

# 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, but amateur compared to Donald Trump in 2016
  
- III. **Candidate-Centered Campaigns Clips**
  1. The First JFK-Nixon Debate (1960) - <http://www.history.com/topics/us-presidents/presidential-elections/videos/the-first-jfk-nixon-debate>  
  
<http://www.history.com/topics/us-presidents/kennedy-nixon-debates>
  2. Reagan-Mondale Debate (1984) – Reagan’s age issue
  3. Bill Clinton on Arsenio Hall (1992) – Clinton plays saxophone
  4. Obama and 1<sup>st</sup> Lady on *The View* (September, 2012) – 1<sup>st</sup> couple appear on show to attract women voters (00:00-2:49)
  5. Hillary Clinton on SNL *Bar Talk* Ellen Degeneres [October 2015] - [6:10]
  6. Donald Trump on Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon *Trump Interviews Himself in the Mirror* [5:22]
  7. Hillary Clinton on Between Two Ferns with Zach Galifianakis [5:47]
  8. Donald Trump on Late Show with Stephen Colbert [2:15]