

Opinion-Based Journalism

Kelsey Whipple

University of Massachusetts Amherst

This turn toward **objectivity** has since become a modern journalistic norm, with American journalism today being closely tied to the distinction between "fact" and "opinion."

Editorials

- Opinion pieces written to **persuade readers to adopt a specific perspective or take a specific action** in response to an issue
- Present a series of key points intended to argue their points to audiences.
- Often include reported and verified facts that make a case for their argument



Editorials

- Often written by a single author
- Publications have editorial boards comprised of many different journalists, who vote on an issue before an editorial is assigned.
- Editorials represent the collective perspective of a publication's editorial board — and through them, the publication itself
- Usually published anonymously without a byline to maintain the perception that they represent the views of the editorial branch of the publication
- Separated from reported, objective content



Op-Eds

- Short for “opposite of the editorial page”
- Represents the **opposite side of an issue than an editorial** already took
- Generally written by a freelance or guest writer not employed by or associated with the publication
- Distinguished as different than editorials

Columns

- Written from the **author's point of view**, and often include first-person language
- Can tackle any number of subjects through a variety of different lenses, as long as they present a personal experience or perspective related to the topic they cover
- Journalistic publications sometimes employ recurring columnists dedicated to specific beats, including film criticism, sports, fashion, domestic advice, and other realms of opinion.
- They may also employ a columnist who opines or reflects on a different topic each week.

News Analyses

- Aim to place news events or developments **within a broader context**
- **Combat information overload** by synthesizing the information and describing how it fits into a bigger puzzle
- This involves describing relevant background, historical details, and both supporting and contradicting factual information
- Synthesizing and contextualizing the information involves a higher degree of interpretation than so-called 'straight' news stories



Key Takeaways:

- Despite its modern relationship with objectivity, U.S. journalism has maintained a role for subjective opinion pieces, through which opinion journalists seek to weigh in on a public issue or shift the tide of public opinion.
- Opinion journalism includes editorials, columns, and op-eds, in addition to editorial cartoons and user-generated opinion pieces like letters to the editor.
- Such journalism usually aims to persuade readers (though they must still draw upon a factual foundation to be opinion journalism). Additionally, journalists may produce news analyses that aim to contextualize more episodic news stories.

Key Takeaways:

- Opinion pieces usually appear in the Editorial Section of a publication.
- This separation is intended to make clear to readers that this content is opinion-based and should not be confused with the reported, fact-based content that appears elsewhere in the publication.
- News analyses do appear alongside typical news content, though.