



Spin Cycle: How the White House and the Media Manipulate the News

Howard Kurtz

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Spin Cycle is the first behind-the-scenes account of the White House political operation as it packages and shapes the news by manipulating, misleading, and in some cases, intimidating the press. It is also the tale of how some of the nation's top journalists buy into these efforts and, often, put their own spin on the news. Compelling, infuriating, often devastatingly funny, this is the story you should read before you pick up the newspaper tomorrow morning.

Spin Cycle: How the White House and the Media Manipulate the News Details

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Seth says

Assembles the details of how employees of the White House / Executive Branch work daily at controlling and manipulating what information is released when for maximum impact of positive news and damage control of bad news. Some of the guys who worked for Clinton are back in there working for Obama, so even though this book is dated, it's overall description of how the system works is probably still relevant and insightful.

Jim says

"Wonderfully topical look

Ja Ne says

5/5: Meeletult hea insight raamat , kuidas toimub meediamanipulatsioon ning selle keerutamine alates WH-st(Hillary ja Billi skandaalid) kuni pisikese politiikuni välja.

Rebekkila says

I registered a book at BookCrossing.com!
<http://www.BookCrossing.com/journal/11446777>

Kathi says

A must read for anyone even attempting to discuss politics; explains how trial balloons are used, stories are spun to politicians' benefits, etc.

Mariana Gaspar says

De leitura obrigatória para aqueles que não vêem a natureza tablóide da imprensa e acreditam que o spin é uma arte exclusiva aos assessores de imprensa.

"He had launched his career thinking that journalism was pure - a bunch of people dedicated to serving the public by ferreting out the truth - and concluded, sadly, that it wasn't. In fact, it wasn't all that different from being a spokesman. Both professions waxed and waned according to the news cycle, and both had their

share of shortcuts and compromises. You got your hands dirty in both arenas. But Lockhart came to believe that you could have more of an impact from the inside." (Kurtz, 1998: 127)

Chris says

Interesting to see where power lies in Washington D.C: The White House, K Street, the Capitol, and the PRESS. This book is a case study in how the Washington media and the White House battle each other in defining issues and influencing the public.

Jerry says

While the book is framed with the intern scandal, and Kurtz does include some of the administration's stonewalling on the other potential presidential sex scandals, the thrust of his analysis is the long-running fundraising scandal. Spin Cycle was published in 1998, which means it mostly predates the Lewinsky scandal, which is too bad because that was the Clinton's finest spin, when they convinced feminists to support an abusive boss, Democrats to vilify a young woman, and reporters to ignore scandal and report as if the prosecution was the scandal.

It is an insider's view, literally. Kurtz describes the world through what he takes as the view of each participant, giving both Clinton spinmeisters and press a charitable reading.

Bridget says

Anyone who has ever lamented media bias, read this book. Reporters, on the whole, are not on some ideological warpath. They're just trying to scoop the competition, make deadline and keep their editors happy. Howard Kurtz provides ample examples of this, showing how politicians manipulate the press and how reporters use their political sources. The book seemed so important to me when it first came out - I had been living in Washington, D.C. at the time and the Monica Lewinsky scandal had just passed - but I think its portrayal of the cynical symbiosis between the press and the pols remains relevant now.

Robert Owens says

There was a time when I enjoyed Howie Kurtz; I watched his show, I read his book. Yes, the Clinton Administration spun the news hard. Who doesn't? An interesting look at how presidents manipulate the public.

Eric says

How the Administration (Clinton's) AND the press have trivialized coverage of the political news of the nation. (With coverage from the likes of Dan Rather and Brian Williams, how can it matter?)

Eric says

It's 1998. The Thompson Committee, holding hearings about the fundraising abusing of the Clinton/Gore campaign in 1996, has released a memo written by Harold Ickes for Clinton and Gore, explaining the differences between hard money and soft money, and how much of each amount could be used for commercials. Both Clinton and Gore had read it.

This was a major problem, because Gore had denied knowing that he was raising hard money. This memo proved him a liar. Time for the masters of spin to swing into action.

Lanny Davis, adviser to the president and one of the chief spin masters, ran to the Hart Building, where an AP reporter was writing the first dispatch about the memo. Davis peered over his shoulder and started suggesting alternate phrases for the story. He ran away again to check the current spin with his boss, then returned and read the story again. And suggested another word change.

"We're not going to edit your statements on the wire, Lanny," another AP reporter said. Davis denied he was doing this, but the reporter didn't believe him. After the story was done, Davis told him that the official comment from the administration was too low in the story. The AP reporter brushed him off again.

In other words, a member of the federal government was trying to dictate to a member of the press how he should write his story, to make it more favorable to the administration. That's pretty brazen.

Howard Kurtz, author of the Media Notes section in the Washington Post, chronicles this and other adventures of the Clinton spin team in 1997. These people – Lanny Davis, John Podesta, Mike McCurry, and others – were obsessed with controlling the message, the flow, the tone, and even the content of all stories written about them. They sweet-talked reporters, bugged them, screamed at them, whatever it took. They leaked damaging stories to control the damage. They withheld information before leaking it at what they calculated to be a politically opportune time. They cooperated with reporters when it suited their purposes and stonewalled when it didn't. They considered all these shenanigans a war for the hearts, minds, and favorable polling of the American people. They were battling against the evil, scandal-obsessed press, who ignored all the wonderful things Clinton and Gore were doing and instead reported the lying, dissembling, perjuring, and law-breaking Clinton and Gore were doing. All of this, of course, with the full blessing and encouragement of Clinton and Gore. With such so much time devoted to spin, when did they have time to get any real work done?

Kurtz knows his stuff and has talked to all the principals involved. One has to wonder, though, if he hasn't been "spun" himself. If you're Lanny Davis, and Howard Kurtz interviews you for his book, aren't you going to give him the spin like you would any other reporter?

The main fault of the book is the timing, which, of course, is hardly Kurtz's fault. Since he covers only 1997, and just the first part of 1998, he can only touch on the mother of all scandals: the Monica Lewinsky affair. I would have loved to have read how the spin masters handled that little episode, which nearly (and should have) brought down the Clinton presidency.

Beth W says

I'm going back through my book collection and reading things I didn't read when I bought them. This is interesting as it was written/published in 1998 and is about how Bill Clinton--through his team--"controlled" his own press. It seems almost naive at this point. Interestingly, it talks about how hostile he was to the media and how he personally believes that the media is/was "out to get him." Gave me some insight into him losing his temper while stumping for hillary recently. That's apparently real. It's so outdated I'm mainly reading it for closure at this point.
