

Op-Eds

An op-ed is a concise prose piece (typically 600–800 words) in which an author stakes a clear, informed claim on a relevant issue. Unlike a standard news report, an op-ed is argumentative; it uses a blend of evidence, logic, and the author’s unique expertise to persuade a specific audience (Morelli 1). Historically known as ‘opposite the editorial page,’ these pieces provide a platform for outside experts and community members to influence public discourse and propose solutions to modern challenges.

Op-Eds VS Editorials

An op-ed is ***not*** the same thing as an editorial.

Feature	Op-Ed	Editorial
Who writes it?	Guest contributors or columnists	The publication’s editorial board (staff)
Whose voice is it?	Represents the individual writer’s personal view (can contradict the outlet’s stance)	Represents the newspaper/outlet’s official stance
Purpose	To provide a unique, expert, or contrarian perspective	To influence public policy or state the outlet’s institutional values
Tone	Can be passionate, witty, or even provocative. Using “I” is expected	Is consistent, avoids heavy use of “I” and emotional language
Do they provide resources? Why?	Yes, to help the reader learn	Yes, to validate the institution’s position
Signature	Always signed by the specific author	Usually unsigned (collective)
Word Count	600-800	400-600

What Should I Consider When Writing an Op-Ed?

Understand Your Audience

Identify who you are trying to convince with your op-ed. Tailor your vocabulary and choices to meet the audience where they are: make it accessible to them. Ask the following questions:

- Who is the target audience? What are the current demographics?
- Where do they stand on this topic?

- What are their primary concerns?
- What are their barriers? What objections will they raise?
- What call to action will be most effective for them?

Define Your Purpose

Identify a mission for this piece as you begin the writing process to maintain focus. Decide if you are trying to do one of the following:

- Inform: teach the audience something new
- Provoke: challenge a common belief
- Propose a solution: advocate for a specific change

Demonstrate Authority

Establish trust and credibility with the reader by demonstrating authority. Weave in your credentials, research, or even personal lived experiences. You don't need a PhD to have authority; being a student leader or a community member with a unique perspective is enough.

Have a Strong Voice

- Be engaging by using an **active voice** (“The researcher conducted the methods willfully” as opposed to “The methods were conducted willfully by the researcher”). Visit our [“Passive Voice”](#) handout to learn about the distinction between active and passive voice.
- Consider choosing a **tone** that matches your specific topic:
 - Authoritative
 - Contemplative
 - Descriptive
 - Humorous
- Use ***I, we, and you.***
- **Vary sentence lengths** to establish an appealing rhythm. Use short, punchy sentences to establish a sense of urgency. Use longer sentences to relate in-depth research or background information. For more tips, visit [“Sentence Variety and Rhythm.”](#)

Include Research and Facts

By including research and facts, you are supporting your opinion and argument with concrete evidence. Data and statistics are hard to dispute, strengthening your claims.

Provide Resources

As you are including a “call to action,” it is important to provide resources for readers to be able to do said action; it also builds trust and allows interested readers to dig deeper into the topic. Use embedded hyperlinks to direct readers to websites or organizations that speak to your mission and claims. Be mindful when choosing these items, making sure they are accessible to your audience (e.g., websites *without* subscriptions or payments).

General Structure of an Op-Ed

- **Headline**
- **Hook + Introduction**
- **Thesis**
- **Argument + Evidence**
- **Call to Action**

Headline

A headline is the title of the op-ed that encompasses the main perspective and can grab the attention of the readers. It may be helpful to write the headline after the op-ed is fully written to better represent the piece holistically. Headlines should be *active*, like the following examples:

- Thrifting Isn't Enough
- The Myth of the Lone Genius

Hook + Introduction

A hook is meant to attract and spark the reader's potential interest. It can come in the form of a striking fact, a metaphor, a counterintuitive observation, and sometimes even queries.

- *Examples:*
 - “The U.S. Census reports that roughly 22 million children live with a single parent. And three times as many women, when compared with men, head these households” (*Psychology Today*).
 - If one could solve the *New York Times*' Wordle in two tries, would that be considered *luck*?

After the hook, introduce your topic by providing the background or context for the specific topic. Ask questions like “Why is the issue relevant right now?” or “What does the reader need to know to understand your argument?” Once the introduction is complete, write a sentence to pivot to the thesis, bridging the background of the introduction to your main claim. For more information on the general structure and functions of introductions, visit “[Writing Introductions for Essays](#).”

Thesis

The thesis acts as your opinion statement or the core claim you are making. The thesis usually appears by the end of the first or second paragraph. It outlines and previews what the rest of the op-ed will discuss, which may imply a call to action. To learn more about the general structure and function of thesis statements, visit “[Essay Planning: How to Develop a Working Thesis Statement](#).”

Argument + Evidence

This is the “meat” of the piece where you develop your thesis with logical reasoning. This section should be broken up into shorter paragraphs, each with a main idea/point and some supporting evidence for why your thesis is true.

When using evidence, consider using field research (interviews and observations) or secondary research (scholarly articles, data, charts) to substantiate your claims. Hyperlinks are most used when citing evidence (replacing formal citations).

While you want to persuade the reader of *your* argument, make sure to include a **counterargument** to balance your perspective. Start with phrases like “Critics may argue...” or “A common concern is...” Once you have done this, immediately follow it with a logical explanation of why your argument still holds weight or why the objection may be flawed.

Call to Action

Now that you have presented your argument, the call to action is meant to motivate the reader to do something with the information you provided. Conclude your piece by clearly stating what

you want the audience to do, whether it is changing a behavior, supporting a policy, or simply being more aware of this relevant topic. Make sure the last sentence is memorable by either echoing the introduction or leaving the reader with a moving observation.

NOTE: While there is a general structure for op-eds written above, it is important to know that op-eds do not have a rigid structure and can be written in a variety of ways; each element can be ordered differently, depending on the style and publication of the op-ed. You will see this flexibility demonstrated in the examples below.

Op-Ed Example with Annotations

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Climate Change Psychology & the Impact of Cultural Norms</u> By: Imaan Siddiqui</p> <p>Climate change does not pick and choose who it affects. It affects us all. Currently, there is a variety of innovative technological solutions to alleviate anthropogenic climate change, from renewable energy to sustainable farming, but that alone will not be enough. It is <i>people</i> who are the ultimate forces in global change. Climate Change Psychology studies the psychological components of climate change, including perception, cognition, anxiety, and behavior. What encourages or discourages people from participating in pro-environmental behaviors? How can we increase climate action? Ultimately, it is the beliefs and values individuals hold that manifest in their actions and behavior. So the next question becomes, how can we change our beliefs for the greater good of humanity? <u>We must integrate sustainability into the fabric of national identity and everyday values.</u></p> <p>In a study across 28 countries, Struwig and Roberts [1] discuss the value-belief-norm model (VBN), which analyzes how society’s progress influences the transitional relationship from values to pro-environmental behaviors. To measure societal progress, the Weighted Index of Social Progress (WISP) was used, which measures dimensions like health, environment, women’s status, and cultural cohesion, to name a few. Countries high on the WISP index (higher income nations) would report greater belief in their ability to make positive impacts on environmental issues [1]. Some might argue that focusing on psychology and culture is a distraction from the urgent need for immediate policy changes or massive infrastructure shifts. However, history shows that even the most advanced</p>	<p>Headline: encompassing and active</p> <p>Hook: personification of climate change</p> <p>Introduction: background and context intended for a larger audience who may not know about climate change psychology; <i>we</i> and active voice are used; tone is contemplative</p> <p>Thesis: opinion statement/claim; purpose is proposing a solution</p> <p>Argument + Evidence: using and explaining concrete research to back up the thesis, citations included <i>Note: It is rare to use the IEEE (Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers) style in op-eds like what is seen here.</i></p> <p>Counterargument: identifies the scope of the proposed lens and its potential limitation; immediately pivots back</p>
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infrastructure fails to gain traction without public buy-in. Policy and psychology are not at odds; rather, a culture that values sustainability provides the necessary social mandate for those policies to succeed.

European countries like Switzerland and Norway are known as some of the greenest countries and rank among the top WISP scores. This is not a coincidence. As the natural environment is tightly connected to Switzerland's identity, pro-environmental behavior, climate action, and policy are encouraged and enforced through its culture and, consequently, its Federal Council [2]. Similarly, Norway uses both culture and art to integrate sustainability practices into citizens' way of life [3]. By examining both the history and cultural environment of Norway, Norwegians can also respectfully preserve and integrate their traditions and values into combating the climate crisis [4].

So how do we draw inspiration from these leading green countries? In discussing research at the 2025 Western Psychological Association Conference with both students and faculty, I asked, "What would provide you with the most hope in alleviating climate change?" To which most replied: "I would like to see others publicly participate in pro-environmental actions." Seeing others be green empowers and encourages people to do the same: seeing is believing. So, make it a friendly competition to be greener with your neighbors, make your own paint for your next art piece, and thrift next year's Halloween costume. By understanding Climate Change Psychology and fostering a culture where environmental belief is the norm, we can finally unlock the full potential of collective action.

Resources:

- <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0272494421002012>

to why the main claim is valid

Argument + Evidence: examples of other countries used to support and synthesize the claim, citations included

Call to Action: pivot to how to use the research as proof for the solution.

weaves in credibility and lived experiences to demonstrate authority

specific calls to action mentioned

memorable last sentence echoes the introduction and projects a bright future if action is taken

Resources are provided, including related research articles, relevant book reviews, climate activist organizations, and individuals.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● https://www.theguardian.com/books/2024/jan/04/not-the-end-of-the-world-by-hannah-ritchie-review-an-optimists-guide-to-the-climate-crisis ● https://www.conceivablefuture.org/ ● https://www.multisolving.org/ ● https://climatesolutions-careers.org/ ● https://reneelertzman.com/ <p>References:</p> <p>[1] http://tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00207659.2024.2420498</p> <p>[2] https://houseofswitzerland.org/swissstories/environment/key-aspects-environmental-protection-switzerland</p> <p>[3] https://www.norwayinla.com/?p=101</p> <p>[4] https://moreto come.net/2022/06/15/norways-rich-and-changing-cultural-environment/</p>	<p><i>Note: Not all op-eds provide resources.</i></p> <p>Not all op-eds have a references section. On a basic level, it is important to cite evidence throughout the piece.</p> <p><i>Note: It is rare to use the IEEE (Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers) style in op-eds like what is seen here.</i></p>
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Note: The author was asked to follow previous editorials on the Science Diplomacy Grid for structure, which is why there are no hyperlinks, and the word count is around 400 words instead of 600-800. To reiterate, there is no rigid structure for op-eds.

Other Examples of Op-Eds

- [Op-Ed Exampes - Write the World](#)
- [Op-Ed: “The Climate Crisis is our Third World War. It Needs a Bold Response” by Joseph E. Stiglitz](#)
- [Op-Ed Examples \(in IEEE Style\) - Science Diplomacy Grid](#)

Activity 1: Considerations for Op-Eds

Read the following op-ed: “[Philosophical Ramifications of Social Media through the Truman Show](#)” by Uyen. Then answer the multiple-choice questions regarding what was considered as the author wrote the op-ed.

Philosophical Ramifications of Social Media through The Truman Show

By: Uyen

Utopian yet deceitful, fictional yet realistic, *The Truman Show* (1998) can be interpreted as having predicted the pitfalls of social media from a philosophical angle.

In the movie, the naive Truman Burbank is oblivious to the fact that he has been the main character of a live broadcast reality show ever since his birth. The town of Seahaven where he

spends his entire life in an enormous set inhabited by paid actors and over 5000 hidden cameras that capture his every move for a global audience to view.

Today the idea of having one's daily life exposed to an audience is not unfamiliar. Influencers such as the Kardashians are not the only ones who embrace the Truman lifestyle by producing reality shows like "Keeping Up With the Kardashians." By diligently reporting snapshots of our daily lives on Instagram, Facebook, Tiktok, Twitter - you name it - whether we admit it or not, most of us are striving to become a TV show star like Truman. As we post multiple stories about what we eat, who we hang out with and where we travel to in a day, we expect an audience to admire our exciting life - at least, the one we convince ourselves that we are experiencing.

The problem with such expectation is that one's life is turned into a spectacle, objectified under the gaze of the audience. In *The Truman Show*, the audience worldwide adore Truman, but more as a source of entertainment than as a human being. Although these viewers are perfectly aware of the unethicity of voyeuristic broadcasting, they cannot resist tuning in every episode, thus ironically enabling the show to sustain for over 30 years. When Christof, the creator of the show tries to capsize Truman to prevent him from escaping Seahaven, the viewer ratings skyrocket because the audience is curious about what would happen. It is not Truman's life that matters, but the riveting spectacle of it being compromised.

As Jacques Lacan's psychoanalysis suggests, humans as subjects are constituted of desires for what is beyond ourselves. We construct a desirable image of ourselves as that is a unified and self-satisfied object. We misrecognize ourselves as this objectified version and thus desire to be seen and affirmed as objects. In our minds, we imagine a crowd of audience imposing their gaze on us, the object, the spectacle.

With social media, the gaze is made concrete and quantifiable. Counting the number of views, likes, shares and comments on every post, we are assured of the existence of a crowd of audience as we imagine. As such, striving to become Truman means wanting to be someone else's source of entertainment, to be both validated and objectified.

Notably, the key difference between Truman and social media users is that the former is deceived and manipulated, while the latter voluntarily exhibits their daily lives. As a result, despite wanting to be that star that Truman is, social media users, in my opinion, become more similar to Meryl instead.

In the show, the persona of Meryl is being Truman's wife. Living under the same roof as Truman, Hannah, the Hollywood actress behind Meryl must sacrifice her real personality to fully dedicate to this invented character. "Well, for me, there is no difference between a private life and a public life. My life... is my life, is *The Truman Show*. *The Truman Show* is... a lifestyle. It's a noble life," commented Hannah in an interview at the beginning of the movie.

Eventually, the inherent dissonance with her character proves detrimental to the actress. Without genuine affection for Truman, continuing the staged marriage becomes unbearable for Hannah. In her last scene before quitting the show, Meryl breaks down and bursts into tears, “How can anyone expect me to carry on under these conditions? It’s unprofessional!”

Since our social media personae often represent how we want others to perceive us, they deflect from our personality in real life. Therefore, just like Meryl/Hannah, we risk prioritizing our public persona over our private lives, consequently suffer perpetual discontent. In order to nourish a fabricated representation, we forget to cherish our private experiences; we in ourselves become starved.

Logically, the solution to this entire dilemma is to leave social media forever. However, in real life, digital detoxes are often unsuccessful because the desire to be seen as an object is chronic (according to Lacan) and invented personae are not so easily extinguished. Plus social media can be a useful tool for positive purposes, such as staying in touch with family and friends. After all, one can list various pragmatic reasons to remain in the network. Hence, I suggest that we keep in mind the discomfort of a Truman-like existence and gradually refrain from oversharing on social media.

1. Who is their intended audience?
 - a. People who use social media
 - b. Wives
 - c. People named Truman
 - d. Students who live off the grid

2. What is the purpose of the piece?
 - a. Inform
 - b. Provoke
 - c. Propose a Solution
 - d. Both a and c

3. How does the author demonstrate authority?
 - a. They use their own lived experiences with social media.
 - b. They watched *The Truman Show*.
 - c. They are the actress who plays Meryl.
 - d. Both a and b

4. What tone does the author employ throughout the piece?
 - a. Authoritative
 - b. Contemplative
 - c. Descriptive
 - d. Humorous

5. Which of the following does the author use?
 - a. I
 - b. You
 - c. We
 - d. All of the above

Activity 2: Identifying General Structure

Using the op-ed above, answer the following multiple-choice questions about identifying each part of the op-ed.

1. What is the headline?
 - a. *The Truman Show* has Philosophical Ramifications via Social Media
 - b. Psychological Tricks of *The Truman Show* Now Released
 - c. Philosophical Ramifications of Social Media through *The Truman Show*
 - d. Jim Carrey is a Great Actor in *The Truman Show*
2. What is the author's hook?
 - a. Today the idea of having one's daily life exposed to an audience is not unfamiliar.
 - b. In *The Truman Show*, the audience worldwide adore Truman, but more as a source of entertainment than as a human being.
 - c. In the movie, the naive Truman Burbank is oblivious to the fact that he has been the main character of a live broadcast reality show ever since his birth.
 - d. Utopian yet deceitful, fictional yet realistic, *The Truman Show* (1998) can be interpreted as having predicted the pitfalls of social media from a philosophical angle.
3. How does the author provide background information or context?
 - a. They dive right into the evidence.
 - b. They explain what *The Truman Show* is early on.
 - c. They relate it to current topics.
 - d. Both b and c.
4. Where is the author's thesis?
 - a. Third paragraph
 - b. Second-to-last paragraph
 - c. First sentence
 - d. Last sentence
5. What is the author's thesis?
 - a. In order to nourish a fabricated representation, we forget to cherish our private experiences; we in ourselves become starved.
 - b. Notably, the key difference between Truman and social media users is that the former is deceived and manipulated, while the latter voluntarily exhibits their daily lives.
 - c. Today the idea of having one's daily life exposed to an audience is not unfamiliar.

- d. It is not Truman’s life that matters, but the riveting spectacle of it being compromised.
6. What evidence is used to support the claim?
 - a. Mention of “Keeping Up With the Kardashians”
 - b. Jacques Lacan’s psychoanalysis
 - c. Quotes from the movie
 - d. All of the above
 7. What is the counterargument being made?
 - a. If Truman is seen as entertainment, then we should be more like him.
 - b. Digital detoxes are often unsuccessful.
 - c. We should actually be diligent about counting views and likes on social media so we know we are real compared to Truman.
 - d. Although Meryl thinks her circumstances are unprofessional, we should feel encouraged to act like her.
 8. What is the author’s call to action?
 - a. Social media users, in my opinion, become more similar to Meryl instead.
 - b. Logically, the solution to this entire dilemma is to leave social media forever.
 - c. Hence, I suggest that we keep in mind the discomfort of a Truman-like existence and gradually refrain from oversharing on social media.
 - d. We construct a desirable image of ourselves as that is a unified and self-satisfied object.

Answer Key for Activity 1

1. a. People who use social media
 - The call to action is for those on social media to not overshare, implying the intended audience is specifically those who use or post on social media.
2. d. Both a and c
 - The author **informs** us of the lessons learned from *The Truman Show* but also provides us with a potential **solution**.
3. d. Both a and b
 - The author seems to understand how social media works and current popular platforms in conjunction with the clear knowledge they have of *The Truman Show*, which they use as the basis for their argument.
4. b. Contemplative
 - The author completes a deep reflection of the movie and uses theory and a nuanced conclusion to connect the dots with soft deliveries.
5. d. All of the above

Answer Key for Activity 2

1. c. Philosophical Ramifications of Social Media through *The Truman Show*
2. d. Utopian yet deceitful, fictional yet realistic, *The Truman Show* (1998) can be interpreted as having predicted the pitfalls of social media from a philosophical angle.
 - This is the first sentence.
3. d. Both b and c.

4. b. Second to last paragraph
 - The thesis does not always go in the first or second paragraph. The true argument does not fully crystalize until the end of the ‘Meryl’ section.
5. a. In order to nourish a fabricated representation, we forget to cherish our private experiences; we in ourselves become starved.
 - It is argumentative, states the problem, and leads to a call to action.
6. d. All of the above
 - These specific examples help relate to the discussion at hand.
7. b. Digital detoxes are often unsuccessful.
 - “However, in real life, digital detoxes are often unsuccessful because the desire to be seen as an object is chronic (according to Lacan) and invented personae are not so easily extinguished.”
8. c. Hence, I suggest that we keep in mind the discomfort of a Truman-like existence and gradually refrain from oversharing on social media.

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