

Master of Science in Sustainability Management

SUMA PS5460 Writing Op-Eds, Small Personal Essays and Blog Posts

Dates: Tuesday, 6:10-8:00 pm

Location: TBD

3 Credits

Elective

Instructor: Professor Claudia Dreifus; cd2106@columbia.edu
Office Hours: Two hours before the class lecture and also by special appointment.
Response Policy: Available by Email and/or telephone midweek. Will respond within 24 hours. Please send duplicates of all inquiries to Professor Dreifus and Ms. Sharma.

Teaching Assistant: TBD
Office Hours: By appointment
Response Policy: Available by Email and/or telephone midweek. Will respond within 24 hours. Please send duplicates of all inquiries to Professor Dreifus and Ms. Sharma.

Course Overview

The class is designed to give students exercises and guided experiences in producing and marketing publishable opinion essays. That's the bottom line.

In the last two decades, newspapers, magazines and websites have opened up their pages to reader contributions. The New York Times, the Washington Post, Scientific American, USA Today, the Wall Street Journal, Bloomberg News and the websites of NBC News and CNN, all have extensive op-ed sections where readers are invited to become guest columnists.

This development provides an unprecedented opportunity for sustainability and science students and faculty to connect with the general public about policy issues—and also to their personal passions. Op-eds provide a relatively new pathway for communication and advocacy.

With students with specific interests in climate change, sustainability, medical practice and public health policies, this course is meant to facilitate their ability to move their concerns beyond the university and into the public square. The language of both the business world and the academy is often different from that of the mass media. Even the basic forms are different. Moreover, in fields like sustainability and climate change, the issues are frequently difficult to effectively illustrate in a way that the general public can easily connect with. This frank reality limits the effectiveness of sustainability professionals and scientists to win public support for critical initiatives.

This professor, with a lifetime of experience in the mass media, is convinced that academically trained professionals' benefit from learning how to write in a different language from that they are accustomed to.

Journalistic writing is very different from academic writing; it has its own conventions and protocols. This course aims to teach this specialized language so that our students can gain a larger forum on matters like climate mitigation, conservation biology, green roofs, urban farming, ecologic waste disposal, environmental justice, and pandemic prevention.

The aim is empowerment. We want to give Columbia students, faculty and staff the tools that will permit them to enter this ever-widening sector of the public square.

Currently, there are few comparable courses offered either at Columbia or at any university in New York.

Traditional journalism classes have been mostly pegged to future journalists. We hope to turn non-journalists into published writers and by focusing on this one journalistic form. By guiding class members through different types of opinion essays, we'll give them the means to produce the op-eds that editors seek.

Moreover, we'll teach the students how to successfully place their essays with editors.

Our target markets are mainstream media, Internet journals and community publications.

This is a workshop for Columbia-based scientists, social scientists, sustainability managers, conservation biologists, future NGO workers, and medical professionals seeking to produce opinion pieces and personal essays about their work.

In short, this is a journalism course for non-journalists, with an emphasis on how to do opinion-based features.

The main prerequisite is a willingness to experiment with popular forms and a desire to reach new readers.

Learning Objectives

This is a course for graduate students in the sustainability management program, enrollees in the various SPS specializations, and where there is room, for graduate students in the sciences from across the Columbia community.

With this opinion writing intensive, by the end of the semester, students should be able to write an op-ed or a letter to the editor that will stand a good chance of finding publication.

By mastering the various types of op-eds and targeting their submission to appropriate markets, some will be printed in mainstream media or on internet sites. Classwork might be submitted to markets like the Washington Post, Medium, the New York Times, State of the Planet and SPS's own blogsite, Tomorrow's Minds at Work.

Regardless of the forum, students who do achieve publication, will be rewarded by an increase in their final grade.

Even if the students do not publish their op-eds within the semester's time frame, they will have an understanding of the form and learn skills that they can deploy later in their professional lives as scientists or sustainability professionals. They will know how to do an op-ed when policy issues come up that they wish to comment on. Over all, students can expect their professional skills will be enhanced.

Writing is not just a matter of talent—though talent, of course, helps. But it is often a matter of practice—of doing a lot of it and improving because of practice. By asking the students to write frequently and, when necessary, to rewrite their work, their writing in this class and in all their others, is likely to improve. Improvement of writing skills, in general, is a goal.

While other science journalism courses, including the one offered at SPS in the Spring, offer training in a variety of news forms, this one focuses the entire semester's work on opinion writing.

Class sessions on persuasion and debate will give them further skills that will be useful, generally, in advocacy. One needs to make a good argument when writing a successful op-ed. But one needs the same skill when appearing on television as an expert, testifying before a legislature, lobbying for a cause. Enrollees can expect to gain more confidence in their ability to effectively persuade.

Moreover, by learning journalistic techniques of research for their opinion pieces—e.g. interviews with original sources and protagonists on an issue, successfully deploying appropriate statistics, the incorporation of citations into narrative—the students may become far more facile story-tellers in whatever forms or venues they are working in.

WHAT STUDENTS CAN EXPECT FROM THIS COURSE:

- Even if they don't intend to become professional writers, their writing will improve.
- They will gain skills in argument and exposition that will help them communicate their research and their policy passions to the general public.
- Students will create professional level journalism that can be published and added to a portfolio or CV.
- Participants in the workshop will learn the techniques of journalism, useful skills in many other disciplines.
- Class members will learn how to submit their work for publication.
- In many instances, they will find publication for their work. Members of Professor Dreifus' classes have published opinion pieces in the Atlantic, the New York Times, the Washington Post, Fatherly, Medium, the Public Interest, the Morningside Post and State of the Planet.
- Their contributions to blogs, websites and social media will have greater impact because of enhanced readability.
- And that will help them produce successful letters to the editor whenever they write them.
- In short, members of this class will gain new tools for participating in public policy discussions. Their voices and ideas will be amplified.

MORE LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- 1) Discuss, summarize, and defend research and policy passions to the general public.
- 2) Distinguish different types of opinion essays (op-eds on policy questions, op-eds proposing new ideas, personal essays about matters of interpersonal relationships or remembered experience), as well as hybrids of the various forms.
- 3) Analyze the content and structure of other writers' work, and identify the needs of editors and publications.
- 4) Formulate a convincing argument that is effective in science and academic communication.
- 5) Plan the marketing and publishing of work in real-world publications.

Readings

Most of the reading will be contemporaneous op-eds and opinion essays from mass media that illustrate specific issues and lessons. If, for instance, the deregulation of energy providers in Texas is an issue in the news—as it was in late February, then we would read published op-eds on that issue and discuss what was effective about them. Or not. If Miami's lack of preparation for the hurricane season is newsworthy in the Fall, then we might locate and read some op-eds on that.

Because it is always useful for student writers to read well executed examples of the form they are studying, students would be asked to read the opinion pages of the New York Times, the Washington Post and the Wall Street Journal daily. They would be asked to consult with popular op-ed providers like Medium and the Atlantic, too.

Each week, they will be asked to post on CourseWorks the work of columnists and oped writers whose work they appreciate and to explain why it appealed to them. Students will be asked to leave commentary on their classmates' choices.

This professor has also created several original “tip sheets” for the students to guide them in their studies. They will be distributed at appropriate sessions in the semester.

These books will be referred to in lectures. Most are available in paperback or on Library Reserves.

- Writing to Persuade by Trish Hall, Norton/Liveright
- Making Sense of Science, Separating Substance from Spin by Cornelia Dean, Harvard University Press
- “Writer’s Market: 2022—The Most Trusted Guide to Getting Published, Writer’s Digest
- Public Influence: A Guide to Op-Ed Writing and Social Media Engagement, Mira Sucharov, University of Toronto Press
- Arguing with Zombies: Economics, Politics and the Fight for a Better Future, Paul Krugman
- Black Voices in Commentary, the Trotter Group
- Bad Feminist, Roxane Gay
- Modern Love, Revised and Updated: True Stories of Love, Loss and Redemption, Daniel Jones, editor

NEWSPAPER AND WEBSITE OPINION READINGS:

- The New York Times
- The Wall Street Journal
- The Guardian
- The Washington Post
- Medium
- The Atlantic
- State of the Planet
- Tomorrow’s Minds at Work (SPS)

ADDITIONAL READINGS

The Best Op-Ed Ever

Abraham Verghese’s “Close Encounters of the Human Kind”

http://www.nytimes.com/2005/09/18/magazine/18lives.html?_r=0Links to an external site.

Advocacy

“Oppenheimer Shows the Danger of Politicizing Science, Kai Bird, New York Times, July 18, 2023

<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/07/17/opinion/kai-bird-oppenheimer-christophernolan.html>

Personal Essay:

Policy Proposals:

“Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez Knows How to Fix Housing” – Ross Barkan

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/04/opinion/public-housing-faircloth-amendmentrepeal.html>

Arguing a Position:

“It’s Not Possible to ‘Win’ an Argument With Robert F. Kennedy Jr.” – Farhad Manjoo

<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/06/23/opinion/rfk-jr-joe-rogan.html>Links to an external site.

Using a Newspeg to Make a Point:

“The Myth That May Have Doomed the Titan” – Naomi Oreskes

<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/06/28/opinion/titanic-titan-oceangateinnovation.html?searchResultPosition=1>

Reportage Op-Eds With Policy Pegs:

“Australia Is Committing Climate Suicide”, Richard Flannigan, New York Times:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/03/opinion/australia-fires-climate-change.html>

“Want to Do Something About Climate Change: Follow the Money”, Bill McKibben and Lennox Yearwood, New York Times:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/11/opinion/climate-change-bank-investment.html>

RESOURCE LIST: A lot of what you’ll need for the course and for your future as a writer can be found here:

<https://www.earth.columbia.edu/articles/view/2636>

Resources

SUPPORT FOR YOUR WRITING:

This is a hands-on course where you will get guidance in producing multiple types of opinion writing. There is a special emphasis on producing opinion pieces relating to contemporary issues in sustainability and the environment.

The professor and the teaching assistant will each be available for coaching for at least two hours weekly. Emergency sessions are also possible.

For additional support, we urge students to make use of the excellent coaches available through the Columbia University Writing Center. SIPA students who’d appreciate a second eye can obtain free writing tutorials through the SIPA Dean of Students’ office.

We also urge class members to form writing circles where they read their work to each other outside of the classroom.

ADDITIONAL STUDENT RESOURCES:

Columbia University Information Technology

Columbia University Information Technology (CUIT) provides Columbia University students, faculty, and staff with central computing and communications services. Students, faculty, and staff may access University-provided discounted software downloads (<https://columbiait.onthehub.com/>).

Columbia University Library

Columbia’s extensive library system ranks in the top five academic libraries in the nation, with many of its services and resources available online: <https://library.columbia.edu/>. Some feature-writing source works used in my feature writing class will be posted within the "library reserves" feature of Canvas.

It is possible for students to gain access to thousands of newspapers and magazines through the Columbia University Library system. Please familiarize yourself with the process.

SPS Academic Resources

Adapted from: **The Course Syllabus: A Learning-Centered Approach, 2nd Edition**, Judith Grunert O'Brien, Barbara J. Millis, Margaret W. Cohen. ISBN: 978-0-470-60549-3. Available as an E-Book from Wiley at:

<https://www.wiley.com/en-us/The+Course+Syllabus%3A+A+Learning+Centered+Approach%2C+2nd+Edition-p-9780470605493>

The Office of Student Affairs provides students with academic counseling and support services such as online tutoring and career coaching: <http://sps.columbia.edu/studentlife-and-alumni-relations/academic-resources>

Assignments and Assessments

In this course, we write at least three different types of opinion essays—an op-ed on a policy question, one that proposes a new idea, a personal essay about a matter of interpersonal relationships or one based on a remembered experience.

Students' opinion essays will be graded on their originality, the persuasiveness of their argument, the quality of the writing, the appropriate use of expert sources and statistics, the accuracy of information presented, the coherence of the essay's structure, and the originality the compelling nature of the storytelling.

We will also consider op-eds that include journalistic reportage and that are hybrids of the various forms. These hybrids will be graded on the same basis as the simple opinion essay, but will also be required to effectively fuse the different genres into one seamless essay.

Between two drafts of each type of piece, we will have speakers from the opinion desks of major media, talking about what they do, what they seek and how to submit appropriately for publication (L3). Student participation and engagement with these guest speakers will be evaluated based on originality and topicality of the questions posed to guests.

There will also be sessions on effective science and academic communication and on how to make a convincing argument. Activities completed during this session will be evaluated based on critical thinking and analysis, application and synthesis of lecture/discussion and reading topics, as well as thoughtful consideration and responsiveness to posts by other students.

In between regular class sessions, students will be asked to use Canvas/Couseworks as a means of communication about their ongoing work. Drafts of op-eds will be posted. As will interesting op-eds gleaned from newspapers and websites. Workshop members will be asked to leave helpful comments on drafts, including ideas for structure, stronger source material, more convincing arguments. Students will also be asked to evaluate published opinion pieces and leave critical notes on Courseworks on why these op-eds work or how they might be written differently.

Beyond op-eds, other forms of public communication will be attempted—including a Letter to the Editor and a Blogpost. These additional assignments will be evaluated based on critical thinking and analysis, application and synthesis of lecture/discussion and reading topics, as well as thoughtful consideration and responsiveness to posts by other students.

Finally, students will receive a lecture on strategies for marketing their essays and will gain experience in submitting their work to real world publications. Publication is not required. But it will be encouraged and supported. Extra credit will be given to students who succeed in publishing their classwork.

IN PREPARATION FOR THE FIRST SESSION:

Make arrangements to discuss your goals and interests with Professor Dreifus in an inperson session on campus during office hours.

Please leave a biographic blogpost on CourseWorks for your classmates. For maximum benefit to the students, the enrollment is limited to fifteen students.

Out of the possible registrants, please choose an “affinity study partner,” someone in your time zone or neighborhood you can bounce ideas off of, check in with and read your drafts to. Writing almost always looks better on paper or pixels when it has been read aloud.

EMAIL: Students are asked to email their completed assignments on the Saturday before every class to Professor Dreifus (cd2106@columbia.edu) and Raghavi Sharma (rs4207@columbia.edu) in addition to uploading the assignment on Courseworks. Students are also asked to read their colleagues' filings on Courseworks and leave supportive comments. **Deadline Firm.**

Evaluation/Grading

The main focus of the course is, after lectures on particulars, the writing of specific types of opinion essays.

On the whole the standards will be those of professional journalism—which means that all opinions, no matter how personal or original, must be supported by facts. Of course, libel and malice are prohibited. In each essay, the class assistant and I will look for skillful story-telling, persuasive argument, a viable story structure with a beginning, middle and end, newsworthiness and yes, good grammar and correct spelling.

In addition to these standards, other factors may contribute to grading. Any student whose class work is published will get an additional upwards “tick” for their final grade. I will also consider the kind of progress a student has made over the semester with their writing. If a student has moved from B minus work to something in the A category, their discernable effort might further improve their grade. Hard work and the application of lessons should be rewarded.

The professor seeks to have the students competing against their earlier work, not each other.

Attitude will matter somewhat too. The classroom standards are those of a newsroom. That means a collegial and supportive tone to all discussions and it, above everything, means filing on deadline.

The grading will be done by me, in consultation with the class assistant. Of course, peer response is a factor that will be taken into account, but since the over-riding standards are those of mainstream journalism, it is appropriate for a working journalist to make the final decision.

A NOTE ON TIMELY FILING: In order for students' writing to be graded and considered in time for Tuesday's class, it is vital that assignments be filed on Canvas by Saturday night. **Firm.**

ANOTHER NOTE ON FORM: As in journalism, all filings must be clean, grammatical and as far as possible, in “ready to print” form. That means, of course, with a headline and a by-line.

A SEPARATE NOTE ON PACE: We will move as quickly or as slowly as the class' progress requires. That, of course, means the schedule below is not set in stone. As that late 20th century philosopher John Lennon had it: "Life is what happens when you're making other plans."

ADDENDUM: it is always difficult to put a numeric grade on a creative enterprise. This is a writing workshop, not a lecture/exam course. The professor will apply the standards of journalism to her reading of each submission.

In considering a final grade, some additional factors may be computed. Among them, did the student’s work improve over the semester? Did they try hard? Students who move a great distance in the twelve sessions will be rewarded as much as students who come to class with facile and practiced skills. This is a way of encouraging students to compete against themselves rather than each other.

Students who are creative in marketing their work—e.g. finding publication for their essays—will also be rewarded with a higher grade. The professor’s usual practice is to move the grade of a published writer up a tick—an A minus might be elevated to an “A”, for example. If the student’s class produced essay is published in major media like the New York Times Opinion section, that would be considered a home-run and would be thusly noted. That might well merit an “A plus.”

Grading

The final grade will be calculated as described below:

FINAL GRADING SCALE

Grade	Percentage
A+	98–100 %
A	93–97.9 %
A-	90–92.9 %
B+	87–89.9 %
B	83–86.9 %
B-	80–82.9 %
C+	77–79.9 %
C	73–76.9 %
C-	70–72.9 %
D	60–69.9 %
F	59.9% and below

Assignment/Assessment	% Weight	Individual or Group/Team Grade
750 Word Op-Ed	20	Individual
900 Word Short Personal Essay	20	Individual
750 Word Advocacy Op-Ed	20	Individual
300 Word Blog Post	15	Individual
100 Word letter to the editor	10	Individual
Participation	15	Individual

Course Schedule/Course Calendar

Module/Week	Topic	Readings	Activities/Assignments for this module
Week 1	<p>What is an op-ed?</p> <p>A discussion of the form, its conventions, and the various types of op-eds and opinion essays that one can write. To prepare, students should read different types of op-eds.</p>	<p>The Best Op-Ed Ever: Abraham Verghese's "Close Encounters of the Human Kind"</p> <p>Advocacy with a Personal Peg: "How Rescuing Frogs Inspires How I Fight for Change," Belle Boggs, NYTimes, September 3, 2023.</p> <p>Policy Proposals: https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/04/opinion/public-housing-faircloth-amendment-repeal.html</p> <p>Reportage Op-Eds With Policy Pegs: "Australia Is Committing Climate Suicide", Richard Flannigan, New York Times.</p> <p>"Want to Do Something About Climate Change: Follow the Money", Bill McKibben and Lennox Yearwood, New York Times.</p> <p>Speakers—second half of class, the editors of State of the Planet, Consilience, Tomorrow's Minds at Work and the Morningside Post.</p> <p>Required reading: Writing to Persuade, Trish Hall</p>	<p>Complete readings. The best way to learn this form or any form: read good examples and ask yourself, "how did he/she/they do it? Take it apart. Use only quality sources. With op-eds, that means in most instances, The New York Times, The Washington Post and the Wall Street Journal.</p> <p>Assignment 1: Post on CourseWorks an op-ed or a work by a newspaper columnist that you like and explain why it spoke to you. Due September 10.</p> <p>Assignment 2: Develop an idea for your own op-ed. Due September 10.</p> <p>Attend the Live Session</p>
Week 2	<p>Persuasion. In most op-eds, the writer is seeking to win the reader over to an argument, a policy idea, or a point of view. In this session, we'll discuss how to be persuasive in</p>	None	<p>Assignment: Write a 750-word op-ed that is targeted to a market like <i>The New York Times</i>, <i>The Washington Post</i>, or the blogs of an NGO, like State of the Planet or the National Resources Defense Council. Due September 17.</p> <p>Attend the live session.</p>

	<p>one’s writing. What are the elements of a good argument? How does one convince the skeptical? What is appropriate proof? Can one use material found on Twitter and other social media? When does one use statistics? What about fairness? Does an op-ed need to be balanced?</p> <p>Since this is opinion, are there any assertions that are best avoided?</p> <p>For practice, we will go into breakout groups and debate several controversial contemporary matters that are currently in the news. Students will be asked to give the best argument for and against—as in a debate.</p>		
Week 3	Workshopping the Op-Ed	None	Assignment: Rewrite your first draft. Due September 24.

	Class discussion of the first assignment. What worked? What didn't?		Attend the live session.
Week 4	The Short Personal Essay First hour: workshop on second draft Second Hour: Introduction to short personal essays.	Bad Feminist, Roxane Gay Modern Love, Revised and Updated: True Stories of Love, Loss and Redemption, Daniel Jones (Ed.)	Assignment: Write a 900-word short personal essay. Due October 1. Attend the live session.
Week 5	The Short Personal Essay First hour: workshop on second draft Second Hour: Introduction to short personal essays.	Bad Feminist, Roxane Gay Modern Love, Revised and Updated: True Stories of Love, Loss and Redemption, Daniel Jones (Ed.)	Assignment: Write a 900-word short personal essay. Due October 1. Attend the live session.
Week 6	Field Trip–Live Interview	Professor Dreifus will be doing a live interview with Cat Bohannon, the author of “Eve: How the Female Body Drove 200 Million Years of Human Evolution” at Book Culture. Seats will be reserved for class members. Venue: Book Culture. Bring your questions to the live interview	Assignment: Write a second draft of your short personal essay. Due October 8. Attend the live session.
Week 7	Personal Essays Workshop on short personal essay.	Two personal essays by the professor that deploy personal experience and factual reporting to make an argument.	Attend the live session.

		<p>“NYU Eats the World”, by Claudia Dreifus, The Chronicle of Higher Education.</p> <p>“A Group of Mexican Immigrant Women Were Sterilized Without Their Consent. Can a New Film Bring Justice Where the Courts Failed?” by Claudia Dreifus, The Nation.</p>	
Week 8	<p>Advocacy</p> <p>What works? What doesn't? How does one create a viable “story” out of what may be some very dry facts and assertions? When is it appropriate to do such advocacy? What is appropriate expertise? How do you make a complex policy point in a word limited essay?</p>	None	<p>Assignment: Write an advocacy op-ed in an area where you are expert. Word limit: 750 words. Due October 22.</p> <p>Attend the live session.</p>
Week 9	<p>Workshop of policy advocacy op-ed</p>	None	<p>Assignment: Write a 100 word letter to the editor on a subject you've produced an op-ed on. Due October 29.</p> <p>Attend the live session.</p>
Week 10			Attend the live session.
Week 11	<p>No Class: University Holiday</p>	It's election day. Be sure to vote.	

Week 12	Cousin of the Op-ed: the Letter to the Editor Workshop on letter to editors.	None	Assignment: submit your letter to an appropriate publication. Due November 19. Attend the live session.
Week 13	Catch up on assignments		
Week 14	Wrap-up and Celebration Together, we'll be celebrating the progress this class has made over the semester. Pandemic permitting, we will do what is traditional in Professor Dreifus' writing classes: have an evening of assessment and a Dutch Treat supper at her home near Lincoln Center. Students are urged to bring a dish from their home country or county for the communal table.	None	Attend the live session.

Course Policies

UNIVERSITY WIDE PUBLICATION POSSIBILITIES: Your professor encourages you to publish with some of Columbia's excellent on campus media outlets—State of the Planet, SIPA News, Consilience, The Columbia Spectator, Columbia News, The Public Policy Review, the Morningside Post.

You are also encouraged to participate in the Earth Institute's new initiative on science and sustainability communication. More information on that effort can be found here:

<https://blogs.ei.columbia.edu/2019/10/18/climate-sustainability-communicationsnetwork>.

CANVAS/COURSEWORKS AS A COMMUNICATION MEDIUM:

Class members are asked to post their essays on CourseWorks and to leave helpful critiques for their colleagues there.

They are also asked to post op-eds they've seen and liked in the "Discussion" file there.

Think of CourseWorks as the equivalent of the "water cooler" at an office.

Strong writing and improvement of those skills is what we're looking for—but we also appreciate students who are willing to support their classmates, participate in constructive critiques, and those who go the extra mile to break new ground in the form.

Whenever realistic, students are asked to submit their classroom work for publication. That can mean anything from mass-circulation magazines to the in-house publications at Columbia University and SIPA. Students are encouraged to find online publishers for their work, a particularly rich and growing market for opinion essays.

For example, the website undark.org is often open to new writers if the work is good. Scientific American's blog has an open-to-readers opinion section that may be the perfect place for what students in this class produce.

The Earth Institute has a website/magazine-blog, State of the Planet. Students are encouraged to submit appropriate class work there. The School of Professional Studies supports a blog, "Tomorrow's Minds At Work," where students and faculty can, with the guidance of staff editors, publish their writing. Class members are urged to submit their opeds to these markets and also to neighborhood community newspapers.

Writing is key to success in this class. We believe that writing is like gymnastics: The more you do, the more you achieve. Thus, class members will be asked to write often. What may be different from other courses is that they will often be asked to do guided rewrites of their original submissions.

On the whole, we're looking for enthusiastic writers and curious reporters, but also students who will improve their skills over the semester.

THE USE OF ROBOTIC A. I. TECHNOLOGY IS STRICTLY FORBIDDEN: Because this is a course in teaching students how to write their own op-eds, letters to the editor and small personal essays, we cannot accept any manuscripts that were produced with the aide of A.I. Aside from the obvious fact that when you use a robot to write, you are not writing, the A.I. produced composition may contain factual errors and fabrications.

CLASSROOM INTEGRITY:

Because the heart of this course is opinion and communicating it, we would ask that all students respect differing opinions.

At the same time, it grieves the professor to have to state outright that op-eds based on untruths, slander, or stereotyping, can have no place in the classroom.

PRIVACY:

Because some students may discuss or write about very personal or controversial matters, we ask that all class members pledge to maintain the privacy of our deliberations and not discuss or cite them elsewhere. We would like for class members to feel that they can discuss difficult matters freely. We will not be recording class sessions and request that all members refrain from doing so with their private technology. To paraphrase a popular meme, “What happens in class, stays in class.”

COLUMBIA INTEGRITY:

Please familiarize yourself with the proper methods of citation and attribution. The School provides some useful resources online; we strongly encourage you to familiarize yourself with these various styles before conducting your research and writing.

As stated in your Sustainability Management registration packet, Columbia University functions at the highest levels of integrity and demands the same from its students.

It goes without saying that plagiarism, "recycling" of previously produced works, the employment of intellectual products created by others will not be tolerated.

Participation and Attendance

I expect you to come to class on time and thoroughly prepared. I will keep track of attendance and look forward to an interesting, lively and confidential discussion. If you miss an experience in class, you miss an important learning moment and the class misses your contribution. More than one absence will affect your grade.

Late work

Work that is not submitted on the due date noted in the course syllabus without advance notice and permission from the instructor will be graded down 1/3 of a grade for every day it is late (e.g., from a B+ to a B).

Citation & Submission

All written assignments must, cite sources. Unlike in academic writing, footnotes and often links, are not permitted. Instead, you must back up your source material by incorporating the citation in your essay’s copy.

All submissions must have a headline and a byline and be posted on CourseWorks—as well as sent to the Professor via email at cd2106@columbia.edu.

School and University Policies and Resources

Copyright Policy

Please note—Due to copyright restrictions, online access to this material is limited to instructors and students currently registered for this course. Please be advised that by clicking the link to the electronic materials in this course, you have read and accept the following:

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted materials. Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specified conditions is that the photocopy or reproduction is not to be "used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship, or research." If a user makes a request for, or later uses, a

photocopy or reproduction for purposes in excess of "fair use," that user may be liable for copyright infringement.

Academic Integrity

Columbia University expects its students to act with honesty and propriety at all times and to respect the rights of others. It is fundamental University policy that academic dishonesty in any guise or personal conduct of any sort that disrupts the life of the University or denigrates or endangers members of the University community is unacceptable and will be dealt with severely. It is essential to the academic integrity and vitality of this community that individuals do their own work and properly acknowledge the circumstances, ideas, sources, and assistance upon which that work is based. Academic honesty in class assignments and exams is expected of all students at all times.

SPS holds each member of its community responsible for understanding and abiding by the SPS Academic Integrity and Community Standards posted at <https://sps.columbia.edu/students/student-support/academic-integrity-community-standards>. You are required to read these standards within the first few days of class. Ignorance of the School's policy concerning academic dishonesty shall not be a defense in any disciplinary proceedings.

Diversity Statement

It is our intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well-served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that the students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength and benefit. It is our intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity: gender identity, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, nationality, religion, and culture.

Accessibility

Columbia is committed to providing equal access to qualified students with documented disabilities. A student's disability status and reasonable accommodations are individually determined based upon disability documentation and related information gathered through the intake process. For more information regarding this service, please visit the University's Health Services website: <https://health.columbia.edu/content/disability-services>.

Class Recordings

All or portions of the class may be recorded at the discretion of the Instructor to support your learning. At any point, the Instructor has the right to discontinue the recording if it is deemed to be obstructive to the learning process.

If the recording is posted, it is confidential and it is prohibited to share the recording outside of the class.

SPS Academic Resources

The Division of Student Affairs provides students with academic counseling and support services such as online tutoring and career coaching: <https://sps.columbia.edu/students/student-support/student-support-resources>.

Columbia University Information Technology

Columbia University Information Technology (CUIT) provides Columbia University students, faculty and staff with central computing and communications services. Students, faculty and staff may access University-provided and discounted software downloads.

Columbia University Library

Columbia's extensive library system ranks in the top five academic libraries in the nation, with many of its services and resources available online.

The Writing Center

The Writing Center provides writing support to undergraduate and graduate students through one-on-one consultations and workshops. They provide support at every stage of your writing, from brainstorming to final drafts. If you would like writing support, please visit the following site to learn about services offered and steps for scheduling an appointment. This resource is open to Columbia graduate students at no additional charge. Visit <http://www.college.columbia.edu/core/uwp/writing-center>.

Career Design Lab

The Career Design Lab supports current students and alumni with individualized career coaching including career assessment, resume & cover letter writing, agile internship job search strategy, personal branding, interview skills, career transitions, salary negotiations, and much more. Wherever you are in your career journey, the Career Design Lab team is here to support you. Link to <https://careerdesignlab.sps.columbia.edu/>

Netiquette

Online sessions in this course will be offered through Zoom, accessible through Canvas. A reliable Internet connection and functioning webcam and microphone are required. It is your responsibility to resolve any known technical issues prior to class. Your webcam should remain turned on for the duration of each class, and you should expect to be present the entire time. Avoid distractions and maintain professional etiquette.

Please note: Instructors may use Canvas or Zoom analytics in evaluating your online participation.

More guidance can be found at: https://jolt.merlot.org/vol6no1/mintu-wimsatt_0310.htm

Netiquette is a way of defining professionalism for collaborations and communication that take place in online environments. Here are some Student Guidelines for this class:

- Avoid using offensive language or language that is not appropriate for a professional setting.
- Do not criticize or mock someone's abilities or skills.
- Communicate in a way that is clear, accurate and easy for others to understand.
- Balance collegiality with academic honesty.
- Keep an open-mind and be willing to express your opinion.
- Reflect on your statements and how they might impact others.
- Do not hesitate to ask for feedback.
- When in doubt, always check with your instructor for clarification.