

News: Journalism or Entertainment?

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They came in business suits and blue jeans, pumps and tennis shoes, with gray hair and gelled hair, backpacks and brief cases ? a diverse audience that gathered to listen to a panel of political consultants and journalists discuss the current state of national news coverage.



Panelists talk about national news coverage during a session of the Bipartisan Policy Center political summit, held at Tulane. (Photos by Paula Burch-Celentano)

The discussion, “Blurring the Line: Is it Journalism or Entertainment?,” was part of the second annual political summit organized by the [Bipartisan Policy Center](#) and held on the Tulane uptown campus on Tuesday (Nov. 9).



Lining up to ask questions, members of the audience wait their turn during the presentation, “Blurring the Line: Is it Journalism or Entertainment?”

Panelists considered various overlapping views of news media, with moderator David Korn, Washington bureau chief for *Mother Jones* magazine, proposing that news media inform the citizenry and foster public debate, make money as for-profit corporations and are employed as tools by special interests.

During the question and answer session, Celeste Lay, assistant professor of political science at Tulane, expressed her concern that young people were becoming alienated by the glut of often unreliable media sources. She asked panelists what they would say to “those people who feel like they can't trust anything they hear or read.”

Dan Bartlett, who served as counsel to President George W. Bush, said young people, not able to trust institutional outlets, are turning to social media for support. “[They are saying,] ‘I only have on my Facebook people I trust. I am going to do what they do.’”

A number of students, meanwhile, asked the panel about the journalistic role of comedians Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert.

“We had four or five people come up in a row and said, ‘I don't watch any of you people, I just want to watch Jon Stewart,’” said Joe Lockhart, a senior adviser to President Bill Clinton. “I think that's a recognition that we haven't figured out what the next thing is. I don't think it's going to pure entertainment and comedy, but we

don't know what it is.”

Other panelists were Betsy Fischer of NBC's “Meet the Press;” Jonathan Martin of Politico; Mark McKinnon, a counselor to President George W. Bush, and Kiki McLean, senior adviser to the Hillary Clinton presidential campaign.

At the summit, the Bipartisan Policy Center announced “[The Democracy Project](#),” an initiative that will focus on strengthening civil discourse in government and congressional redistricting.