

CSC 302
Computers and Society
Summer 2006

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Course Overview and Objective

The impulse to apply computer technology to human processes shapes the structure of our society to a great extent. What is this impulse? It seems that we have some need to create processes in the most *efficient* way to implement a specified task. *Efficiency* is measured as some cost benefit and requires the collection of relevant data. This connotation of efficiency then tends to be limited to qualities for which the collection of data is possible (or convenient!).

The tasks to which technology applies are narrowly conceived. The side effects of technology often have more impact than the completion of the task for which the technology was conceived.

The intent of CSC 302 is to study our societal need to computerize our processes. We do this in order to understand how computers affect our life, our work, our family and our society. With this knowledge you will be better able to make reasoned, professional judgments about computers and their applications in our modern world.

Textbook

Friedman, Thomas, *The World is Flat*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005

Class Attendance

You are expected to attend class regularly. You may be called on anytime to present one of your news media articles. In addition, you will use class time to prepare for the final team project; if you're absent, it is difficult for your team to use the time effectively.

If you plan to miss class, notify me via email, a written note or orally.

Notebook

Your work in CSC 302 is to be collected into a course notebook that will be turned in every Monday for review. The notebook includes:

1. Reactions to readings (if you chose to do the reading questions)
Write an informal paragraph or two, in complete sentences, giving your reaction to each assigned reading. Don't summarize the reading; I want you to react to what you read. And please don't do bullet writing! These notes can be handwritten if your handwriting is legible. The notes should include some or all of the following:
 - Your reaction to key ideas
 - Ideas you find surprising or new
 - Evidence given for or against the author's arguments
 - Relationship of the article to other articles or class discussion
 - Problems you see with the author's arguments

2. Answers to specific questions (if you chose to do the reading questions)
For each assigned reading, you will be asked to answer some specific questions. Do so in a paragraph; please don't write extensive answers to the questions.

3. News media articles (required for everyone)
The press, both traditional and web) is rife with articles on computers and society. You are to read current articles, put copies of the article in your notebook, summarize the article and describe its relevance to the issues in this class. You must add two articles per week to your notebook; one must take a positive view toward computers and one must take a negative view toward computers. At least one must be from an approved popular press list. Each article must be at least 300 words and each summary must be at least 100 words; place the summary immediately after the article in your notebook.

Students will be called on randomly to present their articles; if called on, the grade you earn will be averaged with your written summary grade for the week.

4. Assignments (required for everyone)
There will be two or three short assignments during the quarter.
Put your assignments in your notebook after they are graded and returned.
The written assignments must be typed or printed by a high-quality printer. Late assignments will not be accepted unless prior arrangements, at least 24 hours before the due date, are made

The notebook must be organized in an 8 1/2 by 11 binder, neatly organized and indexed. Please organize the contents by week. Put all of material for each week together and label that material Week 1, Week 2, etc..

Expect to turn in your Notebook every Monday. News media articles must be completed and ready to insert in your notebook on Wednesday when they are returned.

Team Project

You will work in a team, of 4 or 5 people, to research a public policy topic and present that topic to the class. The presentation can be a mock meeting, a debate, a video, an interview, a play or other public forum. Public policy topics can be selected from a list to be provided by your instructor.

Examinations

There is no required examination; you may choose, if you wish, to replace the reading reactions and answers to the reading questions with a written examination during the 7th week of school. Consider your choice carefully; do you prefer to learn in a structured way or do you prefer to work on your own schedule? If you choose to take the examination, you must pass it to earn a passing grade in CSC 302.

You are required to attend the final examination period; at the time, some teams will present their team project.

Grades

Written grades are based on the instructor's subjective evaluation of your work. Grading does not depend on your agreement with my values or opinions on the course issues. We are studying topics where people often disagree; I am interested in your writing quality, clarity of reasoning, use of evidence and your understanding of sources.

Grading Scale – Reading reactions, reading questions and article summaries

- 10 - Perfect understanding and WPE writing level at 4 or above
- 9 - Good understanding and WPE writing level at 4 or above
- 8 - Satisfactory answer and WPE writing level at 4 or above
- 7 - Weak answer; use of words from Bad Words List; marginal writing
- 6 - Weak, incomplete answer
- 1-5 - Question not understood; < 4 level writing
- 0 - Verbatim response; quoted response; not answered

Grading Scale – Oral Responses on news articles

- 10 - Perfect understanding and articulate response
- 9 - Good understanding and excellent response
- 8 - Satisfactory answer and response
- 7 - Weak answer; satisfactory speaking
- 1-6 – Weak incomplete answer
- 0 - Responder absent

In addition, **each student is expected to participate in the class**; such participation can include attendance, discussion, article clipping, use of office hours, outside work or anything else that contributes to the class.

Class grades will be computed on a weighted average as follows:

Reading reactions	15%
Answers to questions	15%
[Optional Examination replaces above two for a total of 30%, requires passing grade.]	
News media articles	30%
Written assignments	15%
Team Project	25%
Participation	Used to award + or - grades