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Ethics of Facebook to be Discussed in May 4 Talk at Cal Poly

SAN LUIS OBISPO -- Anthony F. Beavers — philosopher and cognitive scientist at University of Evansville in Indiana — will speak on the “Ethics of Facebook” on Monday, May 4, 2-3:30 p.m. in Building 26-103 (Graphic Arts) at Cal Poly.

Recent research indicates unintended effects arising from Facebook, the fast-growing social networking site, from overtaking email to become the most popular Internet activity to perhaps causing lower school grades.

Touching briefly on issues such as privacy, employer scrutiny of employee profiles, fairness for all users, the professor will focus on issues that concern the quality of life more broadly, particularly:

1. Whether Facebook redefines friendship in ways that are potentially helpful or harmful;
2. How Facebook’s news feed might influence which relationships will develop and which will not;
3. Whether Facebook plays a positive or negative role in helping users attain a meaningful sense of purpose and self-identity;
4. How Facebook contributes to remembrance and the coherence of one’s life for older users and how the need for such may not even arise for younger users;
5. And whether the openness of our private lives on Facebook will lead to restructuring the social and moral expectations placed on us as human beings, and, in turn, help us better understand and accept ourselves for what we are.

Beavers is Professor of Philosophy and Director of Cognitive Science at the University of Evansville in southern Indiana. He is currently a Digital Humanities Fellow with the National Endowment for the Humanities and is spending the year at Indiana University, as a visiting scholar, to work on the Noesis search engine for the discipline of philosophy.

He is also the Executive Director of the International Association for Computing and Philosophy and Program Chair for its 2009 North American conference dedicated to “Networks and Their Philosophical Implications.”

The talk is free and open to the public. For more information, please contact Professor Patrick Lin at palin@calpoly.edu or visit <http://ethics.calpoly.edu>.

ABOUT THE ETHICS + EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES GROUP hosting the event:

Based at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, the Ethics + Emerging Technologies Group is a non-partisan research and educational organization focused on the risk, ethical, and social impacts of emerging technologies. Current projects and interests are related to issues in robotics, human enhancement, nanotechnology, space development, and other areas.

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