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J201 Midterm Essay

An understanding of the press and presidency is important to future mass communicators due to the notion that history tends to repeat itself. Although much has changed in presidential matters and public relations, much has stayed the same. Presidents' relationship to the public, campaign strategies, and the way the media depicts women have seemingly stayed the same. Alternatively, the way in which the government censors media and places propaganda has changed. Understanding relations between press and government institutions is important to understanding the dynamics of the world we live in today.

From the Jefferson and the media lecture, we can see similarities in the construction of opposing outlets for the Federalist and Republican audiences. The duty of the press then was to shape, not reflect, public opinion. This example aligns with the way our society is increasingly divided by political parties and how that determines which news source they may rely on. For example, people who watch Fox News versus CNN. We see other examples of dramatic party splits from the lecture on Jackson versus Adams in 1828. In the 1828 election we had, "the peoples candidate" versus "the ignorant and inexperienced," "common man" versus "insufferable snob nepotism boy." Ultimately, corruption versus corruption. We see the same kind of rivalry in our presidential elections today. Political party affiliation continues to stand in the way of many relationships.

From the Civil War Journalism lecture, we can see historical differences in the role of a journalist. Previously, journalists were regular citizens. They were not reporters. They were only printers of information that came directly to them. It is also interesting to note from the Jefferson and the media lecture that in the late 1700's, newspapers had a blank page at the end for one to write their own news to share with the community. As we can see, there are major disparities in

the way news was historically obtained, written, and distributed. One similarity in the way papers were written lies in the way women were portrayed. Women were written about strictly in reference to their husbands and fathers. We still see women undermined in today's society. Frequently labeled as too much or not enough, "too emotional," or "doing a man's job." We continue to see the media's obsession with female appearance, similar to Jeanette Rankin and her red hair. From Journalism History: episode 73, we see similar circumstances today where manliness is defined as being opposite of what's considered feminine. For example, the cartoon illustration of George Williams Curtis as "Miss Nancy." Historical cartoons are a way of viewing what society deemed important at a given time. Mass communicators can study the things that resonated with the public, like cartoons, that were effective in communicating a certain message.

One notable difference to consider between past and present news is the way the government interfered. From Journalism History: episode 86, press releases were previously an aspect of the government. Their "very clever and systematic use of the information tools they had," made them seem more credible. People relied blindly on the government to relay information. This eventually diminished the credibility of the government due to their use of propaganda, people started to see it for what it was. Thankfully, we have evolved past the need for government supply of information in the age of mass media. People have more ability to discover and invent their own opinions and are protected by the First Amendment to do so. Whereas in the past, presidents like Lincoln have made aggressive efforts to silence the press. From Chapter Five of "The Presidents Vs. The Press," Lincoln's administration arrested and imprisoned editors, banned certain news from telegraphs, stole printing presses, threw newspapers out of train windows to stop publication, and seized papers from post offices so they could not be mailed out.

An understanding of the press and presidency is important to future mass communicators because we can refer to it as a source. Although history does not always play out the same way as before, we can learn from the principles it leaves behind. We can further understand how societies evolve out of historical events and issues, giving a great point-of-reference on why and what happens in the present. For mass communicators this is crucial for success. It is ultimately our job to know what people know and how they know it.

Finneman, Teri, et al. "Podcast: The Power of Political Cartoons." *Journalism History Journal*, 31 Mar. 2021,

<https://journalism-history.org/2021/03/01/podcast-the-power-of-political-cartoons/>.

Hirshon, Nick, and John Maxwell Hamilton. "Hamilton Podcast: Woodrow Wilson's Ministry of Propaganda." *Journalism History Journal*, 11 Aug. 2021,

<https://journalism-history.org/2021/08/16/hamilton-podcast-woodrow-wilsons-ministry-of-propaganda/>.

Holzer, Harold. "Chapter 5: Abraham Lincoln." *The Presidents vs. the Press: The Endless Battle between the White House and the Media -- from the Founding Fathers to Fake News*, Dutton, an Imprint of Penguin Random House LLC, New York, NY, 2020.

Lectures: Jefferson and the Media (1/27), Jackson vs. Adams 1828 (2/1), Civil War Journalism (2/10), Margaret Chase Smith 1964 and Jeanette Rankin 1916 (2/24)