Debate Challenge #2
Web-Based Social Networking Websites

October 31, 2006
2:00 – 2:50pm

This class session will be a debate on the extent of the uses of web-based social networking sites. You will need to do some research to understand the extent of the problems and their potential impacts. The class will be divided into four teams. **For those in teams 3 and 4, you should meet with your team members prior to class in order to coordinate your presentations.**

Team #3 will take the position “The students should be encouraged to use the social networking websites.” Team #4 will take the position “The students should be discouraged or even prohibited to use any social networking websites.” Teams #1 and #2 will act as judges.

Each member of Teams 3 and 4 will prepare a 1-page written defense (including any guidelines to the use/not to use any social networking websites) of their position that will be due at the beginning of the class session (use Microsoft Word, no handwriting.) At the class session, each member of Team #3 and #4 will give a three-minute presentation of their case. After each presentation, there will be one question from the opposing team, with a one-minute response. The presentations will rotate from Team #3 to Team #4, as below:

Team #1, 1st presenter (3 minutes)
Team #2, 1st question (30 seconds) and Team #1 reply (1 minute)

Team #2, 1st presenter (3 minutes)
Team #1, 1st question (30 seconds) and Team #2 reply (1 minute)

Team #1, 2nd presenter (3 minutes)
Team #2, 2nd question (30 seconds) and Team #1 reply (1 minute)

etc.

The members of Teams #1 and #2 will act as judges. They will not have any assignment due at the beginning of class. They will take notes during the debate of the key points being made. At the end of the class, they will turn in their notes and will answer two questions: 1) Which team made the better case? 2) In your opinion, were the individuals ethical or unethical? Why? Be prepared to write this up neatly as a single paragraph.

**Grading (Total of 80 points.)**

- Attendance at the class session is worth 30 points.
- There will be 50 points assigned for your written preparation for class and for your participation in the class discussion, according to your assigned job, as described above.
Students adore social-networking sites like Facebook, but indiscreet postings can mean really big trouble.

Web of Risks

By Brad Stone
Newsweek

Cameron Walker learned the hard way that sharing information online can have unintended consequences. In 2005, the sophomore at Fisher College in Boston organized a student petition dedicated to getting a campus police guard fired and posted it on the popular college social network Facebook.com. Walker wrote that the guard "loves to antagonize students ... and needs to be eliminated." It was a poor choice of words. Another student informed school officials, who logged on and interpreted the comments as threatening. Though Walker claimed he was trying only to expose the guard's demeanor, he was expelled. He's now enrolled at another college and admits he made a serious mistake. "I was a naive 21-year-old," he says.

Creating a page on a social-networking site is now a cherished form of self-expression at universities around the world. Students use ad-supported services like Facebook, MySpace, TagWorld and Bebo to make friends, plan their social lives and project their personalities. The most popular site among college students is Facebook, with more than 8 million members. A student's personal Facebook page is usually a revealing, dynamic chronicle of campus life—one clearly not meant for the eyes of parents, teachers or anyone else older than 25.

But adults are taking notice. Sites like Facebook are accessible to nearly anyone willing to spend the time to gain access: teachers, school administrators, even potential employers and the police. Such online services can create the illusion of privacy where none actually exists. Facebook, in particular, was designed to emphasize privacy and intimacy. Only other users at your school (with the same college e-mail domain name), and those in networks you join, can see your home page. But determined off-campus visitors can persuade a student or alumnus to help them access the student's page.

What happens when the identity you reveal to friends suddenly overwhelms the façade you present to grown-ups? The results can be awkward—or worse. Photos from drunken parties, recollections of sexual escapades, profanity or threats—all these indiscretions, posted online, have gotten students suspended or expelled, or harmed job prospects. In a couple of decades, a presidential candidate may be called on to answer for a college misadventure that he or she impetuously detailed in a blog entry.

Harvard student Marc Zuckerberg and a few classmates designed Facebook in 2003 to facilitate contact among students. After it launched in early 2004, the service spread like the flu in a freshman dorm, first at Harvard and then to all 2,100 four-year colleges. Last year the company opened its digital doors to high schoolers. Early on, Zuckerberg left college and moved his
fledgling enterprise to Silicon Valley, raising more than $35 million in venture capital. Facebook now has 100 employees and is supported by big advertisers like Apple and MasterCard.

Facebook's founders worried about privacy. That's why it isn't one big network but a series of connected smaller ones. "We decided early on that you get better information flow and more trust if you limit access to just those around you," says Zuckerberg. Besides restricting access to a student's classmates, Facebook offers extra privacy tools. Students can limit parts of their pages, such as photos, to specific people. Still, just 17 percent of customers ever change those privacy settings.

For many students, Facebook is not only an interactive diary and yearbook, but a pervasive way to stay in touch. Mitchell Perley, an Atlanta-born student at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland, is typical. On his page there's a photo with a friend at Disneyland, mentions of his membership in such Facebook groups as the Krispy Kreme Appreciation Society and listings of his favorite musicians and films. Perhaps most important, his page is linked to the pages of 99 friends at his college and 845 back home at various U.S. schools.

But not everyone's Facebook experiences have been positive. Brad Davis was a freshman at Emory in Atlanta in 2005 when he and friends commemorated a night of drinking by posting photos of themselves in their dorm, hoisting their libations. They created a Facebook group called the Dobbs 2nd Floor Alcoholics, named after their dorm. A dorm adviser saw the photos and reported the underage imbibers. The school ordered Davis and his friends to hang anti-drinking posters on their walls, and a citation went on their records.

The consequences for Jason Johnson were more serious. He was a student at the University of the Cumberlands, a Southern Baptist school in Williamsburg, Ky., when he created his own MySpace page. Visitors to his page could hear a favorite song, learn his birthday or find out he was gay. But Cumberlands' student handbook states that students must lead a "Christian lifestyle," which the school president explained included a ban on homosexuality. When school officials discovered Johnson's page, he was expelled. He hired a lawyer, who got the school to rescind the expulsion and let Johnson transfer with his academic record intact.

Students' indiscriminate postings may also get them into trouble when they're applying for a job or to graduate school. The postings could still be accessible online despite students' efforts to delete them. Even though companies are loath to admit it, researching candidates on social networks is becoming as easy and prevalent as entering their names into Google. Laurie Sybel, a director of career development at Vermont Technical College, had never looked at Facebook until she got a call from a big company about the internship application of a 19-year-old. The student was being rejected, Sybel recalls, because executives had viewed the student's Facebook page, which contained a photo of him holding a bottle of vodka. The company noted that the student was not only apparently breaking the law but demonstrating bad judgment by publishing the photo. In response, Vermont Technical, like other colleges, now integrates tips for social-network decorum into its career-guidance workshops.

Not all students want to temper their behavior. They point out that the Internet lets them express themselves and find like-minded souls. Still, adults aren't likely to stop prying any time soon.
That means students who use Facebook and MySpace have a new burden. The Web may seem ephemeral, but what you casually post one night might just last a digital eternity. While social networking represents a powerful tool for today's students, they're advised to be prudent. Even if they have no plans to run for president someday.

With Robbie Brown © 2006 Newsweek, Inc

NOTE: Work is individual. Each team member is to hand in his/her assignment.

If your last name is: B Barnes, Choa, Clincy, Cline, Cogburn You are on Team #: 1
C Cowan, Hacena, Harrison, Kanga-Tharalingam, Littlefield 2
Littlejohn, Maxson, Mouse, Newman, Soper 3
Strickler, Taliaferro, Ward, Wartley, Williams 4

If your last name is: Allen through Blackwell You are on Team #: 1
Bowling through Fore 2
Gange through Linton 3
McCoy through Russell 4