

## Editorial/Community Commentary

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Writing for a public forum requires a careful balance between your feelings and passions, and an even clear tone. In fact, writing about the things you are most passionate about can be the most difficult of writing tasks. It's easy for us to get so caught up in our point of view that we begin to preach or insist that others accept it, instead of simply explaining it and respecting the fact that others have every right to examine our arguments then decide whether or not they accept them.

On the other hand, recognizing that using a clear calm tone and approach to explaining our points of view is the most powerful way to communicate, gives us a strong starting point. This is the center of public debate and argument. In this essay assignment, we will practice this type of writing.

For this essay you will do a number of things:

1. Identify an issue in one of the communities you are a member of and write an editorial essay about that issue. That can be something that you think we should value more or appreciate, or something that needs to be changed or that we should do.
2. Identify a relevant publication (audience) for the community where you can submit a letter to the editor or public comment in a reputable online forum.
3. Investigate to find information you need to make your case.
4. Write an editorial essay explaining your point of view, and if applicable to your topic, suggesting a method of action. If applicable, you need to address opposing views.

Your first step is to decide what you'll write about.

### Topics

We are all members of various communities. By virtue of your doing this assignment, you are a member of the El Paso Community College community. You are also a member of your neighborhood and city communities. If you attend religious services, participate in a club or group, you are a member of that community. As you decide on your topic, you need to identify the communities you are a member of and select an issue that is related to one of those communities. You will also need to find a publication that is aimed at that community. For example, if you choose a topic that is related to EPCC, the college newspaper, *The Tejano Tribune*, would be the appropriate place to write to.

Your topic must be relevant to you. That is, it must be something that affects you directly. For example, if you choose to write about the death penalty, then you must know someone who was subject to it, or who was a victim of someone subjected to it. (Please don't write about the death penalty.)

Here are some broad topics that will get you started:

- A service the community needs
- A better or more efficient way of doing something in the community
- A problem or issue that needs to be addressed in the community
- A person, program, or group in the community that deserves recognition

Finally, if you are writing about an issue that has an opposing point of view, you must bring it up and address it, discussing why that point of view doesn't work, or what parts of it don't make sense.

### **Audience**

Your audience is a community publication, like *The El Paso Times*, a respected forum from one of your communities, *The Tejano Tribune*, *The UTEP Prospector*, or *Stars and Stripes*, to name a few. You have to find a publication that is aimed at the community you're writing to. You may choose a print or online newspaper, journal, magazine, newsletter, or forum, but need to be ready to show me how and where they accept and foster serious discussion of the issue. You may also choose to write to a business or company.

### **Evidence**

This is not a research essay. However, as with all essays you must back up your points with evidence. In this case, the evidence may be facts, statistics, observation, experience, and interview. While you can use your experience and observation, you do need to include some other information as well.

When you use facts, statistics, or an interview, you need to make sure you clearly explain where the information comes from, so you'll be using clear signal phrases and integrating the information into your sentences (see *Writing down the Basics* p 41). You will **not** use formal academic documentation.

No bulleted lists, graphs, or charts.

### **The Challenges**

The challenges in this essay are to clearly explain your point, and make sure you do that in a way that appeals to your readers within the community without deriding, insulting, or ranting. You have to think very carefully about what they know and expect, and then balance that with what you want to say.

## Possible outlines

Problem paper (Houston, we have a problem.)

1. Explain the problem
2. Discuss the solution.
3. Connect it to the community and suggest a solution.

Praise paper (Way to go!) / Informative (Did you know?)

1. Identify the idea, person or group and what they do.
2. Discuss what they offer and how they make a difference in the community. Explain why that's important or helpful.
3. Encourage community to get involved or support this.

## Beginning Considerations

- Style: This is a semi-formal essay (depending on your audience) that should be written in your voice and from your perspective, but it will use a higher level of diction and language than the personal essay. However, it should not be forced.
  - Do not use words that are not natural to you.
  - Do not use the personal pronoun *you*. Instead, use I/me/my when referring to your own experience, or we/us/our when extending that to the community as a whole. When appropriate use the specific nouns: i.e. women, men, students, teachers, teens, dragons, etc.
- Purpose: The purpose of this essay is simply to explain your point of view or stance
  - Do not preach to your readers.
- Research: You need to gather and use some facts for your essay. You will use simple attribution and signal phrases, which will be discussed in class and are also addressed in the MLA section of your *Writer's Reference*. You will **not** use formal citation in this essay.
- Audience: You must identify a specific audience for this essay. Think of this as simply talking to people who are concerned with the community you've identified and this topic.

Finally, remember we begin with the prewriting assignments, so take it one step at a time. We will read samples and discuss the details more as we move through the essay.

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## IMPORTANT E2 Cover Letter Note

As with your previous cover letter, this should discuss the issues you struggled with as well as the parts you feel good about. However, your opening should also identify your intended audience (the publication you're writing to).

## Prewritings

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### Prewriting 1: Use this Form—[PDF](#) [Word](#)

- Community: Make a list of communities you belong to. You should start your list with the city/community you live in and EPCC. Come up with at least 3 communities.
- Issue: Make a list of topics you might write about for those communities. You should have issues for at least two communities.
- Target publication: For each community, find a target publication. If it's a community issue, the most obvious target publication is the community newspaper or a well-respected online forum.
- Investigation/Information: Make a list of things you need to know and where you can find them out (e.g.: internet, specific website, library, interview).

### Prewriting 2: Use this Form\*— [PDF](#) [Word](#)

Now that you've done some initial exploring, it's time to choose your topic and do some searching for information you may need. Look back at your list in the last part of Prewriting 1. What things do you need to find out for this issue?

- Use your local resources—internet, library, people—to find out. Write out what you've found and use signal phrases to integrate it into your sentences. You should have enough evidence to support 2-3 points in your paper.
  - Remember, if there is a significant opposing point of view, make sure to address it. You don't have to contradict it if you see it has value, but explain how it fits into your point of view.
- Identify your target publication. Remember, this must be a specific newspaper or a reputable forum.

\*If the form doesn't work for you with this one, you may do this on your own, but **don't forget to identify your target publication!**

### Prewriting 3: Use this Form Use this Form— [PDF](#) [Word](#)

Now that you've decided on your evidence, it's time to again think about why this is important. For each of your main points (2-3) you need to

1. write out the point in a clear sentence,
2. Integrate your research using signal phrases and attribution, and
3. explain why or what that research shows about your main point.

## General Requirements

Your work should:

- Be organized in a clear manner; I will not grade folders that are simply thrown together with no organization.
- Be written in a standard 12-point font and have 1-inch margins.
- Your essay should be between 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ –2 pages long. You may not go over 2 pages and it should not be less than 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ .
- Identify your targeted audience in your heading. See the samples.
- Have a clear thesis at the end of your introduction.
- Use and integrate sources to support your points. (Statistics, expert opinion, interviews, etc.)
- Have a call to action or some sort of suggestion for bettering the problem or a way to contribute to the goodness.

## Turning your essay in:

When you turn in your essay, it should be organized in a pocket folder. I will not sort thorough papers to figure out what everything is. Organize from the top down in this order:

### Left-side pocket

- Prewriting Assignments—clearly labeled
- Writing Center draft and form (OPTIONAL)
- Workshop form and rough draft from workshop
- Other drafts you have

### Right-side pocket

- Cover Letter
- Final Essay

## Editorial/Commentary Grade Criteria

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Your essay will be evaluated based on the following standards.

### Format/Professionalism

- Is the project correctly formatted, organized, and turned in on time?
- Does it meet length requirements?
- Does it include all required drafts and pre-writing assignments, and the cover letter?

### Editorial/Commentary Focus

- Is it clearly focused throughout?

### Introduction

- Does the introduction work to move the audience into the issue being addressed through discussion of the overall topic, history, major issues, etc.?
- Is the thesis clearly articulated at the end of the introduction in a concise declarative statement? (No questions.)

### Content

- Is there solid, credible evidence to support the main point?
- Is the evidence smoothly integrated and discussed?
- Does the conclusion contain a call to action or some sort of suggestion for bettering the problem or a way to contribute to the goodness?

### Style

- Does the style—voice, tone, sentence style, and word choice—reflect the type of writing expected in this essay?

### Clarity

- Does the writing reflect grammatical and mechanical correctness expected at this level?

### Revision

You will have the opportunity to revise this essay.

- If you choose to revise, look at the comments and suggestions I've given you in the essay and above, and ask me questions if you have them.
- Revisions are due one week from the day I hand back papers to the class.
- **You must highlight the changes you made in both the original and revised copy of your essay.**
- **You must turn in your original essay and the grading sheet along with your revision or I will not grade it.**