



**mind
over
media** België
Hoe worden we beïnvloed?

Lesson plans

Elaborated by



Analyzing
Contemporary
Propaganda

These lesson plans provide activities to extend learning
from the Mind Over Media online platform

www.mindovermedia.eu



Lesson 1: Create your own propaganda

Room set-up needs: Projection screen, projector & computer, seats facing the screen with ability to move into groups in various areas of the room

Materials needed: A smartphone or tablet per group of learners (+/- 4 people), presentation with various 'For Change' propaganda images (see Lesson 6 worksheet), access to the Mind Over Media platform at www.mindovermedia.eu

Time Needed: one 50-minute period

Target Audiences: youth, parents, teachers; age 13 and up

Key Theme: To understand propaganda, it is important that young people learn to understand why certain campaigns manage to convince them. In this lesson, learners look at some examples of propaganda and create their own version. This way, they can discover how many of the propaganda techniques they have mastered. This lesson is an active introduction to discovering and understanding the various propaganda techniques.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Participants learn to:

- recognize that they are influenced by propaganda and that they influence others by using propaganda techniques
- understand that propaganda activates strong emotions, simplifies ideas, appeals to audience needs and values, and targets opponents
- develop a sense of social responsibility for the appropriate sharing of propaganda
- increase their confidence in expressing their views with images, words and sound
- participate in discussions of controversial topics where people have differences of opinion
- reflect on propaganda's potentially beneficial or harmful nature and impact on individuals and society

Preparations for the instructor:

- Acquaint yourself with the various propaganda techniques.
- Note: this is an introductory class. You should consider also teaching a follow-up class that discusses the techniques in more depth.

Read an account of a test version of this class at

<https://mindovermedia.mediawijs.be/dossiers/dossier-media-en-radicalisering/propaganda-cre%C3%ABren-propaganda-te-begrijpen>



Instructions for the instructor:

A. Introduction

- o Show the campaign images in the lesson 6 worksheet to learners. Feel free to look up other examples.
- o Let learners answer questions like the following:
 - Which poster most closely matches the idea of ‘change’?
 - Why?
 - Has change been visualized well or not?
 - What sort of image would fit better?
 - What are some other points this party might stand for? (In the context of local elections? Specifically for young people? E.g. better education, mobility)

B. Activity

- o Divide the class into groups of +/- 4. Make sure every group has a smartphone or tablet, and (!) a person who is adept at putting text on top of an image.
- o Let the groups brainstorm briefly about something they want to **change in society**. If they can't come up with anything, ask them what they might want to change in their area or school in terms of mobility, diversity, cleanliness, (press) freedom, ecology, housing, ...
- o Make them come up with a **slogan** about the chosen change.
- o Make them find a photo or image that fits the slogan (and ideally underscores the message). Learners can use their smartphone for this, or a school tablet. When they have found an image, they should put the slogan over the top. They can use Snapchat, WhatsApp, Instagram or another tool.
- o Gather the photos on a central platform. You could also ask learners to **upload** the photos using a tool like Padlet or Pinterest.

C. Discuss

- o First, show the photos with no explanation from the creators. Ask the other learners to **figure out what the photo is trying to say**.
 - What does the photo convey?
 - Does the slogan match the image?
 - Does this campaign convince you?
 - Why (not)?
- o Try to **reformulate** the learners' answers in terms of the propaganda techniques.
- o Let the learners **choose** an example: which is the strongest image and why?



SOME EXAMPLES



Leaners created this image. It appeared to work well for other learners because it made them feel guilty—a strong emotion, enticing them to stop leaving rubbish behind.



This slogan mostly proved popular with female learners, who found it quintessential that they would get more chances in society—to break the glass ceiling.

D. Conclusion

- Explain the various **propaganda techniques**. Tell learners these aren't always all present within one example. You can also illustrate this using the learners' creations. Not everyone will have used the same techniques. Emphasize that one technique isn't necessarily better than others, but each technique might have a different impact on different people.



Lesson 1 Worksheet

Create your own propaganda





Lesson 2: Elections and propaganda

Room set-up needs: Projection screen, projector & computer, seats facing the screen with ability to move into groups in various areas of the room

Materials needed: Examples of (local) election propaganda, access to the Mind Over Media platform at www.mindovermedia.eu per group of participants (+/- 4 people), copies of lesson 7 worksheet

Time Needed: one 50-minute period

Target Audiences: youth, parents, teachers; age 13 and up

Key Theme: In the run-up to elections you'll see lots of campaign slogans and posters, used by the various parties to convince voters to vote for them. This lesson looks at how they try to achieve that, and the impact this has.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Participants learn to:

- recognize that they are influenced by propaganda and that they influence others by using propaganda techniques
- understand that propaganda activates strong emotions, simplifies ideas, appeals to audience needs and values, and targets opponents
- develop a sense of social responsibility for the appropriate sharing of propaganda
- increase their confidence in expressing their views with images, words and sound
- participate in discussions of controversial topics where people have differences of opinion
- reflect on propaganda's potentially beneficial or harmful nature and impact on individuals and society

Preparations for the instructor:

- Gather various examples of campaign posters for (local) political parties. Consider uploading these to www.mindovermedia.be in advance.
- Make several copies of the worksheet propaganda in attachment
TIP: you'll find some examples of election propaganda at propaganda.mediaeducationlab.com/browse/verkiezingen. You can use these examples or add your own.

Instructions for the instructor:

A. Introduction

- Explain** the various propaganda techniques, ideally using four examples that each clearly illustrate one technique. If you also taught the 'make your own propaganda' lesson, you might even use examples the learners created.



B. Discuss together

- Show various **campaign posters** for political parties (ideally, the examples are as local as possible). **Discuss** these examples in class. Ask these questions:
 - Are you convinced? Why?
You could make learners stand in a line, representing a scale: those who are entirely convinced on the left, those who aren't at all convinced on the right. Let a few learners explain their position.
 - Might this message convince a different segment of society? Why (not)?
Let them take another position in the line as e.g. elderly people or factory workers.
 - Does this have a positive/neutral/harmful effect? For whom?
Ask if the campaign image would have positive or negative consequences for the learners personally (e.g. the campaign could foster hate against a certain group, could scare people, ...).

C. Discuss in small groups

- Pupils compile their **top 3** of the examples discussed.
They come up with the 3 most positive examples (that should be shared), then with the 3 most negative ones (that shouldn't be shared).
- An alternative question to discuss this with: would you like or share this image on social media, or not at all?

D. Time left?

- Let learners discuss the examples on Mind over Media and add a comment in groups of 3. You can then discuss their top 3 of the examples they just picked. Learners can use their smartphone for this task – internet is necessary.
- Alternatively, learners can upload an example of election propaganda to www.mindovermedia.be and discuss each other's examples.

E. Conclusion

- Let learners complete the worksheet in groups, with:
 - Their own universally applicable definition of propaganda,
 - Characteristics of propaganda,
 - A few examples,
 - A few tips for recognizing propaganda (e.g. tips for recognizing the difference between a misleading and an honest message).



Lesson 2 Worksheet

Elections and propaganda

DEFINITION OF PROPAGANDA	CHARACTERISTICS OF PROPAGANDA
EXAMPLES OF PROPAGANDA	TIPS FOR RECOGNIZING PROPAGANDA



Lesson 3: The power of words

Room set-up needs: Projection screen, projector & computer, seats facing the screen with ability to move into groups in various areas of the room

Materials needed: Per group of participants (+/- 4 people) a computer to browse the internet, a few examples of metaphors and euphemisms purposely used to influence thought.

Time Needed: one 50-minute period

Target Audiences: youth, parents, teachers; age 13 and up

Key Theme: Words can influence us in subtle ways. Politicians, journalists, advertisers, ... often purposely try to steer our thinking and behavior with metaphors and euphemisms.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Participants learn to:

- recognize that they are influenced by propaganda and that they influence others by using propaganda techniques
- understand that propaganda activates strong emotions, simplifies ideas, appeals to audience needs and values, and targets opponents
- develop a sense of social responsibility for the appropriate sharing of propaganda
- increase their confidence in expressing their views with images, words and sound
- participate in discussions of controversial topics where people have differences of opinion
- reflect on propaganda's potentially beneficial or harmful nature and impact on individuals and society

Preparations for the instructor:

- Look for examples of metaphors and euphemisms that have purposely been created or used to influence thoughts.

You can find inspiration in the collection '[euphemisms and dysphemisms](#)' in the Archives for Education.

Instructions for the instructor:

A. Introduction

- Show a few examples of hyperbolic language used by politicians, like:
 - "We have to protect ourselves from the caravan of refugees"
 - "We are being inundated by a tsunami of refugees"
 - "14 people were arrested this morning. #cleanup"
 - "Jews are germs, who infect and undermine the German nation"

B. Discuss together

- Why would politicians use language like that?
- What effect does this have on you personally? In the short/long term?



- What effect does this have on people generally? Do you know people who are influenced by this kind of language?
- Which words are the strongest? What feelings do they elicit?

C. Explain

Summarize the answers briefly and explain that metaphors are a clever way to break into someone's mind and steer their thinking. It's a widely-used propaganda technique.

- E.g. talking about 'protecting from ...' automatically makes you think of danger.
- E.g. describing something as a tsunami sounds very threatening and imminent.
- E.g. describing something or someone as a disease has very negative connotations. It can feed into fear and disgust, and increase the 'us vs. them' feeling.
- E.g. doing something negative, but calling it a 'cleanup', is mostly a way to brush off your own public image.

D. Activity

Give the learners a few examples of metaphors and euphemisms that are purposely used to change minds or actions, or let them search for examples themselves in recent news or in the propaganda examples at www.mindovermedia.be.

Examples:

- Service vehicle – company car – leasing car
- Refugees – migrants – illegals - aliens
- Wage gap – gender pay gap – glass ceiling
- Parental leave – maternity leave
- To suffer from cancer – to battle cancer – to have cancer
- Worker – employee – salaryman – personnel
- Disabled – physically impaired – handicapped – crippled – differently abled
- Social security – social welfare – benefits – financial assistance

Let learners discuss a few examples more closely in small groups.

- Browse the internet.
- What does each term mean? What is the difference?
- Who uses one term versus the other? Are there ideological differences between those groups?
- Are the terms always used correctly? Why would someone choose one term and not the other?
- Assignment: can you rewrite a few statements and make the euphemisms or metaphors more neutral?

E. Present and conclude

- Let learners present their neutral alternatives to each other. You might hold a vote about which new terms the group would really use.
- Have you found a great new term? Could you introduce it further (at school, to journalists, politicians, ...)?



Lesson 4: A campaign for a charitable cause

Room set-up needs: Projection screen, projector & computer, seats facing the screen with ability to move into groups in various areas of the room

Materials needed: Per group of participants (+/- 4 people) a computer to browse the internet, copies of lesson 9 worksheet

Time Needed: 100 minutes

Target Audiences: youth, parents, teachers; age 13 and up

Key Theme: Propaganda seldomly works immediately. Campaigns to raise awareness and propaganda usually only work when the message is repeated often, and when it is well tailored to a specific audience.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Participants learn to:

- recognize that they are influenced by propaganda and that they influence others by using propaganda techniques
- understand that propaganda activates strong emotions, simplifies ideas, appeals to audience needs and values, and targets opponents
- develop a sense of social responsibility for the appropriate sharing of propaganda
- increase their confidence in expressing their views with images, words and sound
- participate in discussions of controversial topics where people have differences of opinion
- reflect on propaganda's potentially beneficial or harmful nature and impact on individuals and society

Preparations for the instructor:

- Look for examples of awareness-raising campaigns. You might want to upload these to www.mindovermedia.be in advance.
- Provide several copies of the worksheet per group.

Instructions for the instructor:

A. Introduction

Divide learners into groups and let each group think about a socially relevant issue they want to address. For example:

- o We want everyone to become vegetarian.
- o We want everyone to drive safely.
- o We want people to drink less.
- o We want everyone to use their seatbelt.
- o We want everyone to buy as locally as possible.

If the learners can't come up with an issue on their own, you can let them browse various [existing awareness-raising campaigns](#).



Short on time? Divide the class into groups and assign themes yourself.

B. Show and discuss

- o Show the class a few examples of campaigns aimed at influencing people's behavior.

Here are a few examples of campaigns against smoking:

- [This campaign](#) shows the price many smokers will pay: diseases caused by smoking.
- In the campaign [Vloggers vs. Cigarettes](#), YouTube vloggers tested the effects of the noxious chemical substances in cigarettes. In [this video](#), vlogger Just Jade tests what benzene does to plants using everyday tools.
- Many campaigns against smoking depict the consequences for children, like [this image](#).
- Some campaigns use [scientific findings](#) to support their message.
- o Once you have shown all the campaigns, discuss:
 - Which campaign do you think is the most effective?
 - Who was the target group of the campaign?
 - Which propaganda technique(s) is/are used?
 - Would this campaign be more likely to have short term or long term effects?

C. Explain

- a. that awareness-raising campaigns and propaganda only really become effective if the message is repeated often. One anti-smoking campaign will only convince a handful, but repeating the message year after year will be more effective.
- b. that awareness-raising campaigns and propaganda often have sub-campaigns aimed at different target audiences. Some smokers might not care about their personal health, but they might be sensitive about their children's health. And if you want people to become vegetarians, you will convince some with arguments around animal welfare, while others might be more susceptible to arguments around ecology.

D. Activity

- Divide the learners back into groups and ask them to design a communication and action plan for a charitable cause. The main question is: how do I make my cause a reality within 5 years?
- Let them think about the following questions to inspire the plan – make use of the work sheet:
 - Who can you convince first? (parents, children, politicians, employers, ...)
 - What sort of message might push them to change their behavior?
 - Does that match what that group wants in life? (e.g. Safety, health, luxury, enjoying life, ...)



- What feelings does your message want to elicit? (fear, frustration, guilt, hope, ...)
 - Would the message mostly convince centric thinkers, or radical thinkers too?
 - Does your message divide people? Do you want this?
 - Is the message easy to understand?
 - If a group gets stuck, let them look up some existing campaigns on the internet. They can adapt and improve campaigns.
- E. Present and analyze**
- Let each group present their action plan: how will they make sure their cause is attained within five years?
 - Discuss and analyze why that would or wouldn't be successful.



Lesson 4 Worksheet

A campaign for a charitable cause

Create a communication plan for your charitable cause. What kinds of messages would help you convince people?

Fill out the grid below for every target audience to assess if your message works.

What behavior do you want people to change?	
What target audience do you want to convince (first)? (parents, children, politicians, employers, ...)	
What are this group's core values? In other words, what do they enjoy? What is important to them? How do they want to be treated?	
What sort of message might push them to change their behavior?	



What feelings does your message want to elicit? (fear, frustration, guilt, hope, ...)	
Would the message mostly convince centric thinkers, or radical thinkers too?	
Does your message divide people? Do you want this?	
Is the message easy to understand?	