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DIGITAL GOVERNMENT I WEEK 6: POWER, ADVOCACY, AND MOBILIZATION: ELECTORAL POLITICS

Feb 17, 2009

tonight's plan

- final project template + poster session
- book reviews
- my lecture: the Internet & electoral politics (background & recent findings)
- group discussion: Hindman's arguments
- final project group work (no in-class assignment)
- in- and post-class consultations; additional group project consultations, Monday Mar 2nd 1-3:30 pm

Political communication

‘Hard’ or ‘strong’ effects models:

- propaganda studies (the ‘hypodermic’ model) (1920s-30s)
- mass society theses (1940s-50s)

‘Soft’ / ‘weak’ / ‘limited’ effects models:

- opinion leaders and the two-step flow (1950s)
- interpretation theory (‘Decoding Dallas’) (1980s)

Somewhere in between:

- agenda-setting (‘media don’t tell people what to think, but they tell them what to think about’) (1970s)
- gatekeeping (media control access to public discourse) (1970s)
- elite / in-group conversation

Political mobilization

donating ($$$)

volunteering (rallies, ground game, basic campaign functions)

advocating (letters, lobbying, networking, conversation)

voting

The lessons of Obama
(and some questions)

- Accounting for campaign success: Is this a Dean-like story? An old-fashioned campaign? Some combination of the two?
- Online fundraising (http://www.opensecrets.org)
- The Internet and the Tube ("big media is dead, long live big media")?
- Online and offline hybrids (Meetups, etc.)
- Web 2.0 (twittering, Facebook, etc.)
- Databases and campaign intelligence (Howard Dean: "We can predict with 85 percent accuracy how you're going to vote based on your credit card data without bothering to see what party you're in." Demzilla / Votebuilder; Voter Vault).
- How LASTING are the political effects of campaign mobilization?

(see Hindman and other postings at: http://publius.cc/2008/12/09/not-the-digital-democracy-we-ordered)

Internet & Democracy (Hindman)

- Everyone has the right to speak, but not everyone has the right to be heard…
- "Ultimately, this book argues that the Internet is not eliminating exclusivity in political life; instead, it is shifting the bar of exclusivity from the *production* to the *filtering* of political information." (13; my emphases)
  1) **The politics of search**
  2) **Online concentration**
  3) **The limits of blogs**

Arguments and evidence for each?

Hindman's general conclusions: the limits of online politics (do you agree with these)?

Proposals and solutions / the road ahead?

Source: Matthew Hindman. *The Myth of Digital Democracy*. Princeton University Press: Princeton NJ, 2009: 13.