

Syllabus MCOM 302

Opinion Writing

Fall 2021

Course Name: Opinion Writing		
Course Code: MCOM 302	Course Type (elective)	Course Credits: 3
Class Timings: T, Th—9:30 to 10:45 (A) 12:30 to 01:45 (B)	Section: A&B	Office Hours: M, W, F (10:00-11:00 AM)
Instructor Name: Dr. Firasat Jabeen		
<p>A Note from the Instructor: Dear Students, MCOM 302 is an exciting course that is related to reasoning, building an argument, and writing/expressing your opinion. For this course, I'll regularly post/upload material (book chapters, pdf files, exercises, PowerPoint presentations, etc.) on Moodle. Additionally, I'll be uploading material on a weekly basis. Please feel free to reach out if you have any questions/concerns. Note: As this course is essentially related to writing, there will be many writing exercises and practice sessions. I recommend that onsite and online students finish their writing exercises in a timely manner.</p>		
<p>Instructor Contact Details Email: firasatjabeen@fccollege.edu.pk Office Hours: M, W, F (10:00 to 11:00 AM) Office Location: Room # 18-Faculty Block <u>Guidelines for contacting instructor:</u> In your online learning period, if you have any problem with a concept/course content, please feel free to send me an email. I can set up a Zoom meeting to assist you during my office hours.</p>		
<p>Course Description: Welcome to MCOM 302: the course on opinion writing. This is an exciting course for students who are inquisitive or want to learn more about writing in journalism. As the title of the course reveals, this course is more focused on the writing of opinion based articles that includes columns, features, editorials, letters to the editorial desk, and all sorts of opinion articles in electronic and print format. In addition to providing news, an important role that media play in our lives is to provide detailed insights into issues of national and international importance. These insights can be offered by news/media organizations or by senior journalists or public intellectuals. Thus, in this course, students will not only learn about different kinds of opinion based articles that media organizations offer but will also enhance and practice their skills for writing opinion articles.</p> <p>Mode of Instruction (Blended):</p>		
<p>Main Mode of Instruction: (Moodle, in-person, Zoom)) Technology Requirements: <i>I highly recommend that students bring their laptops to classes (especially for Writing Sessions). As this is a writing course, we'll do many practice sessions in our classes on Google Doc. However, in case you don't have a laptop, you can let me know so that I can help you in any possible way.</i></p>		

Considerations for Students with Limited Internet/Technology Access: Please get in touch with me if you face technology issues/problems at any stage of the semester. I can assist you in all possible ways during your F2F learning period.

Course Objectives or Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

1. Identify different sorts of opinion articles, i.e., editorial, column, feature, etc.
2. Know the fundamentals of media writing, i.e., policy, style, and ethical issues, etc.
3. Get familiarity with famous Pakistani and South Asian opinion writers
4. Explore and learn from online forums of opinion writing such as “Democracy Now,” “The Intercept,” and “South Asian Tribune,” etc.
5. Develop and polish their own writing skills especially feature writing and letters to the editor.
6. Be creative in their thinking and expression
7. To understand how experts can influence and even sometimes manipulate public opinion

Course Content, Learning Material & Activities Schedule

The schedule is tentative because it is not possible to anticipate exactly how much time each topic will require.

Wk	Topic/ Title			
		<u>Teaching/Learning Activities</u>	<u>Assessments</u>	
1	Introduction to the Course & quick revision of concepts learned in previous classes	Class Intros; Icebreaker; a quick revision of norms of media writing: inverted pyramid, lead/intro paragraphs, etc.	Class Discussion	I'll provide the exam/Writing Session dates and rubric at a later stage. We'll have five Writing Sessions in the semester. Each Writing Session will be on the Friday of the week (mentioned below). Students (both online and in-person) will take part in the writing activity on Google Doc. I'll further explain this in the first week of the semester.
2	What is an opinion? What are rhetorical/persuasive	The instructor will assign readings in class	Bring a copy of any Urdu/English	

	strategies and how are they used in op-ed writing? How to differentiate between different forms of op-ed writing such as opinion, commentary, editorial, and feature story, etc.	on a weekly basis.	newspaper. Learn to differentiate various forms of opinion on the op-ed pages of newspapers	
3	Editorial	What is the structure/body of an editorial? How is editorial different from other sorts of op-ed writings?	Bring op-ed pages of newspapers of your choice. Students will read newspaper editorials in groups and discuss the essential components of this form of writing.	Writing Session—I (10%)
4	Editorial (contd.)	Different types of editorials; salient features of editorials; how editorials are different from other forms of writing	Class Discussions and Q/A sessions with the instructor	
5	Feature Writing	What is a feature story in the newspaper? How is feature different from other sorts of op-ed writing? How to write a newspaper feature?	Bring your own copies of newspapers of your choice. You can also bring the Sunday editions. In groups, students will identify salient features of a feature story.	Writing Session—II (10%)
6	Editorial Writing Exam	This exam is worth 20% for the final grade	Students will be asked to write editorials on the information provided by the instructor	Class Quiz (20%)— In this exam, students will demonstrate their ability to write editorials according to the norms discussed/learned in

				class. Students may also be asked to differentiate between editorial and feature.
7	Feature Writing (contd.)	Feature writing practice	Students will select a topic of their choice and will come prepared in class to practice feature writing.	
8	Column Writing	Style, types, and structure of newspaper columns	What is a newspaper column? How to differentiate between a feature and a column	
Writing Session— III (10%)				
9	Column Writing (contd.)	Famous Pakistani and South Asian Columnists	Students will discuss their favorite columnists and their reasons for liking them.	
10	Letters to the Editor	The importance of writing letters to the editorial desk in newspapers Letters to Editors (LTTE) in Electronic media and their importance	Bring op-ed/editorial pages of newspapers. Students will read LTTE in groups and will do in-class exercises for writing LTTEs on the issues of their choice.	
11	Article and Review Writing	What is the difference between a newspaper and an academic article? What are different types of reviews, e.g.,	Bring pages of newspapers/magazines that contain reviews and articles.	Writing Session— IV (10%)

		book review, movie review, etc.		
12	Importance of punctuation in writing	The correct use of comma, period, colon, semi- colon, quotation marks, ampersand, ellipsis, and abbreviations in writing		
13	Writing on the Web	Blogs and different sorts of opinion articles on blogs	Class Discussion on online opinion pages	Writing Session—V (10%)
14	New Media and its effects on Opinion Writing	The effects of technology on opinions		
15	Final Exam (30%) Throughout the semester, we'll do several writing exercises (please see the assessments column). Students need to maintain a record of those exercises.			
16	Final Exam (30%)			

‘Out-of-class’ Study Required (across all 3 categories of students -- those attending in-person, online, or asynchronously)

Important: In this course, I expect students to read newspapers and online opinion forums (the instructor will discuss them at length in class) on regular basis. I would also encourage students to get familiar with the names and writings of famous opinion writers/columnists on Pakistani and South Asian issues. Towards the middle of the semester, I would expect students to come up with two or three names of their favorite op-ed writers and reasons for liking those writers. Also, I highly encourage students in this course to write something for English/Urdu newspapers and try to get it published in a national publication anytime during the semester.

Also, regardless of your status (on campus or off campus), keep practicing/writing opinion articles to maintain a portfolio.

Required Readings:

Fink, Conrad. C. *Writing Opinion for Impact*. 2nd ed., Blackwell Publishing, 2004.

Hicks, Wynford. *Writing for Journalists*. Routledge, 1999.

Pape, Susan. & Sue Featherstone. *Feature Writing: A Practical Introduction*. Sage Publications, 2006.

Note: All of these books are available at the FCC library. However, I'll also provide you the pdf copies of relevant parts.

Course Requirements:

Note: I'll explain the rubrics for each assignment at a later stage in the semester.

Activities/Assignments	Percentage
Quiz	20%
Writing Session I	10%
Writing Session II	10%
Writing Session III	10%
Writing Session IV	10%
Writing Session V	10%
Final Exam	30%
Total	100%

Extra Credit

- I highly encourage students to write opinion articles especially for the LTTE section. I'll always be there to help you improve your write-up. If your LTTE is published in any **English or Urdu newspaper of national level, you'll get 5 bonus points for your overall evaluation.**

Attendance Policy:

-There aren't any marks for attendance per se for this course. However, if you have low attendance/have been missing regular writing sessions, that may affect your portfolio and your performance in exams.

Grade Determination & Course Assessment as per FCC Policy:

- As this is a writing course, for assessments, I'll pay special attention to grammar, punctuation, sentence structures, argument building, and eloquence in writing.
- There will be deduction of marks for late work and missed exams/assignments.

Grading Legend

Below is the grading legend of FCCU (published in all catalogues and available on the FCCU website) as approved by the Academic Council and applies for Fall as well

Grade	Point Value	Numerical Value	Meaning
A	4.00	93-100	Superior
A-	3.70	90-92	
B+	3.30	87-89	Good
B	3.00	83-86	
B-	2.70	80-82	

C+	2.30	77-79	Satisfactory
C	2.00	73-76	
C-	1.70	70-72	
D+	1.30	67-69	Passing
D	1.00	60-66	
F	0.00	59 or below	Failing

Student Conduct & Other Issues:

- If any student faces any issues or has any concerns regarding the classroom climate and interactions, please feel free to contact VR office gloriacalib@fccollege.edu.pk

Changes to the Syllabus:

This syllabus was designed to convey course information and requirements as accurately as possible. It is important to note however that it **may** be subject to change during the course depending on the needs of the class and other situational factors. Such changes would be for your benefit and you will be notified of them as soon as possible.

Student Support Services

[Student Counseling Services](#)

[Writing Center](#)

[Mercy Health Center](#)

Other Useful Policy Documents:

[Sexual Harassment Policy](#)

[Anti-Corruption Policy](#)

[Academic integrity](#)

[Plagiarism Policy](#)

[Academic Calendar](#)

I expect that you will strictly follow the core values of FCCU and put your entire efforts to learn as per the course requirements, attend classes, read the textbook(s)/other assigned reading material and do the assignments in the stipulated time period

Note:

This syllabus is prepared using the template provided by Center for Learning and Teaching (CLT) at Forman Christian College.