



Writing Assignment:

Op-Ed related to Internet Law

You are required to write an “Op-ed,” which potentially counts for 33 percent of your final grade. An op-ed is an opinion article about a newsworthy and typically controversial topic. Op-eds are often printed on the same page as staff editorials and letters to the editor.

Your op-ed must somehow relate to Internet law. For example, you might write an op-ed arguing that employers should not be allowed to conduct Internet searches on prospective applicants.

Deadlines:

The assignment has three separate deadlines:

- By June 21, you must pick a topic to write about.
- By July 3, you must e-mail your op-ed to me.
- Five days after you receive feedback from me, you must submit your revisions as well as send your op-ed to a newspaper/magazine. Please note: it will probably take me at least two weeks to send feedback.

Video Lecture:

I have created a video lecture explaining in detail how to write an op-ed. The video is available online at <http://vimeo.com/9754733>. Below is a step-by-step process for the assignment.

Choose a Topic:

First, choose a topic. It **MUST** relate to Internet law. It should be a current issue. Don't harp on something that was decided months ago, like SOPA, or a topic that's been an ongoing controversy for several years and has been opined on extensively, like cyberbullying. Choose topics that are interesting and relevant to many people. Op-eds on obscure topics have limited impact. Don't shy away from controversial topics. However, please avoid hackneyed topics, such as cyberbullying, unless you have a truly novel stance on the issue. I must approve your topic. By 11:59 p.m. on June 21, e-mail your topic idea to mgrabowski@adelphi.edu. If you decide to change

your topic, you MUST e-mail me again and get approval for your new topic idea. If you fail to do this, you will receive a grade deduction.

When emailing me your op-ed idea, you should state the topic you're interested in, your position and provide some details. Do not just email me and say, "I want to do something about network neutrality." That's too broad. Be specific and give me an idea of what your stance and argument will be on the issue.

Finding Op-Ed Ideas:

Below are some good places for learning about current issues in Internet Law that could make for good op-ed topics:

- The mainstream media regularly reports on Internet Law issues. Do a Google News search for "Internet Law" or read the New York Times' website at nytimes.com.
- ScoopIt actively curates summaries and links to Internet legal issues at <http://www.scoop.it/t/media-law>
- The Electronic Frontier Foundation is an online free speech advocacy group that blogs about online speech regulation issues at <https://www.eff.org/press>
- The American Civil Liberties Union is an advocacy group that, among other things, fights for freedom in cyberspace. Check out its blog posts on "Civil Liberties in the Digital Age" at <http://bit.ly/1nmkRZR>
- Harvard Law School's Digital Media Law Project's blog covers Internet Law issues at <http://www.dmlp.org/blog>
- The National Conference of State Legislatures tracks proposed state laws related to the Internet and technology at <http://bit.ly/1kKM4Fp>

Keep in mind that some of these organizations have their own agendas. While you may not agree with their stance on issues, reading their content will help inform you about some of the emerging issues in Internet Law.

Writing Process:

Once I have approved your topic, write your op-ed. Keep it short and simple. Aim for between 500 to 600 words (less than 400 is too short and more than 650 is too long). So, make your point and get to it quickly. Be sincere. If you have a strong conviction in your opinion, readers will sense it. Research your topic thoroughly. Support your argument with facts and evidence. Make sure your solutions are logical and practical. Have a catchy beginning and a strong ending. Proofread your letter and have someone else proofread it. If your letter is sloppy, incoherent or contains grammatical errors, you will not receive credit.

At the end of your letter, be sure to include your name, address, e-mail and phone number. Newspapers need this info in order to verify that you actually sent the op-ed. They will publish only your name and town. Do not ask to be anonymous – your op-ed won't get published.

Finally, select a newspaper to submit your letter to. Consider submitting it to *Newsday*, the *Garden City News*, *Long Island Press* or your hometown newspaper (e.g. if you're from Poughkeepsie, N.Y., send it to the *Poughkeepsie Journal*). I would avoid large national newspapers, such as *The New York Times*, because they receive several hundred Letters to the Editor every day and publish only a handful. The chances they'll publish your letter/op-ed are slim.

Submission Directions:

First, you will submit your op-ed to only me, your professor. Copy and paste the text of the letter into an e-mail along with your contact info and the name of the newspaper you intend to submit it to. Remember, copy and paste – do not send me an attachment. The deadline to e-mail me your op-ed is 11:59 p.m. on July 3.

Revisions:

I will grade your assignment and send you feedback. If you make all of the changes I suggest, I will raise your grade. You must make changes within five days of receiving my feedback.

In addition, after you make the changes I suggest, you must send your op-ed to a publication. If it gets published, I will give you extra credit.

Submit your op-ed only to mainstream media publications. Obscure blogs, websites and school newspapers do not count. E-mail – don't snail mail or fax – your letter. Almost every publication nowadays accepts op-eds via e-mail. You can find the appropriate e-mail address either by visiting the newspaper's website or calling them up and asking for it. If you're not sure which newspaper(s) to send your op-ed to or how to find the paper's e-mail address, e-mail me with the name and state of your hometown (and newspaper name, if you know it), and I will help you out. Here are a few:

- The Garden City News: editor@gcnews.com
- Newsday: letters@newsday.com
- Garden City Patch: carisa@patch.com

Send an e-mail using your school e-mail address. In the "To:" box, type in the e-mail

address for sending letters to the editor. In your subject heading, simply write “Letter to the editor/Op-ed.” In the “CC:” or “BCC:” box, type in my e-mail address: mgrabowski@adelphi.edu. This will serve as proof to me that you made the changes I requested and submitted the op-ed to a newspaper.

Cut and paste the text of your op-ed inside your e-mail – do not attach it as a file! Attachments get deleted for fear that they may contain a computer virus. Make sure your name and contact info is at the bottom of the e-mail. Do not write anything else in the e-mail, such as “Here’s my op-ed” or “Hi prof, I hope I get a good grade!”

You will receive extra credit, if the op-ed gets published. You must e-mail me a link or scan a copy of your published op-ed and e-mail it to me or bring it to class. It is your responsibility to check to see whether it got published. The deadline for getting your op-ed published (in order to receive extra credit) is July 21.

Make sure you follow these instructions perfectly. If you deviate from the instructions at all, you may lose points. Contact me, if you have any questions.

Op-Ed Grading Rubric:

Categories & Criteria	<i>Good (necessary for a B+ or higher)</i>	<i>Bad (You'll lose points)</i>
<i>Writing</i>	Uses all correct grammar and spelling throughout. Sentence variety and word choices are outstanding. The writer uses effective words throughout the article to make transitions between ideas.	Contains grammar and spelling mistakes. Words choices are poor; sentences lack variety. Writing lacks transitions, leading to a disjointed and confusing reading.
<i>Lead</i>	Written with an outstanding lead to bring the reader into the story.	Written with a boring lead (or no lead at all) which does not encourage reader to continue.
<i>Issue/ Background</i>	Contains a sufficient amount of background information about the issue (who, what, when, where, why, how).	Contains very little information about the background information. Or background info is confusing and/or irrelevant.
<i>Opinion/ Position</i>	Has a clearly stated opinion/position toward the beginning of the article which continues throughout.	Writer seems confused about his/her opinion on the issue or no opinion is present, no position clearly stated.
<i>Argument</i>	Persuasive argument is made. Argument is supported by logical reasoning and evidence. Multiple credible sources are cited to support argument. Other side is addressed.	Argument is wishy-washy or non-existent. Argument does not persuade. No sources are cited to supported evidence or the sources are not credible. Other side is not addressed.
<i>Solution</i>	Ends the article giving very specific and outstanding recommendations for the reader to take action. Reader feels compelled to act.	Ends the article without any clear recommendations for the reader to take action. Concludes too abruptly.
<i>Academic Honesty</i>	All sources are cited. Contains no plagiarism, fabrication or libelous statements.	Fails to give proper credit to sources the writer got information from. Contains plagiarized material, made up information and/or libelous claims. Note: violating academic honesty is a very serious offense and could result in an F for the course.

Sample Op-Ed:

Below is a link to an Internet law-related op-ed that was written by a student last year and published in a local media outlet. It clearly states the author's position, backs up her argument with logical reasoning and evidence, considers the other side, etc. – all the things required for a good op-ed.

- <http://gardencity.patch.com/groups/opinion/p/adelphi-secrets>

Questions?

Contact me via cell phone at (646) 820-2130, via e-mail at mgrabowski@adelphi.edu or see me after class.