THE MEDIA AND U.S. POLITICS

I. INTRO
   a. In 2008, Obama understood the impact of the Internet and used it to his advantage
      i. Mostly concentrated on younger people
      ii. Young use facebook and myspace, which was used extensively by Obama in the 2008 election
      iii. Music video on Obama titled “Yes We Can!”

II. THE INFLUENCE OF THE MEDIA ON POLITICS
   a. INTRO
      i. Print media – the “fourth estate” or 4th branch of government
      ii. MASS MEDIA- all forms of information flow, reach almost everyone in U.S.
      iii. NEWS MEDIA – tells people what’s going on in the world
          1. Entertainment and news have become blurred; 60 Minutes and Dateline
      iv. Mass media disseminates messages on a large scale to a heterogeneous crowd
      v. Internet has become a more important source of news in the U.S.
   b. THE PERVASIVENESS OF TELEVISION
      i. TV has changed U.S. politics more than any other invention
      ii. Emotional impact not done in print media
      iii. Most people watch some type of TV news each day
      iv. Growth of around the clock cable news is one of the most recent developments
          1. Used to be only ABC, CBS, NBC; now CNN, FOX, MSNBC
2. Cable, Internet, Google bring instantaneous information 24/7
v. One of the big changes in last ½ century is dependence on TV advertising for candidates and parties; sound bites and slogans
vi. Much less focus on politics in local news; less than a minute per broadcast
vii. In large urban markets, newspapers do a much better job of covering Congressional candidates than TV
viii. In most contested referendums, advertising is the most important source of information for the voters
c. THE PERSISTENCE OF RADIO
   i. Radio continues to reach more households than TV
   ii. Essential while driving
   iii. More targeted than TV; can reach a distinct audience; NPR, talk radio
d. THE DECLINING IMPORTANCE OF NEWSPAPERS
   i. Declining, especially among younger people
   ii. Now have national newspapers such as WSJ and USA Today
   iii. Internet has hurt due to alternative; generating advertising revenue
e. THE GROWING POPULARITY OF THE INTERNET
   i. 12BB publicly accessible documents; 153MM unique domain names
   ii. 37% Internet is primary source for news
   iii. Younger people use it in place of library for schoolwork
   iv. Politicians use it effectively for fundraising efforts. Changed the way campaigns are financed
v. Provides inexpensive way to communicate with organization

III. THE CHANGING ROLE OF THE U.S. NEWS MEDIA
a. INTRO
i. Average American adult spends 67 minutes per day consuming news
ii. Media bashing has become a national pastime
b. A POLITICAL TOOL
i. From the framers, the Bill of Rights protected freedom of the press in 1st Amendment; watchdog of politics
ii. From Hamilton and Jefferson, newspapers created partisan viewpoints to be read and understood
c. FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE
i. In Jacksonian era, with greater suffrage, the news went from the elite to the masses and increased literacy significantly
ii. Created the ability to charge for newspapers; “penny press”; less political and more human interest stories to be bought
d. OBJECTIVE JOURNALISM
i. By early 20th century, sentiment is press should be independent of political parties; expressed by NY Times
ii. Reaction to “YELLOW JOURNALISM”- sensationalism and exaggeration of news
iii. Journalists viewed their work as a profession; code of ethics
e. THE IMPACT OF BROADCASTING
i. Radio and TV personalized the news; follow it as it happens
ii. 1933, FDR used radio effectively; fireside chats
iii. TV increased the dramatics of politics
iv. Cable news created 24/7 information and news; CSPAN
f. INVESTIGATORY JOURNALISM
   i. Do more than just report the news, investigate it which has significant political consequences; 60 Minutes;
   ii. Watergate was most significant; revealed secrets of Nixon administration through the media of TV, radio and newspaper; Deep Throat
g. MEDIA CONSOLIDATION
   i. Consolidation has created media giants that are multinational; Murdoch with FOX
   ii. Multi-news agencies that own newspapers, TV stations, radio stations
   iii. FCC is supporting the consolidation of media outlets; concern about limited access to information- one newspaper per city
h. REGULATION OF THE MEDIA
   i. FCC regulates media through licensing and fines

IV. MEDIATED POLITICS
a. INTRO
   i. 9/11 shows the power of TV into our lives
   ii. Media in general determines what we see, read, hear and reach many people quickly
   iii. Political parties and interest groups are not as important today because media shapes people’s perceptions of parties and candidates
   iv. News media has taken the role of speaking for the people; makes news not reports it
b. THE MEDIA AND PUBLIC OPINION
   i. TVs ability to present images and communicate events has greatly influenced public opinion
      1. News coverage of the Vietnam War
      2. Watergate
ii. For a long period of time, analysts believed that the political figure had more influence on media than media had influence on political figure; today media is more aggressive in news gathering
c. FACTORS THAT LIMIT MEDIA INFLUENCE ON PUBLIC OPINION
   i. POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION – our attitudes, beliefs and values can be stronger than the media message; we tend to watch and read what we believe in; CNN v FOX; NY Times v WSJ
   ii. SELECTIVITY –
      1. SELECTIVE EXPOSURE - filtering out what we don’t believe in; creating a bias
      2. SELECTIVE PERCEPTION – perceiving what we want out of political messages; Clinton’s Lewinsky affair
   iii. NEEDS – people read and watch news media for different reasons; entertainment (sex scandals) vs. affect on lives (economic issues)
   iv. AUDIENCE FRAGMENTATION – growth of cable and internet allow users to tailor the media to their specific preferences; CNN vs. FOX vs. CSPAN vs MSNBC vs Comedy Channel
d. ARE THE MEDIA BIASED?
   i. People blame media for being too conservative or liberal
   ii. Most U.S. news media are committed to being unbiased
      1. Insulate advertising from news and content
      2. Internal checks and balances between advertising and content
   iii. Some commentators complain that reporters have become too friendly with who they cover
   iv. Review table 10-1 on pg. 289
v. Journalists are more liberal than the population as a whole
vi. One bias that is not partisan is the bias towards sensationalism
e. PUBLIC OPINION – 2 important influences media exert
   i. AGENDA SETTING – by calling public attention to certain issues, media influences what will be debated; not absolute power
      1. Reagan used the media to set the national agenda; “the great communicator”
      2. Most effective when it appears to be natural or unscripted
ii. ISSUE FRAMING
    1. Media “spin”
    2. In referendum campaigns, the side that defines the battle the best, wins

V. THE MEDIA AND ELECTIONS
a. INTRO
   i. Coverage of campaigns greatest in presidential elections; least in state and local
   ii. Smaller the election, the more sway of opinion by news coverage; less news coverage
   iii. Diversification of news media, especially in larger campaigns, lessens the ability to influence the outcome of elections
b. CHOICE OF CANDIDATES
   i. Extensive use of TV enforces looking and sounding good, as well as increasing the political consulting industry
   ii. Highlights mistakes and gaffes by candidates and office holders; good TV
   iii. Candidates can overcome gaffes by utilizing TV advertising; Obama in PA
iv. TV can influence who has a chance to win; creative ads by lesser known candidates can get media attention

c. CAMPAIGN EVENTS
   i. “photo ops”; reinforce visual message and public image
   ii. National conventions are very strong events that capture national attention
       1. Cable channels now cover to a much greater extent than traditional TV

d. TECHNOLOGY
   i. Satellites allow candidates to broadcast nationally from home town or wherever they are
   ii. Target specific groups via cable TV or Internet
   iii. Internet and email used for more passive voters
       1. Citizens can interact with each other via blogs, utube, facebook

e. IMAGE MAKING AND MEDIA CONSULTANTS
   i. TV and the Internet media have given rise to MEDIA CONSULTANTS - campaign professionals who can provide candidates with positive media perception on media relations, advertising strategies, and opinion polling
       1. “power ties”; blue shirts
       2. Taken over the role of party politicians
       3. Coach candidates on how to act and behave on TV
       4. Utilize FOCUS GROUPS - small sample of people with in depth interviews
       5. Some criticize media consultants are the new political elite

f. THE MEDIA AND VOTER CHOICE
   i. PERSONALITY OVER SUBSTANCE
       1. Critics believe more importance on looks and personality than substantive issues
2. Strong public appetite for candidates’ strengths and weaknesses
3. Much depends on the sophistication of voters; well-informed are less swayed

ii. THE HORSE RACE
1. More commentary on where candidate is in polls versus issues
2. Propensity to discuss the “game” rather than issues

iii. NEGATIVE ADVERTISING
1. Voters say they dislike attack ads, but they actually do work and inform the voting public
2. Can create some VOTER SUPPRESSION – not turning out to vote

iv. INFORMATION ABOUT ISSUES
1. In recent elections have experimented with issues-centered focus called CIVIC JOURNALISM

v. MAKING A DECISION
1. More influence in primary versus general election because there is less information on primaries

vi. ELECTION NIGHT REPORTING
1. Controversy as to whether election night reporting influences the western states; don’t show up to vote if know they are losing
   a. Project winner when they are wrong
   b. Effectiveness of exit polling

VI. THE MEDIA AND GOVERNANCE
a. INTRO
   i. Lack of press attention to the way policies are implemented explains why we know little of day to day governance
ii. Media more concerned with large events and sensationalism

b. POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS AND THE MEDIA
   i. Presidents are the stars of the media
      1. “Bully pulpit”
      2. Manipulate news coverage to his advantage
      3. Most media coverage is favorable to neutral
   ii. Members of Congress try to cultivate relationships with media
   iii. Due to large size of Congress, less media influence
      1. More likely to get negative coverage
      2. Only given media coverage for sensationalist situations
   iv. Federal judiciary is the least dependent on the press
      1. Doesn’t rely on public opinion due to lack of term limits
      2. Manipulation of press more subtle
   v. News media most influential at local level
      1. Fewer news sources
   vi. Not all believe power is harmful
      1. Watchdog ability