

Op-Ed Guidelines

Printed opposite the editorial page, as the name suggests, op-ed articles are an excellent way to express interesting opinions and perspectives on matters in the news. Well written articles reflect well on both the author and the University. For the *New York Times* and other national newspapers, competition for getting an op-ed published is stiff; other media are more welcoming. For all, it is important to keep op-ed articles short, between 500 and 750 words. Letters to the editor are generally limited to 150 words. Generally, topics and relevance (global, national, local) depend on the newspaper.

Plan with the Media Relations office. If you have an idea, it is usually best to have a quick conference. The office can help you strategize before you start writing and can help edit once you have a draft. Sometimes the staff may call you to propose an idea. Staff members have spent years cultivating professional relationships with members of the media and are able to base evaluations of ideas on their knowledge of the interests of the media and other constituencies. They edit following news guidelines in order to ease the job of editors at the other end, which increases the possibility that articles will be used.

Op-ed Articles should be approximately 700 words long. Requirements vary by publication, but 700 words is the maximum for the *New York Times*. *Newsday* and some other papers will accept pieces up to *Newsweek* runs 1200-1500 words. Letters to the editor generally should be no more than 150 words.

Articles should be topical and, above all, timely. They should be related to an event or trend in the news and submitted while the subject is still in the headlines. Timing is absolutely critical. It is just too late once the news in the daily paper has moved on to another topic, regular columnists have sounded off, or other op-eds have appeared. Noel Rubinton, the op-ed editor of *Newsday*,
piece on the right day is be -ed pieces are written to
appear a day or two *before* a forthcoming event or legislative development when that can be predicted.

Articles should be contentious. They 0 1 71.789)104 the

Scholarly work can be adapted. Sometimes a piece can be partially written by adapting from or excerpting a current scholarly work.

Articles should be polished. Most publications want mastery of the subject, expertise, and clarity of thought more than elegant prose. Especially if a piece is fresh and topical, editors often will edit and polish, getting your approval of changes.

Articles should have statistics. They should not overwhelm the piece but are always welcome.

Articles are a way to publicize recent projects. A biography at the end of the piece often can be used to publicize a current or forthcoming book or project.

There should be a local connection. For all papers except the *Times*, and sometimes even there, papers like to feature authors with local connections and expertise. For *The Journal News* in Westchester, for

cover the county (including its thinkers), and because on local issues, Westchester experts are likely to be better informed than outsiders.

Imagine and write for a target audience. Your target may be readers of a national newspaper like the *New York Times* or *Los Angeles Times*, readers of a regional one like *The Journal News*, magazine like *The Nation* or *The National Review*, of a specialized publication like *Forbes* or *Rolling Stone* or *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, or of a professional newsletter. It is essential to refresh your sense of what the publication likes by looking at one or two recent issues.

All subjects welcome.