1.5-Day Program

**FIRST DAY**

1. **INTRODUCTION and WHY WE’RE HERE** (10:00-10:45)
   - Introductions
   - Origin Story: The OpEd Project
   - Five core questions – the core concepts of thought leadership and influence

2. **GAME: PEAK CREDIBILITY** 10:45-12:30pm

   What is expertise? We’ll examine that concept, and explore the source of credibility: how can we present ideas quickly and powerfully under pressure? What are the common roadblocks to credibility that we hit in our own presentations of our expertise—and why do we repeatedly hit them? They include: jargon, talking too much, lowballing our numbers/accomplishments, reluctance to share impressive credentials, dismissal of personal experience, and more. These are not individual roadblocks, so much as common themes that disproportionately affect minority voices (including women). What if we could clarify them, once and for all? We’ll explore both strategy and the underlying implications of how we convey our expertise.

3. **WHAT IS THOUGHT LEADERSHIP?** 12:30-12:45pm
   - Group brainstorm: what’s an op-ed? (and by extension: thought leadership?)
   - Participants take positions

**LUNCH (12:45-1:30)** ( “working lunch” after 1:15)

4. **PURPOSE (Why and Who?)** 1:30-2:00pm
   - Group brainstorm: When taking a position, what are your intended outcomes? What do you want to you accomplish?
   - Group brainstorm: who reads the top opinion forums?

   Takeaways: First, public service and personal advancement are not mutually exclusive. Second, if you can’t imagine the intended outcome, its unlikely you’ll achieve it.

5. **COMPONENTS OF INFLUENCE:** (Part 1 & Part 2) 2:00-3:45pm
What are the components of powerful, evidence-based argument? We will explore the concepts of timeliness and evidence, the difference between being “right” and being effective; and strategies for making a greater impact, including how to escape a pigeonhole, how to preach beyond the choir, and the value of seeing your argument as part of a bigger picture—and yourself as part of a larger public conversation. We’ll examine how to address opposition and build consensus, and explore why most arguments don’t change many people’s minds. We’ll also explore the factors that make some arguments and ideas capable of changing the world.

Part 1: Elements of Persuasion (including “Winning” an Argument)

- Attention (ledes)
- Timing (Newshooks)
- Argument (your case – in one sentence)
- Evidence (“Best Friends” game)
- To be Sure (how to change hearts and minds)
- Conclusion (what change do you want to see?)

Takeaway: Social Science research shows that very few arguments do win people over, on anything important—because of the way we store and remember “evidence.” The few arguments that have changed large numbers of people’s minds do not focus on winning, but on Changing the Frame.

Part 2: Break out Groups

(Possible Break)

7. GAME: THAT’S RIDICULOUS (3:45-4:10pm)
Devil’s Advocate game.

Takeaway: If you say things of consequence, there may be consequences. But the alternative is to be inconsequential.

Note: our point is not that people should speak up at any cost, but rather, that our ideas and knowledge matter – and everything else is a matter of consideration (what could happen?) and strategy (how could I shape what happens?). We want to anticipate the potential consequences of speaking up, come up with strategies to handle consequences that are undesirable, and know how to decide when and why to speak up (or not).

8. THINKING BIGGER (TRIANGULATION) (4:10-4:40PM)
How can we use limited knowledge to speak to big things?

Takeaway: Growing up is largely a process of better and better understanding the limits of our knowledge – realizing how much in fact we don’t know, and the potential consequences – and then, being able to draw from that realization the ability to say and do things that matter, nevertheless.

9. **WRAP UP**: 4:40-5PM

---

**SECOND DAY**

1. **GROUP DEBRIEF** 10am-10:45am
Since yesterday: What came up? What kept you up last night? Questions/ideas/thoughts?

2. **IDEAS, LEDES & DRAFTS** (Scholars Choice) 10:45am-12:00

First option: if participants have come with draft op-eds, we can workshop a small number of drafts in front of the group.

Second option: Small groups. Approx. 4 people per group. Within each group participants practice “getting attention” for their ideas, and help each other craft ledes (45 minutes). Each group selects a winner (“best lede”), who shares their lede with the entire group.

Third option: Idea Slam. A timekeeper is assigned. Each person has 60 seconds to state an idea (informed by their area of expertise) or summarize an interesting aspect of their research. Timekeeper is responsible for interrupting at 60 seconds sharp. Once everyone has gone, group has 5 minutes to write down any reflections. Round 2: A new timekeeper is assigned. Each person now has 2 minutes to restate their idea/research; this time all participants shout out as many ways of relating that idea or research to something going on in the world right now (general news, or can be something going on in any of their respective fields). Goal is to come up with as many timely ideas and connections as possible – even ridiculous ones --- that might generate an op-ed. Timekeeper is responsible for interrupting at 3 minutes sharp. At the end, each person has 5 minutes to write.

3. **HOW TO GET PEOPLE TO THINK YOUR IDEAS ARE GOOD** (12:00-12:30)
Otherwise known as “Pitching”
Philosophy of successful pitching (not op-eds, but anything) – 6 elements

- So what?
- Why me?
- Why now?
- Economy of Words
- Contribution/Aha point of view (what’s in it for the reader)
- Mind the power of words – choose words that work for you

Takeaway: find ways to telegraph that you are a potential asset, so that you will get a response—and use that information to get to YES. No is devastating if you think it’s the end of the conversation; it’s no big deal if you think it’s the beginning of the conversation.

**Short Pitch Blitz:** Scholars can try pitching ideas out loud.

4. **CLOSING (12:30-1pm)**

- 5 Core Questions - Redux
- What’s next: What you can do when you walk out the door
- And make sure to follow us on twitter (where we broadcast your successes and connect you with OpEd Project journalists and thought leaders across the nation): @theopedproject