

## **GU POLITICS FELLOW MIKE DUBKE**

### **DISCUSSION GROUP OUTLINE**

## **THE 24-MINUTE NEWS CYCLE**

*REALITY POLITICS AND CELEBRITY SURROGATES IN THE AGE OF FAKE NEWS*

### **Discussion Group Synopsis**

With the advent of cable news, political discourse was ushered into the era of the 24-hour news cycle. Now with Twitter, Snapchat and Signal we are entering the realm of a 24-minute news cycle. Nothing is permanent and the story will change to a new topic before the answer to the first charge is cleared for release. Is this hyper delivery of news good for our public dialogue? Do we run the risk of half-truths taking on an aura of conventional wisdom because we have collectively already moved on to the next big thing? Using the experience of the first several months of the Trump administration as a guide, the discussion group will consider whether this phenomenon is real and whether or not anything needs to change.

### **Week 1 – Controlling the News Cycle**

Can anyone or any institution control the news cycle? Using the real-life examples of an overseas Presidential trip, a White House resignation and the rollout of the Federal budget, the group will explore whether it is still possible to shape a narrative in today's news cycle.

### **Week 2 – The Power and Danger of Leaks**

Leaks come in all shapes and sizes. Some are meant to further a policy objective. Some are meant to hurt a rival and some put lives and national security at risk. When, if ever, is it okay to leak and when should a reporter walk away?

### **Week 3 – Fake News**

What is Fake News? If news stories are more opinion than objective reporting of the facts, are they fake? Does a reporter's political orientation create an inherent conflict of interest? When and how should a news organization be held accountable when one of their reporters gets a story wrong?

### **Week 4 – Do Sunday Shows Matter Anymore?**

For the communicators in the Reagan administration, only the nightly news and the Sunday Shows mattered when it came to television. Once the 6:30pm national news aired, they could relax for the day. Today, with the combination of the digital delivery of video and 24-hour cable news programming, there is no rest for the press team. In this hyper-news environment, do Sunday news shows even matter?

### **Week 5 – Cyrons & Cable News**

At the turn of the last century, a good number of American cities had more than one daily newspaper. A passenger on a train could tell the political orientation of his or her fellow rider by looking at the masthead of the newspaper they read. Today, cable news channels fill that role (MSNBC for liberals ... Fox News for conservatives, for example) and the cyrons serve as the headlines for the millions of televisions left on mute. Are our politics more polarized today or just louder?

### **Week 6 – Celebrity Surrogates**

Is there a danger when a White House Press Secretary or Surrogate becomes more of a celebrity than an advocate?

### **Week 7 – What comes first? The Money or the Message?**

Modern messaging is expensive. The President has the Bully Pulpit, but sometimes that is not even enough. In order to create a narrative that will cut through the media clutter, it is imperative to control the message both inside and outside the White House. How is that accomplished and is this type of coordination healthy for democracy?

### **Week 8 – In the Marketplace of Ideas, has Trust been Lost?**

When does spin end and accountability take over? Can any of our institutions, politicians or journalists be trusted to tell the truth? If the answer is no, can it be fixed.