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Entertainment, Journalism



Mel Basil Paper I: Media, Politics and Propaganda Heather Palmer ENGL3850-002 October 16, 2012 Not What to Think, But What to Think About With the 2012 Presidential Election in full swing right now, the issue concerning American troops in Afghanistan is a heated topic. President Barack Obama and Republican candidate Governor Mitt Romney have taken their quite opposite stances and debated this issue throughout the course of the election. That is until the last week when the Romney campaign began suggesting that their " administration would take almost precisely the same course, " according to ABC News. However, if you we're to ask FOX News about the republican nominee's shift in course toward American troops in Afghanistan, they would say " The Democratic Party has Lost its Mind and its Way, " according to the title of an article posted on foxnews. com.

Propaganda is not something new to the media. " When there is a communication channel, there is also a potential propaganda medium (Jowett and O'Donnell). " News media doesn't tell you what to think, but what to think about. This paper will asses this generalization, based on the media's presentation of the political topic of American troops in Afghanistan. The media is the people's source for news. In America, the media gives the people an agenda of the topics we talk and think about. We put this responsibility in the hands of news professionals and trust what they tell us is fair, accurate and objective. Because it is the media that gives we the people our agenda, the media must have an agenda of their own.

Propaganda is widely used throughout the world and has affected politics everywhere. It is a type of communication used to spread specific beliefs, ideas and expectations. In modern propaganda, examples seen in the two

news stations stated in the previous paragraph, political discourse and advertising become an issue because influential figures are able to control the mass media and its content, imposing their truth on culture. " The control of behavior by manipulation is facilitated by three factors: (1) an audience ' that is enmeshed and engulfed in a harried life-style, less well-informed and less politically involved, (2) the use of sophisticated polling and surveying procedures, whose results are used by the propagandists to increase their influence, and (3) the incorporation of media companies into mega-conglomerates (" The Rise of Media Theory in the Age of Propaganda"). " Objectivity behind politics is a concerning issue since news coverage may sometimes be made to be favorable to appeal to the audience. Fox News blatantly reports and covers news stories with a very right-winged approach. While CNN News does a better job of trying to stay objective, many critics would say the media outlet is left-winged. When deciding upon an agenda, the mass media have their choice of military analysts they choose to get insider information from to " give authoritative and unfettered judgments about the most pressing issues (Barstow). " These analysts have business deals with political figures that go unknown to the public, and their job is to make issues pertaining to Washington favorable to the public. Since such business deals have been brought to people's attention in recent year, analysts' media coverage is being closely monitored (Barstow). Some networks are publishing analysts' background on their websites and information about business ties (Barstow). However, some networks have little care or concern about this. " The media are just as market-driven in their news coverage as they are in programming

entertainment (Griffin). " That is to say the mass media and different media outlets know exactly what to write to appeal to target audiences. These media outlets, such as Fox and CNN are not only setting and agenda for the public on what to think about, but even perhaps what we need to do about it. When media outlets concentrate on either the right or left winged side of politics, and their political stance dominates their markets, it undercuts our democracy. The widest possible dissemination of information from diverse and antagonistic sources is essential to the welfare of the public. The power of the press is a primordial in that it sets the agenda of public discussion. Coverage of political topics by the mass media needs to change. Objectivity and relaying actual events should be the most important responsibilities of media outlets. The media not only sets the agenda for what issues, events or candidates are most important, but also transfers the salience of specific attributes belonging to those potential objects of interest. The news media plays a significant role in narrowing public debate about important issues by excluding or marginalizing certain views. By framing a particular aspect of a perceived reality and making the aspect more salient in a communication text, sometimes in way to promote a particular problem definition such as in the two articles by Fox News and CNN, interpretation of this issue becomes warped. With interpretations of political issues becoming warped by the mass media, the Fairness Doctrine becomes necessary. Yes, we the people have a choice on which media outlets we decide to follow and obtain our news from, but isn't it the major responsibility of the mass media to report and relay issues, especially political issues, with the upmost objectivity in order for news to be honest, equitable and balanced? The Fairness Doctrine

is necessary because the mass media has significantly excluded and marginalized certain views. The public no longer is presented with contrasting viewpoints of news on controversial issues. While propaganda in the mass media and in politics helps to shape the discourse of the public's agenda, it needs to be done in way that presents both contrasting views in order for the public to formulate their own opinions. This First Amendment is crucial to America and the American people and the mass media has a responsibility to the American people to uphold the freedom of speech, and the ability to criticize the government for any wrong doings by reporting contrasting views.