to convince the others
 - * Like how Mongol societies voted with horse
 - * Iowa is first caucus
 - **Primary** = simple ballot casting procedure that selects a candidate using the FPTP system
 - Criticism
 - * Early caucuses and primaries get more attention
 - * Later states are discouraged from participating if not a close race

- * **Frontloading** = state holds a primary or caucus early to get all that *sweet, sweet* media attention
- **National Party Convention** = delegates allocated during primary season meet to vote for who the party's official candidate will be
 - Usually, primary winner is already known due to vote count
 - * Doesn't stop media from making damned good use of all that footage of balloons falling
 - Serves to unite the party after a bitter primary season
 - Isn't as big a deal as it used to be
 - **McGovern Fraser Commission(1968)** = committee that wrote new set of rules for selecting delegates in the Democratic convention
 - * Aimed at increasing representation for women and minorities
 - **Superdelegates** = delegates that are typically pledged to one candidate before primary season even begins
 - * Serves the interest of the party
- **General Election** = actual election season between the major parties
 - Debates are held to give candidates opportunities to voice policy
 - Media speculation can sway voter turnout
 - **Electoral College** = system by which the general election happens
 - * Each state legislature gets assigned a limited number of **electors**
 - State legislatures fill those spaces with people they like
 - * Candidate who reaches **plurality** takes all of the electors for that state
 - **Plurality** = more than anyone else
 - This doesn't apply to Nebraska and Maine; they assign electors proportionally
 - * Serves as insulating layer between the government and the people
 - * Shifts focus towards "battle-ground" states and highly-populated states

2016-11-08

Campaign Finance

Soft Money vs Hard Money

- **Federal Election Campaign Act of 1974**

- Created the **Federal Election Commission**
 - * Deals with legislation regarding campaigning and campaign finance
- Provisions
 - * Public financing of presidential elections = matching private donations
 - * Placed limits on spending
 - * Required disclosure
 - * Placed limits on private contributions
- The result: **soft money**
 - * **Soft money** = contributions directly to the party
 - Used for general party activities
 - Essentially unlimited
- **Hard money** = direct contributions to candidates
 - * Generally well-regulated
- *Buckley v Valeo(1974)*
 - Supreme court rules that limiting expenditures of a candidate amounts to abridging free speech
 - Strikes down provision that limits an individuals ability to contribute directly to a candidate

BCRA

- **Bipartisan Campaign Finance Reform Act(BCRA)**
 - Also known as the **McCain Feingold Act(2002)**
 - Sought to eliminate distinction between *soft* and *hard* money
 - Placed limits on contributions
 - * \$2,000 limit for individuals
 - * \$5,000 limit for PACs
 - Resulted in 527s and 501(c)3s
 - * 527s
 - Independent organization
 - Can spend an unlimited amount of money
 - * 501(c)3s
 - permits donors to remain anonymous
 - Intended primarily as religious institutions
 - Are only permitted to spend half of their funds on political activities

The Role of Capital in Campaigns

- **Political Action Committees(PACs)**
 - A legal entity that is permitted to donate large amounts of capital to political campaigns
 - Created by a 1974 law
 - **Not** considered an interest group
 - Candidates who represent the rich get more funding
 - * Capitalism is *garbage*
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2016-11-09

Citizens United

- *Citizens United v FEC(2010)*
 - Supreme court case that ruled that 527s and 501(c)3 organizations are considered “persons” under constitutional law
 - “Corporations are people too”
 - Overturned 30 and 60 day limits on advertisements
- **SuperPACs** = organizations similar to PACs
 - Also known as “independent expenditure only committees”
 - * *independent expenditure* means that money doesn’t go to the party; it funds advertising and the like itself
 - Not beholden to any particular candidate
 - * Can give money as they please
 - Virtually unregulated