

# Mass Media Lecture Notes

## What is Mass Media?

- Mass media refers to forms of communication reaching large, dispersed audiences simultaneously
- Key function: Informing public about government actions
- Shapes public opinion on candidates and political issues
- Essential component of modern democratic society

## Traditional Mass Media Types

- Television (Since 1930s)
  - Primary source of political information
  - Replaced newspapers by 1960s
- Radio
  - Revolutionary in 1930s for political communication
  - Famous example: FDR's "fireside chats"
- Print Media
  - Newspapers: 95 million daily readers
  - Magazines: Time, Newsweek, The Nation
  - Provides in-depth analysis

## The Digital Revolution: Internet's Impact

- Emerged as dominant force in 1990s
- Present in 99% of U.S. households
- Changed political landscape through:
  - Partisan websites (e.g., MoveOn.org)
  - Campaign fundraising platforms
  - Direct voter engagement
  - Instant information access

## Media's Role in Setting Public Agenda

- Shapes public discourse
- Determines which issues receive attention
- Influences:
  - Public discussions
  - Political priorities
  - Government focus
- Daily presidential news analysis

## Impact on Electoral Politics

- Reduced dependency on political parties
- Enables direct candidate-voter communication
- Importance of:
  - Media image
  - Sound bites
  - Campaign messaging
  - Visual presentation

## Government Communication Tools

- Media Events
- Press Releases
- News Briefings
- Press Conferences
- Background Information
- Strategic Information Leaks

## Executive Branch and Media Relations

- Symbiotic relationship with president
- Department press officers (e.g., 1,500 at Defense)
- Daily press secretary briefings
- Balance between cooperation and scrutiny

## Legislative and Judicial Coverage

- Congress:
  - 5,000 credentialed reporters
  - 400 full-time correspondents
  - Focus on local representation
- Supreme Court:
  - Limited coverage (under 50% of cases)
  - Technical nature of content
  - Less public accessibility

## The Watchdog Role

- Media as government oversight
- Investigative journalism
- Uncovering corruption
- Balance between:
  - Public interest
  - Government cooperation
  - Critical reporting
  - Democratic transparency