Agenda Analysis –

Communication has many **formats**, including, but not limited to, the written word, images, websites, and mixed media. All communication has a **purpose**; otherwise, the drive to communicate would not exist. The purpose might be as simple as the need to share or as complex as the need to persuade. Communication may be **direct** or **indirect** (hidden) and often contains a combination of both.

It is important to be aware of the effects within your own mind as you absorb messages in communication in all formats. This is called *metacognition*. **Metacognition** is thinking about your own thinking, or, in this case, analyzing the process that occurs within your own mind as you read/view communication and absorb its messages. When you are consciously aware of this process, you are less likely to blindly accept persuasive communication with *hidden agendas*.

A **hidden agenda** is an attempt to covertly persuade and involves indirect—but highly persuasive—communication techniques that can sway your subconscious thinking, thus impacting your choices without your conscious awareness. You can counter this technique through metacognition. As you become increasingly aware of various communication techniques and how you respond to them, you are less likely to unconsciously absorb messages and blindly accept them.

Communication techniques are numerous and vary depending upon the format of the communication. In the Argumentation chapter, you read about logical fallacies that are persuasive even if they involve poor logic. Unless you are cognizant of these techniques as fallacies (invalid reasoning), you might be persuaded by them. The same is true with visual communication. How images are placed in context to other images, text, or media alters their meaning (sometimes very subtly) and affects your interpretation of them.

Generally speaking, anything that **elicits your emotions** should send up a red flag and tell you to analyze further and deeper. For example, the use of emotionally-charged words or images, color that elicits emotion, personal/character attacks, quickly-drawn conclusions, lack of supporting evidence, lack of/missing credentials with highly technical/specific data.

As you experience communication in all formats, keep in mind the following questions:

- What is the reason the author created this piece?
- What does the author want from me, the reader or viewer?
- What emotions am I feeling, and how did I come to feel them?
- What communication techniques are employed (both direct and indirect)?
- Does a hidden agenda exist in this communication?
- Do I choose to believe this message or not?