

Op-Ed Writing

This is a sample syllabus. Actual course topics and assignments may vary by instructor and class.

Week 1

Introduction. Getting started on Op-Ed writing. What are Op-Eds anyway? Choosing a topic and writing an Op-Ed.

Assignment: Read at least five major newspapers' Op-Ed pages and find three examples of Op-Eds that work. Write three one-paragraph ideas for possible Op-Eds, providing rationale, relevance, and structure.

Week 2

How to write An Op-Ed. Researching. Outlining. The structure of an Op-Ed.

Assignment: Read at least five Op-Eds and decide if the writer is using deductive or inductive reasoning. Read supplementary material on the how-to's of Op-Ed writing. Take one idea and write your first 700-word piece.

Week 3

Types of Op-Eds: Declarative, first person, event-based, narrative, and solution. Examples of types of Op-Eds.

Assignment: Read supplementary material. Revise your first Op-Ed based on feedback. Find three Op-Eds that use the solution/declarative approach, employ human or human nature, or are told in the first-person.

Week 4

Elements of Op-Ed style. How to incorporate plain language, pop-culture references, humor, and human nature.

Assignment: Write your second Op-Ed, aiming for 600 words, and find three Op-Eds that use humor effectively.

Week 5

How to write an effective lede. Tips to writing effective ledes. Types of ledes.

Assignment: Revise your previous Op-Eds, focusing on writing an excellent lede and conclusion.

Week 6

What is your expertise? What makes someone an expert? What makes a piece written with "citizen expertise" work?

Assignment: Write an Op-Ed that is outside your area of expertise but which you can claim some "ownership" of. Keep in mind all of the tricks you've learned in class.

Week 7

How to pitch to editors. Determining your audience. Targeting your publication. Writing a pitch letter. Answers to common questions on pitching protocol.

Assignment: Craft a pitch letter of each of the three Op-Eds you've written. Tell me three blogs you read regularly and post example entries that demonstrate effective writing.

Week 8

Writing online opinions and blogs. How is the style online different than print? How to approach online Op-Eds. Tips for opinion bloggers.

Assignment: Take everything you've learned and apply it now to getting published. Set goals.