

Examens écrits session 2 – semestre 2 – 2024-2025

Langue : Anglais	Niveau : 4	Durée : 1 h 30
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Mishma Nixon, “Social Media Activism Can Work, but We Don’t Need to Shame People Into It” – *Teen Vogue*, 02/03/2021

§1 Every time I open Twitter, I am hit with a deluge of information about a new international crisis or incident. Sometimes these are big events that take over everything, no matter what niche community you are part of. But most of the time, global events don’t receive the same attention as something like the Capitol attack in Washington, DC.

§2 This dynamic can be frustrating. We can talk for ages about how global and Western media tends to focus on the U.S., as if the rest of the world doesn’t matter enough. Trust me, as a citizen of Sri Lanka — a third world country that is plagued by corruption, discrimination, and violent censorship — who attends college in the U.S., I understand that frustration completely. What I don’t understand is the expectation that ordinary citizens have to become passionate activists in response to every global event.

§3 People always say: “No one’s talking about this,” in which “this” can mean a lot of different things – the Uyghur genocide in China, a coup in Myanmar, violence in Syria... But what good does it do to simply talk about these events? If I retweet a thread with some petitions and donation links, will I sleep better at night thinking I’ve done my part? Or should I share some informational slides on my Instagram stories, with no sources but lots of pretty colors?

§5 Of course, social media activism can be useful. Of course it can’t always be discounted as performative. In a 2020 paper in *Science*, professors Deen Freelon, Alice Marwick, and Daniel Kreiss showed that social media activism is a complement for offline engagement, like voting and protesting. In fact, their research showed that “sharing information about politics on social media predicted offline political activities – such as attending political meetings, contacting public officials, and donating money to campaigns.”

§6 Still, this does not mean that everyone needs to be a social media activist. Activists do lifelong work; they train, organize, and constantly face the consequences of their efforts. What good is your activism if you are forced into it? Why do we want every influencer, celebrity, member of our respective fandoms, and random mutuals to be calling out every injustice across the world?

§7 Global activism is rather different from national activism. Though I might know enough to post about a political crisis in Sri-Lanka, I probably shouldn’t be posting about the Yellow Vests’s protest in France without doing some background reading. Expecting ordinary people to become familiar with a specific country’s geopolitics overnight isn’t realistic.

§8 To understand and develop an informed opinion about the depth of a crisis in a country, you need to have a grasp of the political, historical, and cultural context of the situation and the place, which is no easy feat. Not to mention, the information you find online may be biased, censored, and manipulated by various political parties.

§9 Does this mean you shouldn't care about or discuss global issues? It's not my intention to tell you that you have to stay silent in situations like this, especially if you have the platform and knowledge to make real change. My point is, we shouldn't expect *everyone* to speak up on *every single issue*. Time and time again, I see some teen influencer posting some half-hearted, obligatory message about a global event they don't really seem to care about. We're left with people posting out of a sense of moral superiority, a culture of shame and guilt, with a complete disregard for the reality that not everyone can be a (good) activist.

§10 It can be more valuable to devote yourself to a few issues you care most about — educate yourself, invest time and energy, learn from others in the movement — rather than dipping your toe in every world crisis. As we've seen during the pandemic, as mutual aid networks sprang up to provide groceries and support to neighbors, helping the people in your community is often where you can really make a difference.

§11 "Silence is violence" is another phrase often thrown around on social media, accompanied by a quote from a random activist. But what is the definition of silence? What exactly counts as not speaking up? When our lives seem to be surrounded by conflict every day, how is it fair to expect people to possess the kind of knowledge and resources that could empower them to really participate and then deal with the consequences of doing so?

I. WRITTEN COMPREHENSION

a. General comprehension [4 points]

*Briefly answer the questions below. Answer in your own words: **do not quote the text.***

1. What does the author generally mean when she mentions the "culture of shame and guilt" around online activism (§9) ? [2 points]
2. According to the author, what would be a good way of taking part in online activism? [2 points]

b. Detailed comprehension [2 points]

*Say whether the following statements are true or false. **Justify your answer** with a brief reference to the text (paragraph number and first words of the sentence).*

1. Research shows that people who take part in online activism never take concrete action. [0.5 point]
2. The media treats all global events with equal attention. [0.5 point]
3. Influencers always care deeply about the global issues they post about. [0.5 point]
4. The author herself feels unsure about posting about other countries' issues. [0.5 point]

II. VOCABULARY AND GRAMMAR

a. Word-match [2 points]

Match the words in list A (from the text) to their synonyms in list B. Watch out, **some words in list B should not be matched**.

List A

- A) censorship
- B) expectation
- C) calling out
- D) half-hearted

List B

- 1) publicly criticizing
- 2) the suppression of news
- 3) something you hope will happen
- 4) ill
- 5) without real interest
- 6) a type of boat
- 7) dividing

b. The passive voice [2 points]

Complete the sentence using the correct form of the passive voice. Make sure to use the right tense.

1. The email (send) yesterday. [0.5 point]
2. The bridge (build) by 2027. [0.5 point]
3. These photos on the table (take) by my friend. [0.5 point]
4. The hotel was closed because it (renovate). [0.5 point]

III. WRITTEN EXPRESSION [10 points]

Choose **one of the two subjects** below and write a 200-word essay (+/- 10%). Your answer should be based on well-organized arguments and **examples**.

- A. The author says it's better to focus on a few issues you care about to create real change in the world (§10). Do you think this is good advice? Why/why not?
- B. The text refers to the dangers of "performative activism." Do you think many people post online just to look or feel good? Why or why not?