**Political Science 12**

**Op-Ed Assignment**

An ‘Op-Ed’ (originally short for ‘opposite the editorial page’ although often taken to stand for ’opinion editorial’) is a written piece typically published by a newspaper or magazine which expresses the opinion of the named author not usually affiliated with the publication’s editorial board. Op-eds are different from both editorials (opinion pieces submitted by editorial board members) and letters to the editor (opinion pieces submitted by readers).

This form of public discourse should respond to an event from the past year and connect it to broader social, political, and economic problems that we have studied in this class. The point of this style of writing is to communicate an opinion about a current event to a broad audience. Successful “op-ed” writing is brief, succinct, and direct.

Your op-ed will offer a clearly outlined and organized argument that reflects a thorough and thoughtful engagement with the issue at hand. For this assignment, you will need to become well-informed on the issue you have selected, through a thorough engagement with media coverage on it. Given the nature of this style of writing, extensive citations and expansive research are not necessary, but you will have to cite the media sources you have worked with to develop your argument.

You will expand your op-ed into a thoroughly cited research paper that references scholarly sources later in the term. For this assignment, focus your energy on clearly explaining the issue you have selected and developing a specific line of argument. To be successful in this assignment, you will have to plan carefully. You don’t have a lot of time to build your argument, but you need to be convincing. Clearly explained examples—both of the issue you are discussing and the structures you are connecting it to—will be key!

**Format:**

Your op-ed will be written as a traditional short essay that would be submitted to a newspaper. **You have a strict word limit of 650 words**, written in 11-12 point, of an appropriate font. Do not include title page and bibliography in this count.

**Citation**:

All ideas, concepts, definitions, facts, and figures must be cited. This means that information presented in an op-ed that originates from any source must be acknowledged specifically. However, if the information is not a summary of the previous content, the writer’s own analysis of previous content, or common knowledge – the earth is round, Canada has 10 provinces, and so on – then the exact source (the author, date and page where that information is found) must be provided.

Papers will use the Chicago (Author-date) style of citation. Each paper will provide a Reference List or Bibliography that likewise follows the Chicago style of citation. For a guide to the Chicago Author-Date style citation, see <http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html>

**The op-ed will include the following:**

1) An **introduction** of a few sentences that briefly and precisely introduces the issue at hand, the op-ed (or more likely, the columnist) you will respond to, and the specific argument you will make in response (your **thesis statement**).

2) A **response to the arguments made in the article you’re addressing.** Outline the author’s thesis and central arguments. Your synopsis should explain only the most important concepts. To decide which points are important, and how much they should be explained is an exercise in judgment – you don’t have to respond point by point to each argument in the op-ed you’re taking on. Rather, you should develop a clear argument of your own by taking as a starting point key aspects of the op-ed you’re responding to. Select 2-3 claims the author makes that you would like to respond to. Is there something important you think the author missed or avoided talking about in their op-ed? There is no room for filler, vague statements, or blanket moralizing in your op-ed (even if there is some in the op-ed you’re responding to!).

3) The **organization of your own argument is crucial.** Each of your paragraphs should begin with a topic sentence that describes the claim the argument will make, as outlined in your introduction.

4) Write a concise **conclusion**, summarizing (briefly!) and concluding with a statement(s) that demonstrate why this is an important issue (and point of view). What’s the takeaway?

Please see the marking rubric below for a (very!) detailed guide to how this assignment will be graded.

**Topics:**

Select one of the following issues and read the associated op-ed listed:

**1) Housing in BC**

‘Vancouver Activists Fight to Bring Housing Back to the Middle Class’ by Alex Bozikovic, *The Globe and Mail*, April 6th, 2018

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/art-and-architecture/article-vancouver-activists-fight-to-bring-housing-back-to-middle-class/>

**2) Social Movements: March of Our Lives**

‘The anti-Trump resistance should stop bringing knives to a gunfight’ by Neil Macdonald, *CBC News*, April 4, 2018

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/opinion/anti-trump-resistance-1.4603520>

**3) Electoral Reform – Trudeau government election promise**

‘It’s not the Liberals’ fault for lying about electoral reform, it’s yours for believing them’ by Andrew Coyne, *National Post*, February 1, 2017

<http://nationalpost.com/opinion/andrew-coyne-its-not-the-liberals-fault-for-lying-about-electoral-reform-its-yours-for-believing-them>

**4) Canadian Federalism and Pipeline Politics**

‘Canada is a federation of frenemies – and pipeline politics prove it’ by David Moscrop, *Maclean’s*, May 17, 2017

<http://www.macleans.ca/politics/canada-is-a-federation-of-frenemies-and-pipeline-politics-prove-it/>

**5) #MeToo and Feminism**

‘Publicly, We Say #MeToo. Privately, We Have Misgivings.’ by Daphne Merkin, *New York* Times, January 5, 2018

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/05/opinion/golden-globes-metoo.html>

**6) Enviro Politics**

‘Nobody Should Believe Canadian Politicians Who Promise to Fight Climate Change’ by Paul Wells, *Maclean’s*, April 6, 2018

<http://www.macleans.ca/politics/nobody-should-believe-canadian-politicians-who-promise-to-fight-climate-change/>

**7) US Politics: A Divided, Polarized Nation?**

‘America’s Political Divide Intensified During Trump’s First Year as President’ by Clare Foran, *The Atlantic*, October 5, 2017

<https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/10/trump-partisan-divide-republicans-democrats/541917/>

**8) Changing Ways of War – The Ethics of Cyberwarfare**

‘Army of 01101111: The Making of A Cyber Battalion’ by Matt Gallagher, *Wired*, March 27, 2018

<https://www.wired.com/story/army-cyber-troops-fort-gordon/>

**Note: In many of the articles you will find videos and links to other articles that will provide you with further understanding of your chosen topic. Be sure to view these as part of your readings…..**