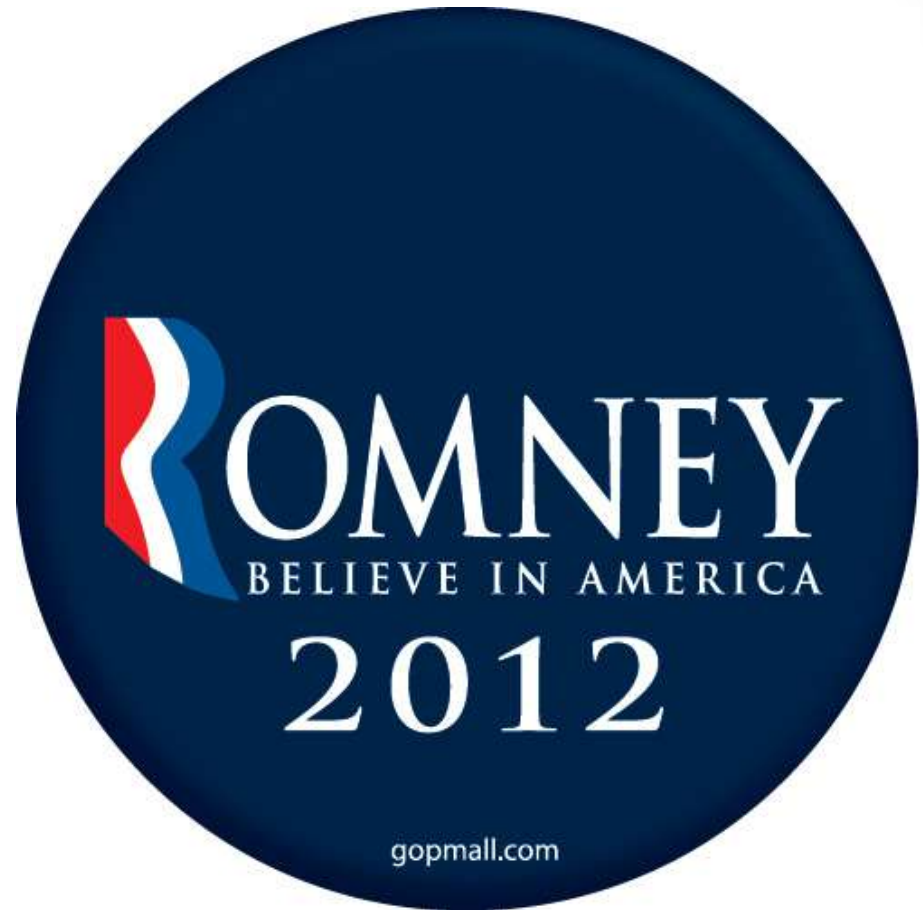


Influencing Government

**Lesson 4: Interest groups use the media
to influence public opinion.**



<http://www.gopmall.com/buttons/mitt-romney-button-2448/>

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/ben-arnon/how-the-obama-hope-poster_b_133874.html

Interest Groups

What is the goal an interest group?

- To influence public policy
 - Public Policy: the position the government takes regarding a certain issue (a problem or an idea for improvement).

How do they influence public policy?

- Lobby government officials
- Influence public opinion
 - Public Opinion: the collection of ideas and attitudes that most people have regarding a certain issue or political candidate.

Why do interest groups want to influence public opinion?

- To increase membership
- To convince people of the importance of various issues that concern its members.
 - Government officials pay close attention to public opinion in order to see which issues the people consider to be the most important.

Interest Groups and Public Opinion

How do interest groups influence public opinion?

- Interest groups educate the general public and elected officials about the issues which concern them.
- Interest groups present the information from their own point-of-view hoping to persuade people to support the group's position.

Methods used by interest groups to influence public opinion:

- Organize public events
- Stage public protests
- Direct mail campaign
- Advertise using the mass media

Interest Groups and the Media

Why do interest groups use the mass media to run advertisements?

- The mass media allows interest groups to reach a large portion of the population.
 - To educate the public about certain issues
 - To persuade the public and government officials to support the group's position on certain issues.
 - To assist political candidates who share the same position on a certain issue to win elections

Interest Groups and the Media

What means of persuasion do interest groups employ when advertising?

- They rely on different propaganda techniques to promote their particular point-of-view on various issues or to support a candidate who share the same views.

Propaganda:

- A method of presenting information through the media that is designed to persuade people to form a certain opinion about a particular candidate, issue, or product.
- Biased messages are used to appeal to your emotions rather than your reasoning.

Propaganda Techniques

1. Bandwagon:

- An approach that attempts to persuade you to support a candidate (or issue) by convincing you that everyone else is “on board” and that you do not want to be left out.
- Pressures people to follow the crowd.

2. Card Stacking:

- An approach that is used to slant a message in favor of a particular candidate (or issue) by omitting key words or unfavorable statistics from a published advertisement or television commercial.
- Shows only positive information about the candidate or idea that is being promoted. Shows only negative information about the opposing candidate or idea.
- Presents a series of half-truths which “stack the cards” in favor of a particular candidate.

Propaganda Techniques

3. **Either/or Fallacy:** (Black-and-white thinking)

- A technique in which only two choices are presented. Voters are either for or against an issue or candidate; no middle ground.
- The purpose is to polarize an issue; discouraging any attempt to compromise.

4. **False Analogy:**

- A technique in which two things that may or may not actually be similar are portrayed as being similar.
- Can be used to either gain support for a candidate or deter support from another.
- Most often there is not enough evidence available to support the comparison.

Propaganda Techniques

5. **Faulty Cause and Effect:**

- A technique that implies that if event B follows A, then A must cause B to happen.
- It ignores the fact that two events can be related without one actually causing the other to happen.
- It relies on people jumping to conclusions without actually examining the facts.

6. **Glittering Generalities:**

- A technique that uses general statements or words that sound important, but in reality have little or no real meaning.
- They also cannot be proven or disproven.
- Example: “The best man for the job.”

Propaganda Techniques

7. Name Calling:

- A technique in which a negative label is attached to a person or idea in order to create fear and or dislike for that person or idea.
- Used as a means to avoid having to support ones own opinion with facts.
- Many politicians find it easier to tear down their opponent than to explain their own position on certain issues.

8. Plain Folks:

- A technique that depicts a candidate in an ordinary manner in order to convince voters that he/she is just like you.
- The candidate is often dressed in ordinary clothes and is doing ordinary activities.

Propaganda Techniques

9. Testimonial:

- A technique in which a famous and often popular individual endorses a particular candidate for office.
- Ordinary people can endorse a candidate by claiming how the candidate has or will help them personally.

10. Transfer:

- A technique that attempts to transfer the prestige held by a positive symbol to a person or an idea.
- Example: A common example of this is when a political candidate use the American flag as a backdrop because people tend to see someone as more patriotic if an American flag is present.

References

- Clayton, G. E., Patrick, J. J., Reny, R. C., Saffeli, D. C., & Zike, D. (2010). *Civics today: Citizenship, economics, and you*. Columbus, OH: McGraw-Hill, Inc.