

Lesson 18

Assignment

PROPAGANDA IN WWI

It was during the War...that we had the best chance of estimating the tremendous results which could be obtained by a propagandist system properly carried out...unfortunately it was only too well taught us by the enemy.¹

WHAT IS PROPAGANDA?

Propaganda is a message meant to persuade the public toward a cause which will benefit the messenger. Propaganda is often thought of negatively because it is biased persuasion and is often associated with manipulation and half-truths. However, it may also be used for social good, such as campaigns for healthy living.

The media used is generally the kind that reaches the largest audience. Prior to the printing press, ideas were propagated by word of mouth. By the time of WWI, posters and flyers became an effective way to influence the masses. Then there came the development of radio, television, and now, in the modern age, the internet reaches beyond the confines of country borders and can influence large groups of people.

Propaganda is used everywhere. Analyzing the common techniques of propaganda will help us evaluate the message and the messengers with some degree of critical thought.

Read the online article PROPAGANDA IS EVERYWHERE.

Propagandists love shortcuts — particularly those which short-circuit rational thought.

Use the information you read to answer the following.
What are the four ways listed in the text (after the quote above) in which propagandists accomplish this goal?

- agitate emotions
- exploit insecurities
- capitalize on the ambiguity of language (i.e. use words that can be interpreted many different ways)
- bend rules of logic

Using arguments presented in the article, describe why you think people today are less or more susceptible to propaganda than during the World Wars.

Since information technology can use data about a user's online behaviour and find messages that will influence them the most, and now bots can control online forums with 'sockpuppets', people are more at risk than ever to be influenced by propaganda.

¹ Hitler, Adolf. "Chapter VI War Propaganda." *Mein Kampf*. Trans. James Murphy. London: Hurst and Blackett Ltd., 1939. Project Gutenberg of Australia. Web. 13 Nov. 2011. <<http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks02/0200601.txt>

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On the *Propaganda Critic* website, in the 'Decoding Propaganda' tab, read the descriptions of different types of propaganda. Summarize the Common Techniques in the chart below.

Type	Summary
Name-calling	Links a person or idea to a negative term, or one that give a negative emotional charge. The common political technique today is to use the term 'racist'.
Glittering generalities	These are words that make bad ideas seem good. They are ambiguous terms, or general terms that mean different things to different people.
Euphenisms	Unpleasant realities can be couched in bland or inoffensive words. These reduce the negative feelings. An example is changing the term 'shell-shock' in the 1st world war, to 'combat fatigue' in th 2nd world war.
Transfer	The propagandist transfers the authority of something we respect to the thing they want us to accept. Use of symbols is common. i.e. prayers (religion); white lab coats (medicine) etc.
Testimonial	Uses a well-known person to promote an idea or program when the person has no credible expertise to do so. This is done often in advertising.
Plain Folks	The message is that the person or idea is for the common folk. Can you think of anyone who has presented themself as understanding ordinary people but, in fact, does not live at all like common folk?
Bandwagon	Everyone is doing it and you should too. This is very effective today since technology can produce fake followers in the powerful tool of social media.
Fear	Propaganist plays to deepest fears to push them towards behaviour. Can you think of any ways you have seen this used in our society lately?

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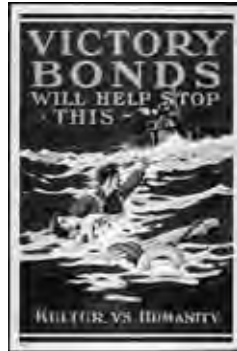
Posters can be seen in colour in online page

On the *Propaganda Critic* website, in the 'Examples' tab read the example of American politician, Newt Gingrich, and how he instructed political candidates to use propaganda to influence listeners.

Analyze which of the common techniques are used with the following WWI posters and give evidence for your choice.



Bandwagon - everyone is signing up



This image is of a Canadian hospital ship torpedoed by a German U-boat in 1918 with 234 casualties including 94 Canadian medical staff. Propaganda soon referred to German Kultur (culture) as one steeped in cruelty and destruction placing Germany outside civilized nations. A total effort against such an enemy was expected.

Fear – the doable solution is to buy Victory Bonds to fund the war.

Name-calling - The German word for culture (Kultur) had negative connotations in these times.



Glittering Generalities – buy Victory Bonds because of values of family, honour



Bandwagon - others would not hoard
Name-calling - breaking the law (criminal)
Glittering Generalities - Patriotic



Name-calling - mere spectator vs. man's part