

# Rough and Tumblr Politics

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Thursday, November 1, 2012

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## Student Covers Election for the *Washington Post*

Every Friday, journalism student Jake DeSchuiteneer joins a Google+ Hangout—a video conference call—with the *Washington Post's* social media director, Natalie Jennings. He updates Jennings on the presidential election news from New Hampshire, and they discuss blogging strategy for the coming week.

DeSchuiteneer is one of 12 on the conference call. More accurately, he is one of “The 12.” In June of this year, the *Post* asked 12 journalism students from swing states across the country to chronicle the 2012 election on a Tumblr blog, [the12.washingtonpost.com](http://the12.washingtonpost.com). Through a bit of old-fashioned networking, DeSchuiteneer was offered the thoroughly modern opportunity to blog for one of the leading American daily news organizations.

Getting the job was just a stroke of luck, admits DeSchuiteneer, a Manchester, N.H., native. After recent UNH alumna Eliza Mackintosh interned at the *Post* last year, journalism professor Tom Haines put her in touch with long-time friend and *Post* digital journalist, David Beard. When Beard’s team later dreamt up the idea for “The 12,” Mackintosh recommended DeSchuiteneer, Haines seconded the choice, and DeSchuiteneer seized the opportunity.

DeSchuiteneer’s primary duty is to curate presidential election coverage by re-posting stories and graphics that reflect the state of the election process in New Hampshire. Sometimes he’s asked to create video content with “man-on-the-street” interviews, asking questions such as “are you better off financially than you were four years ago?” With little experience in political journalism (he covers the music scene for UNH’s *Main Street Magazine*), DeSchuiteneer’s more important qualifications are his smarts and fresh perspective as a college student voting in his first presidential election.

That perspective would not have been tapped in the same way in past elections. In recent years, digital and social media have created new platforms for journalism students to seed their work.

“Jake’s experience shows just how much opportunity and initiative there is in digital media these days for young journalists to get exposure to prominent news organizations,” Haines says. “These types of opportunities didn’t exist 10 years ago—to get involved in national elections for an organization such as the *Post*. There’s a lot of exploratory journalism right now across the spectrum of news outlets.”

The opportunity produces no academic credit or pay, but DeSchuiteneer is well aware of the value.

With the election just weeks away, the project is nearing its end. DeSchuiteneer reflects that he’s a better journalist for the experience, more willing to approach strangers and ask questions. He’s been challenged to develop effective methods for finding his stories. He’s also learned how quickly the news cycle moves.

“It’s very, very fast-paced,” says DeSchuiteneer. “I can’t post things that happened two days ago—it’s just not news anymore. You have to be really on top of it.

“Following politics is exhausting,” he adds.

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**Originally published by:**

The College Letter, Newsletter for the College of Liberal Arts



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