

MEDIA: Pervasive influence on politics

Where Americans get information about politics

65% from Television (and increasing)

40% from Newspapers (decreasing)

All forms of media are commercial

- Must have viewers/readers
- Leads to an emphasis on personality, conflict and dramatic events
- Distorts risk and fear
- Good pictures (obviously an important criteria for TV)
- Limited story substance

Technology reinforces media shallowness

Despite key role, little governmental oversight

- First amendment freedoms
- Equal time and free media are virtually non-existent

Basic Political Roles

- Signaler Role: Guide to public what is important, sets agenda
- Agenda Setting: Again, shallow, often done in “themes” or “Frames”. Usually follows stories over some sort of time frame.
- Talent Scout
- Handicaps the Race
- Public Defender

How Viewers Respond: Media Bias?

Market Bias: action, bad news, anti-incumbent

Bias screened by personal perceptions

- Selective Exposure: What media we use
- Selective Attention: Which stories we pay attention to
- Selective Perception: Your interpretations of the events shown

Sound-bites: Small quotes used by media to capture essence of a story. These are also designed by candidates to be used by the media.