

APGovPol

Chapter 7: The Mass Media and the Political Agenda

Key Words and Terms

beats: specific locations from which news frequently emanates, such as Congress or the White House; most top reporters work a particular beat, thereby becoming specialists at what goes on at that location

broadcast media: television and radio, as compared with print media

high-tech politics: a politics in which the behavior of citizens and policymakers and the political agenda itself are increasingly shaped by technology

investigative journalism: the use of detective-like reporting to unearth scandals, scams, and schemes, putting reporters in adversarial relationships with government officials

mass media: television, radio, newspapers, magazines, and other means of popular communication; they are a key part of high-tech politics (see also broadcast media and print media)

media events: events purposely staged for the media that nonetheless look spontaneous; in keeping with politics as theater, media events can be staged by individuals, groups, and government officials, especially presidents

narrowcasting: as opposed to the traditional “broadcasting,” the appeal to a narrow, particular audience by channels such as ESPN, MTV, and C-SPAN, which focus on a narrow particular interest

newspaper chains: newspapers published by massive media conglomerates that account for almost three-quarters of the nation’s daily circulation; often, these chains control broadcast media, as well

policy agenda: the list of subjects or problems to which government officials, and people outside of government closely associated with those officials, are paying some serious attention at any given time

policy entrepreneurs: people who invest their “political capital” in an issue; according to John Kingdon, a policy entrepreneur “could be in or out of government, in elected or appointed positions, in interest groups or research organizations”

press conferences: meetings of public officials with reporters

print media: newspapers and magazines, as compared with broadcast media

sound bites: short video clips of approximately 15 seconds, which are typically all that is shown from a politician’s speech or activities on the nightly television news

talking head: a shot of a person’s face talking directly to the camera; because this is visually unappealing, the major commercial networks rarely show a politician talking one-on-one for very long (see also sound bites)

trial balloons: an intentional news leak for the purpose of assessing the political reaction