The Media and Politics: 

Constant Evolution
Media ARE Plural

• From the word “medium” = way of delivering information
• Different outlets
• Different formats
• Different audiences
• All of this affects the content
Format I – Books and Magazines

Books:
• Very small (but influential) audience
• Doesn’t reach as many people
• Much more in-depth

Magazines/Journals:
• Narrow audience, but larger than books
• Newsweeklies have a larger “activist” base
Format II – TV & Newspapers

TV:
- Mass media – Large audience
- Power of imagery
- Recent years = rise of cable news cycle (24 hours a day)
- “narrowcasting”
- “Talking Heads”

Newspapers
- Few national newspapers
- Collectively, large audience, but readership has been shrinking rapidly
- Many local newspapers are dying out
Format III – Radio and Internet

Radio:
• Homogenization of programming
• News content is rare; mostly, tidbits of information
• Exception = National Public Radio (NPR)
• Talk radio

Internet:
• More people turning to the web for their news
• Especially, young people
• Political blogging
• “narrowcasting” becomes “slivercasting”
Roles of the Media

• What is “newsworthy”? 
• Media as political “watchdogs” 
• Carl Bernstein & Bob Woodward (Watergate Story) 
• Media as a “4th branch” of gov’t 
• Can help set the agenda 
• Ultimately, the media is a business 
• They want to make money! 
• Selling ads, getting viewership/readership
Media Today

- The media uses politicians and insiders for info and vice versa (ongoing relationship)
- Access – leaks, background sources, trial balloons
- Politicians will do press releases
- Hold media events/news conferences
- Image manipulation
Free & Critical Press

- 1st Amendment – Freedom of the Press
- Public has a right to know
- Pentagon Papers in 1971
- Limited scope of libel
- Had to show “actual malice”
- Extended to any “public figure” in *Hustler Magazine v. Falwell* (1987)
The Future

• Many newspapers are dying out
• Small, independent papers have been bought out
• People turning to the internet
• Dependence on TV and political blogs for their info
• Many worry that serious journalism has taken a real hit