Reading questions for Rheingold

**For the Introduction**

“I have written this book to help inform the wider population about the potential importance of cyberspace to political liberties and the ways virtual communities are likely to change our experience of the real world, as individuals and communities” (p.4)

What kinds of leverage do virtual communities bring to ordinary citizens? Has anyone had experience with virtual communities in the current political crisis?

At various points in the introduction, Rheinhold represents the growth of virtual communities in terms of biological imagery (p.6) How does that metaphor work through the text? In what ways does the metaphor help and where, if anywhere, does it of microorganisms in petri dishes?

(p12) In what ways can CMC change our lives? Explain the three levels

Rheingold’s utopian vision for cyberspace is to opposite terms “electronic agora” and “panopticon” – what does he mean by that? Do you agree?

**For Chapter on Dungeons and Alternative Identities**

“MUD’s are living laboratories for studying **first level impacts** of virtual communities- impacts on our psyches, on our thoughts and feelings as individuals. And our attempts to analyze the **second level impacts** of phenomena like MUD’s on our real-life relationships and communities lead to fundamental questions about social values in an age when so many of our human relationships are mediated by communications technologies” (p16)

Going through the text, what are the effects at these two levels? (You could make a chart or any kind of a diagram to synthesize his ideas from that perspective.

Engage the question Rheinholds question (p.146):
“What are the unique features of this medium that appeal to people psychologically, and what does that say about people’s psychological needs?”

How does Rheingold describe the changes brought about by writing and the printing press? p. 146-147) Do you agree?

**Why and how** do new media “dissolve boundaries of identity”? (Be specific)

Go through the descriptions of identity in cyber-communities, in what ways is r.l. (real life) transformed? -include people, actions, objects etc.

In preparation for our MUSE experience: think of a character you would like to be.

Thanks! See you in class.