

# Op-Ed Writing Webinar: Bridging Gaps Between Academics and the Media

Recorded September 23, 2017:

<https://vimeo.com/235155403>

#CMCS17

## Josh Nathan

Communication Professor | Writer & Editor



Broadcaster's Seal of Approval

Author: *Too Mad to Trust* (2015)  
*Can TV News Change History?* (2008)



# Discussion Agenda

---



1. What is an op-ed?
  
2. For a successful op-ed:
  1. Position yourself as a *reliable* expert.
    - ➡ Self-branding.
  2. “No” from a newsroom *doesn't necessarily* mean “Never”.
  3. Send pitches and work your social media network.
    - ➡ Journalists spent about 4 hours/day on social media.
    - ➡ Allows you to follow trends as well as timing for pitches.
    - ➡ Aligns you with like-minded writers.
    - ➡ Post quotes from research to “test the waters” on interest.
  
1. Questions and Answers

# What Is an Op-Ed?



*“We are especially interested in finding points of view that are different from those expressed in [The New York] Times editorials.”*

*Trish Hall, The New York Times (2013)*



[www.phdcomics.com](http://www.phdcomics.com)

**OFTEN ACTION ORIENTED – ISSUES OF DIVERSITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE**

# What Is an Op-Ed?

---



A persuasive piece offering a specific opinion supported by facts and research that runs 200-800 words.

## **KEYS**

1. **“Whip” your “Attention Getters” into shape...or lose your audience.**
2. **Delete academic jargon unless you’re aiming for a journal. If you still have phrases like, “Hegemony promotes Structural Imperialism”, it needs more work.**

**Remember, you’re catering to your audience.**

3. **Two “E’s”: Experience and Expertise (they matter!)  
Initially, go with 80% facts and 20% opinion. However, don’t show all sides of the issue.**

**Remember, you’re catering to your audience.**

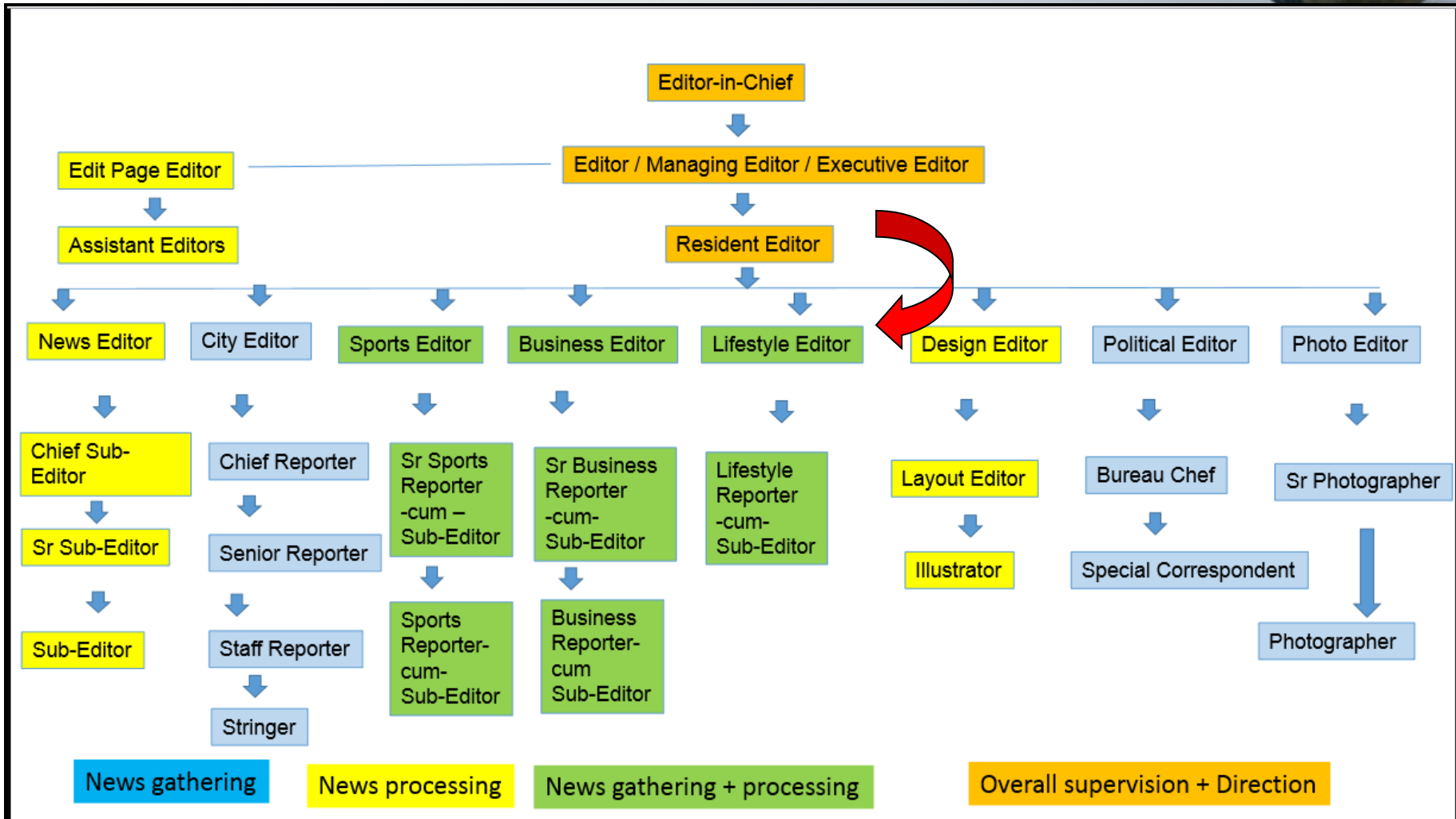
# What Is an Op-Ed?



## **KEYS**

4. Writing style: You're not a **columnist** *performing* for readers; you're a **specialist** *informing* them.
5. Avoid the passive voice and project confidence in your view.
6. **EDIT, EDIT, and EDIT AGAIN**. Listen to your piece to help further edit. If you stumble, so will others.
7. Don't misspell names. Nothing is worse than a rejection because you did so, which does not further your expertise or reputation.
8. Short sentences make for short paragraphs. This isn't *War and Peace*.
  1. Send out query letters.
  2. Allow time prior to following up and prior to publication.
  3. If the editor wants changes, he or she is "right". Go with the flow!

# The Newsroom Hierarchy (Confusing Contradictions)





# Self-branding

---



- Determine your expertise
- Start a media database
- Affiliate with media organizations; Retweet/Support Influencers.
- Engage in public speaking
- Create Communities
- Develop a portfolio (e.g., website, blog posts, media clips, podcasts, online videos, Twitter and LinkedIn are **KEY**).
- Craft your pitch
  - Subject Line - CRITICAL
  - Timing when Sent – CRITICAL
  - If advocate action, be specific.
  - Allow 4 weeks before follow-up.



# Final Tips

---



1. HARO – Help A Reporter Out (Journalists looking for experts)
2. Academia.edu – However, this vehicle is in transition to paid subscriptions for maximum benefit. It's pricey.
3. Contact journalists to establish relationships – not solely to pitch.
4. Let your work evolve naturally. Give it some time and experiment.  
**Remember: CMCS reviews op-eds; 3 independent reviews for 1 editorial staff fee.**

**Contact Information:** Josh Nathan

joshuadnathan@yahoo.com

@ProfJDN

**LinkedIn:** “Five New Keys to Effective Writing”

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/five-new-keys-effective-writing-josh-nathan/>