

Professor's teaching style garners praise

By Kelsey Childress
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A professor in the Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Social Work is creating a lot of buzz about his classes, which have become increasingly popular during the two years he has been teaching at K-State.

"Dr. (Michael) Wesch is the greatest professor I have ever had in my 17 years of formal education, and that sentiment is echoed by many of the students he has every semester," said Kevin Champion, senior in anthropology and Spanish, and current teaching assistant for Wesch. "The amount of impact he has on students in one semester is absolutely beyond anything I have ever experienced before."

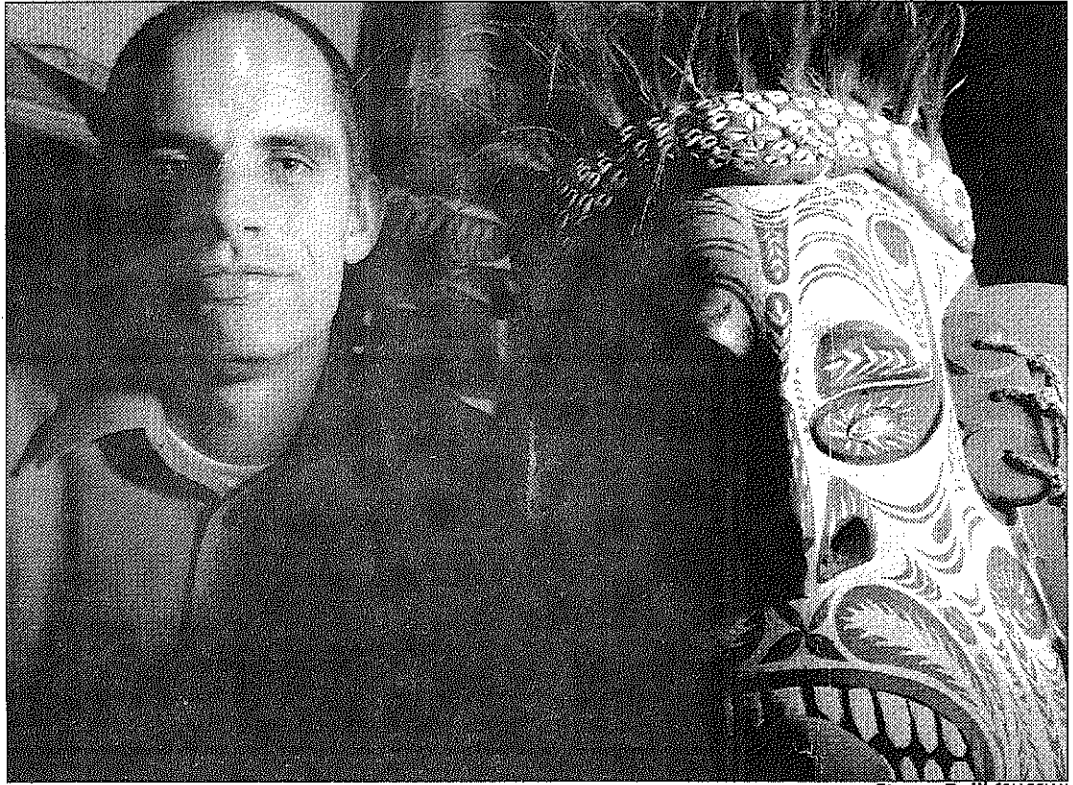
Michael Wesch, assistant professor of sociology, anthropology and social work, is teaching introduction to cultural anthropology, and special topics in anthropology, which focuses on digital media, this semester.

He is a K-State graduate who received his degree in anthropology in 1997 and then went on to graduate school at the University of Virginia.

Wesch began teaching classes at K-State in 2004, after spending about 18 months in Papua, New Guinea, where he said he researched how Western practices like education and religion can relate to the customs of the native people.

"I learned how to respect and admire people who were very different from me, and how important that respect and admiration is in order to learn something from one another," Wesch said. "I try to bring that insight into the classroom by learning everything I can about my students, showing them that I respect them and care about them, and creating a learning environment where we can all learn together."

Wesch said he is planning on returning to Papua this summer to show them film footage from 1969 to 1970 that was shot by researchers who were studying media in



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Michael Wesch, assistant professor of sociology, anthropology and social work, has had positive reviews from his students and other professors about his classes, which feature information he learned from the time he spent in Papua, New Guinea.

the country.

Wesch has created a "World Simulation" project, where students are placed into 15 to 20 small groups, and have to survive in their environment by building their own culture, as different components are discussed in class.

"Everybody in the world is profoundly interconnected," Wesch said. "Processes of globalization send products, ideas, media, money, and people everywhere throughout the world, connecting us all. This creates great promise, but also tremendous challenges. The 'World Simulation' allows me to challenge students to begin thinking about the world and our role within it."

Other professors have noticed Wesch's success.

"His teaching style, I think, is utterly unique," said Harald Prins, distinguished professor in the Department of sociology, anthropology and social work. "This is especially true for the large introduction to anthropology courses, with

enrollments from 200 to 400 students. When students walk into the classroom, they are entering this simulated world and asked to find a way to survive."

Besides his work in Papua New Guinea, and with the 'World Simulation', Wesch's teaching style has gained respect from many students who claim they have learned much about anthropology from taking his class.

"Like a lighthouse, Dr. Wesch reveals, through colorful examples and real-time videos, the potential disaster of ignorance, if we refuse to understand our world and

those in it with the most heartfelt compassion," Adam Bohannon, junior in anthropology, said.

"Dr. Wesch's love for anthropology radiates during his classes, and it almost has a contagious quality. I have met students who were so impacted by what he brings to the table that they are forever changed and no longer will see the world the same way.

"Dr. Wesch is the best instructor I have ever had, and I believe his efforts to be a wonderful teacher changes the world, one student at a time."