Teaching American Cultures in UIBE:
What We have done and What we might do

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• Part one: report of teaching American history
• Part two: tentative thoughts for teaching American business
Part one: report of teaching American history

- Teaching method: task/project-based
- Reasons:
  - 1. previous knowledge of American history
  - 2. inefficacy of presentation in general
- Solution: translation
- Purpose: to compel students to learn about American history on their own instead of serving them everything on the plate
- goal:
  - 1. to improve their language skill
  - 2. to learn American history in translation
The situation in early times

• At the time of Tocqueville and Beaumont’s arrival, the population of the United States was roughly 13 million people (along with 2 million slave), divided among 24 states. Development beyond the Mississippi River was nearly non-existent. Much of of upper Michigan and of Ohio was still wilderness. President Andrew Jackson was in the final year of his first term. Abraham Lincoln was twenty-two; Emerson, twenty-eight; Thoreau, fourteen; Melville, twelve. The population of New York City was 120,000. The country, though no longer in its infancy, had scarcely advanced much beyond its childhood.
•托克维尔和博蒙抵达之时，美国人口约为一千三百万（另有两百万的奴隶），分布在24个州中。那时，密西西比河以西的地区尚未开发，密歇根州的北部和俄亥俄州的大部分仍是一片荒芜。安德鲁·杰克逊总统（美国第7任总统1828-1836 the seventh president, 1828-1836)........
• Picture to yourself, my dear friend, if you can, a society which comprises all the nations of the world—English, French, German: people differing from one another in language, in beliefs, in opinions; in a word, a society possessing no roots, no memories, no prejudices, no routine, no common ideas, no national character, yet with a happiness a hundred times greater than ours. (Tocqueville’s letter to Ernest de Chabrol)
Presidential elections

• “As the election draws near, intrigues intensify, an agitation increases and spreads. The citizens divide into several camps, each behind its candidate. A fever grips the entire nation. The election becomes the daily grist of the public papers, the subject of private conversation, the aim of all activity, the object of all thought, the sole interest of the moment.” And then it is over, and “ardor dissipates, calm is restored, and the river, having briefly overflowed its banks, returns peacefully to its bed.”
Indians

• Along the way, they spotted many Indians—here of the Iroquois tribe—as they would throughout their trip. The Indian Removal Act, forcing Indians to move westwards, had been passed in 1830 with strong support from President Jackson. ... Tocqueville admired the aristocratic grandeur of bearing of the Indians, even in their degraded state, but recognized that they were already a doomed people.
Historical figures

• Among his and Beaumont’s fellow passengers were a bereft and bedraggled group of Choctaw Indians and a Virginian named Sam Houston, who would soon establish his fame as first president and then governor of Texas.
Paratextual approach: translation note

• Translation notes are required for the proper names in the text, including what, when, how, where and who.

• Resources: wikipedia, relevant articles, historical books (citation is required for every proper term),
Paratextual approach: translation note

- Objectives for providing translation notes:
- 1. to understand the terms better by placing them in its rich semantic context
- 2. to develop students’ ability to find relevant info (online and library resources)
- 3. to develop their critical thinking (judging on their own the relevance of extratextual info to textual elements)
- 4. to raise their academic awareness (giving proper citation)
• **Ex. The federalists**

• **Samuel Houston** (March 2, 1793 – July 26, 1863) was an American politician and soldier, best known for his role in bringing Texas into the United States as a constituent state. His victory at the Battle of San Jacinto secured the independence of Texas from Mexico. (wikipedia)
Paratextual approach: Translation notes


PART Two
A Tentative Plan for teaching American Business

• Plan one:
• Talking about American business by eliciting certain keywords
• **Labor:**

• **Retailing:**
  - Walmart: high cost and low price (documentary)

• **Marketing:**

• **Branding:**
  - Naomi Klein. *No logo.* Picador, 2009
  - The corporation (2003) - documentary

• **Big Data and Just-in-time delivery:**
  - A case study of Amazon
• Plan B:
• A historical account of American business by seeing the development of American economy as problem+solution circulation