

PLAGIARISM

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PLAGIARISM is an extremely serious academic offence: one that consists of the following three possible circumstances. The third is the most common – and the most complex.

- (1) **The acquisition and presentation of an essay produced by someone else**, and acquired from some other source: an ‘essay bank’ (whether or not online), from a friend, or fraternity/sorority, etc., whether or not paid for.
- (2) **The submission of an essay that the student wrote and handed in to another course.**
- (3) **The deliberate copying (though not necessarily fully word for word) of one or more passages from some other source**, whether published or on the internet (web) without using quotation marks, or without clearly offsetting the quoted passages, and without proper attribution.
 - Some students wrongly and foolishly believe that they can escape the charge of plagiarism by properly citing the source in a footnote. **WRONG!!** If you fail to provide quotation marks or other indications of a direct quotation, you leave the impression that the wording is yours, but that you are attributing some of the facts or ideas to another source. Thus your doing so still consists of both theft and academic fraud.
 - Avoid the use of direct quotations, except those from primary or original sources that are cited as evidence. And keep all direct quotations short.
 - You are required not just to provide quotations marks and the source citations, but also to introduce the source of the quotation: to indicate clearly where it came from (who was the author) and why it is important for your argument.

If we find any concrete evidence of plagiarism, the following will be the consequences

- (1) You will be summoned to a meeting with me and the TA, where the evidence for plagiarism will be presented. In most cases, we discover plagiarism by using Google for the suspected passages; and that usually reveals plagiarism. Furthermore, most students reveal their acts of plagiarism through abrupt changes in style -- especially through presenting copied passages that can not credibly be the work of a student.
- (2) You will be allowed to present your defence to establish that you did not deliberately commit plagiarism. But a clear warning: you cannot and may not excuse yourself from the charge of plagiarism by contending that it was unintentional, especially not when it appears to have been deliberate. A common but unacceptable excuse is that the student 'forgot' to use

quotation marks. In any event, we professors are not allowed to make such judgements -- that is for the decanal committee on Academic Offences.

(3) You also cannot avoid a charge of plagiarism by claiming that you did change some words. If the passage copied is essentially the same as the original, even if not everywhere word for word, and you did not indicate that it was a quotation, the charge of plagiarism will still stand.

(4) If you fail to convince us of your innocence, I will then present the evidence, along with a report from me and from the TA, to the Associate Director of Undergraduate Studies, who will then present the case, with this documentation, to the office of the Dean of Arts and Science for judicial action.

(5) Please clearly understand that, in doing so, we (I the professor and the TA) are not convicting you of any offence. We instead contend that there is a prima facie case for proceeding with a decanal judicial inquiry. At the same time, to repeat what is stated above, for more emphasis: we are not permitted, once we find such a prima facie case, to exercise our own judgement on this matter: that is entirely up to the office of the Dean of Arts and Science. So, do not even try to ask us to ignore the case -- i.e., to 'have mercy' on you. Seek mercy from the Dean's office (and, best of luck to you!)

(6) The Dean's office will then summon you for a meeting, to defend yourself against these charges or to plead guilty. If you plead guilty, and this is a first offence, you will probably get off with the minimum penalty (see below).

(7) If you deny your plagiarism, and the Dean's office is convinced by the case we present, you will have a formal hearing before a decanal judicial tribunal for academic offences -- whose punishment, if you are found guilty, may be very severe (up to expulsion from the university, though usually only for a repeated offence).

(8) The normal minimum penalty, for a first offence, is zero for the essay and a reduction of 10 marks from your final grade (virtually ensuring failure on the course). Please note the fairness and equity of this penalty: obviously the penalty for plagiarism must be more severe than the penalty of zero for not handing in an essay at all; for the latter is not an academic offence!

(9) Furthermore, a citation of the conviction will also be applied on your record, for about five years; and that citation will certainly prevent you from entering graduate school, law school, medicine, or any other professional faculty, and may provide a serious obstacle in seeking any employment. In other words, you risk ruining your life by committing plagiarism.

(10) Another dire consequence: most students who are charged with plagiarism suffer severe mental anguish. Not because (or certainly not chiefly because) they experience guilt; but

rather because they fully anticipate the dire consequences that they face, and the often long delay in adjudicating these charges.

(11) If you think that you can escape this fate by dropping the course, think again! Once you are accused of plagiarism, your registration in the course is frozen; and only if you are acquitted of the charge will you be allowed to drop the course (and then, only by the due date). If you do succeed -- apparently -- in dropping the course, you will be reinstated once formal charges have been filed against you. **THERE IS NO ESCAPE!**

AVOID THE TEMPTATION TO ENGAGE IN PLAGIARISM, and do the following. Thus avoid all temptations and all circumstances that might lead to plagiarism:

- (1) **DO NOT COPY LONG PASSAGES** from your secondary sources (articles, books, essays, web documents, etc).
- (2) Learn to take notes by making a brief summary or précis of these passages.
- (3) Take notes in point form: not in complete sentences
- (4) In composing your essay, **do not copy your notes for the essay.**

HOW TO ORGANIZE AND WRITE YOUR ESSAY

- (1) Read over your notes, taken from your research sources: create one note only per source, per page.
- (2) Using your notes, construct an outline of your essay, in point form
- (3) Then set your notes aside.
- (4) Write your essay without directly looking at your notes, except for references.
- (5) Re-read your notes to ensure that you have incorporated all the main points in your outline and in your arguments.

Further Considerations:

- See important web document (found on my Home Page): How Not to Plagiarize
- See also my web document on Instructions on Writing Term Essays. Use the search engine (binoculars) in the left margin, to find the passages concerning plagiarism.