

Propaganda and Fallacies

identify & avoid

Importance

Using fallacies and propaganda limits your ability to effectively argue... arguing effectively requires the following:

- ability to study relevant problems and make intelligent choices from alternative arguments

- ability to use rational methods in considering significant issues

- recognition that different viewpoints are valuable and normal

- recognition that reasonable compromise is an important part of the democratic decision making process

- skill of analyzing and evaluating sources of information

Propaganda

— [Definition: ideas, facts, or allegations spread deliberately to further one's cause or to damage an opposing cause OR ideas or statements that are often false or exaggerated and that are spread in order to help a cause, a political leader, a government, etc.

— [It's important to remember that propaganda isn't just used by the "bad guy" (whoever that may be for you).

Commonly Used Propaganda Techniques

— [Bandwagon - Influenced by the majority, “everybody's doing it.”

— [Card Stacking - drug companies downplay side-effects.

— [Generalities - Hitler would use words that were linked to ideas like freedom, pride, independence, and integrity, created a sense of pride in his following.

— [Name Calling - Obama’s association with Reverend Jeremiah Wright

— [Plain Folk - George W. Bush is a perfect example, he prided himself on not being an “intellectual type.”

— [Testimonial - Celebrities endorsing primarily liberal views (gay marriage, legalization of marijuana, etc.).

— [Transfer - The swastika symbol actually meant health and prosperity long before the Nazi’s appropriated it for their own uses.

Power of Propaganda

— [Joseph Goebbels was the Reich Minister of Propaganda in Nazi Germany and therefore enforced Nazi Party ideology. He exerted totalitarian control over information distribution in Germany with book burning and other forms of media and art censorship.

Bad Guy Propaganda



60000^{RM}

kostet dieser Erbkrankte
die Volksgemeinschaft
auf Lebenszeit

*Volksgenosse
das ist auch
Dein Geld*

Lesen Sie
**NEUES
VOLK**

Die Monatshefte des Rassenpolitischen Amtes der NSDAP

The poster features a central illustration of two men. One man, dressed in a dark suit and appearing frail, sits on a wooden chair. A second man, dressed in a light-colored, clean shirt and trousers, stands behind him with his hands on the seated man's shoulders, suggesting support or care. The background is a solid yellow color. The text is arranged around the illustration, with the large number '60000 RM' at the top left. A central text box contains the main message in German. At the bottom, the title 'NEUES VOLK' is written in large, bold, stylized letters, and the publisher information is at the very bottom.

English translation:

60000 RM

This is what this person suffering from hereditary defects costs the Community of Germans during his lifetime

Fellow Citizen, that is your money, too
Read '[A] New People'

Good Guy Propaganda



Propaganda distributed by northern abolitionists in the American Civil War. Photo of a former slave showing scars from being whipped.

Logical Fallacies

— [Definition: argumentative defects; error in reasoning often due to presumptions or misconceptions; oftentimes used purposefully to win arguments, defeat an opponent, etc.

Types of fallacies

— [Hasty Generalization

— [Missing the Point

— [Post hoc (false cause)

— [Slippery Slope

— [Weak Analogy

— [Appeal to Authority

— [Ad Populum (to the people)

— [Ad Hominem (against the person)

— [Appeal to Pity

— [Appeal to Ignorance

— [Straw Man

— [Red Herring

— [False Dichotomy

— [Begging the Question

— [Equivocation

Fallacy Example

“Obama declares war on Coca-Cola.”



Identifying fallacies in your own writing

— [Pretend you disagree with your conclusion

— [List your main points and then list the evidence you have for each point underneath

— [Recognize which fallacies you're especially prone to

— [Claims that use words like "all; every; always; never; no one; and everyone" require more evidence than those like "some; many; few; sometimes; and usually."

— [Be sure you are accurately and fairly characterizing others; especially your opponents

Exercise - Identify the fallacies in the following argument

The feminist argument that pornography is harmful has no merit and should not be discussed in college courses. I read “Playboy” magazine, and I don’t see how it could be harmful. Feminists might criticize me for looking at porn, but they shouldn’t talk; they obviously look at it, too, or they couldn’t criticize it. Many important people, including the Presidents, writers, and entertainers who have been interviewed by the magazine and the women who pose in it, apparently agree. Scientific studies so far have not proved that pornography is harmful, so it must not be harmful. Besides, to be harmful, pornography would either have to harm the men who read it or the women who pose in it, and since they both choose these activities, they must not be harmful. Feminists should take a lesson from my parents—they don’t like loud music and won’t have it in their house, but they don’t go around saying it’s harmful to everyone or trying to prevent others from listening to it. Ever since feminists began attacking our popular culture, the moral foundation of our society has been weakened; the divorce rate, for example, continues to rise. If feminists would just cease their hysterical opposition to sex, perhaps relationships in our society would improve. If feminists insist, instead, on banning porn, men will have no freedom and no pleasure left, and large numbers of women will be jobless and will have to work as prostitutes to support themselves. In light of these consequences, feminists shouldn’t be surprised if their protests are met with violence. Truly, the feminist argument is baseless.