

# ANGLAIS ( Culture & Civilisation )

## 52 FICHES D'ANGLAIS

### Fiche 1 – Big and small government (Welfare State and liberal State)

- **Margaret Thatcher (1979-1990)** is the strongest representing of the decline of the Welfare State, with a “*hands-off*” policy as far as the economy was concerned.
- In the film **The Iron Lady**, we can see the mass privatization movement, and the sacrifices of the coal miners or the steel workers. She bequeathed social division, she once remarked at a Conservative Party conference “*this lady’s not for turning*”.
- **Cameron and Romney have espoused this guiding principle.** Romney wants to eliminate “*every non-essential expensive government programme*”, including Obamacare, and Cameron lamented irresponsible financial management in Gordon Brown’s (Labour) term of office.
- **Some left wings governments have toyed with small governments policies**, such as introducing privately run “*Trust hospitals*” and extending the Thatcherite grant- maintained school system so circumventing Local Education authority controls.
- **Reagan:** “*government is not the solution to our problem, government IS the problem*”
- **Americans television viewers were shocked by the lack of officiousness of the small state during the Hurricane Katrina in 2005**, during George W Bush presidential term of office. Government administrations such as FEMA gave mismanaged funds and warnings of impending floods had been ignored.
- **Obama’s dream was to fight small government based on individualism and indifference.** He had a huge program for health, and saved some important industries from bankruptcy, such as the “*Jeep*” plant in Detroit, dreadfully affected by the recent economic slump in which over 10% of the population was on the dole.
- **The Obamacare have been providing comprehensive health care for all** regardless of their employment status. However, the check could amount a trillion dollars for the State.
- **Romney describes 47% of scrounging Obama voters**, but his Big Government fosters equal opportunities to build his own wealth, and guarantee basic rights and opportunities.

## Fiche 2: Mr Cameron's Big Society

- **David Cameron promised to “roll forward the frontiers of society” in 2006**, to heal a 20 years Labour mismanagement. It was also a pretext to cut some funding which were too heavy on the state finances.
- **His plan used localism to gather people from different sides**, promoting small administrated groups based on as much volunteering as possible, rather than large government bodies.
- **Measures include locally elected police commissioners**, possibilities of referendum, extension of parental involvement at school
- **In August 2011, Britain witnessed some of its worst riots for decade**, one year after the election. It seemed that Big society had still a lot of work to do.
- **Some of the services were ineffective**, such as library whose schedules changed because they were only manned by volunteers. Non-essential services such as youth-club were strongly diminished, which improved youth idleness and unemployment.
- **The Britons still have Christian traditions**, and a relatively harmonious multicultural make-up. The Royal Weeding, the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and the Olympic Games eventually enhanced national cohesion.
- **The “Riot Wombles” is good example of Big Society in action**; this association gathered people with brooms and rubbish bags in order to clean up by themselves the mess left by the rioters in their towns.
- **The society showed its best**, with the excellent promotion of Paralympic games, or Cameron's softening stance (*opinion mise en sourdine*) towards Gay marriage.
- **Cameron identifies in Kennedy sentence: “don't ask what your country can do for you but rather what you can do for your country”.**
- **Cameron wants a return to Greatness**, with a unified country, based on diversity and tradition: the “feel-good factor” is very important.

## Fiche 3: The lessons of the August 2011 Riots in GB and their historical context

- **Police forces were overstretched**, and government was compelled to place the armed forces on stand-by.
- **Tradition of resistance in this country**: Queen Brodicea and the Picts, William Wallace from Scotland, first trade unionists...

- **Enmity between lower and upper classes has always fuelled tensions.** But rarely led to significant bloodshed, maybe because of the Big Brother society and its 4,5 million CCTV cameras. During a demonstration, dairy farmers considered themselves as “frightfully well-behaved”.
- **The events of summer 2011 were apparently sparked off by a police blunder (bêvue);** the police accidentally shot Mark Dugan during a protest in Tottenham North London. The movement widespread and organized itself through Internet, dubbed (*surnommé*) “**the BlackBerry revolution**” (it remembers well the Arab Spring which happened at the same time).
- **Notwithstanding (néanmoins), some felt kneejerk (exagérée) reaction from Cameron.** He blamed a “**slow motion moral collapse** (*malaise, effondrement*)”, and courts sat around the clock, custodial sentences were meted out (*peines de prison ont été prononcées*) to even young first-offenders.
- **Police forces were accused of racism, corruption and incompetence.** Society accused a lack of bridging between different communities, the one angry about budget cut looking toward the City, and finally the lack of prospect due to the soaring (*qui s’envolent*) university tuition fees.

#### Fiche 4: Austerity in Great Britain “feeling the pinch” (*souffrant financièrement*).

- **When his coalition government took up office in 2010,** Cameron announced an austerity policy, against what he called “**years of economic mismanagement**” with the previous Labour administration (*Gordon Brown*). However the economy suffered a double dip recession in 2012, and shrank, so that government’s reaction was further cuts. It led to an outcry among trade union (*une tollé chez les syndicats*), and sector industrial disputes in 2013 and 2014.
- **Young people were the most hit,** university tuition fees were topped up to the figure of 9000 pounds per years. They didn’t want to take out a loan of up to 30 000 pounds which had to be paid back. There were also fewer facilities for young people to access culture and leisure activities.
- **The infamous “bedroom tax” reduced housing benefits** for those living in accommodation with spare rooms (*chambre d’ami*), to incite to vacate large properties for those awaiting accommodation
- **Many elderlies (personnes âgées) were affected by the tax** and many of whom are loath to leave their homes.
- **In 2013, the average incomes increased by 1,4%,** which did not offset the soaring inflation rate at 2,5%. However, the top earners salaries were increasing by as much as 15%. The liberal economic system has led to abuses, such as the increase in “**0 hour**” contracts, with no guarantee of work from one week to the next.
- **OECD reports highlighted the greater fall in relative terms of disposable income in the UK** compare with the rest of the UE: 19 000 pounds VS 23 000 pounds. It represents the longest decline in earnings since the 1870’s.

- **Austerity fostered the soaring level of household debt**, due to huge cost of servicing interest payments on loans. Despite the work of government watchdog (*garde fou, chien de garde*), energy bills have increased no less than 40% in recent years.
- **Food banks, holidaying at home rather than abroad developed.**
- **The policy based on improving GPD (PIB) is questioned**, people propose investment in green infrastructure, fostering robust local and regional economies and breaking up the banks into accountable institutions more likely to provide social credit to the needy. Cameron's government was reluctant to change cap as he believed there was no alternative to austerity.

## Fiche 5: British Muslims-the Jihad and links to international terrorism.

- **An increasing number of devout British Muslims are seeking way to succour their brothers and sisters oppressed by the Assad regime**, "*Zakat*" is among the 5 pillars of faith, to give aid to those in need. Some collected funds or travel to the war zone to bring humanitarian relief or to engage in front-line against the Assad government. Millions of pounds of aids were collected, and in 2014 around 300 people were fighting for the cause in Syria. Mohammed and Akram Sebah became this way martyrs, two brothers dying in fights aged 24 and 28. The movement is increased by "5-stars Jihad" propaganda.
- **This exodus also concerns young people**, which are taken as a serious threat by the security forces since they are being trained in the use of automatic weapons and guerrilla warfare.
- **Some of the groups recruiting promote charia or strict Islamic laws**, like ISIS. Security force fear indoctrinated terrorists who, once they back home, perpetrate terrorist acts. Interpol is still searching Samantha Lewthaine, the "*white widow (veuve)*" for her implication through her husband in the London suicide bombs in the beginning of 2000's, and is linked to the 2013 Westgate shopping mall terrorist attack.
- **The debate keeps going**: backlash (*reaction brutale*) against the nihab for instance. Britain fears to be Islamised, as the Trojan Horse affair in Birmingham, where extreme Muslim parents reportedly attempted to oust teachers from schools, caught people's opinion.
- **A BBC investigation showed that putting extremists in jail increased chances they spread violent Islam** to vulnerable young people, so that the recruiting process continues.
- **However, unlike Abu Hamza, radical Muslim cleric from the banned Finsbury park mosque in London who was extradited and then sentenced for abetting terrorism**, many Imams in the UK have joined forces in a nationwide campaign to combat extremism. If the exodus continues, many parents have been urged (*ont été encouragés*) to control their offspring's (*progéniture*) access to extreme material on the web and to educate their children about the risk of indoctrination.

## Fiche 6: The Fourth Estate, Press freedom, its abuses and censorship

- **In 2012, public outrage in GB**, phone hacking implicating national newspapers and some members of the police. The Australian press baron Robert Murdoch even closed his popular tabloid News Of The World, as it had broken the law. It had ensued public outcry and the affair was enquired to the eminent Lord Justice Leveson.
- **The enquiry concluded on the incapacity of the Press Complaints Committee to efficiently regulate the Press system**, and protect citizen's private life.
- **The mutation of the press has led to a "scandal press"**, which tries to produce cheap information, the fastest. The last big scandal was the photos of Kate Middleton topless in 2012, sold to even some reputable press companies. A British nurse of Kate Middleton also committed suicide due to the pressure after she was hoodwinked by an Australian radio, and had given sensitive private information.
- **But press is also a bulwark** (*rempart*) **against tyranny**. BBC proved its independence from the British government, despite receiving its funding directly from public fees. BBC crossed sword with the Labour government over the Iraq war controversy.
- **In the world, BBC has been banned from many dictatorships**, whereas full access to the truth is necessary. Foreign press and the Internet are enabling Chinese dissidents to make their countrymen aware of their plight.
- **The role of reporters should not be denied**; the 1976 Sharpeville massacre in Soweto, South Africa or the children victims of Napalm in burns in Vietnam, proved that reporters can help change the course of history.

## Fiche 7: Crime and Punishment-Law and Order in GB

- **The recent riots might lead to a misconception that crime is on the increase**. Broadcasts on prime time television, scenes of looting, wanton... but statistics proved that namely a 10 per cent drop in all types of crime in England and Wales between 2011 and 2012 must be seen. People are becoming more law-abiding (*honnêtes*) than they used to be. Racism offences are taking down as well, even if lots of Brits think the contrary.
- **The Joseph Rowntree Trust charity has always well shown the link between social deprivation and crime**. However, the improvement in crime prevention, a tougher criminal justice, a technological enhancement, greater public awareness and vigilance, a huge CCTV camera system (*millions, certain are HD and can identify a suspect in a crowd*), the possibility to track credit cards and mobile phone, the "**neighbourhood watch**" schemes in which neighbours gather to monitor their neighbourhood, and many devices for shopkeepers (*the "Mosquito" keeps young people at a distance from a shop with high frequency sounds*) helped the criminality rate to fall down. Brits could fear a Big Brother State however.



- ➔ **After 2011 riots, Cameron ordered a zero tolerance approach.** It involved short custodial sentences (*peines de prison*), which also increased the reoffending rate (*around two third*), as many prison were overcrowded (*sometimes 6 inmates in rooms for 2 or 3*); official reports often deplore inhumane conditions in these jails.
- ➔ **Alternative were developed;** the Isle of Jersey promoted a system in which those who have committed minor offences have to face a panel of local dignitaries such as the mayor, to explain their action and then repair their offences or do clean up jobs. Cameron also legislated that minor offences such as shop lifting could be directly dealt with “*on the spot fines*”, in order to have less trial.
- ➔ **The advent of gun slinging police would sadden Britons who are proud of the relationship they enjoy with their local “bobby”** and fear the level of bloodshed occurring in the USA.

## Fiche 8: Crisis in policing in Britain

- ➔ **The traditional British unarmed Bobby has always been someone the general public trusted and looked up.** British police has always favoured crime prevention rather than repression. The public has also always been encouraged to cooperate with the police (*last review card*).
- ➔ **Today, there is a crisis of confidence in the police;** under constant public scrutiny they have to be accountable to the general public and when the occasional blunder has occurred the press never fail to seize on it.
- ➔ **Facing organized criminal gangs,** heavily armed, special firearms intervention units who have been known to make mistakes. The Brazilian student Charles Menezes was for instance shot in 2005 in the Tube during the terrorist period, taken for a suicide bomber.
- ➔ **Stephen Lawrence was a black man murdered in a racially motivated attack over thirty years ago.** His family complained about police inaction and had to wait thirty years for some semblance of justice to be done, and also discovered they have been spied upon all that time.
- ➔ **Mark Duggan sparked off the riots of 2011,** a suspect fatally wounded by a police officer. The police version contrasted with eyewitnesses, and police forces were long criticized for being institutionally racist.
- ➔ **The Hillsborough football tragedy enquiry also discovered that police in Sheffield had been responsible for major errors leading to the death of 96 football fans** although the police had tried to pass the blame off onto fans themselves; such dishonesty has gravely tarnished the image of the upright Bobby.
- ➔ **The Police Complaints Commission was formed,** but has only power to make recommendations.

- **Undercover policing has long been used to infiltrate groups supposed to represent a threat to national security** (*animal rights activists, environmentalists, anti-nuclear campaigners*). Certain undercover agents have led double lives even going so far as to start relationships and father children.

## Fiche 9: Debate over Scottish Independence

- **September, the 18th 2014 was a historic day in GB since Scots**, for the first time ever, had a chance to break away from their old oppressor.
- **The SNP** (*Scottish Nationalist Party*), led by first minister Alex Salmond, faced a coalition of unionists, combining all the main political parties from south of the border. As the momentous occasion approached the gap between no and yes camps seems to have narrowed.
- **The SNP developed an economic plan for an independent country whilst insisting on the significance of conserving one single currency.** They argued technocrats in London have underestimate the reserves of North Sea Gas, and praised their other assets, such as fishing, shipbuilding on river Clyde, and beautiful cities for tourism like Edinburgh.
- **As vividly depicted in the film « the Angel's share » from Ken Loach**, Scotland has been suffering disproportionately compared to the rest of GB: chronic unemployment, social deprivation, alcoholism, crime violence are rife. Also a high level of obesity and heart disease. In one district of Glasgow, life expectancy is as little as 54 for men. Salmond believes this is a result of British mismanagement.
- **Since 1998, the Scottish parliament at Holyrood already sits to decide on policy on many issues including roads, health and education** (*free school and universities*). The Welfare state is described for Salmond as *"British value"*.
- **The role of history is important;** Scots still remember the oppression and the cruel massacre of freedom fighters and the brave resistance led by William Wallace and Robert the Bruce. The English invader stole lands, imposed taxes... Mrs Thatcher used Scots as guinea-pigs (*cobayes*) when the infamous poll tax was first experimented on the Scots.
- **The "better together" campaign argued on the benefits of the 1707-union that has afforded economic and political stability**, fostered a sense of a cosmopolitan British identity which the nation can be proud of, according to Alistair Darling, former leader of the NO campaign. British taxpayers were as a whole to bailout the struggling Scottish bank RBS which has lost millions of pounds in the subprime crisis.
- **A smaller nation would struggle to hold its head above water and face of tough competition from abroad**, whereas it would have to renegotiate with the UE. Moreover, cheap US energy from shale gas has led to a slump in the profitability of North sea gas produced by Scotland.

- **Many opponents of full independence would prefer “*devo max*”**, which refers to a scale of increased powers for a Scottish parliament, without any declaration of independence.
- **The NO campaign prevailed with 55% of the votes.**

## Fiche 10: Ferguson: the end of a legend

- **Ferguson was the former manager of Manchester United football club**, who retired in May 2013, after winning 13 titles with Manchester in domestic leagues.
- **The Ferguson’s style often provoked controversy for his what some might say dictatorial managing style.** He was known to lead every player to the better, from the newcomer to the star.
- **Manchester United became a famous brand thanks to him.**
- **He received in 1999 the Commander of the British Empire medal.** He smashed all the records: longest serving manager at Manchester United, only British manager to win two European cup titles, and the highest rate of popularity.

## Fiche 11: Education in Britain

- **The Education Act of 1944 turned the education system in Britain to a tripartite system and schooling became free for all children.** You can access the new secondary school after an exam at the age of 11 (*“the 11-plus”*), and the best performing students go to grammar schools, whereas the others go to secondary modern school or technical school. There is a nondenominational religious meeting each morning. Selection was based on aptitude, not money.
- **In 1965, Anthony Crosland voted new reforms;** the tripartite system turned to comprehensive schools, which were supposed to be more egalitarian, free state-funded schools for all children, with suppression of the 11-plus exam in 1975; today, more than 90% of British students attend comprehensive schools.
- **In the late 1990’s and early 2000’s, the Labour governments gave more autonomy to secondary schools and to local education.**
- **Academies are state funded independent schools, insofar (*dans la mesure où*) they do not have to follow the national curriculum (*programme*) implemented in other state schools.** They are directly financed by the government and are run by academy committee, so that they have more autonomy whatsoever. The idea is to get parents directly involved in the education system. Everyone can invest in these academies by the way, even private sponsors. The number of academies has seriously increased, from about 100 in 2008 to 1700 in 2013. The number of British students being taught in these schools reached 2 million (*more than 25%*).
- **A “free school” are similar to academy**, and to “*charter schools*” in the US.



- **7% of all British children go to independent schools**, fee-paying private schools.
- **Oxford and Cambridge College are famous all over the world and are considered to be the ultimate alma mater** (*university*), with 26 British prime ministers, 58 Nobel prize winners and over 150 Olympic medal winners.
- **However, in 2010 the British MPs voted in favour of a 200% rise in university fees**; but according to the new law British students will have to pay back their government loans once they have graduated on condition that their wages reach €25000 per annum.

## Fiche 12: The British Monarchy

- **“The Crown” shares power with a constitutionally organized government.** On the 24th of May, 2012, 69% of the British respondents claimed that GB would be worse off without the monarchy. The Queen's royal prerogatives are not solely symbolic and ceremonial:

- She appoints Prime Minister after he was elected.
- She can dissolve Parliament and call for new elections. She opens parliamentary sessions with the Queen's Speech, and announces forthcoming legislation dictated by Prime Minister.
- All bills and acts passed must be assented by the Crown although no sovereign has imposed a veto since 1708.
- She's the Head of the Armed Forces, and can thus declare war and peace alone.
- Supreme governor of the Church of England, she appoints the Bishops and Archbishops on advice of the PM.
- She is the Head of the Commonwealth, head of state of 16/53 states of CW.

- **The Diamond Jubilee of Elisabeth II was celebrated nationwide**, in pomp and circumstances, in June 2012. British tabloids have become obsessed with the Royal Family and their lives.
- **Even if Prince Charles is not very loved** (48% of the British distrust him, and want William to directly inherit), the Royal family has solid public support.

## Fiche 13: Thatcher's Britain: the legacy of Margaret Thatcher

- **MT remains a controversial figure**, her funerals in 2013 cost around 10 million pounds, a state funeral in all but name (*the Queen was present*). For many critics, it was undeserved due to the negative impact of her policy. Some municipalities refused to fly the flag at half-mast (*en berne*).
- **But in many press articles at the time of her death, from the left-leaning Guardian to the solidly right Times and Daily Mail**, she is described as for instance Britain's “*greatest post-war PM*” or the PM who “*set the tone*” for the next 30 years, so that Britons live in “*Thatcher's Britain*”.

- **She was recognized at a great PM to have put an end to the time the British economy came to a standstill** (*être au point mort*), the “Winter of Discontent” **of 1978-1979**. She re-affirmed the UK’s close ties with the USA (“*Special Relationship*”) and restored Britain’s economic, political and military clout (*influence*) in the world.
- **She ushered in (initiated) the transition from a Keynesian economy**, based on the intertwining role of the government and the economy, to one centred on the free market.
- **Thatcherism**: low taxation, small government, deregulation, privatisation and reduction of trade union’s power, with a greater emphasis of personal responsibility and individual hard-work. It improves confidence almost immediately for many. The economy was converted from manufacturing to a more dynamic economy based on services, especially financial.
- **Social unrest was a hallmark (characteristic) of Thatcher’s time of office**, the significant loss of manufacturing jobs and the closing down of the coalmines led to the violent 1984-85 miner’s strikes. She refused several times to negotiate with the Trade Unions. She was very controversial for her doctrine of “*self improvement*”, for which the “*underserving poor*” must help themselves to grow richer, and not take a profit of the Welfare State which encourages “*dependency*”.
- **Her arrogance, sense of self-righteousness led the Soviets to call her the “Iron Lady”**, a nickname she accepted with pride. She refused for instance to negotiate with the Irish Revolutionary Army (IRA), and didn’t hesitate to go to war with Argentina over the Falkland Islands in 1982. Did the qualities helped re-established Britain stature to its rightful place in the world, as she was one of the most admired leaders?
- **20 years after, if her policy was very beneficial to the wealthy, inequality rose significantly**. She has been blamed for destroying the social principle of solidarity by cutting many welfare programmes. But it also was a success for women’s place in society; she was one of the most famous personalities in the world whilst being the first woman elected PM.

## Fiche 14: GB and Europe

- **Nigel Farage, leader of the right-wing Eurosceptic party succeeded in 2013 in wooing 15 percent of voters in local elections**. Why so many unhappy people? :/
- **UK is an isle?** Its power in the 19th -20th century has instilled a sense of independence? Churchill proposed at the end of WW2 the theory of the “Three Circles”, in one speech at the conservative party in 1946, in which Britain is at the crossing of the circles of Commonwealth, USA and Anglophone world and United Europe, and must not advantage one part or another. Cameron referred to it in 2014, when he said Britain must not be “sucked into the United States of Europe”.

- Even if he described Euro-sceptic backbenchers (deputes au pv, mais sans importance) as “fruitcakes, loonies and closet racist” (cinglés, tarés et des racistes qui ne le disent pas), he had to announce the possibility of a referendum due to the rise of Euro-scepticism.
- **Tories and Labour Party both felt the pressure**, and Ed Miliband, head of the Labour Party, staked out the position that if he were to win in 2015, he would not call for a referendum.
- **In 2014, UKIP won several victories**, and won the majority at the European parliamentary elections, with 28%.

## Fiche 15: Health in GB and in the US

- **Since the 1942, Beveridge defined free healthcare as essential to the Welfare State.** However, recently, with multi-million pounds deficits, the current government has been obliged to implement budget restraint (cuts?) in order to keep struggling hospital trust afloat. It led to the “postcode lottery”, phenomenon whereby urban and southern citizens receive enhanced care compared to people living elsewhere in the country. Some patients preferred treating their cancers in Scotland where expensive drugs were covered by the local authorities.
- **The British NHS is known as an inefficiently run system**, with too much bureaucracy. Elderlies were sometimes very badly treated in care homes or hospitals according to some headlines.
- **In northern states**, there is more obesity, heart diseases, lung cancer...
- **The case of Baby P.**, a toddler who died as a result of long abuse from his parents, revealed a blatant lack of communication between the health profession and government child protection services.
- **The practical of binge drinking is alarming**, while 70% of hospital admissions at weekends are alcohol-related. People start drinking younger, despite Cameron’s attempt to establish a continental-style drinking culture.
- **The healthcare issue is too politically sensitive for it ever to be side-lined**, even Thatcher never materialized her rhetoric on private health insurance.
- **In the US:** on March, the 23rd 2010, the Obamacare health reform bill was approved by an initially hostile US house of representative. Before, 47 million Americans were not covered by medical insurance and therefore had little or no access to treatment. Even if the 1 trillion originally demanded was severely watered down by the Republicans, the principle stays. It was fought by some states which argued that constitutionally, no one should be authorized to subscribe to insurance.
- **The US spends 16% of GDP in health care**, regarding the 8% of Britain, despite a lower life-expectancy. The challenges stay important for the Obamacare, as it intends for instance to extend existing health provision by enabling children to be covered by their parents healthcare up to the age of 26.

## Fiche 16: Extremism in the political landscape (the far right)

- ➔ **For long away from the political game**, the British National Party or UKIP rose these last years, as they presented an opportunity for white disaffected voters to cast a vote of discontent against the established parties. Both parties advocate a slightly more moderate stance than the National Front (repatriation of non-white immigrant to their countries, criminalisation of homosexuality...), but they groundswell of public support from the anger of the “silent majority” (Richard Nixon).
- ➔ **Voters often ill-educated, low-skilled...** thinking government turns a blind eye to their housing or health need, preferring helping families from abroad. And no longer is English taught at school, it's a Muslim invasion!
- ➔ **Politicians also try to woo voters from the far-right. Mr Cameron seemed pandering to BNP supporters when he recently disavowed Britain's multicultural values**, pledging a return to British identity and values, necessary to be taught to any newcomer as a condition for the acquisition of his nationality.
- 🚩 **US: Obama frequently victim of thinly-veiled racially motivated attacks from the American right.** Members of the Tea Party didn't hesitate to use slurs (insults) to qualify Obama, even in the Congress.
- ➔ **The Tea Party spawned after the 2008 elections**, in response to the Democrat success. Even if too extreme for some Republicans, it pulled the Republican party (GOP as well) to the right, where Mitt Romney was a conservative Mormon candidate. Some accused them of the loss of the 2012 elections, but with no doubt they have an influence on it, pushing candidates during the primaries. The theme of abortion is very present in Tea Party speeches, as Tod Aikten referred to it as “legitimate rape”.
- ➔ **However the defeats of Tea Party candidate proved**, until 2016 lol, that the middle American class disapproved extreme ideas; Romney scored an own goal when he castigated the 47% of Obama –voting scroungers in America.
- ➔ **Finally, they accused Obama of discrimination against the hardworking “Jo the Plumber”**, driving America to an intellectual Ivy League elite symbolized by Supreme Court Judge Sonia Sotomayor. Hopefully Fox News is there to tell the truth to citizens.

## Fiche 17: Racism and multicultural society

- ➔ **Over 200 native languages are spoken in London**, bases of an important melting pot, which valued the City, for a part, to be chosen for the 2012 Olympic Games. The success of this enhances people's pride to belong to a nation which values difference.
- ➔ **However societies are mutating**, as the Latinos in the US who might represent 30% of the population in 2050 according to the official US census data. Eminent economists such as Samuel Huntington have prophesied conflicts between culture due to the shifting (en evolution) demographics.

- **In 2012, in Britain a judge sentenced two white Britons for a racially motivated murder of a black youth**, Stephen Lawrence, as, in the US, a million Americans participated in the Million Hoodie March to pay tribute and protest against the murder of Trayvon Martin, an unarmed black teenager gunned down by a white vigilante. His killer, George Zimmerman, was released after only 5 hours of detention, and acquitted at his trial, because he was said to have acted in self- defence.
- **Still, statistics prove black are more often in jail or affected by educational failure**. Stays the question of “Affirmative Action”, which enforces quotas to foster employment among the ethnic minority, and is very criticized by far right leaders who want, in the US, a “colourblind” system: an impossible meritocracy?
- **Muslims are often looked down**, in Britain the number of ghettos increases as some Muslims feel marginalized. After the 2005 London terrorist attacks and the wave of anti-terrorist legislations, followed by the campaign against the ground zero mosque, they can feel stigmatized.
- **Hopefully, public events** as the Olympic Games, the Queen’s Jubilee are period of reconciliation.

## Fiche 18: Security and freedom, the fight against terror and the aftermaths of 9/11 on civil liberties.

- **Britain has since Thatcher and the IRA imposed a very tough way of repressing terrorism, without any negotiations possible with the terrorists**. She aimed to deprive terrorists of the “oxygen of publicity”. U2 in the song Bloody Sunday illustrates how overreaction to protest can lead to civilian brutalities.
- **2001 civil rights groups such as the ACLU in America expressed grave concerns about new anti-terrorist legislation rushed through (adopted in a state of emergency) in the wake of the terrorist atrocities**. The Patriot Act brought in sweeping new police powers including physical surveillance with or without legitimate suspicion, and financial controls. 1,3 millions “suspicious transactions” are given by the bank to the FBI each year. Some devout donors who wanted to do Zakat were sometimes hampered by government to be raising funds for terrorist activities. As well, the “no-fly list” set up after 9/11 to protect American soils to the potential entry of terrorists, can be open to abuses. According the ACLU, the number of people in this list reaches today 1 million people. It would also have deterred from coming many bright brains whose vital know-how has therefore been lost to America.
- **Uproar in Britain when Labour Home Office minister**, Charles Clarke, aimed to implement indefinite house arrest and unlimited stop and search powers. The 4,5 million CCTV cameras make still the society wary of bossy authorities.
- **However the crackdown has been widely supported by the general public**, as for instance the culprits and the modus operandi of the 2005-terrorists were identified within two weeks.
- **The British society regularly engages in “naming and shaming”**, the British government itself sometimes publishes the mugshots of the most wanted tax evaders, in a bid to mobilise public support in tracking them down.

## Fiche 19: British and American Foreign Policy, international relations

- **Foreign policy consists in adopting policies and strategies** towards other nations in a bid to further one's own agenda.
- **Cameron was severely warned in 2013 by the EU by raising the possibility of a referendum on European issues**, pressed by Eurosceptic in his party. Britain has a long tradition of sitting in the fence (adopter une posture attentiste) about European reforms, they adopted nor Schengen nor the euro as currency.
- **The “gunboat policy”, using the threat of the army or atomic bomb to deal, can no longer resume Britain’s policy.** As American economy also continues to wane, how to think Europe? Britain helped France for Malia, whereas previously France helped Britain for Libya, so that the Entente Cordiale is not dead?
- **Obama strived during his presidency to convey a fresh image of Uncle Sam to the world.** Peacemaker, after the warmonger Bush son and dad. Bush is remembered for Irak, the civilians slain (killed) and collateral damage for what some considers the oil war. Obama earned the Nobel Prize for the withdrawal of American soldiers from Irak, and the closing of Guantanamo. During his Cairo speech in 2010, he spoke in Arabic, as an expression of a politic of dialog, which redefines Arab’s vision of America. For Churchill, “Jaw Jaw (bouche/bouche = dialog) is better than War War”. He was however controverted for the assassination of Bin Laden under his mandate, and his Arab-friendly policy risks to displease the very powerful Jewish lobby, and enhance criticisms from the Tea Party about the fact he owns his citizenship; his middle name is Hossein.
- **Obama also needed money to finance government action during the crisis and the Obamacare**, as he plunged the country into the mire (marécage) of debt. Congress voted in 2011 the Budget Control Act which limits spending, even on defence for the first time.

## Fiche 20: Health in danger, falling standards, Obamacare under threat?

- **Even if being the 6th world economy, Britain’s healthcare is not as efficient as its European neighbours.** One third of the population might be affected by type 2 diabetes, according to the BBC in 2014. Child death rates are worse than South Korea.
- **Many people continue to die from preventable diseases, a disproportionate among of them in the lower classes.** Although British have gained on average 4 years in life expectancy in recent years, stark inequalities exist between regions and districts. Too many people’s lifestyles are jeopardising their long term health.
- **There is an exponential rise in people resorting to Food banks**, as a staggering hike in food prices accompanied by a 7,6% in disposable incomes is to be noticed. The food eaten by the poorer is often very bad for health. The scourge of bingedrinking leads for instance to liver disease for old people.



- **The success of Obamacare must be hampered (freiné) by different factors:** breaches in data security have been exploited by unscrupulous insurance of pharmaceutical companies or employers wanting to vet their workforce, doctors have complained of a lack of quality clinical information on patients, people can feel they are getting a raw deal as their health insurance is now costing them more whereas the coverage provided is of a lower standard than before with private health insurance...

## Fiche 21: Trading with China – the ambiguities

- **GB had many interests into reinforcing its relationship with China**, since trade deals between the two countries are worth around 14 billion dollars. GB exports to China are worth 1 billion pounds per month and have doubled between 2008 and 2013. The implementation of a special relationship was evoked by both Premier Li and David Cameron, but the China's strategy aimed at the time at creating free trade agreements with the EU. Britain have also facilitated the visa application process for Chinese, that had previously put off (décourager) many potential travellers: tourists coming to Britain have increased by 90% from 2010 to 2015.
- **But China has complained that some measures implemented by the EU aimed at protecting the European market**, including a 47% duty on imports of Chinese photovoltaic products. The fear of a trade war that would harm both economies is present, as trade between China and the EU is worth 546 billion euros.
- **But human and worker's right are often not respected.** Fox Conn, a subsidiary of Apple, became sadly exposed as imposing inhuman conditions on their workers forced to work up to 69 hours weeks. Even when Apple switched for Pegatron to escape the scandal, the new plants have been involved in new scandals in 2013! This included ID cards that were withheld, people beaten and subjects to threat. The average wage was limited to a dollar and a half per hour.
- **Democratic America owes the largest communist nation in the world more than a trillion dollar!** That is more enough money for China to buy a controlling interest in every major company in the Dow Jones, and still leave billions to spare.

## Fiche 22: The Subprime crisis and the Euro Crisis

- **The Subprime Crisis was set off by the bursting of a real estate bubble** (une bulle immobilière). The high-risk home loans that had been massively granted to insolvent households and their default triggered the collapse of stock market. It resulted of the period from the seventies to the nineties that was an era of complete and unprecedented deregulation of markets, including the removal of the Glass-Steagall act that prohibited the mixing of commercial and investment banking.
- **It also went wrong since the banks created complex derivatives securities**, the most notorious being CDO's (collateralized debt obligations), with which credit risk was converted into derivatives sold on the stock market. It enabled banks to grant home loans and pay out high dividends on securities without having the equity (capital or liquidity) to back up the loans, since the risk has been sold to investors.

- ➔ **After the dotcom crisis and the reeling from the attacks of September 11th**, the Federal Reserve Bank began slashing interest rates, to boost spending and stimulate the sluggish (stagnante) economy. Many homeowners leveraged (s'endetter pour investir) their assets heavily against the future high value of their homes, hoping to refinance after a few years and thus turn a profit. Massive "liar loans" were also taken, since the banks wanted to maintain their profit even though every secured loans had been granted. The government's belief in these gigantic (bank) companies that were "too big to fail" was also a mistake.
- ➔ **The Euro-crisis had similar roots:** the fall of the credit allowed the countries of the South to go into debt, whose debt was not able to stand against the hit of the Subprime crisis.

## Fiche 23: The media and Politics in the US and the UK

- ➔ **Freedom of speech very important**, sacrosanct principle in the Constitution of the US since the First Amendment; even during the Vietnam War, SC ruled that the New York Time had the right to publish the very sensitive so-called Pentagon Papers.
- ➔ **Is it an unofficial "fourth branch" of the government?** The term "Fourth Estate" (Edmond Burke, 1787) makes reference in GB to the Lords Spiritual, the Lords Temporal and the Commons. The media serve this way as a regulatory function, making the government accountable for its decisions. This indeed happened several times in a watchdog tradition, the most famous was the scandal of the Watergate made public by the Washington Post.
- ➔ **The kept objectivity, anonymity of their sources** (main informant of the Watergate only called "Deep Throat", and spoke in public thirty years later. Independent body such as the Press Complaints Commission (PCC) in the UK are meant to keep unscrupulous journalists in check.
- ➔ **To tame (dompter) the media**, every politicians have recourse to spokesman/ woman who are charged to make announces, and more and more "communication advisors".
- ➔ **"Fleet Street" is a street in London which was the home of the British press** until the 1980's, and stills refers to British national press as a metonym.
- ➔ **The Rupert Murdoch scandal of News of the World in 2011 had huge consequences**, as Murdoch was called a kingmaker as he endorsed any political candidate can win the election with his help.
- ➔ **Assange, founder of the WikiLeaks site, responsible to have put online sensitive diplomatic documents and information about the Afghan war**, thinks these online whistle blowing (dénonciation) is in fact a return to the vocation of journalism, facing a press in thrall to (esclave de) establishment, as no newspaper doubted of the Bush intervention in Middle East. But internationally, it's ok: the Guardian published for example the declaration of Snowden.

## Fiche 27: Money in US elections

- **In 1976, the candidates (Carter VS Ford) were authorized by the Federal Election Commission to spend 35 million dollars each.** In 2012, around 7 billion dollars were spent at all by parties, candidates and municipalities, this election thus became the most expansive one in the US history.
- **Before 2010, individuals could donate no more than 1000 dollars to the campaign of a candidate.** Candidates could benefit from public financing, but had to agree to a cap on how much they could spend. In 2010, the Supreme Court ruled that corporations should also have the right to give contributions to fund elections, because giving money was related to a form of free speech, any limit would be a violation of the First Amendment.
- **“Super PACs” (Political Action Committees) are now allowed to collect hundreds of millions of dollars from corporations, unions... to act for one candidate, independently of his campaign.** They flood the political landscape with the staggering amount of money they collect, by advertising or creating events in favour of the candidate.
- **The Amendment was controversial,** denounced by Obama himself “I believe it will open the floodgates for special interests – including foreign corporations – to spend without limits in our elections”. Petitions were signed, with the following protest signs: “Money is Not Speech”, because, they say, the freedom of speech is threatened by these big-money donors.
- **The dissenting movement has not been taken seriously.** In 2014 passed another controversial decision in *McCutcheon VS Federal Election Commission*, which rules that there should not be overall limit on direct campaign contributions.
- **The power of the wealthiest and big corporations is thus reinforced,** even if 50% of Obama’s financial base in 2012 was composed of pivotal (essential) small donors of “Citizens United”.

## Fiche 28: The polarization of US politics

- **When he ran into office in 2008, Obama wanted to “woo a purple America”,** melting at last the blue Republicans and the red Democrats. He quickly realized how difficult it might be.
- **The deadlock of the polarization is old, and reinforced by the economic crisis.** The wedge issues filled the public debates recently, to divide more and more, on the question of gay marriage, religion, gun control or the right to abortion, instead of focusing on bread-and-butter (major) economic issues. The three G’s (Gay/Gun/ God) are used for instance by the Republicans to lure people away from the Democratic Party and energize their own base voters.
- **The Clash between R and D in 2013, on fiscal policy** and how much debt the country can afford, led to the partial shutdown of the government for 15 days and over 800 000 civil servants furloughed (mis à pied). The Republican-dominated House of Representatives has been increasingly aggressive in using the budget process to demand concessions from the Democrats who control the Senate. They used the budget as a bargaining chip (monnaie d’échange) to defund Obamacare.

- **Obama, 2013** : “One faction of one party in one house of congress in one branch of the government shut down major parts of the government all because they didn’t like one law”.

## Fiche 29: Religion and politics in the USA

- **90% of Americans claim to be believer in God.** Politicians are outspoken about their faith, religious experiences, habit of prayer... no self-proclaimed atheist in the Oval Office should be acceptable. However for the US constitution, the government is secular, as the First Amendment says: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof”. There is for Jefferson a “wall of separation” between Church and State, as no religion should be favoured in the political field. In GB, where the Church of England is official state religion, speaking of God in politics is anathema.
- **In the Denis Lacorne work *De la religion en Amérique*, the author identifies two traditions for the evolution of religion in America’s history:** the first one is the Founding Fathers, who embraced rationalism, rejecting obscure and religious traditions. The second one developed in the 19th century, coming back to the Pilgrim Fathers, persecuted for their religion in Europe and saving themselves in the God’s chosen “City on a hill”: the true religion was this way the Protestant Christianity.
- **This contradiction made that prayers are not allowed in school, but children still sing “God bless America” there.** The President swears on the Bible at inaugural ceremonies, upholding a Constitution that promotes the separation of Church and State.
- **Many social movements such as temperance or abolition of women suffrage have all drawn moral authority from religion.** Economic fairness, social justice, was often wed (marié) to Christian ideals, preached from the pulpit (chaire). The catholic Kennedy faced a terrible hurdle to win his election.

## Fiche 30: State’s rights and the rise of the Tea Party

- **Not a political party, but a coalition in 2009 of several groups that thought the federal state was taking too much place in US politics.** Its members are often “RINOs”, Republican In Name Only, thinking the Republican have forgiven the ideal of small government. They tend to be “white, bright and right”, many well- educated and see themselves as being on a cultural mission, but portray Washington as a haven of Ivy League graduates who look down on the average American. They are socially conservative, outspoken about their position to abortion and gay marriage.
- **They remember the Declaration of Independence according to** “whenever any form of Government becomes destructive of these end [Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness], it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government”. But it quick became evident a centralized government was necessary, so that a Constitutional Convention gathered in 1787 to draft a Constitution that would specify the structure of a new federal government. The Bill was finally passed and modified the Constitution, but anti-federalists made opposition, as Thomas Jefferson pledged a society of independent small farmers, whose virtue and ability should not be limited by any federal government. The Fifth Amendment would protect individual rights, by compelling any modification of the Constitution to be approved by 2/3 States.

- **Finally the Tea Party was called** “popular constitutionalism”, as it promotes the idea that the final authority on the interpretation of the constitutional law lies always with the people.

## Fiche 31: The US Constitution and the Supreme Court

- **The president can veto legislation, but Congress may override a presidential veto with a two-third majority vote from both Houses.** The Congress has the power to “advice and consent” as for the choices of the President for the SC justices, and to reject it. A president or a SC justice can be impeached.

- **The enumerated or delegated powers are the 17 Constitution-listed congressional powers**, like dealing with taxation, domestic and foreign trade, army, money, diplomacy and federal budget. Congress can make any law it deems “necessary and proper” to carry out its delegated power, known as the “elastic clause”. All powers not delegated to Congress are explicitly delegated to the state’s jurisdiction. The most famous Amendment:

- 1st prohibits state religion, freedom of press and speech, right to assemble and petition
- 4th protect against unreasonable searches and seizures (prises)
- 6th right to a speedy trial and confrontation of witnesses
- 7th guarantees a trial by jury in civil cases
- 8th prohibits excessive bails (caution pour la prison) and cruel and unusual punishments
- 9th the Constitution does not deny any right not specifically mentioned
- 10th gives the states or the people any power not granted (asquis) to Congress or to the state
- 26th (1971) set the voting age to 18 years.

- **SC is primary an appellate court.** Any state or federal law struck down in the SC establishes Constitutional laws. But the Founding Fathers wanted a flexible document that would endure through the ages. SC finds new right as the society evolves, like the “right to privacy” that is nowhere explicitly mentioned in the Constitution, discovered in the “penumbras”. Judicial review is the process of interpreting the law with a view to articulating individual rights with ever great precision: most famous are the end of segregation at school, the right to contraception, the striking down of the ban on interracial marriages...

- **SC is criticized of overstepping their constitutional authority in order to advance a left-wing agenda**, as they have no judicial restraints, and can thus become judicial activists. For Strict constructionist, SC should only determine the “original intent” of the framers (rédacteurs) of the Constitution.

## Fiche 32: Judicial review VS judicial restraint: interpreting the US Constitution

- **SC selects cases from lower state and federal courts** that it deems significant for the challenges they represent to the rights guaranteed by the Constitution.

- **The authority of the SC derives from an established practice called judicial review**, not until the landmark case of Marbury VS Madison in 1803 that the 9 Justices owned the right to review and invalidate laws passed by Congress.
- **The majority of measures of the second half of the 20th century were in favor of causes espousing progressive left.** So that conservative right-wing groups cried foul, accusing the justices of political bias, of judicial activism, its role should be only to correct oversight. For the progressive, Constitution is a flexible structure whose meaning can change over time.
- **As an antidote to judicial activism**, some advocate judicial restraint, deferring to democratically elected law-making bodies whenever possible, and limit the power of SC to very special cases violating with evidences the law. Some even pledge for constructionism/originalism, interpreting all the time the Constitution as the Founding Fathers were thought to have made it. But isn't it right-wing judicial activism?
- **Question of gay marriage, where SC looked quite uncertain;** in Hollingsworth VS Perry, 2013, SC let the decisions to State court, which abolished an anti-gay- marriage bill.

### Fiche 33: Affirmative Action: from individual rights to identity politics

- **Affirmative Action is promoting particular groups or communities or individuals who have been discriminated against in the past.** The term was first time used by Kennedy in 1961 to reduce racial bias in employment.
- **Some forms of affirmative action have led to accusation of reverse discrimination and had been banned by the SC (Bakke VS University of California, 1978).** Universities in particular demanded to have access to the complete background of a future student, arguing that an institution of higher education has a "compelling interest" in maintaining a diverse student population. However, SC case Gratz VS Bollinger, 2003, made illegal the argument affirmative action should be implemented in order to redress historical inequality.
- **Affirmative Action was a cornerstone (pierre angulaire) of Johnson's vast social program known as the Great Society.** He claimed to seek "not just equality as a right and a theory, but equality as a fact and as a result". This policy fits the principles of the CR activists, who denounced de facto segregation.
- **Identity politics was the name given to the political consciousness-raising of identification of the ethnic/racial/gender minorities.** The doctrine of colorblindness wants the law to apply the same way to everybody. It opposes Chief Justice John Roberts (colorblind) and Justice Sonia Sotomayor who considers AA must be encouraged smartly, as in 1996 a dramatic drop in black and Hispanic enrolment occurred in California subsequent to the ban on racial preferences. Black Justice Clarence Thomas, who benefited from AA, considers promoting people on criteria other than competences is condescending and undermines their credibility.



- **In 2006, the voters of the state of Michigan passed a ballot initiative amending the state constitution and prohibiting any form of preferential treatment.** The SC did not strike the ban, paving the way for other, similar blanket (total) bans on racial preferences.
- **In the wake of Selby VS Holder, 2013, which made illegal the control of the federal state on some State voting process,** several states proposed stricter ID requirement for voter registration. However, a formal identity card is not something the US issues, and a passport is expensive and lengthy. At last, not everybody owns a driver license...
- **Finally, the SC seems to respond to general opinion by progressively abolishing racial preferences.**

## Fiche 34: Self Reliance and the Ownership Society

- **Ralph Waldo Emerson was an American philosopher who, by 1830's, has set out to theorize a distinctly American identity (from Europe).** The school of thought called transcendentalism, both literary and religious movement, that represents a particular strain of Romanticism. It emphasized the need to throw off the shackles of traditions and institutions; as the young country had refused the arbitrary of the King of England. "Society everywhere is in conspiracy against the manhood of every one of its members", wrote Emerson. Self-reliance is still a cultural touchstone for Americans, also represented by the self-made man Douglass.
- **Horatio Alger was a famous writer of the 19th century whose single theme was the tale of young men who rose from rags to riches thanks to hard work.** Andrew Carnegie (1835-1919) was a son of a Scottish immigrant who became "the richest man in the world" whilst being self-taught, by sheer dint of (à force de) hard work and determination.
- **Myth of the self-made man is a key to understand why Americans have proven so tolerant of high levels of income inequality.** Wealth is seen as the just reward of risk-taking and innovation. But they also disrespect discriminations and take "affirmative actions". The Congress also long refused to impose high-taxes on the wealthiest. The notion of the "undeserving poor", though not specific to America, has a particularly resonance in the US.
- **Bush envisioned the Ownership Society as an alternative to the Welfare State.** Individuals must assume both risk and responsibility for their lives in the largest sense; it implied initiatives like loans accessible to everybody to favor home ownership or privatization of the federal pension program known as the Social security. Bush said "The more ownership there is in America, the more vitality there is in America, and the more people have a vital stake in the future of this country".
- **However, a safety net does exist for those who are the most in need;** Medicaid, Medicare and now Obamacare do pay for the health of the poorer Americans, and low-income families can qualify for public aid.

## Fiche 35: US democracy- the shutdown and gerrymandering

- ➔ **After the bitter feud between Rep in the House and the Democrat government over the budget hike (augmentation) to finance Obamacare**, it came to a point Obama was compelled to announce a partial government shutdown. It lasted 16 days. It represented 2bn dollars of lost revenues per day for the economy; non-essential government staff was furloughed or idled (*désœuvré*), as national parks or whole governments departments were closed. Rep remembered the high cost of saving General Motors during Obama's first term of office.
- ➔ **In the US recently, the lack of consensus had evolved into a sort of hyper- partisanship spawning gridlock within American democracy.** According to statistics, the two sessions of Congress 2011 to 2012 and 2013 to 2014 have been the less productive for decades, failure after failure to legislate, due to healthcare reforms or firearm control. In 2014, Obama asserted his intention to govern more directly and independently since consulting Parliament inevitably has led to stalemate. Some political commentators have been scathing about what they term "Republican nihilism" and "Obama hatred".
- ➔ **In the 2012 congressional elections, Democrat House candidates received 1.4 millions more votes than Republican opponents but won fewer seats in the House, due to gerrymandering** (*decoupage des circonscriptions électorales*). But this means there is less competitions between parties and less likelihood (probability) of pressure for candidates to be moderate in order to woo voters. As Voltaire said, "I do not agree with you but will defend to the death your right to say it".

## Fiche 36: Enduring poverty in the US

- ➔ **15% of Americans live at or below the poverty line, and the US has the second highest rate if child poverty among developed nations.** Inequality rose these past decades, despite the Johnson's plan of waging "war" to poverty in 1964. According to Sasha Abramsky, the American Way of Poverty, this situation is not the result of an act of god or nature, but rather the consequences of man-made decisions. General public and some policy-makers see poverty as a sign of moral failure or idleness ( *paresse*) on the part of the individual. The 19th century British New Poor Law of 1834 separated poor between deserving (old, sick, handicapped...) and undeserving (able-bodied, alcoholics and addicts). Mitt Romney claimed in 2012 that 47% of Americans were "dependent on the US government". Abramsky, a Republican presented in 2014 the program of his party in which he proposed large cuts in welfare programs to force people to "find a job".
- ➔ **The current economic crisis led to the dramatic increase of what economists refer to as the working poor, people who must live paycheck to paycheck.** In 2010, nearly 60% of poor households had at least one person working. But at minimum wage, even a single person would barely earn enough to raise him or herself above the poverty line; not to mention a family of four. Programs like food stamps (income complement that can only be used to purchase food) or Earned Income tax credit (a tax-break that encourages people to work) are often cited as preventing many from slipping into extreme poverty; but also criticized for being corporate welfare (*aide sociale aux entreprises*), subsidizing companies so they can continue paying their employees low wages. Professor David Dante Troutt, *The Price of Paradise*, demonstrates the direct link between rising poverty in America and a decline in equality of opportunity and social mobility, as the US has become one of the least socially mobile nations in the developed world.

## Fiche 37: technological unemployment: the race against the machine

- ➔ **“Technological unemployment” was the name given by economists and industry specialist to this new form of unemployment fostered by the use of robots;** they argue it was a major cause of America’s “jobless recovery” following the Great Recession in 2008.
- ➔ **According to Brynjolfsson and McAfee, The Second Machine Age, this is only the beginning of the replacement of human by machines,** as for instance Amazon and others internet companies now have 50 to 60 robots replacing hundreds of human workers, or as hospitals around the US now use Kiva robots that carry meals to patients and dirty linen (linge/drap) to the laundry.
- ➔ **However, computer leaning, otherwise known as Artificial Intelligence,** with the help of supercomputers and algorithms that model the way human brain processes information, can do more and more complex tasks. Moreover, six of the world’s ten most valuable companies are IT (information technology) firms and everyday there is the new of innovative start-up being bought by Apple, Google, Microsoft or Amazon.
- ➔ **Remembers the early 19th century Luddites staged a machine-breaking rebellion over justified fears that the innovation weaving technology was going to destroy their jobs.** “Luddite” means, to this day, somebody afraid of technological advancement. But there are also circles of destructions and reconstructions, as the English Agricultural Revolution of the first part of the 19th century which displaced the vast majority of the country workforce, roughly (à peu près) coincided with the Industrial Revolution.
- ➔ **But this can also destroy every low-paid jobs, and annihilating opportunities for mid and low classes, whose education is not efficient enough.** In the US, jobs that entail (impliquent) data collection or analysis represent 60% of the job market. Finally, the risk is also that more high-skills jobs means more high wages, as the middle classes don’t found any new jobs and inequalities rise dramatically. The GAFA employ together less than 150 000 people, which is fewer than the number of people entering the US job market each month.

## Fiche 38: The American Dream

- ➔ **For philosopher Jacob Needleman, happiness seems to have evolved over time to mean the opportunity to thrive** (prosper) and has now come to stand for the rather egotistical pursuit of pleasure. Originally, there was no “pursuit of happiness” for the Founding Fathers, according to Needleman, without virtue.
- ➔ **The US writer and historian Truslow Adams, 1931, The Epic of America, defined the American Dream as the one** “of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability and achievement [...] regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position”. It was reused by Obama in 2008 for instance, who maintained that everyone should have the right to personal fulfillment, but with equal opportunity.
- ➔ **After WW2 and Great Depression, the Dream toned down** (s’atténuer) to a simple version of being able to break into the middle class and providing a better life for one’s children.

- **Today, more and more people, especially poor, don't trust this American Dream in the US.** "The American Dream has become a myth" for economist Joseph Stiglitz, who warns in *The Price of Inequality* that social tensions will arise if the issue is not addressed.

## Fiche 39: Education in the US

- **According to the 1999 Moser report, more than 20% of the American population is "functionally illiterate", VS 13% in Germany.** 1/5 of secondary school leavers drop out of school without a diploma. Americans pupils score poorly in science, ranking last of 50 developed countries in physics, second to last in maths. 29% percent college freshmen have to attempt remedial courses in the 3 Rs. Moreover, facing an ever-increasing feeling of insecurity and violence, school authorities have been experimenting a new weapon to fight again bad behaviour at school: "zero tolerance" thereby even the slightest act of misconduct is considered as an act of aggression and should therefore be punished. Education thus became the number one priority of Bush and Al Gore during 2000 presidential campaign.

- **No Child Left Behind Act of 2001** aimed at making sure that state school provided every American child with an adequate level of education through standardized tests. However, there is no national curriculum in the US so that the Southern States of the "Bible Belt" teach creationism at school, whose textbooks include "In the beginning, God created the Heavens and the Earth". However reforms have made possible a real and conscious choice of school for families:

- Charter schools are state funded school with a large amount of autonomy and a charter granted by the State for 3 to 5 years. They are similar to English "free school".
- Magnet school have a particular subject to attract students, like foreign languages.
- Choice schools are relevant to a scheme that allows family to choose a school outside their catchment area
- Voucher school makes reference to a controversial reform whereby parents can receive voucher (bon, chèque éducation) from the US government to send their children to a school outside their catchment area. If some argue it gives opportunities for the most underprivileged fringe of the population and encourages every schools to improve their standards to catch up (rattraper) with their rivals, others see this as a violation of the First Amendment whereby no religion should be favored.

- **Every university has its own selection criteria.** In the university, students are first year freshmen, then sophomore, then junior, then senior, so they can validate their Bachelor's degree. Then they are graduate students, and can go to Master and Doctoral.

- **Ivy League universities of the North East are Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Brown, Columbia, Cornell, Dartmouth and the University of Pennsylvania**

## Fiche 40: The origins of Commonwealth

- ➔ **The acquisition of colonies in the late 16th century would enable Britain to access valuable resources and to stand up to the great and threatening power of Catholic Spain.** In its heyday (âge d'or) it covered about a quarter of the world, and it was said that "the sun never sets" on the British Empire. The earliest successful colony of England was in Virginia, North America. In the late Victorian age, they participated in the "scramble for Africa", seizing (s'emparer de) control of large parts of the continent.
- ➔ **In the mid-19th century, the white English of Canada, Australia and New Zealand asked for the right to govern themselves,** as they felt full Briton, but wanted their right to be recognized. Remembering the Independence war in the US, England accepted.
- ➔ **They benefited the status of "dominion", as the interference of the British government were meant to be very little.** The Irish joined this status in 1922. In the 1926 Balfour declaration, the different states were defined strictly "equal in status [...] though united by a common allegiance to the Crown, and freely associated as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations". The 1931 Statute of Westminster confirmed the complete independence of the Dominions, associated with the UK by choice.
- ➔ **The "New Commonwealth" of the 1949 London Declaration involved India as a free independent state.** The Commonwealth is no longer a white's club, as it was then joined by almost every former British colony. Some like India however refused to recognize the Crown as the symbolic head of State.
- ➔ **Today the Commonwealth is a loose, free association of 53 sovereign states encompassing (englobant) all the world's continents.** They are bound together by different traditions and, in principle, a commitment to the fundamental values of democracy, human right and equality.

## Fiche 41: Commonwealth organizations

- ➔ **The Commonwealth of Nations is an international association of 53 states** that would be better defined as a network, as it covers much more than international relations.
- ➔ **Before 1965, the administrative matters of Commonwealth relations were handled by Britain,** but the need of independency for most members made the situation unacceptable, and all finally agreed to the establishment of a Secretariat General, in 1965. It "should not arrogate to himself executive functions". It has made Commonwealth relations more multilateral. It is an administrative heart, organized into divisions dedicated each to specific areas, like politics, economic policy, health, education... even though it operated with a very small budget.
- ➔ **The Commonwealth Foundation was also created in 1965, to reflect the fact the Commonwealth was before anything else an association of peoples.** It first organized meetings for professionals who wanted to share their particular skills and knowledges. Then, it progressively enlarged its cope to help NGOs (ONG) and all voluntary associations in many fields. It promoted dialog between civils and governments in 1997 with the co-organization of the Commonwealth People's Forum.

- **Other organization stemmed from (venir de, découler de) former imperial organizations**, like the Commonwealth Games Federation, organizing Commonwealth multi-sport events every four years. The CoL (Commonwealth of Learning) aims at improving the access to quality education, including the development of open and distance learning resources.

## Fiche 43: Commonwealth multilateral co-operation for development

- **The Commonwealth contains some 2 bn people – about one third of the world population.** In the Singapore declaration of principles of 1971, multilateral co-operation was proclaimed the best means both to alleviate poverty and to contribute to better solidarity among Commonwealth nations – the idea is to reduce the gap between the rich and the poor.
- **The CFTC is an organism by which assistance programs are financed funded on a voluntary basis.** The contributors are both donors and recipients, and South-South collaboration is encouraged (even if top contributors are developed countries).
- **The projects fund by the CFTC are various,** from assisting bank development in some area, to strengthening public institutions in their struggles against corruption, by for instance appointing a justice (un juge) to the High Court of Swaziland, to strengthen the efficiency and legitimacy of the Swazi judiciary. The system often functions by sending experts, who help locals to manage by their own.

## Fiche 44 : The Ageing Society

- **The Beatles, “Will you still love me, will you still need me, when I’m 64?”**. These lyrics represent the plight (situation précaire) of old age pensioners in western society, especially in GB. The basic state pensions alone are limited to 80 pounds per month, as many private pension plans failed to deliver the necessary dividends. The neglect of old people’s basic human right is alarming, when many have to squander (dilapider, dépenser) their life-savings and or sell their own homes to cover the cost of going into care.
- **The Southern Cross scandal in 2010 underlined the extreme vulnerability of senior citizens within the British health service,** but also a lot within private care homes, where some of their staff abused patients. The austerity made that Age UK estimated at 25 000 the number of elderlies who died of cold for fear of paying their bills in 2012.
- **Seniors are not well considered,** as recent government has tried to implement a mandatory retirement age at 67 to make older employees redundant (licenciés, inutiles, superflus). It is degrading their dignity and making them easy target for muggers and rip-off merchants.
- **However, according to statisticians, the proportion of over-sixties in Britain is growing faster than any other group,** due to demography and the improvement of health services. Many see as an Eldorado living their retirement time in France or Spain, where the housing market is fluctuating.



- **The power that be (les autorités) however try some things**, as for instance one housing scheme enables elderly homeowners to provide affordable accommodation to young students in return for services rendered. One can hope as all is not doom and gloom for the elderlies in Britain; life expectancy is higher and retired people are more active and healthier than ever before.

## Fiche 45: Whistleblowing

- **Whistleblowing is the action of exposing illegal or immoral practices in society in order to sound the alarm and raise public awareness to injustice.** People like Mrs Bigelow (the American film producer who caused a stir by including explicit scenes of torture perpetrated by the US army in order to obtain vital intelligence information so as to locate and eliminate Bin Laden) or Michael Moore (producer of Bowling for Columbine) defended their actions on the ground they were serving public interest. Internet helps these whistleblowers, as the information moves faster and recent legislation like the Freedom of Act which enables a much faster more complete access to often sensitive information.
- **The New Internationalist of Wikileaks of Assange have sworn to hunt down all sorts of abuses of power or irregularities.** Sensitive information about the high security Guantanamo bay camp have been published on the Internet for all to see.
- **But they can be criticized, as the diet of Morgan Spurlock in Super Size Me is not very representative of the consummation of the average American.** But Sugarland is... Whatever, whistleblowers can be accused of presenting one side arguments, as Michael Moore seems wanting to put the society on trial.
- **But they often risk high, especially in non-democratic countries;** Steve Biko, an activist in South Africa whose story was related by the movie Cry Freedom; managed to use the arena of a trial to denounce the injustices and inhumanity of the Apartheid system. He was then beaten to death in prison. And even a white journalist wrote a book to denounce this horrible story, ha too was forced to flee the country with his family.

## Fiche 46: The Prism and its repercussions

- **News in 2013 that US National Security Agency has collected data from major tech firms and the US authorities have spied on allies and hostile regimes** alike have raised question about privacy. The Prism schemes, Snowden's documents revealed, made the government able to access details of smartphone and internet activity. Companies like Verizon Business Network were ordered by a secret federal court to turn over details of phone calls.
- **Civil liberties advocates say the measures are unacceptable intrusions**, when supporters say they are legal and have yielded evidence that has helped stop terror plots.
- **Merkel told Obama that the surveillance tapping of her cellphone by the NSA was “like the Stasi”, the infamous East German secret police.** But the NSA refused to promise Merkel to exclude Germany from its surveillance scope! If the NSA had agreed, NSA said, other US partners would have asked the same thing.
- **On can say that breaches over privacy are violations of the Fourth Amendment...** which protects any citizens “against unreasonable searches and seizures”.

## Fiche 47: Fair play in sport

- ➔ **The adage for it is “participating that matters”** seems rather quaint in a world of tough professional sports in which huge sums of money depend on the outcome of matches. One can think of the Luis Suarez biting incident in the 2014 World Cup against Italy. Dishonesty in sport is something we are very well accustomed to, from the drug-taking east European athlete of the cold war period.
- ➔ **Even the quintessentially well-behaved world of cricket was in 2014 made dirty by pressures on the players**, and in 1939 during the body line tour of Australia, the bowlers aimed not at the batsmen’s stumps but at the batsmen’s bodies in a period where effective protective equipment was unavailable. One batsman was fatally injured by a ball from Larwood. The modern game of cricket has developed phenomenon such as “sledging”, meaning trying to intimidate an opponent on the field by using insults to affect their performances.
- ➔ **The term “Bodyline”, from this competition where so less fair play was to be observed, carries the stench of underhand or unsportsmanlike behavior.**
- ➔ **The racism can be present**, as Suarez was found guilty of racial abuses against Patrice Evra, and suspended for eight matches and fined 40 000 pounds by the British Football association.
- ➔ **The case of Lance Armstrong**, who admit he had doped himself to win seven times Le Tour de France, represents that doping is kind of part of the sport and allows sportsmen to represent a beautiful story as to Lance Armstrong who rose from testicular cancer to winner and founder of a cancer charity dubbed Livestrong.

## Fiche 48: Food security and sustainable growth

- ➔ **The year 2007-2008 saw the Subprime crisis and the onset (beginning) of massive food riots** across the Middle East, North Africa, South Asia and in some countries of Sub-Saharan Africa: a global rice shortage coincided with a sharp hikes in the prices of staple (de base) crops.
- ➔ **Is economic growth related to food security, as pledges the FAO with a “wide consensus”?** The three major international food price spikes within five years (2005, 2007, 2011) call into question this assumption. Food security was defined in 1996 by the World Food Summit as existing when “all people at all times have access to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life”.
- ➔ **Industry can be responsible, as the UN food agencies have concluded that by diverting (détourner) 40% of US corn to produce ethanol** for example, the effort to reduce the impact of dirty fuels on the climate has instead massively contributed to world hunger. Moreover, the food riots of 2007-2008 were overwhelmingly in countries with high rates of urbanization: more important in Egypt than in Niger.
- ➔ **Deregulation of the 1980’s and 1990’s made possible for banks and food companies to buy up rare food commodities** when food shortage loomed on the horizon, so that they drive up prices and create a bubble they then cash in on by selling out before price drop. The World Development Movement estimated that Barclays makes up to 340 million pounds a year from speculating on foodstuffs.

- **World leaders like Cameron** increasingly speak about “well-being” as a more accurate measure of a country’s prosperity.

## Fiche 49: Globalization and its detractors

- **Globalization refers to a recent, sharp increase in the interplay and interdependence among nation-state.** Bretton-Woods or GATT agreements abolished a lot of borders and helped this process. Canadian professor Marshall McLuhan used the term “global village” to describe the world that had emerged thanks to new technologies. Journalist Thomas Friedman, *The World is Flat*, 2006, called the globalizing force the flattening of the world (l’applatissage du monde). But globalization is also cultural, promotion of the Americanized McCulture and mass consumer culture. One can finally see it as the promotion of capitalism worldwide.
- **Naomi Klein, No Logo, 1999, became something of a manifesto for the anti- globalization movement.** She describes every intergovernmental organization as pro-free market think-tank. First large scale anti-globalization protest was launched at the World Trade Organization conference in Seattle, Washington in 1999. At the 2001 Genoa summit, demonstrations degenerated into riots, looting and police brutality, leaving one activist dead. Other pamphlets continued the movement, as the one of Stéphane Hessel, *Indignez-vous / Time for Outrage*. The movement Occupy Wall Street is one of the most famous.
- **Corporate bosses now make more than 110 times the salary of the average worker, up from 40 times the average 25 years ago.** Some argue that the low-paid unskilled jobs that have disappeared are being made up for (compenser) by the creation of higher paying skilled work in different sectors, a process known fondly (affectueusement) as “creative destruction”.
- **It is finally worth mentioning** that, as the emerging economies develop their standards of living, some outsourced manufacturing jobs are now beginning to return “home” to the US, where transportation is cheap and unemployment has hit record highs, creating a new source of low-cost manpower.

## Fiche 50: Technology and Power

- **Some argue that ICT in general and social media have ushered in (inaugurer) a paradigm shift, utterly (complètement, tout à fait) transforming the nature of power itself.** The social media are indeed organized horizontally, as the Internet undermines traditional hierarchy. For instance, the online campaigning organization Avaaz harnesses (exploiter) the Web’s power by raising awareness in the free World and enabling citizen’s voices to be heard. The so-called Saffron revolution in Myanmar in 2007 was given a boost by photographs taken on cell phones and published on the web that even government’s media blackout could not censor. ICT have thus done almost as much as protest itself to pave the way for the democratic reforms now underway in Burma.
- **However, digital activism can also foster terrorism.** Ill-intentioned hackers can wreak havoc (causer des ravages) in no time and at little cost. Moreover, Nobel Peace Prize Liu Xiaobo may have been enabled to organize an anti-government petition (Charter 08), but these same technologies enabled the government to put him in jail.

- **Some denounce the online campaigns that artificially create the illusion of political activism, calling them slacktivism (activisme paresseux).** Social media must only be a support for a real campaign that occurs in the reality; and the CR movement didn't wait social media, as other meaningful, even revolutionary, political protest and social change effected from the bottom up, remarked Malcom Gladwell in The New Yorker.
- **Consumers can also use ICT for their own means;** Oxfam, for instance, has launched an online drive called "Behind the Brands" to influence the food industry to produce and market goods ethically, but also to put pressure on Big Food companies and hold their suppliers accountable for human right abuses or for polluting the earth.
- **Crowd sourcing refer to systems where anonymous contributors provide free content for general public consumption,** like Wikipedia or Facebook. These are said to give little to reward creators, and undermine the very notion of intellectual property. Jaron Lanier, You Are Not a Gadget, a digital pioneer who coined the term "virtual reality" and one sang the praises of open culture, now condemns what he calls "digital Maoism". He argues that by insisting information must be free, profits now must only be derived from private information harvesting and advertising.

## Fiche 51: Corporate fraud-Enron as a case study

- **On December 2nd 2001,** corporate America –Enron, the Texas energy trading giant, one of the top 10 Fortune 500 US companies, filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcies, which came a surprise to millions of people and investors who had thought the company was doing well. The company indeed fiddled (truquer) its figures of big liabilities (pertes). Almost 4000 joint venture (associées) companies have been set up (prise au piège) with Enron.
- **The attitude of CEO Kenneth Lay came in for much criticism,** as he had been advising his staff to buy stock which he qualified as an "incredible bargain" (occasion en or), while he was himself selling stocks. He died of a heart attack in 2006 about three and a half months before he was supposed to be sent to prison.
- **The consequences where for these millions of Americans who had secured pensions funds in a company which had now become worthless overnight (du jour au lendemain).** This affair is tantamount (equivalent) to corporate fraud and has been a blow (choc) to American capitalism. Critics have aroused concerning the high power of American bosses, especially as Kenneth Lay combined the roles of chairman (president) and CEO. The British example tends for example to differentiate the roles.
- **Companies like Worldcom and Global Crossing** followed the same pattern as Enron, tampering (fausser) with their performance figures and going bankrupt.
- **The Sarbanes-Oxley act, in 2002,** aims at protecting the investor against another financial scandal by creating a PCAOB – Public Company Accounting Oversight Board, auditing accounts (surveiller les comptes).

## Fiche 52: the Glass Ceiling

- ➔ **A mere 21% of parliamentarians worldwide are female and in the corporate sector**, the percentage of women at the top remains less than 16%. It can be explained by the fact society values breadwinner dad and a caregiver mom.
- ➔ **Anne-Marie Slaughter in a 2012 article in The Atlantic says** women with a family have a hard time getting access to the most prestigious positions, as the proportion of men and women working more than fifty hours a week has increased since the late 1970's, making impossible for both parents to enjoy professional success and a true commitment to their family.
- ➔ **For Sheryl Sandberg, Lean In, chief operating officer of Facebook**, explains that it is abnormal only 4% of CEOs in America's top 500 companies are women, whereas women had more college degrees than men for 30 years. The reason for Sandberg is that women have always been told to hold back on being too successful and tend to downplay their accomplishments. They turn down more opportunities and play it too safe. There is an "ambition gap": "Do not lean back, lean in", she says.
- ➔ **In 1952, every income above 1 million was taxed 92% under Eisenhower**; in the 1980's it was 28% with Reagan. Reagan also argued for self-regulated market, massive selling off and privatizations of public assets, strict budgetary control (balanced budget and austerity). The shift from one consensus to the other was due to series of social and economic crisis in the US and Britain, to increased globalization that provoked greater dependence of foreign goods to meet domestic demand, and the fact Hayek's and Friedman's theory appeared as a supported alternative ready to take its place.
- ➔ **Moreover, Politics has become a mere technical issue of managing the established order, a domain reserved for experts**. These people appear more and more aloof from the average man, whereas the financial sector has taken a big leap and was not regulated though it proved its limits during the 2008-crisis that impoverished more people, including a significant part of the middle-class. People saw inequalities take a big rise and these people are more likely to understand that politics is always partisan and require an us/them confrontation.
- ➔ **"Pundits [experts] talk about populist rage as a way to trivialize the anger and fear that is coursing through the middle class"**, E Warren, democrat US senator from Massachusetts.
- ➔ **However, for F Fukuyama in 2016, "populism is the label that political elites attach to policies supported by ordinary citizens that they don't like (...)** The American political system has in fact suffered from substantial decay, and it will not be fixed unless popular anger is linked to wise leadership and good policies. It is still not too late for this to emerge". Populism can thus also refer to looking ahead and making great reforms like the New Deal.
- ➔ **T Friedman**, "when you were a white male growing up in the 60s 70s and 80s in the US, you actually needed a plan to fail. Today, you need a plan to succeed".