

FLC 301/Fall 2001 Instructor: H. Kurthen
Minutes of 10/3/2001
Debating Globalization
by
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1. Organization-Extracurricular Project Report

Each team discussed what project they decided on. People shared their ideas on how to make the projects interesting and more informative.

2. Briefing (Team #2) on "Explaining Globalization"

For a better understanding of globalization it is necessary to know more about the history of the modern era and the limits of travel, trade, transport, technology, and science in pre-modern times when most people were confined in their lifetime to their immediate surroundings. With better mapping and navigation European explorers began to look for new territories to conquer and settle, for raw materials, slaves, and for markets to accumulate capital and reap huge profits. Exploration since the 1400's-- and later colonialism--had immense impacts on countries, peoples, and cultures worldwide, such as the spread of genocide, slavery, immigration, trade, war, disease, Christian religion, and liberal democracy. And wealth, population, science, and trade grew in the colonizing "mother" countries themselves. For example, Hobsbawm illustrates in our reading how trade increased six-fold between 1840 and 1875. Developments in transport, communications, and electronics made it more and more simpler to connect cultures, societies, and trade. Now the Internet, satellites, and wireless communication has opened up even more revolutionary avenues and tools of interaction to connect cultures and peoples worldwide.

3. Briefing (Team #3) on "Debating Globalization"

West Africa has become a hotbed of instability, crime, violence and lawlessness as a result of the destruction of the material, social, religious, and moral fabric of traditional communal/tribal African societies. Tearing down the rain forest causes an increase in flooding, mosquitoes, and then malaria. Overpopulation affects shifts in domestic and external migration, which then causes unsustainable forms of urbanization, the mix of ethnic and national groups, squalid living conditions, and disease (Aids/HIV), particularly among the poor. Education, health, and other government services break down, people riot, rebel groups come to power and political government and state institutions break down and give way to anarchy.

Class was also briefed about Barber's article *Jihad vs. McWorld*, Bowen's criticism of the myth of ethnic conflict as quasi natural events, and Kueng's proposal for a global ethic as a tool to combat violence, anarchy, and intolerance. Kueng proposes four principles based on shared religious beliefs: respect for life, honesty and fairness, truthfulness in word and action, and respect and love for each other.

4. Class Discussion

We touched on some of the question provided by the briefing teams. In the reading globalization is by most authors defined as growing transborder mobility with the effect of a compression of space and time leading to increasing interconnectedness/interdependence of human affairs. The latter leads to a reordering of power relations, the emergence of global institutions, and a new consciousness of people on global, national, regional, local, and individual levels.

Examples of man-made global events are environmental pollution, Aids/HIV, or the mad-cow disease. Examples of global institutions are the United Nations, the Red Cross, Amnesty International, and the IMF. Examples of global consciousness are the fear that nuclear war could completely destroy all living beings on our planet or the concern for the equal application of human rights to everyone at any place.

Our class also explored how the global is connected with the local. For example, higher wages and better living standards/liberties/security in one place can attract immigrants from places far away leading to unintended consequences in the sending as well as receiving country, such as brain-drain or ethnoracial conflict. Or how major grievances in one locale can breed terrorist acts (9/11) in another place, which then again triggers economic, financial, social, military, and political shock waves around the globe affecting thousands or even millions of people far away who had nothing to do with the grievances or the terrorist acts in the first place. How else can we understand the bewilderment of farmers in remote Afghan mountain villages without electricity, cars, roads, TV, tap water and supermarkets who are suddenly confronted with cruise missiles and bombs in revenge of the 9/11 suicide bombing in NYC? A major cause for the shrinking of our world into a "global village" is the availability of new technological tools (CNN, Internet, fax, cell phones, satellites, money) connecting us daily and instantly from our homes with the rest of the world--making us accountable world citizens, perhaps even against our original intentions and knowledge.