

HANDOUT FOR THE WAR ON TERRORISM: TRUTH OR PROPAGANDA

TRUTH

- Facts that has been verified
- Conformity to reality or actuality
- Correspondence between what is stated and how things are

PROPAGANDA

- Any form of communication in support of national objectives designed to influence a group's:
 - Opinions
 - Emotions
 - Attitudes
 - Behavior
- In order to benefit the sponsor, either directly or indirectly).

ANALYZING PROPAGANDA

- Source: Where did the message originate?
- Purpose: What is the desired outcome?
- Beneficiary: Who will benefit?

PROPAGANDA TECHNIQUES

- Propaganda techniques employed to sway public opinion:
- Manipulation of:
 - Language
 - Photographs
 - Statistics
 - World Maps
- Logical Fallacies
 - Fallacies of Relevance
 - Fallacies of Logic

CATEGORY 1: FALLACIES OF RELEVANCE

1. Ad Hominem: (argument against the man) Shifting from argument based on reason to an attack on the arguer: "You can't believe him. He's been in prison."

2. Ad Verecundiam: (appeal to authority) Accepting an argument not on its own merit but because of the status of the person putting it forward.

3. Ad Populam: (argument to the people) Attempting to win popular assent to a conclusion by arousing the emotions and enthusiasms of the multitude -- a favourite device of advertising and propaganda. It can involve slanted language, glamorous association, or mass appeal: "1000 housewives can't be wrong." "Every right-thinking American will agree that . . ."

4. Wrapping Oneself in the Flag: (can overlap with ad populam) Using appeals to patriotism or other emotional allegiances shared by the audience to gain acceptance. "As a loyal Canadian, I cannot stand by and see our military forces weakened by budget cutbacks."

5. Ad Baculum: (appeal to force) Arguing that a statement is true because the opponent will be harmed if he or she does not assent to it. "I wouldn't advise you to disagree with Johnson in tomorrow's meeting. He is on the Promotions Committee, which decides next week on your application." It might also be an appeal to fear: "If you don't buy our product, your competitor will get ahead of you and cut you out of the market."

6. Ad Misericordiam: (appeal to pity) Arguing for the truth of a statement because someone would suffer if it were false. Use of emotional grounds for persuasion.. "I must have been driving under the

speed limit, because I'll lose my license if I'm convicted again." Claims of victimization can persuade an audience with a strong concern for social justice to accept accusations.

7. Special Pleading: Accepting a general principle, but making oneself or one's own group an exception on grounds that one would not accept in others. "Everyone should pay income tax honestly but I really need the money."

8. Ignoring the question / red herring: Getting off the topic, distracting the attention from the argument. Diversionary tactics are often used by people who find the direction of discussion rather uncomfortable

CATEGORY 2: FALLACIES OF LOGIC

1. Problem with the Premise (The premises of an argument are the assumptions with which we start.)

(a) Missing Premise: A stated or implied premise is missing. Example: "This senseless language requirement should be abolished." First we must establish that the language requirement is senseless. Then we can argue that it should be abolished.

(b) False Premise: The premise (regardless of whether it is stated or implied) is false. Example: "He must be rich because he goes to Pearson College." This makes the false assumption that only rich people go to Pearson College.

2. Complex Question: Failure to separate the premise from the conclusion based on it. Examples: "Have you stopped beating your wife?" "Have you stopped cheating on exams?"

3. Argument in a Circle: Using as a conclusion material that has already been stated in one of the premises:

- 1st Premise: "You've got to do what I say because I'm in charge."
- 2nd Premise: "How do I know that you're in charge?"
- Conclusion: "Because everyone's got to do what I say."

4. Non Sequitur: The term is applied when something irrelevant intrudes to deflect the reasoning. Example: "I can't understand why I do so badly in math. I bought the most expensive

5. Ad Ignorantum (argument from ignorance) Absence of evidence is used as the basis for the conclusion. Example: "Martha Corey, we hereby condemn you for being a witch. You have not proved to the court that you are not one."

6. Hasty Generalization: Generalizing from unrepresentative or insufficient cases. Example: "That racial/ ethnic/ religious group is so fanatical. I work with three people from that group, and they're very fanatical."

7. Argument of the Beard (How many hairs make a beard?) Arguing that a distinction cannot be made because there is no clear dividing line between the extremes. Example: "There is no difference between a child and an adult because there is no one moment in a person's life at which time he ceases to be a child and becomes an adult." It derives from the argument that one cannot specify how many hairs a man must have on his chin before it can be said that he has a beard.

8. Oversimplification Ignoring alternatives and complexities and thus implying that the question can be settled more easily than is the case.

- **a. Black or White Argument:** Ignores differences of degree and presents only the extremes as alternatives Example: "He is either a hero or a villain."
- **b. False Dilemma:** Ignores alternatives. Example: "Either we must take up arms against our oppressor or we must say farewell to all the liberties which we hold dear." Might there not be other alternatives?

9. Truth is in the Middle: Assuming that an average or a compromise is necessarily the solution to alternatives. Example: If I see two \$5 bills on the floor and ask myself whether it would be reasonable to steal them, does it make any sense to conclude that it would be all right to take one ?

10. False Cause: Making an inaccurate connection between events.

- **a. Non Causa Pro Causa (not the cause, for the cause):** Mistaking what is not the cause of a particular effect for its real cause. Example: "Oh, she didn't help you with math? That's why you got a good grade this time."
- **b. Post Hoc Ergo Propter Hoc (after this, therefore because of this):** Assuming that because one event followed another, it must have been the result of the other. Example: "When that important dignitary visited the college, the weather improved. I wish he'd return and bring the sunshine back!"

11. False Analogy: Using a likeness as the basis for argument. When two things have a point of similarity, it cannot be concluded that they are alike in other regards. Examples: The statement "You can't make an omelet without breaking eggs" is used to justify violence as a means to an end. Heard on the radio March 16, 2003: "Saddam Hussein is a cancer in the body of Iraq. We need surgery to remove the cancer and that surgery is a war."