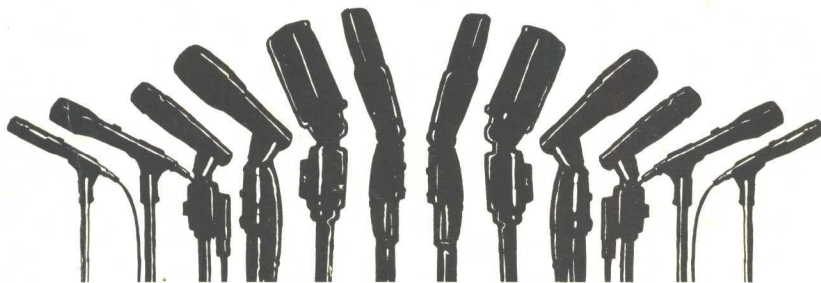


American Politics in the **Media** Age

Second Edition



Thomas R. Dye
Harmon Zeigler



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Thomas R. Dye

Florida State University

Harmon Zeigler

University of Puget Sound



Brooks/Cole Publishing Company
Monterey, California

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A Division of Wadsworth, Inc.

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Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Dye, Thomas R.

American politics in the media age.

Bibliography: p.

Includes index.

1. United States—Politics and government.

2. Mass media—Political aspects—United States.

I. Zeigler, L. Harmon (Luther Harmon),

II. Title.

JK274.D97 1985 320.973 85-14906

ISBN 0-534-05578-2

Sponsoring Editor: *Marie Kent*

Editorial Assistant: *Amy Mayfield*

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Art Coordinator: *Judith Macdonald*

Interior Illustration: *Art by AYXA*

Photo Editor: *Judy K. Blamer*

Photo Researcher: *Robin Raffer for Omni-Photo Communications, Inc.*

Typesetting: *Allservice Phototypesetting Co., Phoenix, AZ*

Cover Printing: *Phoenix Color Corporation, Long Island City, NY*

Printing & Binding: *R. R. Donnelley & Sons Company, Crawfordsville, IN*

Credits continue on page 396.

Preface

Introduction

Politics is the struggle over the allocation of values in society. It is lobbying, pressure, threat, bargaining, and compromise; it is serious and significant.

Politics is talk, expression, picture, and image; it is drama and entertainment.

Both aspects of politics—serious decision making and drama and entertainment deserve our attention.

What political leaders *say* is as important as what leaders *do*. All government leaders—democratic and authoritarian, capitalist and socialist—use mass communication to legitimize their rule. The average person learns about political values and about political events and personalities from the mass media. The media help to set the agenda for national decision making. The media determine what people will think about and talk about in public affairs.

American Politics in the Media Age is a basic introduction to American government with a special focus on the political role of the mass media. The book describes the basic elements of the American political system—beliefs and ideologies, constitutional arrangements, federalism, interest groups, parties and elections, Congress, the presidency, the bureaucracy, the courts, civil liberties, and civil rights. More importantly, it describes how these elements are symbolized and communicated to mass audiences and how these audiences respond to these symbols.

The functions of the mass media in politics are discussed—newsmaking, interpretation, socialization, persuasion, and agenda setting. The book describes the political parties, the volatility of the electorate, the recruitment of political leaders, the rise of single-interest groups, the changing nature of political campaigns, the representative role of the Congress, the symbolic role of the president, the functioning of the Washington bureaucracy. *American*

Politics in the Media Age is written to help the reader understand both the symbols and realities of American politics. As political scientist Murray Edelman once wrote:

Political analysis must, then, proceed at two levels simultaneously. It must examine how political actions get some groups the tangible things they want from government, and at the same time it must explore what these same actions mean to the mass public and how it is placated or aroused by them.*

Features of the Book

This book has helpful features to make the study of American politics clear and interesting.

- Essentials boxes outline the basic structures and processes of American government.
- Other boxes highlight topics of current interest.
- Important concepts are repeated in color.
- Terms are defined in a running glossary.
- End-of-chapter summaries review the main points and concepts.
- Photographs, cartoons, charts, and graphs give added meaning to the text discussion.

*Murray Edelman, *The Symbolic Uses of Politics*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1964), p. 12.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the following people for their helpful comments in the early stages of the manuscript: Richard Joslyn, Temple University; Levon Marashlian, Glendale College, Glendale, California; Coley McGinnis, Tennessee State University at Nashville; Robert Peterson, University of Texas at El Paso; Walter Powell, Slippery Rock College, Slippery Rock, Pennsylvania; and David Yamada, Monterey Peninsula College, Monterey, California.

Special thanks to Ron Munion, whose extraordinary diligence and skill made the task of revision a pleasure.

Finally, we would like to thank Ellen Brownstein of Brooks/Cole, who worked with both of us with humor and humanity.

Thomas R. Dye
Harmon Zeigler

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