

Publishing in Popular Media Outlets

Many scholars find a new audience for their work by writing popular pieces for outlets like *Slate*, *Foreign Affairs*, *The New York Times*, *Avidly*, and *The Atlantic*. This guide explores how, when, and why to get your ideas in print.

WHEN SHOULD YOU PUBLISH?

When you have something to say. If you don't feel moved to write, it may not be the right time. But if you have an idea that you have to get out, go for it! No one has ever hurt their career by writing good articles.

UPSIDES

- The publication process moves fast, and your ideas get taken up quickly
- Working in both the scholarly and public realms helps you refine your arguments
- You can have a real impact on popular discourse
- A large, new audience finds your scholarship
- You build skills that help you land positions in industry, government, and nonprofits

CONSIDERATIONS

- Be ready for criticism; the more successful the piece, the more intense the reaction
- Editors can be heavy-handed, and you do not have total control over the finished product
- Confessional or political writings can pose professional risks
- Writing too many popular pieces may distract you from producing work that "counts" on the academic job market

HOW TO PITCH

- Find an editor's email address online or through your contacts; do not submit a pitch to a generic address or portal
- Draft a four-sentence contrarian pitch (e.g. "Popular discourse suggests that the sky is red, but I say that it's actually blue.")
- Finish with a sentence that explains who you are (an expert)
- Grab an editor's attention with your email's subject line (e.g. "Is everything that we know about the color of the sky wrong?")
- If you have not heard back in a few hours, pitch somewhere else
- Don't take a "no" as a total rejection; if an editor responds at all, keep pitching new ideas

WHAT SHOULD YOU WRITE?

Draw upon your dissertation research to write pieces that are grounded in evidence. Each article should have only one central argument, and this argument should challenge popular understandings of a topic. Write in the same tone that you would use for an email or Facebook post. Above all, make sure that you demonstrate why what you are writing matters.

