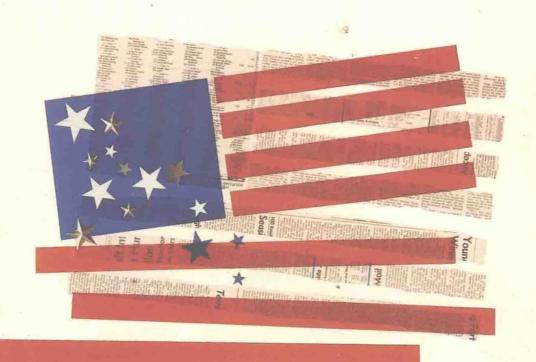
# American Politics in the Media Age Third Edition



Dye

Zeigler

# **American Politics** in the Media Age

**Third Edition** 

Thomas R. Dye Florida State University

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### **Preface**

#### Introduction

Every now and again, a book seems "right." In 1988, any pretense that American politics had not entered the media age was abandoned. Both Michael Dukakis and George Bush conducted their campaigns as though television were not only the only efficient means of communications with voters, but also as if it were a legitimate participant in the governing process. At the end of the first debate, the TV audience was allowed to watch the "spin doctors" for the first time. The spin doctors—public relations types who try to persuade the various media representatives to spin coverage in their candidate's favor-hawked their wares while allowing the viewers to be in on the secret. Each candidate saturated the air waves with photo opportunities, 30-second sound bytes, and negative advertisements. In 1984, Walter Mondale lamented that he lost because he did not understand television; neither candidate could make that claim in 1988, nor will it be made again.

Our book records, many say with cynicism, the political and governmental consequences of the media age. Our souls tremble: are we the chroniclers of the decline and fall of America? Can a nation of sound bytes compete internationally with "real" governments? Can candidates whose gods are media consultants, whose currency is opinion polls, and whose sole worry is "high negatives" ever lead a nation?

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 well these audiences respond to these symbols.

The functions of the mass media in politics are discussed newsmaking, interpretation, sopersuasion. cialization. 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 and outlined in color.
- \* Murray Edelman, The Symbolic Uses of Politics, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1964), p. 12.

- Terms are defined in a running glossary.
- End-of-chapter summaries review the main points and concepts.
- Photographs, charts, and graphs give added meaning to the text discussion.

#### Acknowledgments

Revising is never an easy task, especially for two authors who have been close friends for more than two decades. We therefore would like to offer our thanks to those who contributed to easing our task: First, and surely foremost, is Ellen Brownstein at Brooks/Cole. The line between authors and editor grows ever more indistinct. To Al DeMarco, student assistant at the University of Puget Sound, we extend our thanks for reducing the tedium of finding material quickly.

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> Thomas R. Dye Harmon Zeigler

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# The Two Faces of Politics

# Politics is

- · Who?
- · Gets what?
- · When?
- · How?

#### But politics is also

- · Who?
- · Says what?
- · In which channel?
- · To whom?
- · With what effect?1

Politics can be serious decision making about who gets what—the distribution of values in society. At the same time, politics can be about who says what—the communication of symbols to mass audiences. We often think of politics as a