

Beyond Policies



PROMISING PLAGIARISM PREVENTION PEDAGOGY

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<http://www.oakland.edu/ouwc/presentations/>

Starting Where You Are



Questions

- How do you define plagiarism?
- What contributes to it?
- Who is responsible for teaching plagiarism avoidance?

Participant Response

They Say: The Professionals' Take on Plagiarism



- **Jonathan Hall:** In “[Plagiarism across the curriculum](#): How academic communities can meet the challenge of the undocumented writer,” Hall (2005) defines it as a WID/WAC problem, not simply a composition instruction problem.
- **[Rebecca Moore Howard](#):** Perhaps the scholar most identified with this issue, Moore Howard challenges us to resist notions that plagiarism is only a digital problem or a “cheating” problem. Her recent work on citation analysis explores it as both a cultural problem and a reading problem.
- **Margaret Price:** In “[Beyond ‘gotcha!’](#): Situating plagiarism in policy and pedagogy,” Price (2002) asks readers to move beyond a policing model that addresses plagiarism as “something fixed and absolute.” She also points to problems inherent in our calls for a student’s “own work,” which can indict peer review and writing center assistance if we are not careful.

How Do You Currently Address Plagiarism?



Question

- Where are you seeing plagiarism in your students' coursework? What do you identify as the cause? Ethics, laziness, poor prior instruction, knowledge gap, weak skills, etc.
- How do you currently attempt to deter plagiarism in your course(s)? With what campus and national resources are you familiar?
- Are you satisfied with your current approach to plagiarism and with your students' ability to negotiate attribution, fair use, etc.? If not, what needs to change, and who needs to spearhead that change?

Participant Response

Plagiarism Prevention: A Multi-Pronged Approach



- Facilitate discussion about the “P” word as a cultural, ethical, and literacy problem. The context matters.
 - In most of the Western world, it is considered dishonest to employ others’ ideas and words without attribution, but this is not the case in all cultures. Although most Western academics frame the issue in terms of academic integrity, cohesiveness of voice, and credibility, the concept originated from copyright law, not pedagogy.
 - When children are young, we encourage them to mimic—copy—but as they age, we expect them to adapt, repurpose, and acknowledge the original.
 - Failure to properly paraphrase can indicate a reading problem as well as a skills and/or ethics problem. If students are unfamiliar with the subject and don’t understand the diction, they won’t be able to comprehend and then translate the material—no matter how clearly we convey the rules and how harshly we dole out the punishments.

Plagiarism Prevention: A Multi-Pronged Approach



- Involve all faculty, not just compositionists, in efforts to prevent it.
 - Many students enter as transfers or returning students who are not subject to OU's composition requirements .
 - The documents employed as support and forms in which they are represented are different from discipline to discipline. Social scientists, for example, expect more paraphrasing than do literary scholars. Some words, like “significant,” are only appropriate in the context of specific support—empirical evidence—in the social sciences, but in the humanities the word simply means “important.” Students need to see how experts within their own disciplines acknowledge what they borrow, paraphrase, quote, and summarize.
 - Composition teachers, even those who draw from diverse non-fiction genres, cannot simulate the assignment conditions of all other disciplines.
 - If students are comfortable with the genre and the subject matter, they are more likely to create better paraphrases, which could cause their teachers to infer better skills than they actually possess.

Compositionists and others must work together to explore the conditions under which students are expected to show what they borrow.

Plagiarism Prevention: A Multi-Pronged Approach



- Ask students to articulate the definition of, prevention strategies for, and responses to plagiarism.
 - Ask students to explain what it means to plagiarize. Solicit multiple examples of academic dishonesty as they understand it.
 - Query students about assignments that are easy to sidestep and about deterrents that will hold sway over their actions.
 - Have students examine assignments and passages in an effort to anticipate where they and others will struggle. Enlist their help in refining the directions and in augmenting the instruction to address these gaps.
 - ✦ My students, for example, noted that many online modules had answer keys that their peers used to finish the work. Some noted that some teachers use the same readings, assignments, and tests every semester, which makes it easy to resubmit others' work. They further argued that if the assignment had not changed in 10 years, it was likely that the skill being evaluated was important to their future.

Plagiarism Prevention: A Multi-Pronged Approach



- Leverage and respond to initial failures as an opportunity to learn.
 - When Oakland had a subscription to [Turnitin.com](https://www.turnitin.com), I asked students to upload their rough drafts. Next, we looked at the report together, so they could see the amount of unacknowledged borrowing and ill-worded paraphrases. You might use [Grammarly.com](https://www.grammarly.com) for a similar approach or recommend that student visit [Plagiarism.org](https://www.plagiarism.org) or subscribe to [Turnitin's WriteCheck](https://www.turnitin.com/writecheck) and hand in the report with their final paper, but I would confer with your department before requiring it. Whereas the above are paid sites, your or your students could try [The Plagiarism Checker](https://www.theplagiarismchecker.com) or [Plagium](https://www.plagium.com), but in add cases try to emphasize the tool's role in instruction rather than in policing students' writing.
 - Excerpt examples from prior students' papers, which demonstrate problems with paraphrase, quoting, summarizing, citations, etc., and enlist students' help in addressing the mistakes.
 - Share your own process. How do you ensure that your work is “your own”?
 - Examine cases of public plagiarism. I use the case of historian [Stephen Ambrose](https://www.npr.org/2017/05/17/534444441/stephen-ambrose-plagiarism) as reported by National Public Radio.

Pedagogical Interventions: Course Design



- Seek expert knowledge. Educate yourself from the professional literature just as you would for your academic projects. In other words, if academic integrity is an important pedagogical goal, you need to understand why it might be lacking, where it is most likely to falter, and how to respond to it.
 - Seek the seminal works. Enter the larger conversation about plagiarism as introduced by Moore Howard et al. Who are the stakeholders? How are the issues framed? What are the best-practices?
 - Examine how your field redresses plagiarism. Have members of your discipline written about plagiarism? How have they tailored the conversation to specific values and skills in your field?
 - Query colleagues who teach similar classes. What are those who experience less plagiarism doing to discourage it? What are the common culprits they indict? What can you do to plagiarism-proof your assignments?

Pedagogical Interventions: Course Design



- Collaborate with academic service units, such as libraries and writing centers, to design a fair use, documentation, paraphrase, etc. unit for your class.
 - Start with The Oakland University Libraries' [Plagiarism Tutorial](#), which offers scaffolded attribution skills.
 - See also "[Don't Fail Your Courses: Cite Your Sources.](#)"
 - See also resources included in this blog entry devoted to [plagiarism resources](#)
- Design plagiarism-resistant assignments, including plagiarism resistant paraphrase activities.

Pedagogical Interventions: Course Design



- Design plagiarism-resistant assignments, including plagiarism resistant paraphrase activities. To get started, ask the following questions:
 - How available are both my previous assignments and prior student responses to these assignments? If readily available,
 - ✦ Can I alter the text(s), the approach, the presentation mode?
 - ✦ What other assignments can solicit evaluation of the same skills?
 - ✦ Can I narrow the focus to a local or regional focus or to an unusual topic on which there is less prior coverage?
 - ✦ Can I require the use of sources that are not widely circulated—sources for which students won't find internet summaries, paraphrases, papers, etc.?
 - ✦ How can I sequence the assignment and submission requirements so I am relatively certain that the student is submitting his/her own work? In other words, what preliminary work should students document that shows their own interaction with the ideas, texts, etc. that they will use?

Best-Practices



- Scaffold discipline specific, course-specific, assignment specific instruction.
 - Explicitly teach students how to read an article in your discipline. Draw attention to how the author summarizes and cites the ideas of others. Perhaps pull up some passages from the original so they can see how that author is doing the same thing that you are asking them to do.
 - Require students to demonstrate knowledge of reading assignments on the texts themselves. This can be done orally as well as in written assignments. Assign dual-entry note-taking, research forums on Moodle, and/or a research log/blog. It is easy to examine and requires limited teacher review.
 - Add a summary assignment that requires students to analyze or apply an author's ideas as a scaffolding activity before a major assignment.
 - Ask students to demonstrate their knowledge of the sources and how they are related long before the paper is due. See my Source Grid assignment for a scaffolding activity that discourages reliance on another's work.

Best-Practices



- Employ ideas from Graff and Birkenstein's *They say/I say: The moves that matter in academic writing* (2010), which models how to place different sources in conversation with one another using templates and explains the concept of metacommentary as something different than simply repeating what a source has claimed.
- Assign a short practice paper for which you supply a question and excerpts. Because you are familiar with the original sources, it will be easier for you to notice attribution problems. Or, require an early submission of a short section of the paper, so you can examine the balance/presentation of the students' ideas and those of their sources.
- Require the final paper to be accompanied with hyperlinks to sources, or ask students to attach copies of pages from which they cited specific information.

Common Signs of Plagiarism or Poor Skills



- Shifts in font, font size, or spacing
- Shifts in diction and syntax
- Diction/syntax that differs substantially from the student's in-class participation and any in-class writing samples you may solicit
- Terminology to explain disciplinary concepts that sharply differs from your textbook and course lectures
- Reference page that does not include any current sources or that contains many sources that are not available through Kresge Library's databases
- Over-quoting and/or overuse of one source or items from one anthology (unless assigned)
- Unfamiliarity with the sources and their relationship to one another and to the student author's purpose