

JRN101D critical paper #2: a journalistic opinion article

Even though we are using a journalistic format, your second critical paper for JRN 101D should address the four parts of the critical method that Campbell outlined and that you studied for paper 1.

1) Your **description** section should answer the **5 Ws?** Identify your column's focus and your argument. Specifically, **what** do you want the news media (or a specific news medium) to change to better attract and serve young adults? In 2-3 clear sentences, use specific language to define your column's purpose. Also clearly identify and articulate the personal assumptions and attitudes you brought to the project. For evidence, use at least 3 of the following 5 sources

- 1) your watchdog
- 2) your interview/s
- 3) "Elements" or other class readings
- 4) DDN prototype
- 5) Nonassigned journalistic or academic articles

Even though you will not have footnotes or a bibliography, you must still give specific citations and completely identify anyone you quote. Define any terms you introduce, and avoid generalizations. For example, do not talk about political bias in a news source unless your evidence clearly backs your assertion.

2) **Analysis.** Arrange and shape your evidence in a way that helps your reader see patterns, similarities, differences, etc.

3) **Interpretation.** Answer **So What?** What does all this mean? In at least 2 or 3 clear sentences, place your argument within the larger context of journalism or news issues. "Elements" will be especially handy for this section.

4) **Evaluation/conclusion.** Restate the argument you started with. Say **how** your idea should be implemented. In a clear conclusion of 1 or 2 paragraphs, present your informed judgment, built on all the earlier steps and surpassing an off-the-top-of-your head uninformed opinion. Clearly address any change from your initial position and attitudes (as detailed in 1).

The paper itself

Your paper should be 600 to 800 words long. Use a word processor, select 12-point type, and double-space. Grammar, spelling and punctuation count, as does clarity of presentation. Use the tools available on your word processing program – both spell check and grammar check. If you have problems with writing, visit the Writing Center in the basement of the Campus Avenue Building.

As Mr. White told us, a classic opinion piece has

- 1) an engaging lead that introduces the topic and argument,
- 2) a body that clearly states 3 to 5 points,
- 3) a "walk off" that again clearly states the argument and that may include a call for action.

This basic structure will accommodate the critical thinking work outlined above. It will be easier to write this piece if you decide on an audience and if you have a model to work from or a specific structure in mind.

- Your **audience** might be Mr. White, Ms. Collier or another working journalist you have met this semester. It might be print journalists in general, online journalists in general, or potential news consumers. It may be readers or viewers of a specific news outlet, or other Miami students. Think about where you might like to submit this paper for publication to answer the audience question.
- Look at any opinion pieces you've read as part of Watchdog – or go to the editorial or opinion pages of a favorite publication – to see how professionals approach this task. You may adapt a specific structure as a **model**. Over the weekend, I'll put links to a few selected columns on Blackboard. It also may be helpful to write in support of – or opposition to – a piece of published writing. For example, Okrent's "The Death of Print" could be a good jumping off place for those of you writing about the Internet.
- Even without a specific model or foil, you might **structure** your piece as a letter to the editor of a specific publication or Web site. You might structure your paper (and then submit it!) as a guest column or "op-ed" piece for whatever news medium you are critiquing – or for the Miami Student. You might want to experiment and do your paper as a blog!

Flexible deadlines, but still a schedule

Monday, Dec. 5, I will have a sheet available for you to sign up to see me for a personal consultation on your first (or second) draft. These appointments will start that day and run through Friday Dec. 9. Bring to the meeting in Bachelor 360 two paper copies of your draft. You'll read one out loud to me, as I read along, and then we'll talk. We will also set an **individualized deadline for your final draft**. If you show up for your appointment on time and ready to read your full draft, you'll earn 50 project points. I'll take off points if you ditch, are late or don't have a full draft of 600-800 words.

Class is canceled on Wednesday Dec. 7 to provide some time for these conferences.