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Bill Schlotter

Technology Writer Howard Rheingold to Discuss "Smart Mobs" At UCSB Center's "Life Online" Lecture Series October 17

Howard Rheingold, one of the world's best-known thinkers on the social implications of technology, will discuss his latest book, "Smart Mobs," and make other observations in a lecture at the University of California, Santa Barbara on Friday, Oct. 17 at 2 p.m.

The talk, the first of the "Life Online" series co-sponsored by the Center for Information Technology and Society and the California Nanosystems Institute, is free and open to the public.

It will be held at UCSB's Engineering II Pavilion.

Rheingold has been observing, participating in, and writing about technology and society for more than 20 years. He was the founding executive editor of "HotWired," editor of "The Whole Earth Review," editor-in-chief of the "Millennium Whole Earth Catalog," and on-line host to the intellectual Web site called The Well (www.well.com).

In addition to "Smart Mobs: The Next Social Revolution," Rheingold has written "The Virtual Community," "Virtual Reality," and "Tools for Thought."

In "Smart Mobs," Rheingold argues that wireless communication devices are driving a social revolution in which people can communicate, coordinate, and quickly act in concert without meeting one another in person ahead of time.

At the World Trade Organization protests in Seattle, activists used cell phone communication to organize and evade police. Then there is the flash mob phenomena: People in contact over the Internet send out a mass call to meet at a certain time and place, show up en masse, and leave just as suddenly.

So far carried out mostly as an elaborate act of mass whimsy, flash mobs could be organized for a variety of social and political reasons, Rheingold said.

Rheingold also discusses other developing issues, such as evolving pressure from media cartels and threats to privacy and security.

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