**How Has Social Media Changed Politics?**

In just the last two decades, **social media** has transformed how people engage with politics. Platforms like Twitter/X, Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok allow political candidates, elected officials, activists, and everyday citizens to share opinions, organize events, and respond to breaking news instantly and publicly.

Unlike traditional media, social media removes the middleman. Politicians can speak directly to voters. Movements like Black Lives Matter and #MeToo gained traction online, bypassing gatekeepers and reaching millions without ever appearing on the nightly news. Voters can now **interact with campaigns**, **fact-check claims**, and **go viral** with a single post.

But there are downsides. Misinformation spreads quickly. Algorithms create **filter bubbles** where people only see content that reinforces what they already believe. And the line between truth and opinion has become increasingly blurred. Social media can empower and divide, sometimes at the same time.

**Key Terms and Definitions**

| **Term** | **Definition** |
| --- | --- |
| **Social Media** | Online platforms where users create and share content and interact in real-time. |
| **Viral Content** | Media that spreads quickly and widely online through shares and reposts. |
| **Hashtag Activism** | Using social media tags to raise awareness or mobilize support for causes. |
| **Filter Bubble** | An online environment where algorithms limit exposure to differing viewpoints. |
| **Digital Campaigning** | Using social media and internet tools to run or support political campaigns. |

**Active Learning Assignment: Create a Political Social Media Page**

**Orienting Question:**

*If you ran for office, how would you use social media to win hearts, minds, and votes?*

**Objective:**

Students will design a mock political candidate’s social media presence to understand how messaging, tone, and visuals shape public perception.

**Instructions:**

1. **Choose a Platform:**
   * Pick one: Instagram, TikTok, Twitter/X, or YouTube.
2. **Create a Candidate Profile:**
   * Name, office sought, party or issue, and political goals.
   * Include a profile bio, one campaign slogan, and a professional “tone” or style.
3. **Design Three Sample Posts:**
   * Post 1: Policy announcement or stance on a major issue.
   * Post 2: Personal connection or behind-the-scenes moment.
   * Post 3: Response to a crisis or opponent’s claim.

You may include images, emojis, hashtags, or short video descriptions.

1. **Reflection:**
   * What did you try to emphasize in your social media strategy?
   * How might your posts influence voters positively or negatively?

**Review Questions**

1. What makes social media different from traditional political communication?
2. How has social media made politics more accessible and more challenging?
3. What is “hashtag activism,” and can it lead to real-world change?
4. What are the dangers of filter bubbles and viral misinformation?
5. How can voters and citizens use social media responsibly?