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Data-Driven Journalism

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Final Project Ideas

1. Presidential Popularity

Since I have a strong interest in having my beat as politics/government, I am really interested in expanding upon the first small assignment we did where I researched presidential approval ratings and what they mean. I think it would be interesting to further look into where the approval ratings come from and how they impact a presidency. I find this to be incredibly timely as well because we have just finished the first year of the Biden presidency which really assists in predicting how the next three years will go until the next election. Maybe not focusing too much on the historical aspect so it doesn’t get too big, but using the history of approval ratings as a means of where the rating process is today.

I would use Gallup for polling research because they have a lot of good statistics on presidential approval ratings and I would also look at FiveThirtyEight, who also do some solid research on political stats. I think it would also be beneficial to look at party platforms historically and how they have changed over time and how that holds stakes in this.

Questions:

What exact numbers are used to calculate a presidential approval rating?

How has the process for calculating approval ratings changed over time?

How do campaigns utilize presidential approval ratings to assist them in furthering their agenda?

I expect to find out where these numbers have come from and their impact on a presidency, whether that be seats in the House for that president’s party or chances at re-election.

1. The Media & Politics

Over the last few years, the growing mistrust of the media has become a large issue in journalism. I think it would be interesting to look into this from a data perspective. I would be interested in breaking down public distrust of media over the last 20 or so years and how that relationship has developed in the age of social media when it comes to politics. To do this, I think I would look at how people’s consumption of the news changed when social media platforms were created and how that has impacted where they get their news and how they share that news with other people on their social media accounts. This may have been done more nationally, so maybe localizing it could be interesting. Also, the concept for announcing a candidacy on social media as well.

For my research, I would look at the Pew Research Center and the Brookings Institute because they have both done some work looking at how people think technology has both a positive and negative impact on politics in relation to social media. I would also look at The Dark Art of Political Memes by the New York Times.

Questions:

How did social media change the way people consume political news?

Was social media the cause of the distrust or was it already there and social media elevated it?

How many people get their news from social media, rather than actual news organizations?

I expect to find a large increase in the amount of people who gather their news from social media and that the creation of these social platforms didn’t create public mistrust of the media, it only enhanced it.