

**DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
AND
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

**POSC 105
CLOSURE ON THE MEDIA AND THE PUBLIC**

- I. THIS MORNING:
 - A. Documenting claims about the media.
 - 1. Explanations of media coverage
 - 2. Comment on the press and democracy: suggestions.
 - 3. Film: “News: The Politics of Illusion”
 - B. If time, elections and voting in the United States.

- II. EXPLANATIONS:
 - A. Organizational and economic constraints or imperatives.
 - 1. Networks and affiliates
 - a. Audience flow
 - 2. Media location determines what gets covered
 - 3. Parachute journalism, “stringers,” and the coverage of foreign affairs

- III. THE MEDIA AS THE GUARDIANS OF DEMOCRACY:
 - A. A reassuring belief is that our “free and independent” press guards us against official misconduct.
 - 1. Numerous images and symbols support this feeling, which is also reinforced by, say, books and films such as “All the King’s Men,” starring Robert Redford and Dustin Hoffman. It describes the uncovering of the Watergate scandal in the 1970s.
 - 2. Yet our faith may be misplaced.
 - 3. The relationship between reporters and the reported: the problem of cooptation.
 - 4. Example: Watergate and *All the President’s Men*
 - a. Example: Iran-contra
 - b. Example: the savings and loan scandal (1985-1986)
 - B. Suggestion:
 - 1. Why not rent the film, “All the President’s Men?”
 - 2. Then read Edward J. Epstein, *Between Fact and Fiction* (1975) or *News From Nowhere* (1973).

- IV. “NEWS: IMAGE AND REALITY”:
 - A. Overview:
 - 1. Lots of important events and problems occur and persist.
 - 2. But surprisingly many are hardly mentioned in election campaigns and the mass media.

3. Worse yet, according to this documentary, how the media covers elections is heavily influenced by candidates and their campaign staffs.
 - a. We see and hear what campaign managers, public relations experts, pollsters, and others want us to see and hear.
 4. Ronald Reagan's team was not the first or only group to exercise this influence; it was just better than most.
 5. The media treat campaigns in particular and politics in general as sporting events and entertainment.
 - a. The result: superficial, trivial, confusing, disorienting coverage.
- B. Some names and incidents to keep in mind:
1. Michael Deaver
 2. Lesley Stahl
 3. Reagan and the Daytona 500
 4. Reagan at a Boston pub and a construction site in Texas
 5. Bush and Dukakis saluting the flag and reciting the pledge of allegiance.
 6. Bush jogging in the rain.
- V. NEXT TIME:
- A. Reading:
 1. Patterson, *We the People*, as indicated in the last set of notes.
 - B. Elections and campaigns.
 1. Film "Running Against the Kennedys"

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