

**Academic Integrity & Academic Dishonesty:
A Handbook About Cheating & Plagiarism**

Revised & Expanded Edition

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Acknowledgments:

The original text of this handbook “Academic Dishonesty, Cheating, and Plagiarism” was written and compiled by the primary author between January and August 2001 with the invaluable assistance of a Humanities & Communication Department committee comprising **Robert Taylor, Ph.D., Sharon Irvin, M.A.** and student representative **Leslie Faircloth.**

The author also wishes to acknowledge the assistance, suggestions, and contributions of the following individuals:

Bradford Allen, E.D.; Clayton Baum, Ph.D.; Penny Bernard, M.S.; Rodney Bowers; Eugene S. Cavallucci (Harris Corp.); Donald F. Dement, Ph.D.; Nicole Hoier, Ed.S.; Capt. Robert D. Jordan (U.S. Army ROTC); Cem Kaner, Ph.D.; Celine Lang, D.P.A.; Nabil Matar, Ph.D.; George Maul, Ph.D.; Mary Mullins, M.A.; Douglas A. Nolder, M.S.; Dee Dee Pannell, M.B.A.; Gordon Patterson, Ph.D.; Alan Rosiene, Ph.D.; Doreen Russell, M.S.; Dan Vitkus, Ph.D.

Introduction

By the year 2000, it was evident that two new specters were haunting the halls of academia: a proliferation of legitimate Internet sites (e.g. primary source texts) and illegitimate Internet sites (e.g. term paper mills) that were colliding with a new generation of technologically savvy students willing—but not always well prepared—to use new media sources and increasingly not conscientious enough to use these sources correctly. Since that time, the classroom itself has expanded into the on-line world creating further challenges for both students and instructors.

Objectives The objective of this handbook has been to provide Florida Tech students and faculty with straightforward definitions and discussions of the most common types of academic dishonesty, with a focus on plagiarism. A second, but no less important, objective has been to help students understand the rationale for academic integrity in any context. That so many faculty members and institutions in the United States and around the world have found it useful enough to adopt in part or in whole is both personally rewarding and an indication of the breadth of the problems faced in the rapidly changing world of the academy.

What is *Academic Integrity*?

In other times and in other contexts, the concept of “integrity” would be called “honor”. The United States Military Academy expresses its honor code simply and succinctly: “*A cadet will not lie, cheat, steal, or tolerate those who do.*”¹ The idea of academic integrity embodies nothing less than a statement of ethical principles to which all members of academia bind themselves.

Integrity and honor function as forms of the “social contract” in which the individual relinquishes certain rights—rights which might provide him or her an unfair advantage—in order that other members of the group also relinquish similar rights to create an equitable environment. The idea of academic integrity as a social contract means that individuals have a duty to follow the rules and norms of academia as well as a duty to insure their peers also follow such rules and norms.

Any statement of integrity—like any code of honor—embodies core values of its group, society, or culture. Likewise, academic culture in the United States is rooted in many of the core values of a free and open society: freedom of speech and other forms of personal expression, freedom of conscience, an atmosphere of mutual trust, transparency, honesty, originality, fairness and equity. As a capitalist society, we also value intellectual and real property rights.

Definition Academic integrity is, simply put, a personal choice to act responsibly and to take responsibility for one’s actions.

What is Academic Dishonesty?

Definition *Academic dishonesty* includes “cheating,” “fraud,” and “plagiarism,” the theft of ideas and other forms of intellectual property— whether they are published or not.

Florida Tech's Academic Advising Handbook says, “Cheating and/or plagiarism are extremely serious matters. Even the suspicion of cheating or plagiarizing has jeopardized promising careers. The university has an obligation to itself, its alumni and its students to deal with such cases with unmistakably clear, forthright and fair action.”² Further, Florida Tech's Student Handbook states “All forms of academic dishonesty, including cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty and plagiarism... are subject to disciplinary action up to and including suspension or expulsion from the university.”³ Similarly, U.S. Army ROTC regulations state “cheating” and “any forms of academic dishonesty” are indicators of “undesirable character” that can result in “disenrollment” from the program.⁴

Example

Your best friend is having trouble in a class and needs a “C” to keep her athletic scholarship. She asks if she can copy off your exam “just this once.” You agree since you think you aren't doing anything wrong. Is this cheating? Yes. By allowing someone to copy off your exam, you are guilty of giving information and are thus cheating.

What is Cheating?

Definition *Cheating* is any deceitful or fraudulent attempt to evade rules, standards, practices, customs, mores, and norms to gain an unfair advantage or to protect someone who has done so.⁵ Cheating includes, but is not limited to:

- ✓ Giving or receiving information during an exam (“exam” includes tests, assessments, and quizzes, whether delivered in a classroom setting or on line.)
- ✓ Using unauthorized material (like notes) during any exam; unauthorized dissemination or receipt of exams, exam materials, contents, or answer keys in written or digital form.
- ✓ Taking an exam or writing a paper for another student—or asking someone to take an exam or write a paper for you (this includes sharing work and/or writing group-produced answers on take-home and on-line exams unless explicitly permitted by the instructor). This is also called “impersonation.”
- ✓ Submitting the same paper—or different versions of what is substantially the same paper—in other courses or in subsequent attempts to pass a course.
- ✓ Sabotaging, misrepresenting or fabricating written work, sources, research, or results as well as helping another student commit an act of academic dishonesty or lying to protect a student who has committed one.

What are the penalties for cheating?

The penalties for cheating are at the instructor’s discretion. Depending on the severity of the infraction, the penalties range from receiving an “F” (0 points) on the exam or the assignment to receiving an “F” grade in the course. Cases of cheating may result in the student’s suspension or expulsion from Florida Tech.

What is *Plagiarism*?

His words "I CAME, I SAW, I CONQUERED" express his incredibly strong will and no-nonsense attitude.

- From a student paper

"I came, I saw, I conquered!" These words express the incredibly strong will and no-nonsense attitude of one of history's most famous men.

- Student's unacknowledged source:

<http://myron.sjsu.edu/rome/web/EMPCONT/e022.html>

Definition

Plagiarism is "[t]he use of another writer's words or ideas without acknowledging the source" and is "[a]kin to theft," according to the Harbrace College Handbook.⁶ In *Writing with Sources*, plagiarism means "passing off a source's information, ideas, or words as your own by omitting to cite them—an act of lying, cheating, and stealing."⁷

Simply put, plagiarism is the theft of intellectual property belonging to another. This includes both the theft of unwritten ideas and concepts as well as the theft of written texts, notes, computer programs, designs, and/or visual materials. In many cases, the theft of intellectual property is intentional and, in some cases, malicious in its nature. Such students simply don't think they will get caught. In some cases, the theft of intellectual property seems to be the result of ignorance and could have been avoided had the student better understood the nature of plagiarism. Since instructors cannot know what a student really intended to do, they have no choice but to treat each case of plagiarism as a serious offense.

According to one professor, "Ignorance of plagiarism and its penalties tends to play a minor role in the cases I have encountered at Florida Tech. More often, plagiarizers have difficulty writing and managing their time well. Usually they have become desperate and copied madly at midnight to fill the requisite pages by daybreak. Sometimes they are ignorant of plagiarism and its penalties, but upon further investigation, one discovers this failing to be just one among the many possible effects of their general cluelessness."⁸

Academic dishonesty has far-reaching implications in both the classroom and in the real world, yet many students still struggle with just what "proper citation" means. Two good rules of thumb to avoid a charge of plagiarism are:

- ✓ "If in doubt, cite!"
- ✓ "If I didn't think of it first, I had better cite it."

“Plagiarism is a serious offense. Carelessness is no excuse.”

What are the penalties for plagiarism?

Again, the penalties for plagiarism are at the instructor’s discretion. Depending on the severity of the infraction, the penalties for acts of plagiarism that seem intentional range from an “F” (0 points) on the assignment to an “F” grade for the course. Even minor and seemingly unintentional acts of plagiarism are likely to be rewarded with an “F.” Acts of plagiarism that seem intentional and/or egregious will be forwarded to the appropriate administrator with a recommendation for formal disciplinary action.

“Taking someone else’s words or ideas,” according to the *Harbrace College Handbook*, “and presenting them as your own leaves you open to criminal charges. In the film, video, music, and software business this act of theft is called piracy. In publishing and education it is called plagiarism and/or cheating. Whatever it is called and for whatever reason it occurs, it is wrong.... Although the act may escape criminal prosecution, employers generally fire an employee who uses material illegally, and teachers often fail careless students.”¹⁰

Taking an example from technology industry, Harris Corporation’s *Standards of Business Conduct* states that “Patents, Copyrights and Trademarks are protected by the laws of the United States. Unauthorized copying, manufacture, use ... [of protected items] will subject Harris to civil and criminal liability.” Employees in violation of such standards risk “disciplinary actions, including ... suspensions, termination, civil liability or criminal prosecution.”¹¹ On August 11, 2000, a six-member jury ruled that The Walt Disney Co. stole ideas for a sports complex from two businessmen and should pay \$240 million in damages.¹²

Four Categories of Plagiarism

Category 1 - Unauthorized and/or unacknowledged collaborative work: While students are expected to do their own research and writing, instructors also understand that students may discuss their own research projects with other students in the same course. Instructors strongly suspect collaborative plagiarism when the same or similar phrases, quotations, sentences, and/or parallel constructions appear in two or more papers on the same topic. To protect yourself, you should acknowledge—in a footnote or endnote—any significant discussions you have had with others, as well as any advice, comments, or suggestions that you have received from others, including your instructor or other instructors if appropriate.

Category 2 - Attempting to pass off, as your own work, a whole work or any part of a work belonging to another person, group or institution: This includes borrowing, buying, commissioning, copying, receiving, downloading, taking, using, and/or stealing a paper that is not your own. Submitting an entire work which is not your own also constitutes research or academic fraud.

A good rule of thumb is that **original student work should comprise at least 80 percent of any written assignment.** Assignments should not be padded out with Internet-harvested, borrowed, paraphrased, quoted, or plagiarized material.

Thus the use of ANY AMOUNT OF MATERIAL—either without a citation or cited improperly—TAKEN DIRECTLY from a text, from the web or a digital source, from a broadcast, recording, or from another person’s unpublished work constitutes plagiarism. Within this category, four specific types of plagiarism can be identified.

2.A - Using such material without any attribution, citation, acknowledgment and/or without quotation marks is plagiarism: You must use quotation marks on ANY amount of text taken directly from another source, even from the course textbook; moreover, such material must be cited correctly.

Student
Work¹³

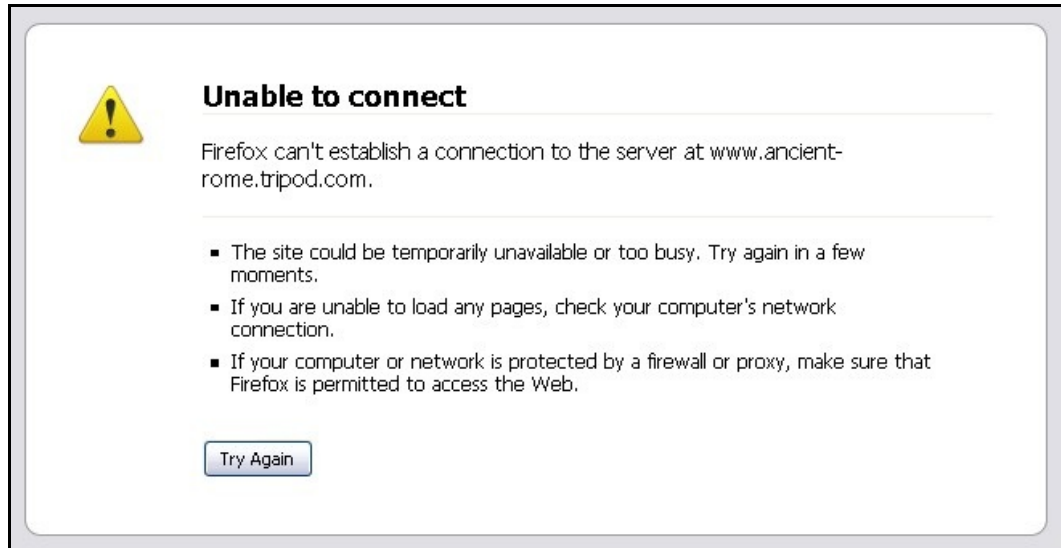
A worldwide increase in toxic phytoplankton blooms over the past 20 years has coincided with increasing reports of fish diseases and deaths of unknown cause.

Source Text

“A worldwide increase in toxic phytoplankton blooms over the past 20 years has coincided with increasing reports of fish diseases and deaths of unknown cause.”

-abstract of a paper by J. M. Burkholder, et. al. (1992), Nature, 358:407410.

2.B - The use of such material with false attributions/citations and/or the use of deceptive or fabricated citations to disguise direct plagiarism is still plagiarism. Students who intentionally plagiarize often attempt to disguise the plagiarized material in their papers with fake or inadequate citations. This is especially true of Internet URLs which can prove time-consuming to verify. Links to password-protected, private, and fee-for-service (non-academic) domains—and even apparent misspellings—should be considered suspect. Numerous false and misleading citations within a paper may also constitute research or academic fraud.



Any citation must point the reader to the exact location of the cited material, whether in print, in an on-line source, or in another medium.

2.C - The use of such material with quotation marks but without any attribution, citation, or with inadequate/improper attribution/citation is considered plagiarism. You must use proper citations for all quoted and paraphrased material taken from another source. In the following example, the student used quotation marks and seems to cite the quoted text but, by neglecting to refer to the page from which this quotation was taken, has failed to cite properly. Failing to cite properly throughout the paper earned this student an "F."

**Improper
Student
Citation**

Once in Egypt he murdered Cleopatra's son Ptolmey and annexed Egypt under his direct power. Once he took all of Egypt's money he paid off everyone he was indebted to and " finally became the master of all the Greco-Roman world"(The Deeds of the Divine Augustus, Augustus).

2.D - The use of such material—correctly attributed and properly cited—but *without* quotation marks is plagiarism. You must use quotation marks on *any* amount of text taken from another source. In the following example, the student cited material that was copied, in large part, directly from the source text but the student failed to indicate the quoted material by using quotation marks. The student pretended to be paraphrasing but was really plagiarizing. Had the student used quotation marks, the paper would not have received an “F.”

Student’s Work

Conspiracy and bribery were very popular tools used by Caesar prior to his reign as Imperator. For instance just before he entered aedileship he was suspected of having made a conspiracy with Marcus Crassus, an ex-consul, and with Publius Sulla and Lucius Autronius, who were found guilty of corrupt practices. The plan supposedly was to kill as many of the senate as they though good, then for Crassus to usurp power and then declare Caesar his master of horse. Further when they had reorganized the state according to their own pleasures, then they would restore the consulship to Sulla and Autronius. This particular plot did not actually occur, because, and it is suggested in Suetonius, that Crassus was either consciencestricken or moved by fear and consequently did not show up for the planned massacre⁶.

⁵ Suetonius 43

⁶ This paragraph was mostly based on info from page 45.

Source Text¹⁴

IX. For all that, he presently made a more daring attempt at Rome: for a few days before he entered upon his aedileship he was suspected of having made a conspiracy with Marcus Crassus, an ex-consul, and likewise with Publius Sulla and Lucius Autronius, who, after their election to the consulship, had been found guilty of corrupt practices. The design was to set upon the senate at the opening of the year and put to the sword as many as they thought good; then Crassus was to usurp the dictatorship, naming Caesar as his master of horse, and when they had organized the state according to their pleasure, the consulship was to be restored to Sulla and Autronius. This plot is mentioned by Tanusius Geminus in his History, by Marcus Bibulus in his edicts, and by Gaius Curio the elder in his speeches. Cicero too seems to hint at it in a letter to Axius, where he says that Caesar in his consulship established the despotism which he had had in mind when he was aedile. Tanusius adds that Crassus, either conscience-stricken or moved by fear, did not appear on the day appointed for the massacre, and that therefore Caesar did not give the signal which it had been agreed that he should give; and Curio says that the arrangement was that Caesar should let his toga fall from his shoulder. Not only Curio, but Marcus Actorius Naso as well declare that Caesar made another

Category 3 - The use of ANY AMOUNT of text that has been IMPROPERLY PARAPHRASED constitutes plagiarism. Suggesting an improper reliance on a single source, this includes “mosaic plagiarism” or “cut-and-paste plagiarism.”

To paraphrase improperly is simply to put the words of a source text in a different order or form while retaining the main idea that is the intellectual property of the original author/translator. When you simply alter the text itself (but not the author’s idea), all that you have done is to eliminate the obvious need for quotation marks; you have not eliminated the need for an explanatory citation/attribution! The idea itself remains the intellectual property of the original author/translator and, therefore, must be cited as such. In the previous example, the student assumed that by simply changing a few words in the source text there was no need to use quotation marks in the paper. Not only are significant portions of the student’s text lifted directly from the source text but the structure of the source text is followed too closely as well.

According to the *Harbrace College Handbook*, “[a] paraphrase is a restatement of a source in about the same number of words. [...] Your paraphrase of someone else’s work should honor two important principles: Your version should be almost entirely in your own words, and your words should accurately convey the content of the original passage. [...] Unless you enclose an author’s words in quotation marks, do not mix them with your own words even if the sentence structure is different. Equally important, do not make the mistake of thinking that you can substitute synonyms for an author’s words while you preserve his or her sentence structure. Both of these are plagiarism, even if you cite the source.”¹⁵

Students tend to have more problems when they write **while** researching on the Internet (often because they are working at the last minute): It goes something like this: “OK, here’s a good site, I’ll use some of this: cut, paste. Here’s another good site, I’ll use some of that: cut, paste...” As the student writes the paper, they often forget to insert the quotations marks and citations, intentionally or accidentally mixing sources. Why is this a problem? Because without exact citations for each quotation and paraphrase, reading student work often becomes a matching game. Which material comes from which source? **Providing a list of works “cited” at the end of the paper makes no sense if there are no citations within the body of the paper itself!** Never make your reader guess what material is your own and what comes from other sources.

To paraphrase properly, your work must contain a distinctly different idea that is, the paraphrase must contain your original idea. Simply changing the word order or sentence structure/order, deleting words or phrases, and/or substituting synonyms is not enough if the original author’s idea remains unchanged in “your” text. If you can’t find a way to paraphrase it properly, then quote it and cite it. Cutting and pasting together improperly paraphrased texts from multiple sources only compounds the severity of the offense.

In the following example, the student in a physical chemistry lab course copied material, in large part, directly from a student report submitted the previous year. The chemical compound used in the experiment was different but the objective and the procedure remained the same. Although a few words in each sentence and a few characters in each equation were changed, the ideas and selection of equations are clearly identical. This is considered plagiarism and not simply paraphrasing.

Student Work

Introduction

The purpose of this experiment is to measure the molar heat of combustion of maleic acid. In order to find this quantity, the heat capacity (Cs) of the calorimeter must first be measured. This was found using the following equation:

$$(1) C_s = (\Delta E(\text{ben}) + \Delta E(\text{wire})) / T_2 - T_1$$

Where $\Delta E(\text{ben})$ represents the internal energy of benzoic acid and $\Delta E(\text{wire})$ represents the internal energy of the wire holding the benzoic acid during combustion. The variable T is the temperature, T2 being the ending temp. and T1 being the starting temp. both in Celsius. For these samples the amounts of benzoic acid, maleic acid and wire were all known.

The heat of combustion was then calculated from the following equation:

$$(2) \Delta E = C_s(T_2 - T_1) - \Delta E(\text{wire})$$

Where Cs is the average value of the heat capacities found in the first equation.

When the heat of combustion is quantified it is now possible to find the molar heat of combustion, also known as enthalpy or ΔH . This is found using the following equation:

$$(3) \Delta H = \Delta E + RT\Delta n$$

Where n is the change in moles for the system found by stoichiometry and R is the universal gas constant in Joules/mol*Kelvin.

Source Text

Introduction

The purpose of this experiment is to measure the molar heat of combustion of Naphthalene. In order to do this, the heat capacity (Cs) of the calorimeter needed to be determined through the use of the following formula:

$$(1) C_s = (\Delta E_{\text{ba}} + \Delta E_{\text{wire}}) / (T_2 - T_1)$$

Where ΔE_{ba} represents the known heat of combustion of benzoic acid and E_{wire} represents the heat of combustion for the wire holding the benzoic acid pellet during combustion. The variable T represents the temperature in Celsius before and after the trial. The procedure for this determination involves combustion of each of the samples within a bomb calorimeter. For such sample, the amounts of benzoic acid, naphthalene, and wire were known.

The heat of combustion (ΔE) was then calculated from the following equation:

$$(2) \Delta E = C_s(T_2 - T_1) - \Delta E_{\text{wire}}$$

Where Cs is the average value of the heat capacities determined through the use of equation (1). Once the heat of combustion for naphthalene is determined we can determine the molar heat of combustion (ΔH) represented through the following equation:

$$(3) \Delta H = \Delta E + RT\Delta n$$

where Δn is the change in moles for the system and R is the universal gas constant in Joules. Due to the fact that the pressure within the system is not constant we can not assume that ΔH is equal to ΔE , and will be determined in kJ per mole naphthalene.

The following is an example of “mosaic” or “cut-and-paste” “plagiarism. The student has intentionally stitched together texts from two different web sites—copying directly, paraphrasing improperly, and failing to cite. The only citation is false—a mistaken attempt to disguise and “authenticate” the plagiarized passages.

Student Work

Source A

Source B

Source A+B

Julius Caesar was born on July 13 in the year 100 BC. His full name was Gaius Julius Caesar, the exact same name as his father. Although patrician and claiming descent from Venus, Caesar's family never achieved real prominence. Around 86BC Caesar's uncle Marius, just before his death, saw to it that young Caesar was appointed flamen dialis, one of an archaic priesthood with no power. This then identified him with his uncle's extremist politics. Julius Caesar's father died in 85 BC. In 84 BC, at the age of sixteen, he married Cornelia, the daughter of Lucius Cornelius Cinna, one of Marius' associates. This marriage further confirmed him as a radical. Soon after his marriage he had a daughter, Julia. When Lucius Cornelius Sulla, Marius's enemy and leader of the Optimates, was made dictator in 82 BC, he issued a list of enemies to be executed. Although Caesar was not harmed, he was ordered by Sulla to divorce Cornelia. Refusing that order, he found it prudent to leave Rome. He did not return to the city until 78 BC, after Sulla's resignation. (Plutarch wrote in more detail about this in his work, *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*.)

Source Text A

<http://www.incwell.com/Biographies/Caesar/html>

THE POWER OF CAESAR

Julius Caesar rose from relative obscurity to supreme power in the late Roman republic. A brilliant general and formidable politician, he defeated all rivals to become dictator of Rome. Fear that he would make himself king prompted his assassination in 44 BC. But Caesar's adopted son, Octavian, later rose to become the emperor Augustus.

Early Life

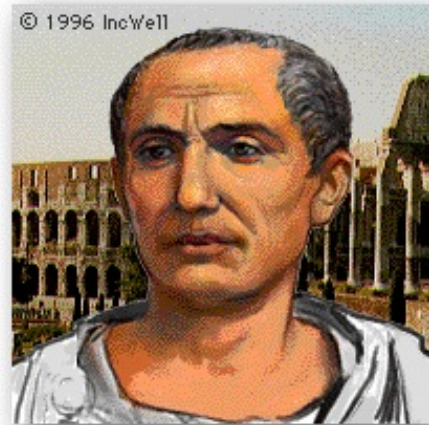
Gaius Julius Caesar was born on July 13, 100 BC. Although patrician and claiming descent from Venus through Aeneas's son Iulus (Ascanius), Caesar's family had not achieved real prominence. His father, also named Gaius Julius Caesar, was the brother-in-law of Gaius Marius and married Aurelia, who was connected with the prominent Aurelii family; he died about 85 BC, however, before reaching the consulship. In 84, Caesar married Cornelia, daughter of Marius's old partner Lucius Cornelius Cinna. When Lucius Cornelius Sulla ordered him to divorce her, he refused and escaped harm through the intervention of such people as his mother's relative, Gaius Aurelius Cotta.

Julius Caesar

Researcher: **Rachel Sahlman** Artist: **Dick Strandberg**

Veni, vidi, vici. 'I came, I saw, I conquered.' These are the words of the man who changed the course of Greco-Roman history.

Julius Caesar was born in Rome on July 12 or 13, in the year 100 B.C.. His father Gaius Caesar, died when Caesar was 16 years old, and it was his mother Aurelia, who proved to be quite influential in his life. Caesar's family was part of Rome's original aristocracy, called patricians, although they were not rich or particularly influential. At the time of Caesar's birth, the number of patricians was small, and their status no longer provided political advantage.



To obtain distinction for himself and his family, a Roman nobleman sought election to public office. In 86 B.C., Caesar was appointed flamen dialis with the help of his uncle by marriage, Gaius Marius. The position was one of an archaic priesthood and held no power. Nevertheless, it identified Caesar with extremist politics. Caesar committed himself further to the radical side when he married Cornelia, daughter of Lucius Cornelius Cinna in 84 B.C..

In 82 B.C., Caesar was ordered to divorce his wife by Lucius Cornelius Sulla, an enemy of the radicals. Caesar refused and prudently left Rome for military service in Asia and Cilicia. He returned in 78 B.C. when Sulla died and began his political career as a prosecuting advocate. Caesar then traveled to Rhodes to study rhetoric and did not return to Rome until 73 B.C. During his journey to Rhodes, Caesar was captured by pirates. While in captivity, Caesar convinced his captors to raise his ransom, which increased his prestige. He then raised a naval force, overcame his captors, and had them crucified.

Improper paraphrasing often results from the use of a single source. In such cases, it is virtually impossible to separate one's own ideas from those of the author and/or translator. This form of plagiarism is especially apparent when the order and structure of a student's paper (or even part of a paragraph) is virtually identical to that of the source text.

When Professor Richard M. McMurry was asked to review the book *War So Terrible: Sherman and Atlanta* by James Lee McDonough and James Pickett Jones (since withdrawn), McMurry discovered much of the book had been "pilfered" from his own doctoral dissertation. This example from *War So Terrible*, reproduced in McMurry's review, is an excellent example of improper paraphrasing and structural paraphrase plagiarism.¹⁶

Single-Source
Example

<p>338</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>THE JOURNAL OF SOUTHERN HISTORY</i></p> <p>The men of one Southern regiment were marched into an open field and, while orators made patriotic speeches, a detail passed out whiskey. After a while, the regimental colors were moved forward a few feet. The men were told that if they wanted to reenlist for the war, they should move forward when the command "forward march" was given. Meanwhile, those men who were known to be willing to reenlist had been instructed to rush forward with loud yells at the command. The command was given. The officers and men who had been alerted charged up to the colors with a wild yell; the others, "half drunk, many of them," hearing a familiar command, obeyed it. Thus did the 18th Alabama Regiment volunteer for the remainder of the war.</p> <p>(Richard M. McMurry, "The Atlanta Campaign, December 23, 1863 to July 18, 1864" [Ph.D. dissertation, Emory University, 1967], 67-68)</p>	<p>Such was the case with the Eighteenth Alabama Infantry, who were marched into an open field while orators delivered patriotic speeches and a detail passed out ample quantities of whiskey. After a time, the regimental colors were moved forward several feet and the men told that if they wished to reenlist for the duration of the war, they should move forward to the colors when the command "forward march" was heard. Meanwhile, those soldiers known to be willing to reenlist had been instructed to rush forward with loud yells at the command. The command was given. Officers and men who had been alerted charged up to the colors with a piercing yell. The others, "half drunk, many of them," hearing a familiar command, obeyed it. Thus did the Eighteenth Alabama, in its entirety, volunteer for the remainder of the war.</p> <p>(<i>War So Terrible</i>, p. 57)</p>
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Should you find yourself using one source over and over again, to the point it seems redundant to keep citing it, that's a very clear indication of a research problem. Using multiple sources will help you decide what's important. Using multiple sources will also help you learn to look at the information in different ways. That's one of the objectives of critical thinking.

Category 4 - The use of any amount of text, that is properly paraphrased—but which is either not cited or which is improperly cited—constitutes plagiarism. This includes papers in which a general failure to cite sources or a gross negligence in citing sources is apparent. Moreover, attaching false, misleading, or improper attributions/citations to properly paraphrased texts still constitutes plagiarism.

“I write, therefore I cite.”

What Makes Instructors Suspect Plagiarism?

Instructors may suspect a student of plagiarism if you do one or more of the following:

Signs of Plagiarism

- ✓ **Use or turn in a paper or on-line assignment from a previous year, a previous section, or from another course.** Instructors talk with one another and many keep copies of papers on file— just like fraternities, sororities, sports teams, and other groups. Plagiarism detection services compile student papers and are very effective at finding “recycled” papers and assignments. If you must use something from another student’s work, cite it properly as the work of that author!
- ✓ **Include citations and/or title pages typed/printed in different fonts and type sizes than that found in the body of the paper or on-line assignment.** Students who do not take the time to research and write their own papers usually do not take the time to correct citations, URLs and inconsistent fonts.
- ✓ **Use words, languages, and concepts that are not likely to be understood in an introductory or lower-division course.** This is readily noticed by professors.
- ✓ **Write a paper in a distinctly different style.** Every student has a unique “style” of writing – an intellectual fingerprint. After interacting with students and reading their papers and exams throughout the semester, instructors come to know the particular writing styles of their students and can readily spot the work of an imposter. The concept is similar to the Turing Test.
- ✓ **Use the same or similar passages that “coincidentally” another student used in a paper or an on-line assignment.** When plagiarizing from the web or from books and periodicals, some students seem to think that they live in a vacuum! When tempted to plagiarize a “great” passage from a web site or a book, remember that you are not alone—someone else is bound to think and do the same thing.
- ✓ **Submit on-line discussion forum or message board postings on the same topics and using the same sources as another classmate.**
- ✓ **Include conflicting or contradictory passages—especially when written in different “voices” or “styles.”**
- ✓ **Include inaccurate or misspelled URL and/or hyperlinked citations producing “HTTP 404 File Not Found” error messages.**

What about “common knowledge”?

Definition

According to the *Harbrace College Handbook*, “Common knowledge includes such information as ‘December has thirty-one days,’ and well-known proverbs (‘a penny saved is a penny earned’) or historical information such as the date of the Declaration of Independence.”¹⁷

Beware of the popular *myth*: “if it appears in three different sources, then it’s common knowledge and I don’t have to cite it.” Remember too, “public domain” is not the same thing as “common knowledge.” *Don’t look for reasons not to cite*; this will only cause you problems. *If you are in doubt about whether to cite something, the rule is that you should cite it.*

But, you might ask, just how many original ways are there to present the known facts and information required in many lower-level assignments? Instead of going through the motions, try asking yourself “What is the point of this assignment?” “Is my instructor really asking me to compile a list of basic facts and information—or am I compiling such information because that’s the format I’m finding when I look at the Internet?” If you don’t know what you are writing about—and what you are going to say—then you’re not ready to start writing.

Don’t assume anything you read—especially on the Internet or in your textbooks— is common knowledge. The majority of texts on the Internet are simply plagiarized from other sites and/or from printed sources. If you have any questions, ask your instructor.

According to *The Holt Handbook*, you need *not* document your own opinions, ideas, observations, and conclusions— but you *must* document:¹⁸

- ✓ Direct quotations
- ✓ Opinions, judgments, and insights of others that you summarize or paraphrase
- ✓ Information that is not widely known
- ✓ Information that is open to dispute
- ✓ Information that is not commonly accepted
- ✓ Tables, charts, graphs, statistics taken [directly or paraphrased] from a source

Keep in mind, however, that the use of too much material requiring quotation marks and attributions/citations is an indication that too few of your ideas are present in the paper. Students who plagiarize intentionally usually do so simply because they have not thought enough about their papers—either because they didn’t want to spend the time on it or because they waited until the last minute.

Again, a good rule of thumb is that **original student work should comprise at least 80 percent of any written assignment**. Assignments should not be padded out with Internet-harvested, borrowed, paraphrased, quoted, or plagiarized material.

Quality papers cannot be rushed.

Why we cite

- ✓ The first reason to cite your sources is because this society places great value on honesty, integrity, originality, and intellectual property rights.
- ✓ The second reason to cite your sources is to help your readers learn about your subject (and yes, even teachers learn from their students). When we acknowledge and cite our sources, we help our readers to find and evaluate the information we have used. Have you ever read something and thought, “I wonder where the author got *that* information! I’d sure like to read it for myself.” If so, you know why citations are useful and necessary.
- ✓ The third reason to cite your sources is to provide an intellectual foundation and support for your own original opinions, analyses, ideas, interpretations, and conclusions.
- ✓ The fourth reason to cite your sources is to help your reader separate fact from opinion (both yours and that of your sources). Oddly, this is one reason students often choose *not* to cite their sources. This is evident when students attempt to “write around” the problem of attribution and/or citation by using such expressions as “some people say” (OK, then who says it?) or “it is known” (by whom?). If it’s common knowledge, you don’t need to use such expressions. If it’s not common knowledge, it must be properly cited.

How to Use and Cite Sources Properly

Three Principles In *Writing with Sources*, “three basic principles” are given for the proper use of sources.¹⁹

- ✓ “Use sources as concisely as possible, so your own thinking isn’t crowded out by your presentation of other people’s thinking, or your own voice by your quoting of other sources.”
- ✓ “Never leave your reader in doubt as to when you are speaking and when you are using materials from a source.”
- ✓ “Always make clear how each source you use relates to your argument.”

Be sure to use the proper citation format designated by your instructor. All student work—whether written, oral, or digital—must contain proper citations and/or attributions. Some instructors require their students to use “in-text citations.” In-text citations are an abbreviated form of citation usually containing only the author’s name and the relevant page number (publications dates may also be required in some instances). Example of in-text citations referring to this page of this publication are (Jones 20) and, in APA style, (Jones, 2011, 20). When using in-text citations, be sure to include a bibliography in which you give the full publication information. In-text citations are treated in the *Harbrace College Handbook*, 485–574.

Some instructors require their students to use “endnotes” or “footnotes” for their citations. Endnotes and footnotes tend to be explanatory in nature although some footnotes and endnotes may only contain simple citations of editions and page numbers. Be sure to include a bibliography if required by your professor/instructor. If no bibliography is required for the assignment, be sure to give full publication information in the first footnote or endnote. For footnote and endnote style, consult your instructor and academic unit guidelines.

The *Harbrace College Handbook* is the required text for Com 1100, 1101, 1102 and should be kept and used as a reference in future courses at Florida Tech. Copies of the *Harbrace College Handbook* are on reserve in Evans Library and a copy is also available for consultation during regular business hours at the Department of Humanities and Communications and the Academic Support Center.

Endnotes

1. United States Military Academy. Information Paper on “Honor” – A Bedrock of Military Leadership, MACC-S- HON, 8 May 1998. Retrieved from: <http://www.usma.edu/committees/honor/info/main.htm> (January 2010)
2. Florida Institute of Technology, Academic Support Center, Academic Advising Handbook, August 2004, 14.
3. Florida Institute of Technology, *Student Handbook*, 1999, 33, & 2010, <http://www.fit.edu/studenthandbook/print.php> (retrieved February 2011) According to the *Student Handbook*, students are responsible for knowing all Florida Tech rules and regulations concerning academic dishonesty (see 1999, 33 & 43–44). Moreover, the *Student Handbook* says that ignorance is not an excuse for a violation of these rules and regulations (1999, 1).
4. U.S. Army Regulation 145-1, Section VI, paragraph 3–43 a (14).
5. See also Florida Institute of Technology Policy No. 2490 (which supercedes Policy No. 1622), August, 2009, available at http://assets.fit.edu/scripts/policy_view.php?id=2490 (retrieved February 2011). Policy No. 2490 includes the category “Cheating by Using Computers”.
6. John C. Hodges, *et al.*, *Harbrace College Handbook*, 13th Edition, 1998, G-38. Plagiarism is treated on 472–483.
7. Gordon Harvey, *Writing with Sources; A Guide for Harvard Students*, 1995, 21 (previously on-line at <http://icg.harvard.edu/~sources/>). See also Gordon Harvey, *Writing with Sources; A Guide for Students*, 1998, Hackett Publishing.
8. Alan Rosiene, letter, March 20, 2000; used with permission.
9. Hodges, *et al.*, 472–473.
10. Hodges, *et al.*, 472.
11. Harris Corporation, *Standards of Business Conduct*, 1999, 21 & 26. Used by permission of Harris Corp.
12. “Disney Stole Sports Complex Ideas,” CNBC & *The Wall Street Journal* Business (August 18, 2000) previously located at <http://www.msnbc.com/news/444904.asp>.
13. Adapted from the Division of Marine and Environmental Systems “Policy Statement on Plagiarism,” January 1999, 2.
14. Suetonius, *Lives of The Caesars*, I.IX (J.C. Rolfe, ed. & trans.), Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1998, 45.
15. Hodges, *et al.*, 479–480. The *Harbrace College Handbook*, on 480–483, discusses “inadequate paraphrasing,” “adequate paraphrasing,” and “summarizing.”

16. See Richard M. McMurry, review of *War So Terrible: Sherman and Atlanta* by James Lee McDonough and James Pickett Jones (New York & London: W.W. Norton & Company, c. 1987), *Journal of Southern History* 60, no. 2 (1989): 337–338.
17. Hodges, *et al.*, 473–474.
18. Mary Mullins, unpublished handout, p. 5, citing Laurie G. Kirszner & Stephen R. Mandell, *The Holt Handbook*, 3rd ed., Fort Worth, 1992, 562–570.
19. Harvey, 3–4.

Resources For Instructors

Suggested Guidelines for Dealing with Cases of Academic Dishonesty

As at most universities, instructors' approaches to cases of academic dishonesty typically range from giving it the "blind eye," to verbally bullying the student until a confession is given, to spending thoughtful but sleepless nights considering the facts and circumstances. While the handling of academic dishonesty cases remains at the instructor's discretion, the university community ultimately benefits when such problems are dealt with consistently. With this in mind, the following guidelines are suggested:

✓ Be Proactive

- ✓ Make clear the penalty for academic dishonesty in your course syllabus, for example:

Any form of academic dishonesty will result in an "F" grade for this course.

Just because you state the penalty doesn't make the maximum penalty mandatory. You are free and encouraged to consider each student as an individual and each incident on a case-by-case basis. Be aware, however, the students know which instructors must be taken seriously and which instructors are simply "going through the motions."

- ✓ Eliminate the ignorance argument: Early in the term, explain cheating and plagiarism with respect to the requirements of your course. A discussion of previous cases or examples is always helpful (just be sure they are anonymous examples).
- ✓ Consider requiring students to sign an academic honesty agreement (an example follows).

✓ Be Informed

- ✓ Do a thorough investigation and collect all possible documentation (keep the original documents!). Use caution—and be ready to give the student the benefit of the doubt—especially when strong suspicions of academic dishonesty are not supported by documents or facts.
- ✓ Familiarize yourself with University policies and publications on academic dishonesty, including the *Student Handbook*.
- ✓ **Contact your department head and the appropriate administrator to determine if the student has previously committed acts of academic dishonesty.** This information may affect how you proceed. A student who has cheated or plagiarized in your course may have already been caught doing so in another course. Moreover, the student is likely to continue to commit acts of academic dishonesty in future courses unless he/she knows a record is being kept, and that a repeat offense could result in expulsion.

✓ **Communicate Clearly and Fairly**

- ✓ When making charges of academic dishonesty, inform your department head and the student's advisor. The advisor may be able to help you contextualize the case.
- ✓ Whether you notify the student in person and/or in writing (a sample notification letter follows), give the student every opportunity to present his/her defense and give due consideration to any supporting documentation and written or oral statements provided. Know the rights of students, including the student's right to have his/her academic advisor present at any meeting.
- ✓ When making charges of academic dishonesty, let students know they have rights too (see *Student Handbook*). Know that if a student requests a hearing, he/she cannot be barred from attending class pending a final decision on the matter.

✓ **Penalize Fairly**

- ✓ Does the punishment fit the offense? How is the student being treated with respect to other students involved? Are there mitigating circumstances? Behind every case is a person, and clemency is sometimes far more effective than punishment.
- ✓ Consider each case individually while aiming for consistency with respect to your previous actions and the actions of your colleagues in similar circumstances.
- ✓ Inform the student as soon as you have reached a decision (a sample preliminary determination letter follows). Also send a letter detailing the case along with supporting documentation to the appropriate administrator. Doing so—even if the matter has already been resolved—can be an effective deterrent.

✓ **Don't Take It Personally**

- ✓ While cases of academic dishonesty can be aggravating—if only for the extra work they entail for instructors and administrators—they should not be construed as personal attacks against the instructor.
- ✓ Remember too that it's not your fault the student has chosen to commit an act of academic dishonesty. Accept the the student's decision for what it is—a bad one—and consider how to make this a learning experience—even if it is to be a painful learning experience.

Further Resources

Florida Institute of Technology, Academic Support Center, “Academic Advising Handbook,” August 1999 & 2004. <http://www.fit.edu/asc/documents/AcadHbk04.pdf>

Florida Institute of Technology, Division of Marine and Environmental Systems, “Policy Statement on Plagiarism,” January 1999.

Florida Institute of Technology “Student Handbook,” 1999 & 2010.
<http://www.fit.edu/studenthandbook/print.ph>

Harvey, Gordon. *Writing with Sources: A Guide for Students*. Hackett Publishing, 1998.

Hodges, John C., et al., *Harbrace College Handbook*, 13th Ed., 1998, 472–483.

Schachman, H. K., *Science* 261 (1993): 148-149.

Stanford University. <http://theory.stanford.edu/~aiken/moss/> The MOSS program can be used in computer science courses to uncover plagiarism in computer programs.

Plagiarism detection services

While several Internet plagiarism detection services are available, no detection service is foolproof. Such services, however, can be particularly useful in preventing and catching “recycled” assignments. Cem Kaner (personal communication, 2006) suggests that instructors using a plagiarism detection service incorporate the following statement in their syllabus.

I understand that my instructor may submit—or require me to submit— any or all written work done for this course to an on-line plagiarism detection service. I hereby give my express consent to transmit my written work over the Internet, and to sublicense my written work without compensation to any plagiarism detection service and/or database on an ongoing basis.

Appendices

(Sample)

Academic Honesty Agreement

Academic dishonesty includes: plagiarism; cheating—giving, receiving, or sharing information during an in-class, take-home, or on-line exam, test, or quiz, using unauthorized material (like notes) during an exam, submitting the same paper (or different versions of what is substantially the same paper) for more than one course or different sections of the same course—fabricating written work, sources, research and/or results; helping another student commit an act of academic dishonesty; and lying to protect another student who has committed an act of academic dishonesty.

According to Florida Tech’s *Student Handbook*, “all forms of academic dishonesty, including cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty and plagiarism . . . are subject to disciplinary action up to and including suspension or expulsion from the university.”

I have read and understand the University handbook *Academic Dishonesty, Cheating, and Plagiarism*. Further, I understand that I am responsible for knowing all Florida Tech rules and regulations concerning academic dishonesty and that ignorance of these rules and regulations is not an excuse for a violation of said rules. If I have any questions or doubts, I realize that it is my responsibility to keep seeking an answer until I understand.

Further, I understand that my instructor may submit—or require me to submit— any or all written work done for this course to an on-line plagiarism detection service. I hereby give my express consent to transmit my written work over the Internet, and to sublicense my written work without compensation to any plagiarism detection service and/or database on an ongoing basis. I freely give my express consent to transmit my work for this course over the Internet, and to sublicense, reproduce, and re-use my written, digital, analog, audio, and or other course work in any form without compensation.

I understand that I am bound by this policy to act with honesty and integrity, and that I must do my own work. I also understand that if I commit any act of academic dishonesty, my professor can assign me an “F” grade in this course and may recommend that I be suspended or expelled from the university.

Signed,

(Student’s Signature)

(Student’s Name Printed)

(Date)

(Instructor & Course)

(Sample Notification Letter)

Date
Student Name
ID Number
Course
RE: Notification of Academic Dishonesty Charges

Dear Student Name:

According to Florida Tech's *Student Handbook*, "All forms of academic dishonesty, including cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty and plagiarism ... are subject to disciplinary action up to and including suspension or expulsion from the university" (35 & 62–63). Students are responsible for knowing all Florida Tech rules and regulations concerning academic dishonesty. Moreover, ignorance is not an excuse for a violation of these rules and regulations (*Student Handbook*, <http://www.fit.edu/studenthandbook/print.php>).

Florida Tech's *Academic Advising Handbook* says, "Cheating and/or plagiarism are extremely serious matters. Even the suspicion of cheating or plagiarizing has jeopardized promising careers. The university has an obligation to itself, its alumni and its students to deal with such cases with unmistakably clear, forthright and fair action" (14).

The course syllabus also makes clear that "Any form of academic dishonesty will result in an 'F' grade for this course."

This letter is to notify you that you being charged with committing one or more acts of academic dishonesty in violation of university, department, and/or course policies. Specifically, you are accused of:

LIST OF CHARGES

Upon receipt of this letter, you have 2 calendar days to respond. You also have the right to:

- Meet with your advisor, the course instructor and/or the head of his/her department to discuss these charges; your academic advisor may accompany you to any meeting.
- Submit a written statement (plus any supporting documentation) defending yourself and/or refuting these charges. If you wish, your academic advisor can assist you with this.
- Request an administrative hearing from the dean of students or seek a hearing before the University Disciplinary Committee (UDC). (See the *Florida Tech Student Handbook*).
- Refuse to exercise any of the above options, in which case a preliminary determination on these charges will be made and a letter will be placed on file with the dean of students. This may lead to your receiving a grade of "F" for course for academic dishonesty and may also entail forwarding your case to the University Disciplinary Committee for formal disciplinary action that could result in your suspension or expulsion from Florida Tech (see your *Student Handbook*). You will be notified in writing of the determination and shall have 2 calendar days to appeal the decision to the dean of students.

Sincerely,

Instructor's Name
CC: Academic Unit

(Sample Preliminary Determination Letter)

Date

Student Name

ID Number

Course

RE: Preliminary Determination on Charges of Academic Dishonesty

Dear Student Name:

After reviewing the documents, information, and the relevant statements made by those involved, it has been determined that you have been found responsible for:

LIST OF CHARGES.

A thorough review has determined your actions were in violation of university policies on academic dishonesty. Your behavior in this matter is not in keeping with the mission and purpose of the university. And after due consideration of these findings and your circumstances, the following penalties have been imposed for your actions:

LIST PENALTIES (or the conditions for the student to remain in the course)

Should you wish to appeal this determination, you may contact the dean of students and seek a University Disciplinary Committee (UDC) hearing on these charges (see your Florida Tech *Student Handbook*). If you exercise this option, you will be allowed to remain in class pending the outcome of the UDC hearing.

Please note that a letter detailing your acts of academic dishonesty will be forwarded to the Office of the Dean of Students for inclusion in your permanent student file. According to university policy, if another such letter is placed in your file, it will lead to your immediate referral to the dean of students for formal disciplinary action, the result of which could be your suspension or expulsion from Florida Tech.

Sincerely,

Instructor's Name

CC: Academic Unit