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During the 2008 presidential election, Sarah Palin rose to political prominence in her run as the first female, Republican vice-presidential candidate. Since the election she has forsaken her Alaskan governorship for the opportunity to become a pundit for the Fox News Network, the star of the TLC network’s new reality show “Sarah Palin’s Alaska”, an active presence on Facebook and Twitter, an electoral godmother, endorsing like-minded candidates throughout the country, and now the author of a second best-selling book. More than any other political figure in the United States, Sarah Palin has harnessed the power of different media platforms to create an unconventional path to political influence.

Over the course of nine weeks I will seek to answer the following questions: How has Palin created a political personality through these different media platforms? What audiences is she reaching through them? Does her career path foreshadow a new way for women to experience political success? Does she demonstrate the benefits and constraints of “convergence culture” (Jenkins, 2006) in the creation of political power.

Palin is most often portrayed as a hockey-mom gone right wing political celebrity who is willing to “go rogue” if it means protecting traditional American values. Her campaigns depict her as a woman that can do it all. One question I will examine is how Palin uses different media to promote different aspects of her “everywoman” persona. How readily do the different facets of Palin -- the wife and mother on TLC, the tech savvy innovator on Twitter, and the hardline conservative pundit on Fox -- mesh together? Do the different media platforms enable or constrain her capacity to develop a coherent and “authentic” persona?

In order to understand what makes Palin so suited for new media, I will first explore how new media has begun to shape modern politics and what this means for the voter. Politicking Online: The Transformation of Election Campaign Communications by Costas Panagopoulos and other research projects on politics in the digital age will offer insight into this inquiry. To understand Palin’s various career decisions and the development of her political presence I will consult the two books that she has recently authored (Going Rogue, 2009) and the (America by Heart, 2010) as well as recent biographies written about Palin. Moreover, I will examine Palin’s Twitter accounts for an understanding of the technological tools she uses to create a political personality.

Through this research I will be able to draw conclusions about how Sarah Palin and her political career illuminate the manner in which emerging information technology has the potential to transform politics in the United States. This project will offer a case study and contribute to the larger work of David Gutterman in his inquiry into how new media contributes to presidential storytelling. Additionally, this project will ideally serve as a basis for my senior thesis.