

Trend Towards Candidate-Centered Campaigns

a.k.a. "Personality Politics"

Class Notes

- I. **Candidate-Centered Campaigns** – campaigns that focus on the candidates, their particular issues, and character rather than party affiliation.
 - a. Began with first televised debates between JFK and Nixon (1960) – JFK understood the power of TV to influence voters; those who watched the debates on TV thought JFK won, those who listened on radio thought Nixon won.
 - b. Consequences of candidate-centered campaigns
 1. Parties have less control over campaigns
 2. More emphasis on candidates themselves than issues and party identification
 3. Parasitic relationship between candidates and the media (media covers personality, gaffs, background of candidates rather than important issues); candidates stage events to get media coverage
- II. **"Personality Politics"** >>> Political candidates or political celebrities?
 - a. Candidates use pop culture TV shows to promote themselves (appearing on SNL, *Letterman*, etc.) to reach voters
 - b. Sarah Palin is prime example of using her campaign in 2008 to create celebrity

III. Candidate-Centered Campaigns Clips

1. The First JFK-Nixon Debate (1960) - <http://www.history.com/videos/the-first-jfk-nixon-debate#the-first-jfk-nixon-debate>
2. Reagan-Mondale Debate (1984) – Reagan’s age issue
3. Bill Clinton on Arsenio Hall (1992) – Clinton plays saxophone
4. Romney on *Tonight Show with Jay Leno* (March, 2012) – Romney shows “personal side during primaries (0:16-2:31)
5. Obama and 1st Lady on *The View* (September, 2012) – 1st couple appear on show to attract women voters (1:39-3:31)
6. *The Daily Show* clip, “Millionaire Gaffemaker – Mitt Romney” (September 18, 2012) – Romney’s “47%” comment at GOP fundraiser (2:15-5:51)
7. SNL Weekend Update, “Obama – What are you doing?” (September, 2012) – Seth Meyers advises Obama to keep his mouth shut and avoid gaffs (21:23-23:44)
8. Sen. Mark Warner NBC12 VA Story (August, 2014) – Warner appears on 6:00 news re: McGuire VA Hospital
9. Ed Gillespie NBC12 (April, 2014) – immigration reform (begin 2:10)/Tea Party (begin 3:22)