



RESPONDING TO PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism conjures up a multiplicity of responses. Receiving a “dishonest” paper can be disheartening or disturbing, and many faculty talk about the deception they felt or the betrayal of “authentic learning” that they promote in their classes. (Price, 2002). Faculty can sometimes take this very personally, and emotions can be charged. For students, it can be devastating and demoralizing as the p-word has historical roots of the ultimate, academic transgression.

In the world of writing instruction, we distinguish between the academic dishonesty as a “writing issue” and a “code of conduct” issue. If it’s the latter and/or a situation with a student submitting multiple evidences of inauthentic writing, then, you should consult with your program director. Writing concerns usually fall into the form of unintentional plagiarism. For example, the student fails to cite sources appropriately or doesn’t know how to paraphrases. For these writing concerns, it can be a very valuable teaching opportunity to talk with the student about their writing and how it’s plagiarism. Connect students with writing support so that they learn about effective ways of integrating quotes, paraphrasing and summarizing material.

Instilling a Healthy Environment Around Academic Authenticity

Faculty members are integral to promoting healthy approaches to writing by conferring with students and taking a few minutes of class time to discuss academic honesty. Here are a few ideas of how you can prepare students for writing an academically honest paper:

- ◆ Be Proactive and talk about writing and plagiarism.
- ◆ Model your own writing process.
- ◆ Discuss copyright, permissions, etc.
- ◆ Be intentional by taking a few minutes of the class session to discuss plagiarism and how it might occur. Discuss plagiarism in its complexity: from paraphrasing to direct quotes, but especially in context to your assignments.



- ◆ Students do not necessarily transfer the learning of plagiarism to other contexts. For example, a student might know to cite a direct quote but not a paraphrase. This also applies to data from tables and illustrations.
- ◆ Use language intentionally. Some research indicates that students see plagiarism and academic dishonesty (a term frequently used in the academy) as separate issues. Better yet, some students find “academic integrity” confusing. So, take time to define.
- ◆ Assess student’s previous knowledge by giving a “Plagiarism Knowledge Survey” that you design or found online: EG. <http://en.writecheck.com/plagiarism-quiz> .
- ◆ Bring the writing process into your class. Give class time for students to workshop their papers. Provide them with directions on what to look for as they read classmates’ writing.
- ◆ Recommend (or require) that ALL students use the writing center or the VWC.

What to do if Plagiarism is Suspected

If you have suspicions of plagiarism, debriefing with a colleague can help to gain clarity and to defuse the feelings of irritation to infuriation. Additionally, you might begin as well by taking a few steps outside the emotional realm to analyze the writing:

- ◆ How do you know the paper is “plagiarized”? How much of the text is not the student’s work?
- ◆ Is the “plagiarism” intentional? (E.G. The student has copied a full text of an article on the topic and submitted as their own. Is the “lifted text(s) forming the majority of the paper?)
- ◆ Or is the “plagiarism” unintentional? Is the “plagiarism” reflecting the students’ naiveté about academic writing? For example,
- ◆ Is the student paraphrasing material but not giving credit via appropriate citation?



- ◆ Is the student still in the writing/learning process? That is, is the student cutting and pasting quotes without developing or summarizing ideas in their own words?
- ◆ Is the “plagiarism” reflecting cultural differences around how one refers to experts?

Prepare to Talk with the Student

Prior to conferring with the student, consult with someone in your program and/or the writing center director prior to talking with the student. If you want a few ideas on how to approach the conversation with the student, here's a great video <https://www.indiana.edu/~academy/firstPrinciples/index.html>

Academic Resources

Bronwyn T. Williams (2008). Trust, betrayal, and authorship: Plagiarism and how we perceive students. *Journal of Adolescent and and Adult Literacy* 51:4, 350 - 354.

Abstract: Emotional responses to plagiarism are rarely addressed in professional literature that focuses on ethics and good teaching practices. Yet, the emotions that are unleashed by cases of plagiarism, or suspicions of plagiarism, influence how we perceive our students and how we approach teaching them. Such responses have been complicated by online plagiarism-detection services that emphasize surveillance and detection. My opposition to such plagiarism software services grows from the conviction that if we use them we are not only poisoning classroom relationships, but also we are missing important opportunities for teaching.

Howard, R., & Robillard, A. (2008). *Pluralizing plagiarism : Identities, contexts, pedagogies*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook.

Pluralizing Plagiarism offers multiple answers to this question -- answers that insist on taking into account the rhetorical situations in which plagiarism occurs. While most scholarly publications on



plagiarism mirror mass media's attempts to reduce the issue to simple black-and-white statements, the contributors to *Pluralizing Plagiarism* recognize that it takes place not in universalized realms of good and bad, but in specific contexts in which students' cultural backgrounds often play a role. Teachers concerned about plagiarism can best address the issue in the classroom -- especially the first-year composition classroom -- as part of writing pedagogy and not just as a matter for punishment and prohibition. . . “--Back cover.

Price, M. (2002). Beyond "Gotcha!": Situating plagiarism in policy and pedagogy. *College Composition and Communication*, 54(1), 88-115

Abstract:Plagiarism is difficult, if not impossible, to define. In this paper, I argue for a context-sensitive understanding of plagiarism by analyzing a set of written institutional policies and suggesting ways that they might be revised. In closing, I offer examples of classroom practices to help teach a concept of plagiarism as situated in context.