

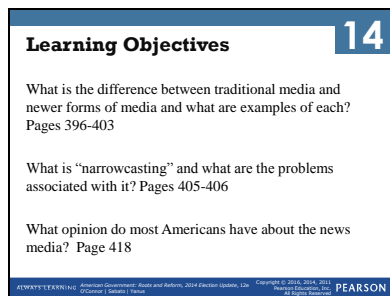
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Slide 1



Smartphones and tablets may have replaced pen and paper as the tools of reporters, but media coverage, whether traditional or new, remains the intermediary between citizens and government.

Slide 2



Slide 3



The history of newspapers in America goes back to the first colonial newspapers printed in 1690. The value of a free press was recognized early, and partisan newspapers proliferated in the 1700s and 1800s. This sensationalist brand of coverage came to be known as yellow journalism. It was common for politicians to pay journalists to keep quiet in order to protect their reputations.

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During the Progressive era, journalists turned their investigative skills to uncovering government, and private sector, misconduct. Although coverage was still sordid and heavy on gossip and rumor, much did come of the exposure of monopolies, deplorable working conditions, and exploitation of workers.

Newspapers gradually developed standards, and become more professionalized and objective. But the dawn of online media turned out to be the sunset of the newspaper industry. Many papers have ceased or limited print publication and have struggled to persuade consumers to pay for their online content.

Slide 4

Traditional Media - Radio News 14.1

- Center of home life
 - FDR's "fireside chats"
- Displaced by TV in 1950s
 - AM talk radio
 - No talk radio for liberals, NPR not biased



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Radios proved immediately popular and soon became the center of home life, with families gathering around them in the evenings to listen to such broadcasts as President Franklin Roosevelt's "fireside chats." TV displaced radio in the 1950s, but conservative talk radio shows revived it as a source of news, albeit heavily slanted. There is no comparable liberal talk radio.

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Slide 5

Traditional Media - TV News 14.1

- Gradually replaced print and radio
 - By 2011, most receive news from TV or Internet
- Network v. cable news
- C-SPAN



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TV gradually replaced print and radio and the source of news for Americans. By 2011, the majority of Americans received their news from television or the Internet. Beginning in the 1990s, cable news networks began to replace network news as the primary television news source. Network news is obliged to remain nonpartisan but cable news stations can have any bias that they choose.

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New Media - Online 14.1

- The Internet
 - Main news source for 41%
 - Lack of credibility, standards
- Blogs
 - Editorial news outlet
- Social media
 - Political debate
 - Reach and engage citizens



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The Internet is now the primary news source for 41% of Americans, and that percentage is growing. But the Internet lacks the traditional filters of editors and journalistic standards that lend credibility to professional news outlets.

Blogs are a vehicle for editorial commentary from both individuals and traditional news sources.

Social media sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, have the potential to provide a forum for political debate. Candidates and elected officials can speak directly to voters without their message being filtered through the media.


Consolidation poses numerous risks to the free flow of information. Profit-driven businesses focus on sensationalist news that drives up audience numbers rather than serious news with objective reporting. Content could also be geared toward placating advertisers rather than informing viewers.

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Narrowcasting

- Targeting specific populations
- News audiences divided along partisan lines
- Appeals to preexisting views



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Narrowcasting is the targeting of programming at specific populations. Fox News, for example, takes a conservative viewpoint, and MSNBC has a more liberal slant.

The problem with narrowcasting is that it appeals to the audiences' preexisting views, which further polarizes public opinion.

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TABLE 14.1 How do media outlets relate to party affiliation?

This table correlates party affiliation with news outlets regularly watched, read, or listened to. Which news outlets do you prefer?

SOURCE: *Pew Research Center, Americans Spend More Time Following News*, "(September 12, 2010): <http://www.people-press.org/2010/09/12/section-1-watching-reading-and-listening-to-the-news/>.

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Infotainment

14.2

- Blending information and entertainment
- Political leaders use these shows to:
 - Reach larger audiences
 - Humanize politician
- Audience sophistication matters



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Infotainment blends news and information with entertainment. It is exemplified by such shows at *Saturday Night Live*, *David Letterman*, and *The Daily Show*. Political leaders have embraced infotainment shows as a way to connect with voters. They can reach larger audiences than traditional news programs, and they do not have to worry about hardball questions.


Such shows also provide an opportunity to humanize the candidate, such as when Bill Clinton played his saxophone on the Arsenio Hall Show. Americans are increasingly tuning into infotainment programs for their news rather than serious news outlets, because the news is more enjoyable in this format.

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Increasing Use of Experts 14.2

- Talking heads fill airtime.
- Who are these experts?
 - Officials, consultants, former politicians, academics, etc.
- Influence on the public
 - Lack of objectivity
 - Weaken democratic deliberation




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Cable TV's 24-hour news cycle is a far cry from the 15-minute news shows of the early 1960s. Many hours of airtime must be filled even when no new facts are available to report. This time is increasingly filled by bringing on experts to analyze the stories of the day.

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Citizen Journalists 14.2

- Ordinary individuals
 - Collect, report, and analyze
 - Post content not covered
 - Provide on-the-scene coverage
 - Cheaper than hiring reporters
- Problems with amateur reporting
 - Lack of objectivity
 - Quality varies



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Technology has taken reporting out of the hands of professional journalists and made anyone with a camera and an Internet connection into a citizen journalist, able to collect, report, and analyze news.

Citizen journalists sometimes post content not covered by traditional news outlets, and provide on-the-scene coverage of events. It is cheaper for news outlets to use footage and reports provided by citizen journalists than to hire reporters. But the problem of objectivity again arises, and the professionalism and quality of the coverage vary widely.

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Slide 14



Journalistic Standards 14.3

- Professional norms and integrity
- Code of Ethics
 - Avoiding conflicts of interest
 - Verifying information
- Dealing with sources
 - On/off the record
 - On background
 - Deep background

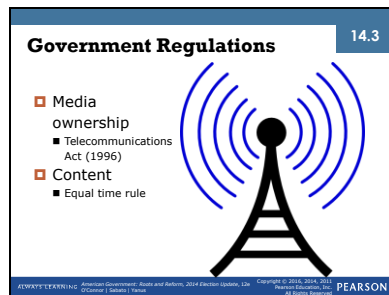
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Professional journalists subscribe to a "Code of Ethics" that includes such norms as avoiding conflicts of interest and verifying information being reported.

Dealing with sources can pose dilemmas for reporters. If an interview is on the record, every detail can be reported. But if it is off the record, nothing the source says may be printed. Revealing sources who wish to remain anonymous can cause them to not offer information.

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Government Regulations 14.3

- Media ownership
 - Telecommunications Act (1996)
- Content
 - Equal time rule

Antenna with radio waves

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The U.S. government regulates the news media in several ways. Libel and slander, for example, are illegal. The Supreme Court, in the 1971 case of *New York Times v. U.S.* that involved the publication of the Pentagon Papers, ruled that prior restraint can only be used in extremely rare cases where national security is at stake. Prior restraint occurs when the government steps in to prevent the publication of something before it occurs.

The government regulates electronic media more heavily than print media. The airwaves are considered public property and are only leased to private broadcasters. There are also a

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limited number of broadcast frequencies.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 deregulated electronic media and paved the way for the growth of the giant media conglomerates that we have today.

Slide 16

How the News Media Cover Politics

14.4

- ❑ How the Press and Public Figures Interact
- ❑ Covering the Presidency
- ❑ Covering Congress
- ❑ Covering the Supreme Court



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The news media spend time and attention covering all three branches of the federal government. The president, especially, received an extraordinary amount of media attention.

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How the Press and Public Figures Interact

14.4

- Press release
 - Official written document
- Press briefing
 - Press secretary represents official
 - Q&A on specific topic
- Press conference
 - General Q&A with official



THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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Elected officials interact with the media in a number of different ways. They can issue press releases, which are official written statements on issues given directly to reporters. They can also hold press briefings and press conferences. A briefing is usually conducted by proxy, with a press secretary or aide appearing on behalf of the official, and answering questions on a specific issue or event.


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Sometimes the elected official will appear in person at a press conference.

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Covering the Presidency 14.4

- Receives most media coverage
- Prestigious post for a reporter
- Daily Q&A with press secretary



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The executive receives the most media coverage out of all the branches of government. Covering the White House is a prestigious post for a journalist. The president's press secretary holds almost daily question and answer sessions with reporters in the White House's press briefing room. Modern presidents use their press secretaries to avoid facing the media themselves, but they will sometimes hold press conferences after major events.

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Covering Congress 14.4

- Logistical challenge
 - 535 members
- Focus on party leaders
 - Majority and minority leaders in both houses
 - Party whips
- Key committee chairs
- Coverage is negative
 - Focus on scandals and conflict




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Covering Congress poses a logistical challenge due to its size. With 535 members, where do you focus? Most news organizations concentrate on the leaders of both parties. Airtime is given to the majority and minority leaders in both houses, and the party whips. Key committee chairs also garner attention when their committee is debating an important bill.

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Covering the Supreme Court 14.4

- Media vacuum
 - TV cameras not permitted
 - Few reporters cover Court.
 - Complex legal issues harder to present
 - Justices rarely grant interviews.



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The Supreme Court exists in a relative media vacuum. TV cameras are not permitted inside, and few reporters cover the Court. Also, the justices themselves rarely grant interviews or speak to the media.

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News Media Bias 14.5

- Journalists are biased
 - Values, preferences, attitudes
- How are news media biased
 - Elite bias
 - Dramatic bias
- News media stardom



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All journalists are biased because they are human beings with different values, preferences, and attitudes. These biases are consciously or unconsciously reflected in news coverage.


How are news media biased? Journalists tend to be from relatively elite backgrounds – white, male, educated, and affluent. As a result, issues affecting different demographic groups can be ignored or misrepresented out of ignorance.

Reporters are also biased in favor of a good story; they seek to inject spice and drama wherever they can. The celebrity status of some members of the news media can also affect their objectivity as they seek higher approval ratings.

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Public Confidence 14.5

- Assessment unfavorable
 - Inaccurate
 - Biased
 - Rich and powerful influence coverage
- Valuable watchdog role



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Americans have an increasingly negative view of the news media, with large majorities believing it to be inaccurate, biased, and providing coverage influenced by the rich and powerful. Yet, at the same time, Americans value the watchdog role of the media, believing that it limits the wrongdoing of political officials.

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Further Review

14

Complete your study guide questions.

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