

The Mass Media

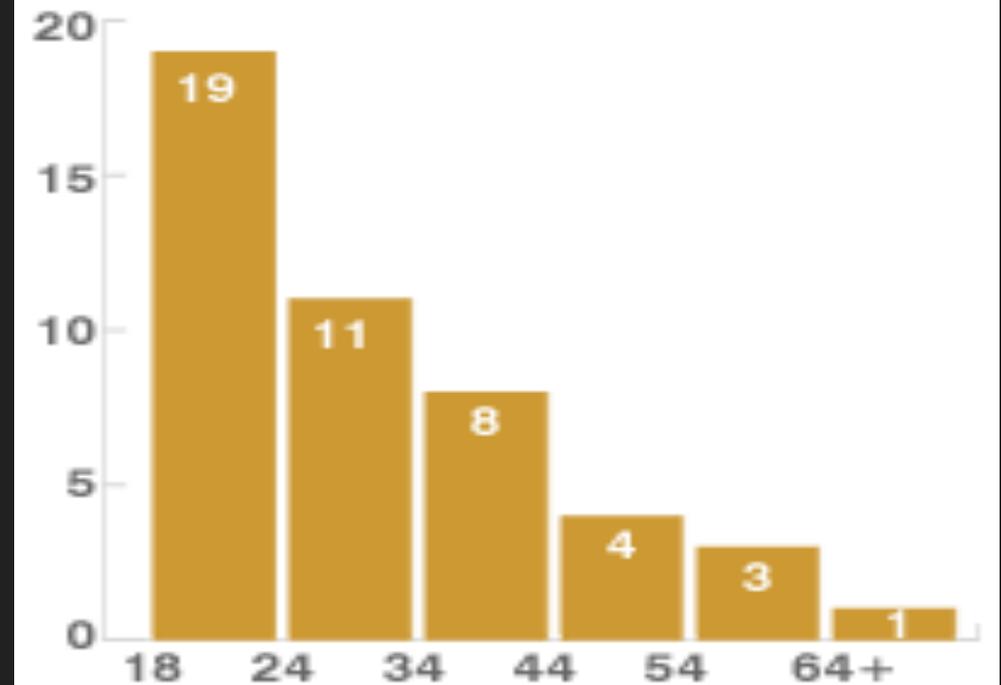
Unit 4- American Political Culture, Part 5

Media and Media Sources

- A medium is a means of communication
- Media is the plural of medium
- Major sources: television, newspaper, radio, magazines, the Internet
- Lesser sources: books, films
- The media does not exist with the goal of influencing politics but it does nonetheless.
- Most people get their political information from the media.

THE INTERNET AGE GAP

% who named internet as most important news source (average for 10 countries)



SOURCE: Globescan

Television

- Television overtook newspapers as the main source of political information in the 1960's
- Now television is the principal source of news of about 80 percent of the U.S. population



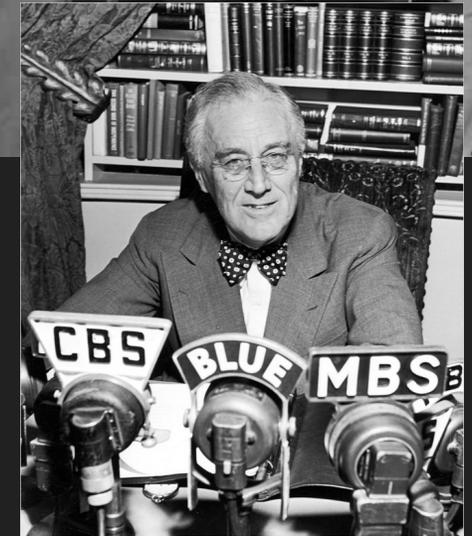
Newspapers

- About 45 percent of adults read the newspaper everyday.
- Most newspapers cover stories in greater depth than television does and try to represent more viewpoints.
- The number of daily newspapers has been declining for decades.



Radio

- In the 1930's radio exposed people to even more national and international news
- President Franklin Roosevelt was the first major public figure to use radio effectively
- Many thought the television would replace the radio
- However, the radio is still popular because it is convenient
- Talk radio has become an important source of political comment



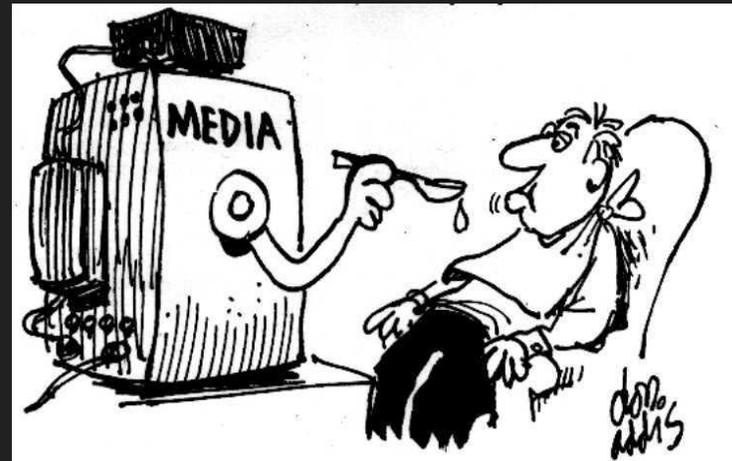
Magazines

- Magazines have been published in the United States since colonial times
- Current examples: Time, Newsweek, US News & World Report



The Media and Politics

- Public agenda – the societal problems that the nation's political leaders and the general public agree need government attention
- The media have the power to focus the public's attention on particular issues



Electoral Politics

- Candidates can appeal directly to voters through the media
- Voters are heavily influenced by their perceptions of candidates



- Newscasts featuring candidates are usually short, snappy reports that can be aired in 30 or 45 seconds
- These sound bites typically lack substance about the issues



Limits of Media Influence

- Studies on voting behavior show that only 15 percent of people that vote are well informed on the many candidates and issues
- People often take in news that agrees with opinions they already hold
- The media really only “skims” important news and much of the news is nonpolitical
- Good, in depth information is out there, but citizens have to work to get it

Knowledge Levels by News Source

	<i>Knowledge level</i>		
	<i>High</i> %	<i>Mod</i> %	<i>Low</i> %
Nationwide	35	31	34=100
<i>Among the regular audience of...</i>			
Daily Show/Colbert Report	54	25	21=100
Major newspaper websites	54	26	20=100
NewsHour with Jim Lehrer	53	19	28=100
O'Reilly Factor	51	32	17=100
National Public Radio	51	27	22=100
Rush Limbaugh's radio show	50	29	21=100
News magazines	48	27	25=100
TV news websites	44	33	23=100
Daily newspaper	43	31	26=100
CNN	41	30	29=100
News from Google, Yahoo, etc.	41	35	24=100
Network evening news	38	33	29=100
Online news discussion blogs	37	26	37=100
Local TV news	35	33	32=100
Fox News Channel	35	30	35=100
Network morning shows	34	36	30=100

How to read this table:

Nationwide, 35% of Americans score in the high knowledge category (answering at least 15 of 23 questions correctly.) Among regular viewers of the Daily Show and Colbert Report, 54% scored in the high knowledge category.

Public Opinion

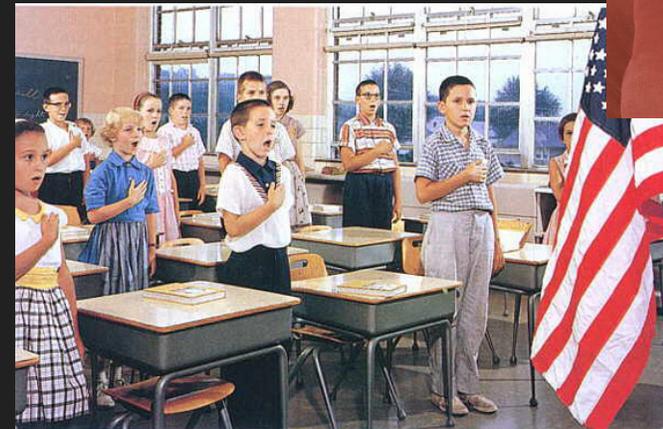
Unit 4- American Political Culture, Part 6

What is Public Opinion?

- Public opinion – those attitudes held by a significant number of people on matters of government and politics.
- Public affairs – those events and issues that concern the people at large

Influences in Political Socialization

- Family – Children learn from their parents
- Schools – teach American values
- Mass Media – Americans spend a lot of time “tuned in”
- Peer groups- the people with whom you regularly associate tend to reinforce your own beliefs
- Opinion leaders – any person who has an unusually strong influence on the views of others



Influences in Political Socialization

- Historic events – Examples:
 - The Great Depression led people to think government should have a bigger role in assisting the public
 - Nixon's Watergate scandal decreased the public's trust in government
 - What are some examples from your lifetime?

Writing Break

- On a piece of paper write down two issues that interests you.
- Write a sentence about each one, explaining your stance on the issue.
- Decide which factor – family, school, peer group, opinion leader, event, or mass media – had the most influence on that stance.

Measuring Public Opinion

- Public opinion polls – devices that attempt to collect information by asking people questions
- Straw vote - asking the same question of a large number of people
- Scientific polling – 5 steps
 - Define the universe to be surveyed
 - Construct a sample
 - Prepare valid questions
 - Select and control how the poll will be taken
 - Analyze and report finding to the public

Polling Key Terms

- Universe – the whole population the poll aims to measure
- Sample – a representative slice of the total universe
 - Random sample – interview randomly selected people in randomly selected locations
 - Quota sample – constructed to reflect several of the major characteristics of a given universe