

**Digital Media Panel - 04/03/08**  
**By Emily Corio**

**Anchor:** How the Internet affects this year's presidential race is the topic of a panel discussion at West Virginia University tonight. The panel includes bloggers and Internet reporters from national media organizations. Emily Corio has this preview.

**Corio:** Michael Tomasky calls this year's race for president the YouTube election. Tomasky is editor of the Guardian America, the American Web site for the British newspaper, The Guardian. Tomasky is also the moderator for tonight's panel.

**Tomasky:** It's often said, and I was taught when I was in journalism school at WVU in the early 1980's, that 1960 was the first television election, and that's said mainly because of the famous Kennedy/Nixon debates that took place in that year. So, one question we're going to explore is 'if 1960 was the first television election, will we be able to say in the future that is 2008 the first new media election?'

**Corio:** And by new media, Tomasky means the world wide web. The campaigns, the supporters and the detractors are all using videos and blogs at a new level—much more than four years ago.

**Tomasky:** For the first time in the 2004 election, bloggers were recognized by the party establishments and were credentialed to go the elections or to the conventions for example. But now four years on, you have so many more bloggers. You have not only the stereotypical people sitting at home in their pajamas writing blogs, but you have the major news organizations of our country, The New York Times, The Washington Post, Time Magazine and others, filled now with blogs and devoting so much more time and energy and thought to their web operations.

**Corio:** CNN hired Abbi Tatton as the Internet Reporter three years ago. She's also part of tonight's panel.

**Tatton:** My job involves wading through Facebook groups and online forums, YouTube videos to see how supporters are weighing in for their candidate and potentially influencing the race. I think just last night I spent I think three hours looking at the most blogged YouTube videos getting completely, completely lost in it. Maybe I need to get out more.

**Corio:** Tatton says one of the best parts of the Web playing a larger role in politics is that more people are getting involved.

**Tatton:** I've spoken to supporters of Barack Obama, for example, before the Texas primary, who were saying, 'there's no way with a full-time job I could have got this involved had I not had these online tools at my finger tips to meet others supporters, to raise money, to organize.'

**Tatton:** It's changing all the time and you can get absolutely lost in this information.

**Corio:** The Digital Media and the 2008 Presidential Election panel is tonight at 7:30 in the Mountainlair on WVU's downtown campus. The panel is part of WVU's Festival of Ideas lecture series and the annual Journalism School's j-week that's focused this year on how new media is influencing the election. For West Virginia Public Broadcasting, I'm Emily Corio in Morgantown.