

MEDIA, MISINFORMATION AND THE POWER OF INFLUENCE

=> How can citizens navigate an information environment where influence, misinformation and hate speech coexist?

A voir/lire au sujet de la liberté d'expression:

Movies: *The People Vs. Larry Flint*, Milos Forman (1996), *Forbidden Voices*, Barbara Miller (2012), *The Fifth State* (2013) *The Post*, Steven Spielberg (2017), *The Social Dilemma*, Jeff Orlowski (2020) *Don't look up*, Adam McKay (2021),

Series: *We the People*, Chris Nee (2021), *The West Wing*, Aaron Sorkin (1999-2006), *The Newsroom*, Aaron Sorkin (2012)

Books: *1984*, George Orwell (1948), *Fahrenheit 451*, Ray Bradbury (1953), *Brave New World*, Aldous Huxley (1932), *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*, Noam Chomsky, Edward S. Herman (1988)



Banksy - London's Royal Courts of Justice

PART I. Media and influence

DOCUMENT A– Social Media as a news source

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OmbCivxLZvg>

1. Watch the video and sum it up in 3 key points.
2. Do you think social media is a reliable source of information?

Tool box

To be highly unreliable: être très peu fiable

To lack credibility: manquer de crédibilité

Sources are rarely vetted: les sources sont rarement vérifiées

Misinformation spreads fast: la désinformation se propage rapidement

To blur fact and opinion: brouiller la frontière entre faits et opinions

Algorithms: les algorithmes

To distort reality: déformer la réalité

To amplify bias: amplifier les biais

A major pitfall: un écueil majeur

To fuel: alimenter

To foster: favoriser

To be liable to: être susceptible de

To entail a risk: comporter un risque

An underlying threat: une menace sous-jacente

Potentially detrimental: potentiellement préjudiciable

DOCUMENT B - Ultra-rich media owners

The Guardian, November 13, 2025

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/nov/13/trump-media-ultra-rich-democracy>

The richest man on Earth owns X. The family of the second-richest man owns Paramount, which owns CBS, and could soon own Warner Bros, which owns CNN. The third-richest man owns Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp. The fourth-richest man owns the Washington Post and Amazon MGM Studios. Another billionaire owns Fox News, the Wall Street Journal and the New York Post.

Why are the ultra-rich buying up so much of the media? Vanity may play a part, but there's a more pragmatic – some might say sinister – reason.

If you're a multibillionaire, you might view democracy as a potential threat to your net worth. Control over a significant share of the **dwindling** number of media outlets would enable you to effectively **hedge against** democracy by suppressing criticism of you and other **plutocrats**, and discouraging any attempt to – for example – tax away your wealth.

You also have Donald Trump to **contend with**. In his second term of office, Trump has **brazenly** and illegally used the power of the presidency to punish his enemies and reward those who lavish him with praise and profits.

So perhaps it shouldn't have been surprising that the editorial board of the Jeff Bezos-owned Washington Post defended the razing of the East Wing of the White House to build Trump his giant ballroom – without disclosing that Jeff Bezos-owned Amazon is a major corporate contributor to the ballroom's funding. The Post's editorial board also applauded Trump's defense department's decision to obtain a new generation of smaller nuclear reactors, but failed to mention Amazon's stake in X-energy, a company that's developing small nuclear reactors. And it criticized Washington DC's refusal to accept self-driving cars without disclosing that Amazon's self-driving car company was trying to get into the Washington DC market. These breaches are inexcusable.

It is impossible to know the full extent to which criticism of Trump and his administration has been chilled by the media-owning billionaires, or what fawning coverage has been **elicited**.

But what we do know is that billionaire media owners like Musk, Bezos, Ellison and Murdoch are businessmen first and foremost. Their highest goal is not to inform the public but to make money. They know Trump can **wreak havoc** on their businesses by imposing unfriendly FCC rulings, enforcing labor laws against them or denying them lucrative government contracts.

And in an era when wealth is concentrated in the hands of a few individuals who have bought up key media, with a thin-skinned president who is willing and able to violate laws and norms to punish or reward, there is a growing danger that the public will not be getting the truth it needs to function in this democracy.

Acquisition of a media company should be treated differently than the acquisition of, say, a company developing self-driving cars or one developing small nuclear reactors, because of the media's central role in our democracy.

The Guardian aims to do what every great source of news and views should be doing, especially in these dark times: illuminate, enlighten and elucidate. This is why I avidly read each day's edition and why I write a column for it.

As the Washington Post's slogan still says, democracy dies in darkness. Today, darkness is closing in because a demagogue sits in the Oval Office and so much of the US's wealth and media ownership is concentrated in the hands of a few people easily manipulated by that demagogue.

1. Find the words from the text corresponding to the following definitions:
to try to deal with a difficult situation or person/ someone who becomes powerful because they are rich/to do something to protect yourself against problems, especially against losing money / in an obvious way, with no effort to hide something/to cause chaos and destruction/ to get or produce something, especially information or a reaction/ to diminish gradually
2. Pick out what media owners have in common.
3. According to the journalist, what is their goal in purchasing these media outlets?
4. Pick out the risks involved
5. Why should media buying be considered with great care?
6. “Democracy dies in darkness”, comment on the meaning of this Washington Post’s slogan.

Curiosity didn’t kill the cat 🐱

An **oligarchy** is a system in which political or economic power is concentrated in the hands of a small, wealthy elite, often allowing private interests to outweigh democratic accountability. The term “**broliarchy**” is a more recent, informal label used to describe a tech-driven oligarchy dominated by a tight circle of powerful male entrepreneurs and investors, whose influence over digital platforms, public discourse, and policy-making is **disproportionate** and largely unchecked.

Let’s practise:

Translate into English

Aux Maldives, l’adoption d’une loi sur la régulation des médias fait craindre de possibles censures. Le Parlement des Maldives a adopté une loi sur la régulation des médias, ont annoncé mercredi 17 septembre les autorités de l’archipel, accusées par des médias et des organisations de défense des droits de porter atteinte à la liberté de la presse. En vertu de ce texte, voté mardi soir, la régulation des médias de l’archipel sera confiée à une commission qui pourra bloquer des sites d’information en ligne ou révoquer la licence de médias si elle le veut.

Le Monde, 17 septembre 2025

 **“To what extent does freedom of the press guarantee a functioning democracy?”**
[Give a few arguments to prepare a Kholle sheet]

Language:

This, that, these and those are demonstratives. We use this, that, these and those to point to people and things. This and that are singular. These and those are plural. We use them as **determiners** and **pronouns**.

.....
"it needs to function in this democracy." "especially in these dark times" "manipulated by that demagogue."	"punish his enemies and reward those who lavish him with praise"

A. This, that, these, those as determiners

=> Pointing to things

We use **this** and **that** with singular and uncountable nouns:

We use **these** and **those** with plural nouns:

=> Time phrases

We often use **this** with words describing time and dates like morning, afternoon, evening, week, month, year to refer to 'the one that's coming' or 'the one we're currently in':

B. This, that, these, those as pronouns

=> Referring to things or ideas

We normally use **this**, **that**, **these** and **those** as pronouns to refer to things or ideas

C. This and these, that and those: uses

=> Physical closeness and distance

We use **this** and **these** most commonly to point to things and people that are close to the speaker or writer, or things that are happening now:

We use **that** and **those** most commonly to point to things and people which are not easy to identify in a situation. They are often more distant from the speaker, and sometimes closer to the listener:

=> Emotional distance

We sometimes use **this**, **these**, **that**, **those** to identify emotional distance. We use **this** and **these** to refer to things that we feel positive about, that we are happy to be associated with, or we approve of:

Exercise: Read the text and complete with THIS, THAT, THESE ou THOSE

The term "broligarchy" has emerged in recent years to describe a troubling phenomenon: the consolidation of both economic and political power in the hands of a small elite of predominantly male tech billionaires. _____ (1) neologism, combining "bro" and "oligarchy," captures a reality that would have seemed far-fetched just two decades ago.

Remember _____ (2) early days of the internet in the 1990s? Back then, _____ (3) tech pioneers promised us democratization and decentralization. _____ (4) naive optimism feels almost quaint now. But look at where we are today: _____ (5) idealistic visions have been replaced by unprecedented corporate concentration.

_____ (6) shift didn't happen overnight. When we examine _____ (7) major acquisitions that occurred between 2010 and 2020—Facebook buying Instagram and WhatsApp, Google absorbing YouTube—we see a pattern of consolidation. _____ (8) deals transformed independent platforms into components of vast digital empires.

Today, _____ (9) same billionaires who made _____ (10) acquisitions wield enormous political influence. The open, democratic internet we once dreamed of? It's gone. And we may never get it back.

Part II. Misinformation, free speech and the fight for the truth

DOCUMENT D - Information pollution

<https://www.undp.org/eurasia/dis/misinformation>

Information pollution is affecting the citizens' capacity to make informed decisions. Disinformation, misinformation, and mal-information together with the growth of hate speech and propaganda, especially online, are inciting social divisions and creating mistrust in public institutions. In the past decade, significant resources by international development partners have been invested in tackling this growing global phenomenon that is also negatively affecting social cohesion in the region. Through different and numerous examples of government-led and independent responses to information pollution, societies in the region are showing that they have recognized disinformation to be a serious threat to their countries' social, political and economic stability.

United Nations Development Programs

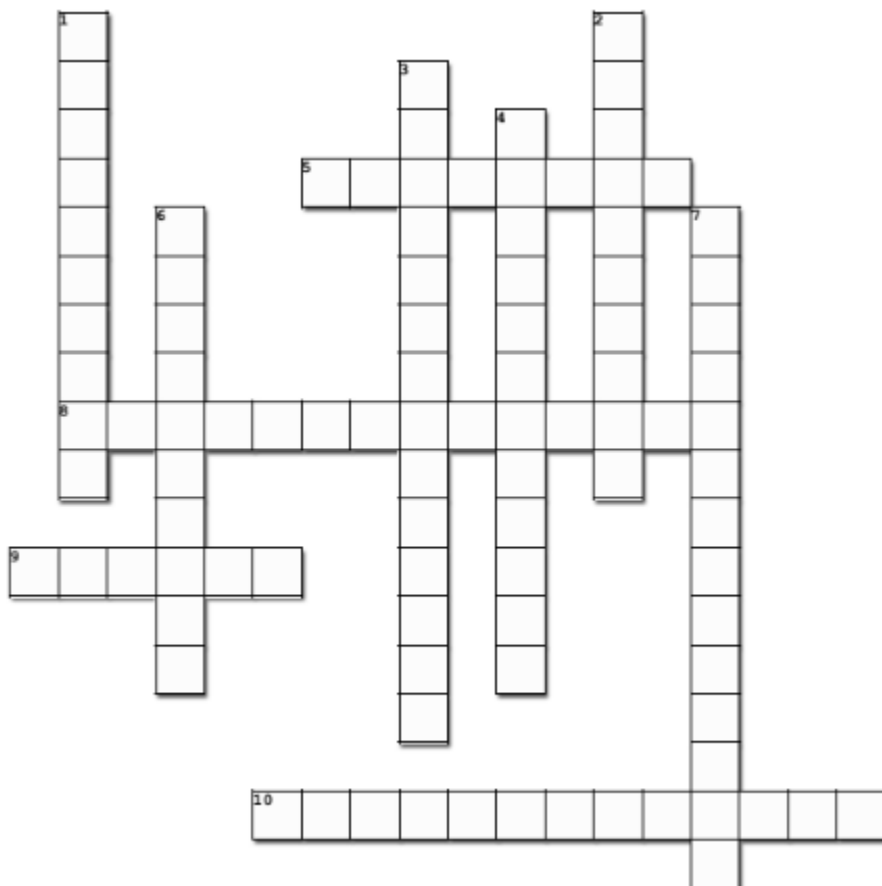
1. Pick 10 key words from the text to talk about information pollution, its consequences and the solutions.
2. Do the crosswords:

Across

- 5. to have doubts about the honesty of someone or be unable to trust something
- 8. Information that is false and deliberately created to harm a person, social group, organization or country.
- 9. the possibility that something unwanted will happen
- 10. someone who exposes wrongdoing, often protected under press freedom laws

Down

- 1. information, ideas, opinions, or images, often only giving one part of an argument, that are broadcast, published, or in some
- 2. The suppression or prohibition of speech, writing
- 3. Information that is false, but not created with the intention of causing harm.
- 4. The principle that government actions, decisions, and information should be open and accessible to the public and journalists
- 6. any kind of communication in speech, writing or behaviour, that attacks or uses pejorative or discriminatory language about a
- 7. Information that is based on real facts, but manipulated to inflict harm on a person, organization or country.



DOCUMENT E : Expert says she was fired by Harvard under Meta pressure

Adapted from The Guardian, December 2023

One of the world's leading experts on misinformation says she was fired by Harvard University for criticising Meta at a time that the school was **being pledged** \$500 million from Mark Zuckerberg's charity.

Joan Donovan says her funding was cut off, she could not hire assistants and she was made the target of a **smear** campaign by Harvard employees. In a legal filing [...], she said her right to free speech had been abrogated.

The controversial claims stem in part from Donovan's publication of the Facebook papers, a bombshell **leak** of 22,000 pages of Facebook's internal documents by the **whistleblower** Frances Haugen, who used to work at the company.

Donovan, believing them to be of huge public interest, began publishing them to Harvard's website for anyone to access.

In an October 2021 meeting of the council which advises the Harvard department where Donovan worked, the former Facebook communications head **allegedly** argued that Facebook "should not be the arbiter of truth". A little over a week later, the council emailed Donovan asking her to justify her approach to studying misinformation in a climate "when there is no independent arbiter of truth (in this country or others) and constitutional protections of speech (in some countries)?"

Donovan reproduced the email in her complaint, adding that Zuckerberg also frequently uses the term "arbiter of truth".

Last year she was told her main project would be wound down. This year the school eliminated her position.

In an email [...], Harvard said Donovan's departure was not related to Meta.

It said it struggled to find a professor to oversee her project, which is a university policy. It also said she was not fired. Donovan "was offered the chance to continue as a part-time lecturer, and she chose not to do so".

Donovan had made a name for herself in part by testifying before Congress and speaking publicly about how the spread of misinformation financially benefited tech companies.

The filing was put together with the assistance of Whistleblower Aid, a Washington-based organization that also helped Haugen, who alleged that Meta knew its platforms helped to spread harmful misinformation.

Donovan claims that Zuckerberg and his wife, Priscilla Chan, both Harvard alumni, have given it hundreds of millions of dollars including promising \$500 million to the school's Institute for the Study of Natural and Artificial Intelligence.

"There are a handful of **tried and true** means to **coerce** someone or some entity to do something they would not otherwise do, and influence through financial compensation is at or near the top of the list," the filing says. "Objectively, \$500 million is certainly significant financial influence."

1. Word search: Find the words corresponding to the definitions:
 To bring to gradual end
 To force, compel
 Tested and trusted
 to be promised
 Someone who exposes wrongdoing
 Revealing secret information
 Slander, words to harm reputation
 Supposedly
2. Pick out key information about Donovan and her job.
3. Pick out the link between Harvard and Meta.
4. Pick out useful information about Haugen. Say how she is linked to Meta.
5. What does the expression “the arbiter of truth” mean to you? Who do you think should play this role in the digital age, if anyone?
6. 💡 In your opinion, should tech companies like Meta be held legally responsible for the spread of misinformation on their platforms, or does this responsibility primarily lie with individual users? => Take a few notes and speak.

Tool box

to be held accountable for : être tenu responsable de

to bear responsibility : assumer la responsabilité

corporate accountability: responsabilité des entreprises

legal liability: responsabilité légale

to enforce stricter rules: imposer des règles plus strictes

conspiracy theories: théories du complot

to go viral: devenir viral

content moderation: modération du contenu

echo chambers: environment where a person only encounters information or opinions that reflect and reinforce their own

Censorship: censure

to infringe on rights : porter atteinte aux droits

Tech giants wield enormous power over... : Les géants de la tech exercent un pouvoir énorme sur...

to mitigate (harm) : atténuer

to leverage (technology) : exploiter, tirer parti de

to safeguard (rights) : protéger

Media literacy: l'éducation aux médias

A multi-pronged approach: une approche à plusieurs niveaux

Free speech in the US	Free speech in the UK
<p>Free speech in the US is protected by the First Amendment to the Constitution (ratified in 1791), which states:</p> <p><i>"Congress shall make no law... abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press."</i></p> <p>This makes the US one of the countries with the strongest constitutional protections for free expression in the world.</p> <p><u>The First Amendment protects:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political speech and criticism of government • Artistic and literary expression • Symbolic speech (like flag burning) • Offensive or unpopular opinions • Most forms of protest and demonstration • Press freedom and investigative journalism <p>What's NOT Protected</p> <p>Despite broad protections, some speech falls outside First Amendment coverage:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • True threats of violence • Incitement to imminent lawless action (Brandenburg test) • Defamation (libel and slander) • Obscenity (meeting specific legal criteria) • Child pornography • Fighting words that provoke immediate violence • Fraud and false advertising <p><u>Key Difference from Other Democracies</u></p>	<p>Unlike the US, the UK does not have a single written constitution or a First Amendment. Free speech protections come from:</p> <p>Common law traditions The Human Rights Act 1998 (incorporating the European Convention on Human Rights) Various statutes and legal precedents Article 10 of the ECHR protects "freedom of expression".</p> <p><u>The UK protects:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political speech and criticism of government • Journalistic freedom and investigative reporting • Artistic and literary expression • Peaceful protest and demonstration • Academic freedom <p>What's NOT Protected (Key Differences from the US)</p> <p>The UK has significantly more restrictions than the US:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hate Speech Laws: It is a criminal offense to use threatening, abusive, or insulting words intended to stir up hatred based on race, religion, or sexual orientation (Public Order Act 1986). • Defamation: UK libel laws are stricter than in the US. • Breach of the Peace: Police can arrest for speech likely to cause a breach of the peace—a broader power than in the US. • Official Secrets Act: Criminalizes unauthorized disclosure of government information, with fewer whistleblower protections than in the US. • Contempt of Court: Strict rules prevent media from publishing information that could prejudice ongoing trials. • Malicious Communications: Online harassment or sending "grossly offensive" messages can be prosecuted under the Communications Act 2003 and Malicious Communications Act 1988. <p><u>Key Differences from the US</u></p> <p>Hate speech is criminalized in the UK but generally</p>

<p>Unlike many European countries, the US does not have hate speech laws. Speech that would be criminal in Germany, France, or the UK (like Holocaust denial) is generally protected in the US, though still socially condemned.</p>	<p>protected in the US Defamation laws favor claimants more in the UK Government secrets are more protected in the UK No absolute free speech principle—rights are balanced against community interests "Grossly offensive" speech can be prosecuted in the UK</p> <p>The UK approach reflects a European tradition of balancing individual rights with collective welfare, contrasting with the American prioritization of individual liberty.</p>
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Language: La voix passive

1. **Observez** les expressions en gras dans le texte. Décrivez chaque forme.
2. Comment **traduiriez-vous** l'exemple suivant: "She was made the target of a smear campaign by Harvard employees".
3. **Complétez** les phrases en conjuguant le verbe au temps approprié (prétérit simple, past perfect, modal...) et à la voix passive.
 - a. The fake news article _____ (already / share) millions of times before it _____ (finally / debunk) by fact-checkers.
 - b. Stricter regulations on online content _____ (introduce) in several European countries this year.
 - c. In a truly democratic society, all voices _____ (should / hear), even unpopular ones.
 - d. Whistleblowers _____ (prosecute) for revealing classified information to the press.
 - e. If the article _____ (properly / fact-check) before publication, the newspaper's reputation _____ (not / tarnish).
 - f. New AI tools _____ (deploy) next year to detect deepfakes and manipulated videos.
 - g. Thousands of fake accounts _____ (remove) from the platform as we speak.
 - h. The anonymous source claimed that evidence _____ (might / have / destroy) to cover up the scandal.

DOCUMENT F - Truth and Treason (2025)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gouhuLTAdcQ>

1. Introduce the document. What key words did you pick out? Briefly sum up the plot.
2. What propaganda or manipulation techniques are shown in the trailer, and what others do you know of?
3. What makes the story particularly resonant today? What is the film's main message?

DOCUMENT G - Controlling the narrative: a historical perspective on propaganda and free speech. Jigsaw classroom

Work in groups of 5. After your group work, you will be reassigned to new groups where you will be the expert presenting this document to students who studied different texts.

Step 1: Read the text you've been given.

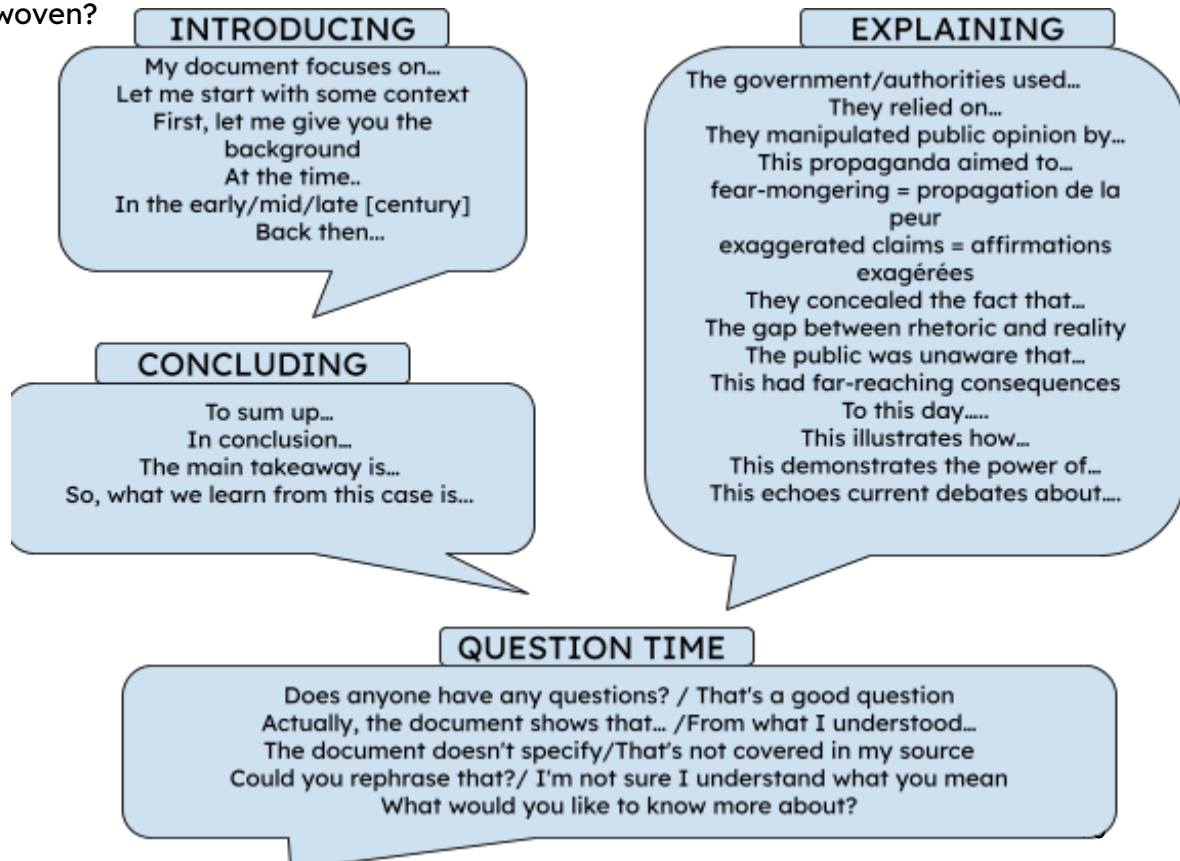
Step 2: Introduce the document and summarize it in 5 key points.


Step 3: Identify 3 important words and translate them.

Step 4: Complete the grid.



💡 Based on the 5 cases we studied, to what extent are free speech, disinformation, and propaganda interwoven?



 Translate into French

As synthetic media and AI-generated and disseminated disinformation proliferate, educational institutions rush to develop technical detection tools and media literacy programs. Simply put, synthetic media is any content, such as audio, images, or video, created by artificial intelligence. This includes "deepfakes," which are digital forgeries so realistic they can convincingly mimic a person's voice or likeness. Deepfakes differ fundamentally from traditional disinformation—they are convincing, scalable, and increasingly accessible. Suspicions of AI generation alone sow doubt. What if this technical arms race blinds us to a more profound disruption? What if our obsession with spotting fakes diverts attention from a deeper epistemological crisis—one that fundamentally destabilizes how humans establish truth and knowledge?

<https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/deepfakes-and-crisis-knowing>

Curiosity didn't kill the cat - Free speech advocates

Contemporary free speech advocates like Floyd Abrams, who defended The New York Times in numerous First Amendment cases, argue that press freedom serves as democracy's primary defense against propaganda and government deception. Organizations such as the UCLA School of Law's First Amendment Project continue this work, protecting whistleblowers and journalists who challenge official narratives. Their efforts demonstrate that the constitutional protection of free expression exists precisely to enable citizens to resist the kind of systematic narrative control we've examined—from imperial propaganda to presidential cover-ups.

Click the link below or scan the code to watch a short video on Floyd Abrams



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uW_nmp8z4OE

Part III. Free Speech and democracy

Document H - Banksy mural targets UK protest crackdown

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KIb9XsvLv5s>

1. Watch the video and take notes.
2. Answer the following questions: Who? What? Where? When?
3. Describe the mural.
4. How is it interpreted?
5. Why has the mural sparked public attention and debate?
6. What did authorities decide to do? Why?
7. How did activists react?
8. In your opinion, is there an appropriate venue for political statements? (200 words)

Toolbox:

To spark attention/ debate: susciter l'attention/ le débat

to rise up against: se soulever contre

A venue: un lieu

A contentious issue: un sujet litigieux/ de controverse

To bridge the divide: combler le fossé

Demonstrations: manifestations

To raise awareness: sensibiliser

A catalyst for change: un catalyseur du changement

To advocate: préconiser, prôner, revendiquer

An infringement on sb's rights: une atteinte aux droits de quelqu'un

Freedom speech/ free speech: la liberté de parole

Ruthless repression: répression brutale

Phonetics:

1. Écoutez l'enregistrement et entourez les syllabes accentuées.

■ Free speech stress 1.mp3


A new mural by the elusive street British artist has emerged on the exterior wall of London's
Royal Courts of Justice

2. Que remarquez-vous concernant la nature des mots accentués ?

3. Ecoutez et entourez la prononciation de ces mots:

Has	/hæs/	/həs/
Of	/ʌv/	/əv/
A	/eɪ/	/ə/

4. Ecoutez l'enregistrement et entourez les syllabes accentuées:

 free speech stress 2.mp3

Conversely, government officials maintain that while artistic expression is valued the law must be upheld regarding historic buildings.

5. Soulignez en bleu les mots accentués d'une syllabe, en vert ceux de deux syllabes et rouge ceux de plus de deux syllabes. Que constatez-vous sur la place de l'accent ?

A retenir !

Les mots lexicaux:

Le rythme de la phrase anglaise est constitué d'une alternance de syllabes accentuées et inaccentuées. Les mots lexicaux d'une syllabe sont accentués. Dans un mot de plus d'une syllabe, une seule syllabe est fortement accentuée. Il vous faut apprendre l'accentuation des nouveaux mots appris.

Quelques points de repère sont dans le tableau ci-dessous, il existe toutefois de nombreuses exceptions:

Mots de deux syllabes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Noms accentués sur la 1ere syllabe sauf si la syllabe de droite contient une diphtongue, une voyelle longue ou deux consonnes (<u>de</u>s<u>er</u>t but de<u>ss</u>e<u>r</u>t) - Adjectifs adverbess et verbes idem que les noms SAUF s'ils comportent un préfixe (<u>a</u>lways, <u>m</u>urder but be<u>lie</u>ve, re<u>p</u>air, co<u>m</u>pare) - Nom préfixé en général accentué sur la 1ere syllabe MAIS le verbe correspondant sur la 2eme (a <u>p</u>rotest but they pro<u>t</u>est)
Mots de trois syllabes ou plus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Le plus souvent l'accent se situe sur l'avant-avant-dernière syllabe (photo<u>g</u>raphy, <u>C</u>anada, <u>t</u>elephone) - Quelques suffixes déplacent l'accent sur la syllabe qui les précède: -ion, -ian, -ual, -ial, -ic- ics, -ity In<u>fo</u>rmation, mathema<u>t</u>ics, electri<u>c</u>ity

Les mots grammaticaux:

En règle générale, les mots grammaticaux sont prononcés rapidement et ne sont pas accentués (sauf en fin d'énoncé ou pour créer un contraste). Ils ont une forme faible et une forme pleine. La forme faible est la plus courante.

Scannez le QR code et écoutez les formes fortes et faibles des mot grammaticaux:

<https://apcenglish.com/fr/phonetique/forme-forte-et-faible-en-anglais.html>



Document I - Jane Fonda relaunches free speech group

<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2025/oct/01/jane-fonda-committee-first-amendment-trump>
[p](#)

Jane Fonda has relaunched the Committee for the First Amendment, the McCarthy-era initiative backed by her father, Henry Fonda, with a **groundswell** of celebrity support.

The new committee, established to protect free speech from government censorship, has the support of over 550 entertainment figures, including: Quinta Brunson, Viola Davis, Kerry Washington, Natalie Portman, Aaron Sorkin, Spike Lee, Pedro Pascal, Ben Stiller, Whoopi Goldberg, Sean Penn, John Legend, Damon Lindelof, Julianne Moore, Janelle Monáe, Barbra Streisand, Julia Louis-Dreyfus, Ethan Hawke, Billie Eilish, Anjelica Huston and Judd Apatow.

“The McCarthy Era ended when Americans from across the political spectrum finally came together and stood up for the principles in the Constitution against the forces of repression,” Fonda said in a statement. “Those forces have returned. And it is our turn to stand together in defense of our constitutional rights.

“We refuse to stand by and let that happen,” she continued. “Free speech and free expression are the inalienable rights of every American of all backgrounds and political beliefs – no matter how liberal or conservative you may be. The ability to criticize, question, protest, and even mock those in power is foundational to what America has always aspired to be.”

The original committee was supported by Henry Fonda in the 1940s, in response to the House un-American activities committee. The House committee accused entertainment figures of being communist sympathizers, **derailing** many careers and casting a chilling effect on Hollywood.

Fonda’s new committee arrives as free speech has once again become a rallying cry in Hollywood, following Disney’s suspension of Jimmy Kimmel Live! under pressure from the Trump administration. ABC’s parent company **pre-empted** Kimmel’s show after Brendan Carr, the Trump-appointed chair of the Federal Communications Commission, threatened to revoke its affiliate licenses over comments Kimmel made about the **politicization** of the shooting of rightwing commentator Charlie Kirk.

After **backlash** from viewers and the entertainment community, Disney allowed Kimmel to return to air last week. Nexstar and Sinclair, the two companies with affiliate stations that still refused to air the show, ended their boycott after discussions with Disney, allowing Kimmel to return to broadcast on all ABC stations.

In a letter encouraging her peers to join the initiative, Fonda pointed to her long history as a civil rights activist. “I’m 87 years old,” she wrote. “I’ve seen war, repression, protest, and backlash. I’ve been celebrated, and I’ve been branded an enemy of the state.

“But I can tell you this: this is the most frightening moment of my life,” she added. “When I feel scared, I look to history. I wish there were a secret **playbook** with all the answers – but there never has been. The only thing that has ever worked – time and time again – is solidarity: binding together, finding bravery in numbers too big to ignore, and standing up for one another.”

1. Find the words corresponding to the following definitions: Vocab au début plutôt qu’à la fin.
 - a. A strong adverse reaction
 - b. The act of giving a political tone or character to
 - c. take action in order to prevent (an anticipated event) happening
 - d. a stock of usual tactics or methods
 - e. to stop something from succeeding
 - f. a growth of strong feeling among a large group of people
2. Pick out key information about Jane Fonda.
3. What is the aim of her activism?
4. What historical period does she compare her actions to? What happened at that time?
5. In your opinion, should citizens be the guardians of free speech?

Language:

- a. Observez l’exemple tiré du texte:

I wish there were a secret playbook with all the answers

- b. Qu’exprime le groupe verbal souligné? Décomposez le groupe verbal, que constatez-vous ?

Le prétérit modal (prétérit du non réel)

=> Le prétérit ne sert pas seulement à renvoyer au passé. Après if et après certains verbes ou expressions verbales, on emploie le prétérit pour signaler que quelque chose n’est pas réalisé. Le prétérit, qu’il renvoie au passé ou au non réel, exprime toujours une rupture: rupture par rapport au présent ou par rapport au réel.

Verbe / expression verbale	Sens	Exemple	Traduction
If + prétérit	Hypothèse (si)	If I were you, I wouldn't sign it If I had more money, I would buy a house	Si j'étais toi, je ne signerais pas. Si j'avais plus d'argent, j'achèterais une maison.
What if + prétérit	Hypothèse (et si)	What if I came tomorrow instead of tonight?	Et si je venais demain plutôt que ce soir ?
Wish + prétérit	Souhait/Regret	I wish I spoke German. I wish Linda were here.	J'aimerais parler allemand. Je regrette que Linda ne soit pas là.
Would ('d) rather + prétérit	Préférence	She'd rather you sent her an email.	Elle préférerait que tu lui envoies un courriel.
It's (high) time + prétérit	Temps	It's time they paid their debts.	Il est temps qu'ils règlent leurs dettes.

Exercices:

A. Complétez ces phrases.

- 1) Robinson Crusoe wishes (his friends/not be far away)
- 2) He wishes (his wife /be with him)
- 3) He wishes(the other sailors/can see him) and (he/can sail back home)
- 4) He thinks: "If only"(not be alone)

B. Traduisez en anglais.

- 1) Si je savais, je te le dirais.
- 2) J'aimerais qu'il puisse venir
- 3) Il est temps que tu penses à l'avenir.
- 4) Si j'étais plus jeune, j'achèterais des patins à roulettes.
- 5) Je préférerais que tu ne lui dises pas.
- 6) Je regrette que nous ayons cours d'anglais le samedi.
- 7) Que se passerait-il s'il échouait ?
- 8) Ils regrettent d'avoir à travailler le dimanche.
- 9) Il aimerait avoir davantage d'argent.

Document J - When words become weapons: How hate speech threatens democracy

<https://www.idea.int/news/when-words-become-weapons-how-hate-speech-threatens-democracy>

In a time when democratic values are increasingly under strain, hate speech has emerged as one of the most pressing threats to democratic societies around the world.

According to the EU Fundamental Rights Agency, reported hate crimes in Europe rose by nearly 20 percent in the past five years, reflecting a broader global trend documented by the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. The proliferation of hate-filled rhetoric, particularly online, undermines the pillars of democracy, disrupts social cohesion, and silences the voices of vulnerable groups. Yet the effort to combat this trend is complicated by the necessity to protect freedom of expression. Balancing these two imperatives: upholding free speech while countering hate, has never been more urgent.

As United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres affirmed, “Addressing hate speech does not mean limiting or prohibiting freedom of speech. It means keeping hate speech from escalating into something more dangerous, particularly incitement to discrimination, hostility and violence, which is prohibited under international law” (United Nations, 2019).

At the heart of the debate is a persistent and dangerous misconception: that any effort to regulate hate speech automatically infringes on freedom of expression. This is often a false equivalency. Freedom of expression is a cornerstone of democratic societies, protected under international human rights law and enshrined in instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 19) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

These rights enable individuals to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas. They form the foundation for other democratic freedoms, including peaceful assembly, participation in political affairs, and religious liberty. However, these freedoms are not absolute. Article 20 of the ICCPR, for instance, explicitly prohibits “any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence.”

The UN’s Rabat Plan of Action offers guidance on distinguishing protected expression from unlawful incitement, emphasizing that restrictions must be carefully justified, proportionate, and necessary to prevent harm or ensure equality and inclusive participation.

The link between hate speech and hate crime is not speculative, it is well-documented. Hate speech often lays the ideological groundwork for hate crimes by normalizing intolerance, dehumanizing specific groups, and encouraging the notion that violence is justified or inevitable. When hateful rhetoric is left unchallenged, it emboldens individuals and groups to act on these messages, translating words into direct physical harm. These crimes undermine core principles of equality, dignity, and justice that form the foundation of democratic societies. Hate crimes create fear, suppress participation in public life, and fracture the inclusive social fabric essential for democracy to thrive.

Document K - Les attitudes des français sur la liberté d'expression révèlent une crise démocratique - Le Point, 28 mars 2025

https://www.lepoint.fr/postillon/les-attitudes-des-francais-sur-la-liberte-d-expression-revelent-une-crise-democratique-28-03-2025-2585853_3961.php

Peut-on encore tout dire en France ? La question est posée depuis des décennies, elle ressurgit à chaque controverse, chaque caricature, chaque procès. Pourtant, les Français restent majoritairement attachés à la liberté d'expression. Selon une enquête menée en octobre 2024 dans 33 pays et que vient tout juste de rendre public le think tank *The Future of Free Speech*, la France figure parmi les nations où l'adhésion au principe de libre parole est la plus élevée.

Basé à l'université Vanderbilt (Nashville, États-Unis) et fondé par le juriste danois Jacob Mchangama, The Future of Free Speech est un centre de recherche indépendant, non partisan, qui milite pour la défense de la liberté d'expression comme pilier des sociétés démocratiques. Il analyse les menaces contemporaines pesant sur ce droit fondamental et produit des données comparatives pour éclairer les débats publics et juridiques.

Dans sa dernière livraison, que Le Point a pu consulter en exclusivité, les sondés français considèrent à 95 % qu'il est important que chacun puisse dire ce qu'il pense ; à 98 %, ils affirment qu'une presse libre, sans censure de l'État, est essentielle. Des chiffres qui placent la France au niveau des grandes démocraties européennes.

💡 According to documents I, J and K, to what extent do debates over the limits of free speech reveal the challenges facing modern democracies?

📖 Thème littéraire:

Au troisième jour de sa vie, Antonio Borjas Romero **fut abandonné** sur les marches d'une église dans une rue **qui** aujourd'hui porte son nom. Personne ne put dire précisément à quelle date il **fut trouvé**, on sait seulement que tous les matins, toujours au même endroit, une femme misérable **avait l'habitude de s'asseoir là** pour déposer devant elle une écuelle en calèche et tendre une main fragile aux passants du parvis. Quand elle aperçut l'enfant, elle le repoussa d'un geste dégoûté. Mais son attention **fut soudainement attirée** par une petite boîte brillante, cachée entre les plis du linge, que quelqu'un **avait laissée là** comme une offrande. Un rectangle en fer-blanc, couleur argent, taillé d'arabesques fines. C'était une machine à rouler des cigarettes. Elle la vola en la mettant dans la poche de sa robe, puis se désintéressa du bébé.

Miguel Bonnefoy, *Le rêve du jaguar*, 2024

VOCABULARY

A. Misinformation & Désinformation

- **Misinformation** - désinformation involontaire, information erronée
- **Disinformation** - désinformation intentionnelle, manipulation
- **Malinformation** - information vraie utilisée pour nuire
- **Fake news** - fausses informations, infox
- **Hoax** - canular, intox
- **Deep fake** - hypertrucage, vidéo falsifiée par IA
- **Echo chamber** - chambre d'écho, bulle informationnelle
- **Filter bubble** - bulle de filtres
- **Confirmation bias** - biais de confirmation
- **Fact-checking** - vérification des faits
- **Debunking** - démystification, réfutation
- **Gaslighting** - manipulation psychologique
- **Propaganda** - propagande
- **Spin** - manipulation de l'information, communication orientée

Verbes d'action

- **To spread/disseminate misinformation** - propager de fausses informations
- **To peddle lies** - colporter des mensonges
- **To manipulate public opinion** - manipuler l'opinion publique
- **To sow discord/division** - semer la discorde/division
- **To distort the truth** - déformer la vérité
- **To fabricate evidence** - fabriquer des preuves
- **To take something out of context** - sortir quelque chose de son contexte
- **To cherry-pick data** - sélectionner les données qui arrangent
- **To amplify falsehoods** - amplifier des mensonges
- **To fall for/buy into** - se laisser prendre par, croire à

Expressions utiles

- **To go viral** - devenir viral, se propager rapidement
- **To gain traction** - gagner du terrain, prendre de l'ampleur
- **To blur the lines between fact and fiction** - brouiller les frontières entre fait et fiction
- **To be taken with a grain of salt** - être pris avec des pincettes
- **To separate the wheat from the chaff** - séparer le bon grain de l'ivraie
- **A breeding ground for conspiracy theories** - un terreau fertile pour les théories du complot
- **To be awash with misinformation** - être inondé de désinformation
- **The post-truth era** - l'ère post-vérité

B. Pouvoir des Médias

- **Mainstream media (MSM)** - médias grand public/traditionnels
- **Legacy media** - médias établis/traditionnels
- **Broadcast journalism** - journalisme audiovisuel
- **Tabloid press** - presse à sensation
- **Gutter press** - presse de caniveau
- **Media conglomerate** - conglomérat médiatique
- **Media mogul** - magnat de la presse
- **Fourth estate** - quatrième pouvoir (la presse)
- **Editorial line** - ligne éditoriale
- **Media literacy** - éducation aux médias

Influence et manipulation

- **Agenda-setting** - définition de l'agenda médiatique
- **Gatekeeping** - contrôle de l'information
- **Framing** - cadrage, mise en perspective
- **Priming** - amorçage cognitif
- **Sensationalism** - sensationnalisme
- **Clickbait** - piège à clics, appât à clics
- **Fearmongering** - alarmisme, propagation de la peur
- **Scaremongering** - alarmisme
- **Yellow journalism** - journalisme à sensation
- **Manufacturing consent** - fabrique du consentement

Verbes et expressions

- **To shape public discourse** - façonner le débat public
- **To hold power to account** - demander des comptes au pouvoir
- **To wield influence** - exercer une influence
- **To set the narrative** - imposer le récit
- **To control the narrative** - contrôler le récit
- **To toe the party line** - suivre la ligne du parti
- **To push an agenda** - faire avancer un programme/une cause
- **To have an axe to grind** - avoir un compte à régler, défendre ses intérêts
- **To have skin in the game** - avoir des intérêts en jeu
- **To be in cahoots with** - être de mèche avec

Expressions idiomatiques

- **The medium is the message** - le média est le message
- **To read between the lines** - lire entre les lignes
- **To take something at face value** - prendre quelque chose au pied de la lettre
- **A double-edged sword** - une arme à double tranchant
- **The pen is mightier than the sword** - la plume est plus forte que l'épée

C. Liberté d'Expression

- **Freedom of speech/expression** - liberté d'expression
- **Free press** - presse libre
- **Prior restraint** - censure préalable
- **Defamation** - diffamation
- **Libel** - diffamation écrite
- **Slander** - diffamation orale, calomnie
- **Hate speech** - discours de haine, incitation à la haine
- **Incitement** - incitation (à la violence)
- **Sedition** - sédition
- **Whistleblowing** - lanceur d'alerte, dénonciation
- **Chilling effect** - effet dissuasif
- **Self-censorship** - autocensure
- **Gag order** - interdiction de parler, bâillon judiciaire

Limitations et régulation

- **To curb/curtail freedom of speech** - restreindre la liberté d'expression
- **To muzzle the press** - museler la presse
- **To clamp down on dissent** - réprimer la dissidence
- **To silence critics** - faire taire les critiques
- **To draw the line at** - fixer la limite à
- **To strike a balance between** - trouver un équilibre entre
- **To toe a fine line** - marcher sur une corde raide
- **Slippery slope** - pente glissante, engrenage
- **A grey area** - zone grise, flou juridique

Protection et défense

- **To uphold free speech** - défendre la liberté d'expression
- **To champion the cause of** - défendre la cause de
- **To speak truth to power** - dire la vérité au pouvoir
- **To have one's say** - avoir son mot à dire
- **To voice one's opinion** - exprimer son opinion
- **Protected speech** - expression protégée
- **Unprotected speech** - expression non protégée
- **A marketplace of ideas** - un marché des idées (libre débat)

Expressions avancées

- **Freedom of speech is not freedom from consequences** - la liberté d'expression n'exonère pas des conséquences
- **To shout fire in a crowded theater** - crier au feu dans un théâtre bondé (limites de la liberté d'expression)
- **The right to be offensive** - le droit de choquer
- **To err on the side of free speech** - préférer pencher du côté de la liberté d'expression dans le doute
- **Content moderation** - modération de contenu
- **Deplatforming** - exclusion d'une plateforme
- **Cancel culture** - culture de l'annulation

Phrases complexes

Pour analyser

- **It could be argued that...** - On pourrait avancer que...
- **This begs the question of whether...** - Cela soulève la question de savoir si...
- **One cannot overlook the fact that...** - On ne peut ignorer le fait que...
- **This gives rise to concerns about...** - Cela suscite des inquiétudes concernant...
- **The crux of the matter lies in...** - Le nœud du problème réside dans...
- **At the heart of this issue is...** - Au cœur de cette question se trouve...

Pour nuancer

- **While this holds true to some extent...** - Bien que cela soit vrai dans une certaine mesure...
- **Notwithstanding these concerns...** - Nonobstant ces préoccupations...
- **That being said...** - Cela dit...
- **By the same token...** - De la même manière...
- **To play devil's advocate...** - Pour jouer l'avocat du diable...

Pour conclure

- **All things considered...** - Tout bien considéré...
- **The implications are far-reaching** - Les implications sont considérables
- **This underscores the need for...** - Cela souligne le besoin de...
- **The onus is on...** - La responsabilité incombe à...

