

Academic vs. Propagandistic Writings

Based on our experience with different types of writings, we can classify those under two categories: Serious academic writings and propagandistic ones. The objective of this essay is to establish criteria to differentiate between the two. The following comparison and contrast will help us in doing so:

	Academic Writings	Propagandistic Writings
Purpose	The purpose of academic writings is to share ideas of the writer to his audience in a decent and positive manner in order to invoke thinking.	The purpose of propagandistic writings is to convince the audience on ideas of the writer by all possible means.
Tone	Tone of academic writings is positive. Even if it is essential to provide some negative information, it is presented in carefully in a positive way.	Tone of propagandistic writings is overtly negative and sometimes highly negative.
Respect for others	The author demonstrates signs of respect for those to whom he disagrees.	The author demonstrates signs of disrespect for those to whom he disagrees.
Manipulation of arguments	The author does not twist or manipulate the arguments.	The author twists or manipulates the arguments.
Hiding facts and arguments	The author does not ignore any argument or fact even if it weakens his viewpoint.	The author ignores the facts and arguments which weaken his viewpoint and presents only those which supports his claim.
Manipulation of reader	The author does not manipulate the reader and considers it as a moral crime.	The author attempts to manipulate the reader and considers it morally legitimate to achieve a bigger objective.
Use of emotional phrases	Use of emotional phrases is limited and calculated.	Use of emotional phrases is abundant.
Style of argument	The author raises questions on the viewpoint he is refuting and does not pass any judgment.	The author passes direct and bold judgments on the viewpoint and the personalities he is refuting.

	Academic Writings	Propagandistic Writings
Discussing intentions	The author never discusses personality of others.	The author discusses even hidden facts like intentions of others.
Type of writings	Serious books and articles are written in academic style.	Polemic books, blogs and articles are written in propagandistic style. Newspaper articles are often propagandistic in nature.
Thoroughness	Academic writers present a thorough analysis of their arguments.	Analysis provided by propagandistic writers often lacks thoroughness and depth. The author is so busy in writing and communicating that he does not give enough time to thinking and analyzing the issue under discussion.
Target of criticism	There is no target, which is severely criticized.	A person, group or nation is target of severe criticism and rebuttal.
Ridicule	The author never makes a ridicule of his opponents and it is considered a serious crime.	Ridicule and witty language is very common.
Describing opponent's viewpoints	Academic writers describe opposing viewpoints in their correct and original form.	Propagandistic writers attempt to portray the darkest possible picture of opposing viewpoints.
Use of 'they'	Use of 'us' is frequent and that of 'they' is minimal.	Use of 'they' and 'us' is too frequent.
Staunchness	Academic writers are expected to be flexible in their views. They should be willing to change their views, if they found better evidence in support of the opposite viewpoint.	Propagandistic writers consider impeccable staunchness as a positive attribute and outspokenly praise their conviction in their viewpoint.
Double standards	Academic writers do not use double standards for evaluating different views.	Propagandists often use double standards for their friends and foes.
Nature of phrases used	Sentences are often mild, pleasant and calm. The author does not attempt to force the reader to accept his viewpoint.	Sentences are often very strong, harsh, self-asserting and aggressive. The author attempts to force the reader to accept his viewpoint.

	Academic Writings	Propagandistic Writings
Examples of phrases used	Following phrases are common in academic writings:	Following phrases are common in academic writings:
	• Evidence indicates ...	• It is clearly proven....
	• It is substantiated by....	• It is a clear proof of....
	• We did not find it correct....	• It is wrong
	• We do not doubt his integrity...	• He is culprit, criminal
	• The view X sounds more plausible than Y.	• The view Y is self-contradictory
	• We respect their view	• They are our enemy....
	• We think that the view X is not correct....	• We accuse them to be heretic, deviated from the right path....
	• It is possible...	• I strongly believe ...
	• It is difficult to believe..	• I cannot believe...
• I appreciate	• I discourage...	
Impact on readers	Academic writings have a positive impact on reader's mind and they are highly effective in producing the desired result i.e. provoking thinking. Opponents are sometimes also convinced by the arguments provided by the author.	Readers often take propagandist writings negatively and are rarely convinced. Such writings only convince those readers who are already convinced on the views presented by the author. Opponents often read them for further refutation.
Behavior of writers	Academic writers often pen in academic style but sometimes, they also write in propagandistic style.	It is very hard for a propagandistic writer to write in academic style, so academic writings of propagandists are rare.

The above-mentioned details are applicable to other genres like film, drama, documentaries, novels, talk shows etc. However, you will find majority of them as propagandistic and it is very hard to find a film, drama, documentary, novel and talk show produced in academic style.

Based on the above, I would like to advise you the following:

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- While reading a book, article etc. determine whether it is academic or propagandistic.
- Focus on academic writings and ignore the propagandistic ones.
- If you do not find academic writings on a subject and only propagandistic writings are available, try to find some writings of the opponent and form your opinions after reading the both.
- While analyzing the propagandistic writings, differentiate between verifiable arguments and non-verifiable arguments. Focus on the first and ignore the second. For instance, especially articles written on political subjects in newspapers, intelligence reports or oral claims of eye-witnesses are provided as an evidence which could not be verified. A clear-cut proof is the one which is easily verifiable.
- Whenever you write a book or an article, try to pen in academic style. Rational readers reject propagandistic styles and mark a red circle around the name of the author. So be careful, writing in propagandistic style may adversely affect your reputation.

I try my best to write in academic style. However, you may find propagandistic tone in some sentences. You are highly encouraged to identify such sentences and let me know so that I can improve them.

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Share your views, comments and questions by sending an email at mubashirnazir100@gmail.com.

Think about it!

- Analyze the psychological aspect of academic and propagandistic writings. What are the psychological reasons to adopt each style?
- Based on your studies, identify three academic and three propagandistic writings and compare their attributes.
- How could you identify propagandistic writings? Describe three of their visible symbols.
- What is the harm of reading propagandistic writings?
- Whether the majority of English writings is academic or propagandistic? Answer in the light of your past reading.