

[ASSIGNMENT_4] OpEd

Resource: [Op-Ed Guide](#)

GOAL

Op-eds are an extremely efficient form of writing that is COMPLETELY different from any other form of writing. It's tricky. It merits a whole [guide](#).

TASK

In no more than 800 words, write an op-ed on any topic related to this course. Your goal should be to publish this piece before the semester ends -- here's a brief list of potential [media outlets](#) to pitch.

1. **Write what you know.** Draw on your expertise and experience.
2. **Know your point.** Figure out your goal: to raise awareness? For readers to take action? Focus on one objective in your op-ed and make sure readers know what it is
3. **Use plain language.** Assume smart readers who have little to no background knowledge of your topic. Op-eds are short – your writing should be too. Use tough, terse prose.
4. **Open with a juicy hook.** Pick something recent in the news or an upcoming anniversary of a major event to peg your piece.
5. **Research your topic.** Even if you're the expert or are drawing on personal experience, fresh research findings and statistics can strengthen your argument.
6. **Cover one issue in three points:** Focus on one issue in your op-ed and have one clear objective. Develop your issue in standard essay format, with an introduction, three key points and a powerful conclusion. Keep your piece concise and organized.
7. **Count the words.** 800 words max
8. **Use the active voice:** e.g. "I believe that" vs "It is believed to be that")
9. **Write a catchy headline and first sentence:** you only have a few seconds to draw your reader into your article, so make sure you grab their attention with a strong headline and a powerful first sentence.
10. **Finish strong.** Summarize your argument in a strong final paragraph with a memorable last sentence.

FORMAT

Superstar op-ed writers rarely stick to any strict structure. The rest of us mortals absolutely must. For this assignment, you *must*. Feel free to pick any topic and argue for or against any position -- but the structure is non-negotiable.

Here is the structure (courtesy of [The Op-Ed Project](#) - highly recommend you browse the site, which is just chock-full of amazing resources):

- LEDE (AROUND A NEWS HOOK)
- THESIS/ARGUMENT
- 1ST POINT
- 2ND POINT
- 3RD POINT
- “TO BE SURE” PARAGRAPH
- CONCLUSION (OFTEN CIRCLING BACK TO YOUR LEDE)

NOTE: This assignment requires STRICT adherence to the structure. **Your op-ed must include ALL the components below.** If not, I will return it to you, ungraded, ONCE, with the expectation that in 48 hours you will resubmit it for a grade WITH these components:

COMPONENTS

- **Title:** While almost all editors will rewrite the title for publication, it helps to give them something to work with
- **Name / affiliation:** First name, last name, and affiliation with (ideally) impressive-sounding institution (eg Columbia University) or unique experience (eg “refugee from X”; “served in Y military branch”) -- this tells editor / readers a tiny bit about your credibility on your topic
- **Hook** (first paragraph): This could be something recently reported in the news; an announcement, anniversary of a significant event, survey results, etc - something catchy, unexpected, or timely.
- **Thesis** (no later than second paragraph): This is what you are arguing FOR or AGAINST -- stated in the most explicit and obvious possible terms. I cannot stress this enough: your thesis should hit me over the head like a frying pan. I highly recommend using the ACTUAL WORDS “for” or “against” (eg “something something something FOR X” or something something something AGAINST Y”). The only purpose of the remainder of

the op-ed is to provide arguments and evidence that serve to persuade readers that your thesis statement is right.

- **“First”** (first sentence of your first supporting paragraph) or similar (eg “The first reason something something is bad is because XYZ”)
- **“Second”** (first sentence of your second supporting paragraph) or similar (eg “The first reason something something is bad is because XYZ”)
- **“Finally,”** (first sentence of your third supporting paragraph): You get the idea!
- **“To be sure,”** (following your first, second, and third supporting paragraphs) or similar. This paragraph acknowledges and then debunks the counterargument.
- **“In conclusion”** or similar + **“(thesis statement; restated)”** In this final section, restate your thesis -- you don’t have to use the exact same words but it should be easily recognizable as your thesis.