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NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC NAMES K-STATE'S MICHAEL WESCH A 2009 EMERGING EXPLORER

MANHATTAN — National Geographic has made Kansas State University's "explainer" an "explorer."

Michael Wesch, K-State assistant professor of cultural anthropology and the Carnegie/CASE national professor of the year for research/doctoral universities, is one of the National Geographic Society's "Emerging Explorers" for 2009. The honor, which goes to only 10 people each year, recognizes gifted individuals who have made a significant contribution to world knowledge while still early in their careers.

Each member of the National Geographic's Emerging Explorers Program, who may be selected from virtually any field, receives a \$10,000 award to support research and further exploration.

Wesch said he is honored by the recognition because his curiosity as a researcher started with National Geographic some years ago.

"It was by paging through National Geographic magazines as a child that I first explored the world, so this is really a special honor for me," Wesch said. "It is really a sign of the times that after doing research in some of the most remote regions in the world I would ultimately gain recognition for my explorations of the Web."

Wesch's specialty is the impact of social media and digital technology on society and culture. He is an award-winning teacher active in the development of innovative teaching techniques, like the World Simulation. He developed the World Simulation for his Introduction to Cultural Anthropology course because he was frustrated that the students in his large lecture classes were more concerned about memorizing what might be on the test instead of actually learning how to live and participate in today's complex world.

Wesch first rose to prominence when a video he created to launch K-State's Digital Ethnography Working Group became a YouTube success. Released Jan. 31, 2007, "Web 2.0 ... The Machine is Us/ing Us" has been viewed nearly 9 million times and translated into more than 10 languages.

Wired Magazine has called Wesch "the explainer." He has won several awards for his work with video, including a Wired Magazine Rave Award and the John Culkin Award for Outstanding Media Praxis from the Media Ecology Association. He also a member of Britannica's editorial board of advisers, regularly blogging at <http://www.britannica.com/blogs/author/mwesch>

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"We are so lucky that Mike was passionate about coming back to K-State to teach," said Betsy Cauble, head of K-State's department of sociology, anthropology and social work. "He has a gift and I am so glad that he has opted to share it with his fellow faculty members and, more importantly, for the benefit of his students."

Wesch graduated summa cum laude from K-State's anthropology program in 1997 and returned as a faculty member in 2004 after receiving his Ph.D. in anthropology at the University of Virginia.

Along with Wesch, the Emerging Explorers class of 2009 includes an urban planner, an ethnobotanist, a geo-archaeologist, a conservationist, a wildlife biologist and conservationist, a behavior ecologist, an aquatic ecologist and biogeochemist and an epidemiologist. More information on Wesch and National Geographic's Emerging Explorers is available at <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/field/article/wesch-michael-09.html>

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