Know The Basics: Op-Eds, Blogs, and Pitches

As APSA’s Press Gallery series illustrates, political scientists have a strong presence in online media, from local and national news outlets to academic blogs. If you are interested in building a public presence or sharing your research and insights outside academia, writing blog posts and opinion pieces for established platforms is a great place to start. Learn the basics of pitching and drafting op-eds and blogs and where to pitch them in this short guide.

The Basics

- **Pitch or submission? Fit the format.** Some outlets accept pitches from the public, while others only review finished pieces. The structure and requirements for pitches and submissions are unique to each outlet. For example, the Monkey Cage explicitly does not publish opinion pieces or calls for action, but rather focuses on applying research to newsworthy topics. Political Violence at a Glance accepts posts, rather than pitches, for consideration.

- **Know the pitch basics.** An op-ed or blog pitch can range from 2-3 sentences to 2-3 paragraphs and must accomplish three things:
  1. Address why readers would care and why they should care now.
  2. Explain why you are qualified to address the issue (your education, research, scholarship and personal experience).
  3. Succinctly summarize the main argument of your piece.

- **Know the op-ed template:** Op-eds are short (often around 700 words) and follow a general outline. As Michael Todd, the editor of Social Science Space notes, scholars should “start by explaining why you’re telling me this now.” Todd suggests using an anecdote, reference to a current headline, or a call to action as a starting point for the op-ed. While blogs may not include a call for action, the structure and guidelines are generally the same. The Op-Ed Project suggests the following outline:

  I. Lede (Around a news hook)
  II. Thesis
  III. Argument
  IV. 1st Point
  V. 2nd Point
  VI. 3rd Point
  VII. “To be sure” (acknowledge opposing views)
  VIII. Conclusion (often circling back to your lede)

- **Try one at a time.** Pitch your piece to one outlet at a time. If you are concerned about your piece losing its relevance in a fast news cycle, consider setting a reasonable deadline for the editor to accept or decline your piece.
• **Plan ahead.** While op-eds should be timely, there are ways you can plan ahead for your piece by identifying key anniversaries and news developments in the works, and by preparing core text you can deploy in different contexts as news unfolds.

**Where Should I Pitch or Submit?**

The Op-Ed project maintains a list of pitching and submission information for major news outlets [here](#). Below, find a list of blogs and websites that feature political science and other academic work and links to their pitching or submission guidelines. Know of a site that’s missing? Let us know at [press@apsanet.org](mailto:press@apsanet.org).

**The Conversation**
The Conversation “is an independent, nonprofit publisher of commentary and analysis, authored by academics and edited by journalists for the general public.” The Conversation requires authors be affiliated with an academic institution and accepts pitches through registered accounts on the website. Learn more [here](#).

**Duck of Minerva**
Duck of Minerva is looking for a “research-informed op-ed about some foreign policy problem!” The blog operates largely with a set of permanent contributors, but accepts guest posts and applications for guest bloggers, who are expected to blog regularly for a period of time. Learn more [here](#).

**The Hill**
The Washington, DC publication accepts a wide variety of opinion pieces from accepted “contributors.” Apply to become a contributor [here](#).

**LSE USAPP**
The London School of Economics’ USAPP blog welcomes submissions from 800 to 1,000 words long. The blog “covers all aspects of American government…and American public policy (including theoretical issues and international/comparative aspects).” Learn more [here](#).

**The Monkey Cage**
The Monkey Cage seeks to “connect political scientists and the political conversation by creating a compelling forum, developing publicly focused scholars, and building an informed audience.” See the blog’s pitch guidelines [here](#).

**Political Violence at a Glance**
Political Violence at a Glance looks for “engaging, straight-forward analysis on pressing events that matter to foreign policy-makers, scholars and practitioners.” The blog considers submissions of posts from 500-800 words. Additional submission guidelines are available [here](#).

**Scholars Strategy Network**
Scholars Strategy Network publishes plain language briefs of new and policy-relevant research. SSN also promotes interviews, op-eds, and blogs by its members. Membership information is available [here](#).