

A Magazine of Politics & Culture

CURRENT AFFAIRS

300 Lafayette St., Suite 210, New Orleans, LA 70130 ♦ currentaffairs.org

We're delighted that you're interested in potentially writing for *Current Affairs*! We'd like to tell you a bit more about what we're looking for and how the editorial process works.

First, please note: *Current Affairs* is quite different from other magazines. All our content has a very particular tone and style. The best way to get a sense of what we're looking for is to spend some time reading our material. Subscriptions and back issues can be purchased through our website. Our [Issue Archive](#) of past digital editions is available free to the public. You don't have to be a *Current Affairs* subscriber to submit work to our magazine, but it sure does help! Not simply because we have a nepotistic bias toward paid members of the *Current Affairs* family (though we do), but because if a writer is unfamiliar with the kind of thing we publish, they are less likely to propose things that will fit well.

Be advised that we only take a very small number of submissions. This is, first, because we are a small magazine with a highly constrained budget and receive a very high volume of pitches, and second, because we really are quite choosy due to our rather idiosyncratic style. If we do not accept your submission, this in no way implies any judgment on its merits. We may just not be commissioning *any* pieces at that time (this is often the case), or it may simply not quite work in our magazine. Please feel free to try again with other pitches in the future.

That said, please do not be discouraged from sending us ideas! **If you do not hear from us within a month, we are not able to use your pitch. Due to the volume of pitches received, we are unable to provide individual responses.**

I. Editorial Process

If you have an idea for an article, [please fill out our pitch form](#). You will be asked to link one or more samples of your previous work (published or unpublished), and/or a few paragraphs of the proposed piece, so that we can get a sense of your writing style.

It is best not to send fully completed pieces. This is because we like to work with writers in shaping a piece's direction. If the piece is already written, be warned that if we accept it, it could be in for substantial rewrites.

Please be aware that our editing process is very hands-on, and that we may make intensive revisions to your original submission in order to bring it in line with the *Current Affairs* house style. Your final draft will almost certainly end up looking quite different to your original draft, unless you have written for us numerous times before. However, our editors are very friendly and collaborative. If a pitch has been accepted, then we are already confident that a great piece of work can emerge at the end, and we want to work with writers to make their work as good as it can possibly be.

An author always has final approval over whether their edited piece appears in the magazine. We are happy to publish pieces under the author's real name, or, if they prefer, under a pseudonym. (A long list of premade pseudonyms can be supplied upon request.)

II. Content Guidelines

a. Form

- We have two publication formats: our print edition and our online edition. Main articles for the print edition are usually around 3000-4500 words, while online articles are usually 1200-2400 words. (The print edition also contains lots of boxes, sidebars, etc. with short interstitial pieces, which can run anywhere from 100-500 words. Please check out the magazine to get a sense for what these are usually like! We love to receive ideas for games, puzzles, satirical advertisements, and other bits and pieces.)
- We aim to make *Current Affairs* accessible and enjoyable for a broad audience. If you are writing on a specialist subject, please write as if you were addressing a reader with only a passing familiarity with your topic. Articles should be able to be read and enjoyed by any literate person with a high school education. We don't mean to say that you shouldn't write about complex ideas and arguments. This isn't *Newsweek*, after all: we're not writing for children. But please try to express your thoughts in clear, understandable language.

B. Substance

Current Affairs greatly values sincerity, compassion, and conviction. Please write about issues you genuinely care about. We are not overly fond of “hot takes” or contrarianism.

Argumentative pieces should be persuasive rather than partisan. Don’t write exclusively for people who already agree with you! A really good article will make its point, in part, by dissecting counterarguments. A good tip is to write your piece imagining the response of the reader who would disagree with you the most, and ensure that your piece addresses what that reader would say.

Submissions need not be humorous, though humor is certainly encouraged. Be warned, however, that if your jokes are not funny, we will remove them and replace them with our own jokes. We will also occasionally insert jokes where once there were none.

General themes that tend to produce good *Current Affairs* articles are

- Critiques of bad premises and arguments that are infecting current debates
- Strategies and suggestions for solving contemporary problems
- Discussions of types of human suffering that people ought to care more about that they presently do
- Merciless verbal thrashings of bad writers, thinkers, commentators, and other such entities

If the general thrust of your article is “Guess What? This Thing That Everyone Likes Is Actually Terrible,” please devote 50% of your word count to practical proposals on how to improve the thing, or discussion of an existing alternative that you believe is superior.

We also like book reviews! But it’s probably best not to pick a book on a niche discipline or debate, unless you’re confident that you can contextualize the subject matter in a relevant and engaging way for the uninitiated. Book reviews are among the trickiest pieces to write, because they require you to make readers interested in a book they might have no intention of reading. Best strategy: do not make it about the book, make it about the thing that the book is about, and use the book solely as a jumping-off point for an independently good essay about the thing.

We have only very occasionally printed fiction, and generally do not publish it. The best fiction pieces for us would be satirical in nature. We do not consider poetry submissions.

III. Tips

- Write with wit, panache, grace, and clarity.
- Nihilism has no place in our magazine. Believe in things and know why you believe them.
- Doomerism is forbidden. Look forward toward the glorious tomorrow and explain how we can build it together.
- Writing should emanate warmth. Readers should not feel sneered at.
- Let the reader into your thought process, rather than just telling them your conclusions. Be fair to both sides of an argument.
- Do not write like a graduate student. This means:
 - DO NOT name-drop any literary or social theorists. If you name-drop a literary or social theorist, we will delete the entire paragraph in which this reference occurs.
 - DO NOT include any untranslated non-English words or phrases in the middle of sentences, *even if they are italicized*. Spanish words we may occasionally allow, as Spanish is well on its way to being our country's second national language. Greek, Latin, German, and French will be treated with great suspicion.
 - DO NOT use any English words that no normal human being has ever heard before. *Current Affairs* editors are fairly bookish types, so if we have to look up something in the dictionary, this is an especially bad sign.
- Twitter controversies are not suitable subjects for articles.

IV. Payment/Rights/Etc.

All *Current Affairs* pieces are paid. Our budget is limited, but we pay what we can. If a pitch is accepted, the editor will propose an amount that we are willing to pay for the piece. Standard rates are:

- Online article - \$250
- Print article - \$350

Payment will be provided immediately upon receipt of a final draft, via check or PayPal. Please let us know which you prefer. If you have not been paid within one week of submitting a final draft, please contact your editor.

You retain the rights to your work and may use it however you please. However, *Current Affairs* holds the exclusive publication rights to your piece until the print issue after yours comes out, and for 30 days on the web (whichever comes later). *Current Affairs* also retains permission to reprint the issue in which your piece appeared, including binding and reselling the magazine as a book.