A composite image for the top half of the slide. The left side shows a stack of papers with a blue tint. The right side shows a clock face with a purple tint. A black-bordered box is overlaid on the center.

# Chapter 7

A composite image for the bottom half of the slide. The left side shows a stack of papers with a green tint. The right side shows a clock face with a yellow tint. A black-bordered box is overlaid on the center.

## The Mass Media and the Political Agenda



# Introduction

## ■ Mass Media:

- Television, radio, newspapers, magazines, the Internet and other means of popular communication

## ■ High-Tech Politics:

- A politics in which the behavior of citizens and policymakers and the political agenda itself are increasingly shaped by technology

# The Mass Media Today

- Effective communication through media is key to political success.
  - Media Events: events purposely staged for the media that nonetheless look spontaneous
    - Media events can be staged by almost anybody.
  - 60% presidential campaign spending is TV ads
    - Two-thirds is negative.
  - Image making and news management is important, especially for presidents.



# The Development of Media Politics

- Press Conferences- meetings of public officials with reporters
- Investigative Journalism- use of detective-like reporting methods to unearth scandals
- Since 1960, news coverage of presidential candidates has become increasingly less favorable
- Two kinds of media
  - print media
  - broadcast media



# The Development of Media Politics

## ■ The Print Media

- Newspapers and magazines
- “Yellow journalism”: a sensational style of reporting characterized newspapers at the turn of the century; focused on violence, corruption, wars, and gossip
- Pecking order among newspapers
  - *New York Times* has largest impact; *Washington Post*, in government circles
  - *Associated Press (AP)*- wire service
- Newspaper and newsweekly circulation has declined



# The Development of Media Politics

## ■ The Broadcast Media

- Television and radio
- Brought government and politics into peoples' homes
  - Vietnam War
- Politicians' appearance and mannerisms more important
  - Kennedy-Nixon presidential debate





# The Development of Media Politics

- From Broadcasting to Narrowcasting: The Rise of Cable News Channels
  - Narrowcasting: media programming on cable TV or Internet that is focused on one topic and aimed at a particular audience, e.g., C-SPAN, ESPN etc.
  - Potential of cable to report on news as it happens and offer myriad choices
  - Yet, resources are limited and stories are not substantive



# The Development of Media Politics

- Government Regulation of the Broadcast Media
  - The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) regulates the use of airwaves in three ways:
    - Prevent near monopoly control of market
    - Reviews performance of stations
    - Issues fair treatment rules for politicians



# The Development of Media Politics

## ■ The Impact of the Internet

- Potential to inform Americans about politics
- Internet is purposive—people choose what to learn about
- Since Americans are generally disinterested in politics, they will not necessarily use the Internet for political information.
- Blogs provide additional information about news stories.

# The Development of Media Politics

## ■ Private Control of the Media

- Only a small number of TV stations are publicly owned in America.
- Independent in what they can report, media are totally dependent on advertising revenues.
- Chains: massive media conglomerates that account for over four-fifths of the nation's daily newspaper circulation
  - Also control broadcast media

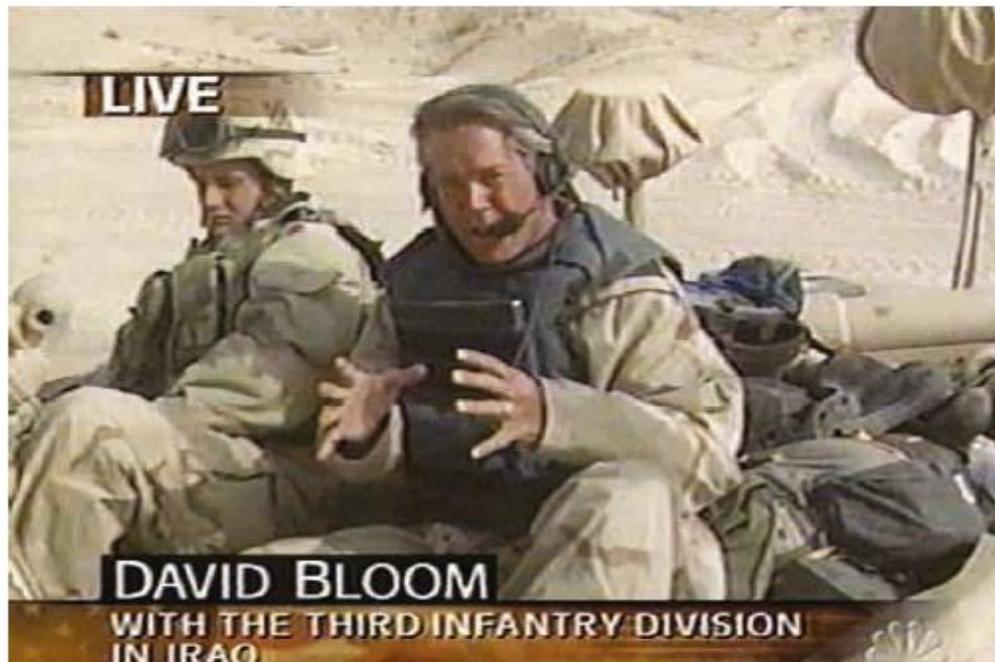


# Reporting the News

## ■ Finding the News

- Beats: specific locations from which news frequently emanates, such as Congress or the White House
- Trial Balloons: an intentional news leak for the purpose of assessing the political reaction
- Reporters and their sources depend on each other; one for stories, the other to get them out.
- Emphasis on covering the horse race at the expense of substantive topics.





In 2003, during the Iraq War, a number of journalists were embedded with fighting units, meaning that they traveled along with them day after day and literally became part of the unit. Being right in with the action enabled an immediacy of reporting that was never possible before. One much-praised example of embedded reporting was that of NBC's David Bloom, who sent back stunningly clear pictures of what it was like to move through the desert with an infantry division. Sadly, Bloom was one of a number of journalists who died during the conflict with Iraq. He suffered a pulmonary embolism, a condition that may have been brought on by long hours confined to a very small space inside an armored tank.



# Reporting the News

## Presenting the News

- *Superficial* describes most news coverage today.
- Sound Bites: short video clips of approximately 10 seconds

## Bias in the News

- Many people believe the news is biased in favor of one point of view.
- Generally are *not* very biased toward a particular ideology
- News reporting is biased towards what will draw the largest audience; good pictures and negative reporting
- “Talking head-” shot of a person’s face talking directly into the camera; visually unappealing

# The Media's Agenda-Setting Function

- Policy Agenda: decide which issues are important enough to bring to public attention
- Policy Entrepreneurs: people who invest their political “capital” in an issue to get it placed high on governmental agenda
  - Use media to raise awareness of issue



# Understanding the Mass Media

- Individualism
  - Candidates run on their own by appealing to people on television
  - Easier to focus on one person like the president, than groups, e.g., Congress or the courts
- Elections
  - Report polls
  - Offer short sound bites from candidates
  - Televised debates
- 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

