

For CSC 103: How Computers Work, Fall 2005

The World is Flat – Thomas Friedman

- Radio broadcast URL:
<http://minnesota.publicradio.org/radio/features/2005/05/collaboration/>
- Note that you may need to copy and paste this URL into your browser because it tends to create an error if you simply click it
- In class on October 6, we will listen to the first part of this radio broadcast – from about 14 minutes up to the 23 minute mark (the end of the intro and just up to where Friedman begins discussing his ‘ten flatteners’)

Assignment

- For **October 13th**, listen to the rest of the radio broadcast *up to* the end of Thomas Friedman’s talk, and the beginning of the question and answer period (from about the 23 minute mark, up to about the 1 hour, 1 minute mark) → so you have about 40 minutes to listen to on your own
- On October 13th, we will have a discussion/debate in class, using this radio broadcast as the starting point for ideas
- Therefore, for October 13th **bring a 1 to 2 page essay** to hand in and to use for discussion, based on the thoughts below *plus your own thoughts from listening to the broadcast*
 - Each of you will be part of a specific group, with a specific topic to think about and write about
- The process:
 - We will first break into small groups to focus on what Friedman says, and critique his discussion
 - We will then mix up the groups to share ideas
 - Finally, we will come together, to share the big ideas and insights

Topics for groups

- What will the ‘real’ IT revolution look like? How will we experience it?
 - What is meant by ‘the IT revolution’ as we have lived it to date?
 - How has it changed the human experience so far?
 - What will the IT revolution look like in the future and how will it be changing the human experience then?
 - (Feel free to write fiction for this if that is where the ideas lead you)
- Critique Friedman’s discussion with respect to the three eras of globalization, and his ten flatteners
 - To what extent is it true/not true that in our current era (‘Globalization 3.0’) the *individual* is the agent of globalization
 - Are countries (governments) and corporations no longer agents of globalization? Are they lesser agents?

- Is it true that the trend currently is that the individual is the most important agent of globalization, or is the trend toward some other entity being the most important agent?
- Do you *disagree* with the importance of any of the ‘flatteners’ Friedman presents? Why?
- In the Q&A session (which you do not need to listen to – though this is the first Q&A), Friedman states that one of the most important changes the US culture needs is a greater focus on education
 - He acknowledges the need to learn ‘facts,’ ‘things,’ ... ‘subjects’
 - YET – he states that *learning to learn* and *learning to love learning* are the most important elements missing from our culture’s view of education
 - Do you agree/disagree with this opinion? Why?
 - What is the role of computers and networking technologies in both helping and hindering education?

Food for Thought While Listening to the Broadcast

- What are the 10 flatteners?
 - Which flattener(s) seem the most important to you? Why?
 - Do you disagree with any of Friedman’s analysis?
 - Would you add anything to his analysis?
 - Did he miss any phases or smaller elements of globalization? (recent ones?)
 - How is it that these technologies (computer, the internet...) change our lives
 - Which changes are for the better?
 - Which changes are for the worse?
- Critiquing Friedman’s thesis
 - Friedman’s analysis is very business/corporation oriented → what about the other aspects of life that are affected by these new technologies?
 - What is the likelihood of the US population accepting the changes required to compete successfully in this new world?
 - What actually is changing that might make our position in the world (strongest economy and high standard of living) precarious?
 - What are some of the changes we would need to accept/adopt in order to not succumb to a lower standard of living and a weaker economy?
 - What might accepting these changes mean
 - for our lifestyle?
 - for our view of ourselves?
 - for our view of the USA’s role in the world?
- What might be the next, new technologies, and how might they change our lives?
 - Carly Fiorina, HP’s ex-CEO, claims that we are only at the end of the *beginning* of the IT revolution → what then will the real IT revolution look like?
- **Thinking ahead to our discussion on artificial intelligence, how might intelligent machines affect our lives and change the course of the IT revolution?**