

Senior Seminar:

Opinions, Columns, Partisanship & Fandom



Photo by Janos Kummer/Getty Images; Nathan Congleton/NBCU Photo Bank/NBCUniversal via Getty Images via Getty Images (Business Insider)

Sometime in my adult life, North Americans have largely lost their faith in journalism ([Brenan, 2022](#)). We have become less and less interested in reading and watching “the news” ([Pew Research Center, 2023](#)). Somewhere along the lines, we became less aware of what was out there unless we agreed with it. And, we could only “agree” with it if it was something we lived. Like, it was hard to find truth in something we hadn’t personally experienced.

At the same time, we became more and more entertained by those who yelled our own opinions back at us, those who amplified our own experiences and views on media platforms. We also have developed an irrational anger at those who have opinions at odds with our own.

I have found this to be a troubling, yet fascinating phenomenon and I started to wonder if it was really “new” at all. And, I began to have questions such as, “How did we get here?” and “What does this all mean?” So, I began to study it, to reach back into archives, to read the work of old columnists, to study scholarship dedicated to the history of opinion pages, to look at what made convincing arguments and why North

Americans flocked to some but hated others. And, I began to really think about what it all means to and for us as democratic and capitalist societies.

For this course, I want to start you on the journey to examining mediated opinion similarly and I want to come together as a group to figure out what it means for us individually and collectively.

OBJECTIVES

At the conclusion of this course, the assigned readings, class discussions and completed assignments should have helped you to:

- * Develop and improve critical-thinking skills,
- * Read and understand the difference between effective and ineffective opinion pieces,
- * Understand the role mediated opinion plays in democratic and capitalistic societies,
- * Write effective opinion pieces.

EXPECTATIONS & COURSE POLICY

I expect you to be honest, to come to class, to be prepared by doing the readings (etc.) before class, to engage and to be respectful. I also expect you to think critically.

You can expect me to listen to your concerns, to be fair, to provide you with feedback in timely manners and to help you succeed in this class and beyond.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Familiarize yourself with Quinnipiac University's policy on Academic Integrity. ([Available in full here.](#))

ChatGPT/AI: Beyond what the university policy states, I want to be crystal clear in my expectations surrounding the use of artificial intelligence when it comes to the papers and columns you are required to write this semester: *I expect your work to be your own and original to you.*

This is literally a course designed to make you think, to articulate *your* thoughts, opinions, lines of thought, questions, etc. AI can't do the things I will ask of you and, if you try to circumvent that intention, you will receive a zero on the assignment.

ASSISTANCE

The course schedule, readings, assignments, professor contact information and more is available at mollyyanity.com.

If you have health and/or educational needs, please inform the professor within the first week of the semester. Even if you have already made arrangements with the Office of Accessibility, *please* make the professor aware within the first week of the semester.

Consistent with its responsibilities, Quinnipiac University [provides reasonable accommodations to promote equal educational opportunity](#). The University employs staff members to ensure compliance with the ADA and Section 504. Staff members work directly with students, faculty and staff to provide reasonable accommodations and other assistance as needed. If you require assistance beyond what your professor can provide, please contact the Learning Commons at learning.center@qu.edu.

ATTENDANCE

This is a senior-level seminar that meets just once a week. Thus, attendance is required. *Missing more than one class will negatively impact your grade.* Course withdrawal will be recommended if a student misses two or more classes regardless the reason.

CLASSROOM TECHNOLOGY & POLICY

* You are expected to follow the course on mollyyanity.com.

* You will use Blackboard to turn in your assignments. I will conversely use it to record your grades, as well as to send group emails.

* This is a discussion-based course; when you are in the classroom, I ask that you remove earbuds/earphones. When we are in discussions, your laptops and phones should be put away. When there is reason for note-taking, you are permitted to use your laptops/tablets. But if you are using your laptop or phone for *non-class reasons*, I reserve the right to count the day as a missed class.

BOOKS NEEDED FOR THIS CLASS

READINGS: All readings will be available on the course site. All readings are to be read *before* class on the day they are listed on the syllabus. Read them. Take notes. Prepare questions and discussion points. READ. READ. READ. Have I made this clear enough?

ASSIGNMENTS

ALL RUBRICS & LATE POLICIES WILL BE DESCRIBED ON INDIVIDUAL ASSIGNMENT

SHEETS. Reasonable requests for an extension beyond a deadline will be considered only if they are levied at least 24 hours prior to the deadline.

Your final grade will be made up of the following:

* **Homework/opinion pieces. 20 points each x 6 = 120 points.** You will be required to write max 500-word opinion pieces based on readings.

* **Columns or Commentary. 20 points each x 3 = 60 points.** Students will deliver three columns or voice commentaries, each 500 words or less. (15 of the 60 points – five for each assignment -- will be for a draft due before the deadline).

* **Engagement/Attendance. 20 points.** This grade is levied at the pleasure of the professor and is determined by your critical and respectful engagement, as well as your preparation for and participation in class.

GRADING SCALE***Grade %/Point Range****Grade**

> 93

A

77-79

C+

90-92

A-

73-76

C

87-89

B+

70-72

C-

83-86

B

60-69

D

80-82

B-

<59

F

** See Rubric on course website*