

## **Examen d'entrée 2021**

### **Diplôme de l'IEP en Formation Continue**

**Vendredi 3 septembre 2021 - de 11h30 à 13h**

### **Epreuve d'Anglais**

Merci de répondre directement sur les feuillets joints pour les parties I + II + III.

Et de rédiger l'Essay sur votre copie.

*Aucun document autorisé.*

*The Guardian, 15 January 2021*

Donald Trump's incitement of a mob attack on the US Capitol was a watershed moment for free speech and the internet. Bans against both the US president and his prominent supporters have spread across social media as well as email and e-commerce services. Parler, a social network popular with neo-Nazis, was ditched from mobile phone app stores and then forced offline entirely. These events suggest that the most momentous year of modern democracy was not 1989 – when the Berlin wall fell – but 1991, when web servers first became publicly available.

There are two related issues at stake here: the chilling power afforded to huge US corporations to limit free speech; and the vast sums they make from algorithmically privileging and amplifying deliberate disinformation. The doctrines, regulations and laws that govern the web were constructed to foster growth in an immature sector. But the industry has grown into a monster – one which threatens democracy by commercialising the swift spread of controversy and lies for political advantage.

What is required is a complete rethink of the ideological biases that have created conditions for tech giants to have such authority – and which has laid their users open to manipulation for profit. Social media companies currently do not have legal liability for the consequences of the activities that their platforms enable. Big tech can no longer go unpunished. Companies have had to make judgments about what their customers can expect to see when they visit their sites. It is only right that they are held accountable for the “terms and conditions” that embed consumer safeguards. It would be a good start if measures within the UK online harms bill, that go some way to protecting users from being exposed to violent extremism and hate, were to be enacted.

In a society people also desire, and need, the ability to express themselves to become fully functioning individuals. Freedom of expression is important in a democracy, where voters need to weigh up competing arguments and appreciate for themselves different ideas. John Milton

optimistically wrote in *Areopagitica* : “**Let Truth and Falsehood grapple; whoever knew Truth put to the worse in a free and open encounter?**” But 17th-century England did not know 21st-century Silicon Valley. Today, speech takes place online much more so than in public streets. Politics is so polarised that Mr Trump and his Republican allies claimed without any factual basis that electoral fraud was rampant.

Facebook and Twitter can limit, control and censor speech as much as or more than the government. Until now, such firms exempted politicians from their own hate speech policies, arguing that what they said was worthy of public debate. This rests in part on the US supreme court. Legal academic Miguel Schor argued that the bench stood Orwell on his head in 2012 by concluding “false statements of fact enjoyed the same protection as core political speech”. He said judges feared creating an Orwellian ministry of truth, but said they miscalculated because the US “does have an official ministry of truth in the form of the president’s bully pulpit which Trump used to normalise lying”.

**Silicon Valley bosses did not silence Mr Trump in a fit of conscience, but because they think they can stave off anti-trust actions by a Democrat-controlled Congress.** Elizabeth Warren threatened to break up big tech and blasted Facebook for “spreading Trump’s lies and disinformation.” Her plan to turn social media into “platform utilities” offers a way to advantage social values such as truth telling over the bottom line.

Impunity for corporations, technology and politicians has grown so much that it is incompatible with a functioning democracy. Populists the world over have distorted speech to maintain power by dividing the electorate into separate camps, each convinced that the other is the victim of their opponent’s ideology. To achieve this, demagogues did not need an authoritarian state. As Mr Trump has demonstrated, an unregulated marketplace of ideas, where companies thrive by debasing politics, was enough.

## COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS (/10)

### I. Which title suits best? /1

1. Trump’s populism goes against the interests of social media.
2. Trump’s populism was weaponised and silenced by social media.
3. Trump’s populism spread controversy and lies through social media.
4. Trump’s populism reveals some inconsistencies within social media.
- 5.

**II. True or False? Justify your answer by quoting from the text. /5**

1. The assault on the Capitol was an expected event on social media. T / F

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2. Social media companies are not accountable for what they are used for. T / F

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3. Social media should not abide by their customer rules. T / F

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4. So far politicians have been allowed to elude social media's censorship. T / F

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5. Trump's platform on social media looks like Orwell's ministry of Truth. T / F

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**III. Explain the following sentences with your own words: /4**

1. : *"Let Truth and Falsehood grapple; whoever knew Truth put to the worse in a free and open encounter?"*

2. *Silicon Valley bosses did not silence Mr Trump in a fit of conscience, but because they think they can stave off anti-trust actions by a Democrat-controlled Congress.*

**ESSAY (/10)** 350 words (+/- 10%)

**Do you agree with the social media companies' decisions to silence Trump?**