

Paper #1: Opinion-editorial

Assigned: February 3

Due: February 10

Length: 2-3 pages (double-spaced, 1-inch margins, 12-point Times New Roman)

Task: Write an op-ed concerning whether or not the Constitution should be adopted

Context: Imagine that, in addition to everything else going on in the United States and the world today, the Constitution of 1789 (and its amendments) is coming up for re-ratification.

Unsurprisingly, re-ratification generates some public discussion regarding its merits and drawbacks. You have the opportunity to write an online editorial arguing for or against the Constitution's retention as the US's basic plan for government.

In order for the US to retain the Constitution, 25 state legislatures must re-pass it. If fewer than 25 re-pass the charter, then the people will elect delegates from their states to attend a constitutional convention. Whatever the convention comes up with requires three-quarters of the states to accept in order to become the new constitution. If three-quarter assent is not achieved in three years, the country reverts to the Constitution of 1789 for the next 50 years.

Guidance: An op-ed is NOT a five-paragraph essay! Read editorials in the New York Times, Washington Post, Wall Street Journal, etc., to get an idea of form. Briefly, assume that your readers will read only the first and last paragraph. (Your evaluator will read the whole thing; don't worry.) The first paragraph thus should contain a clear statement of the issue at hand, and the last paragraph should have a clear statement of what you think should be done about it.

In between those two paragraphs, you will provide background on the issue, provide concrete examples of what will happen if the US takes either course, and discuss why your preferred outcome is better. Feel free to include some light reporting in your editorial, too.

A few general rules that apply to more formal writing (e.g., research papers and essays) are relaxed for editorial writing. The language is less formal, and considering the general audience, avoid anything overly technical. If you need to use a special term, explain it simply but accurately. You do not need to cite sources formally either, though you will notice that professional editorials often refer to authorities in text. Also, you may use a rhetorical question.

Writing goals

- 1) Use the active voice as much as possible.
- 2) Use emotionally- and value-laden language (rhetoric) to make your persuasive points.
- 3) Support your rhetoric with facts and reasons.
- 4) Construct an argument that is both persuasive and hangs together logically.
- 5) Use short, dense paragraphs.