

Open Forum 3
Web Site Transcript
Chapter 3

A = Professor

B = Student 1

C = Student 2

A: Okay, everyone. You should have all read the articles in the coursepack about viral video. In your small groups, I'd like you to discuss the questions I've written on the board. If you need help, please ask me. Off you go.

B: I guess we'd better start with question 1, okay: "What is viral video?" Well, it's like those online video sharing sites.

C: Yeah, and it's called viral video because it's like a virus. Like the flu—if you catch the virus, you'll infect other people. So, you watch a video on the internet, and you pass it on to other people. Viral video.

B: Catchy name. You remember that cool clip I forwarded to you last week, Tim?

C: Are you talking about the one with the joke ad for a car?

B: Right. So, we're a good example of how viral video gets spread around the internet. Did you forward it to anyone?

C: No! I thought it was stupid. These things just slow down the internet and waste time.

B: Well, I know what your opinion is! Let's go on to question 2: "Is viral video a serious sociological phenomenon, or is it just a fad?"

C: It's a fad! It's not going to last. This is just a bunch of teenagers playing with their computers. We don't need to take it seriously.

B: I don't know about that. Did you read that there are 50 million videos on the most popular viral video site? More people go to that site than watch MTV. You know what that means? Advertising dollars.

C: So, you're saying that advertisers are going to invest in an internet site rather than cable TV?

B: You sound skeptical.

C: Oh, professor. I didn't see you there.

A: It's already happening, Tim. Viewers—especially younger viewers like you—are tired of the old media. You know, TV, cable, movies, newspapers. And they're not satisfied with websites that just present information; they want to make the sites that they view. It's called web 2.0.

B: What does that mean, professor?

A: You know how the second version of a computer program is often called 2.0? Well, web 2.0 is the name for the second generation of internet sites—ones that are truly interactive, in

which the users make the content. Why don't you look at the next question: What makes viral video attractive?

C: Well, this journal article we read made a really interesting point. It said that our generation no longer trusts the journalists, TV stars and movie makers. Instead, we turn to our peers for entertainment. That represents a social change away from authority figures, like TV news anchors.

B: Right. Online video belongs to ordinary people. All you need is a cheap digital video camera, free software, and an internet connection and you make a viral video!

C: That's the problem! Look, question 4: "What problems do you see with viral video?" The problem is that most of these videos are terrible. I mean, who cares? There's a reason that these people are amateurs, not professionals: they're not good enough to be paid for what they do. We've all seen those video clips of teenagers singing pop songs in their bedrooms. Is that entertainment?

B: So, you're saying that only professionals can make good TV and movies? I disagree. There's so much bad television these days. The networks have no original programming and they're all controlled by big businesses. I say, let the public have a chance to make its own videos.

C: There was a point about that in this article ... here: When the first phonograph records were made—you know, the old-fashioned recording device—anyone could make a record at the amusement park. And before long, people realized that professional records were much more entertaining. That's where viral video is going.

B: Maybe so. But from a sociological point of view, these online communities are important. Even if the videos aren't good quality, people are watching them and talking about them. Look at us!

A: Okay, everyone. Time's up. The reason I wanted us to discuss viral videos is that they're a good introduction to online social networking sites, which are having a profound influence on youth culture. Let's move on now to talk about blogs, and how they're changing the way we see our society...