

Speaker: Betsi Grabe (Dept. of Telecommunications, Indiana University)

Title: The liberal bias accusation against journalism: An assessment of visual bias in network news coverage of U. S. presidential candidates from 1992 to 2004

Time and Place: Friday, October 13, 12:30-1:45, RTV 226

Abstract

This presentation will report the findings of content analysis that scrutinized network news coverage of Republicans, Democrats, and a group of other presidential candidates across four consecutive (1992-2004) election campaigns for bias. Most studies of journalistic bias in television news focus on the volume of coverage or the verbal component of news, neglecting the visual aspect. This study reveals the importance of incorporating visual analysis into future investigations. Variables related to visual prominence of stories and structural features (editing and camera techniques) used in packaging news stories were employed to do so. Results related to volume of coverage show that candidates outside the two dominant political parties received relatively little coverage while Republicans and Democrats received more or less equal coverage. Yet, when the visual aspects of coverage are considered it becomes clear that Republicans were the beneficiaries, while the position of other candidates improved markedly. Democrats received the least favorable visual coverage of the three groups, across all four elections.