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Contributors: Cristyn Elder, Ehren Pflugfelder, Elizabeth Angeli.
Summary:
These resources provide lesson plans and handouts for teachers interested in teaching students how to understand plagiarism. The lesson plans in this section include activities that help students define plagiarism, assess their attitude toward plagiarism, and create a class plagiarism policy. The resources with titles that include "Handout" provide handouts that are free to print for your students by using the print option in your web browser. The "Handout" resources correspond with the resource listed above it.

Contextualizing Plagiarism

Truth or Consequences: Defining Plagiarism

This 50-minute activity explores plagiarism by asking students to read articles on plagiarism incidents and discuss them. Students perform group work to inform each other about the incidents while recognizing the many contextual concerns regarding what defines plagiarism.

The Big Picture

This 50-minute activity asks students to read and respond to a blog post about purchasing essays from an online essay-writing service. Discussion questions focus on the line between writing process and ethics.

Authorship and Popular Plagiarism

This 40-minute activity asks students to read one of two articles that discuss why plagiarism is an important issue. Discussion can focus on why people see plagiarism as a problem and why some incidents of plagiarism are potentially harmful if used as a substitute for original research.

Copyright and Plagiarism

This 30-minute activity asks students to read a short article from the NCTE Chronicle on the differences between plagiarism and copyright violation and then read and respond to several different scenarios about plagiarism and copyright.

Collaborative Authorship

This 35-minute activity asks students to read and discuss different collaborative composition scenarios and decide for themselves whether or not the actions depicted are “acceptable.”
Instructors foster discussion on what kind of repercussions should arise from the situations described, if any.

**Defining Our Terms**

This 30-minute activity explores the different definitions of the terms that are often used in larger definitions of plagiarism. Students engage with the multiple meanings of the terms and focus on the contextual nature of plagiarism definitions.

**Class Plagiarism Policy**

This 40-minute activity asks students to define plagiarism and then explores some of the many permutations of common definitions. The instructor then engages students on the various forms of plagiarism and asks them to consider a course plagiarism policy.

**Comparing Policies**

This 30-minute activity asks groups of two students to compare their own school’s plagiarism policy with that suggested by Rebecca Moore Howard. Discussion of the two policies and how each defines plagiarism follows.

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**Plagiarism Attitude Scale**

**Time Estimate**

20 minutes

**Objective**

Explore students’ own understanding and attitudes towards plagiarism.

**Materials**

Plagiarism Attitude Scale

**Procedures**
1. At the beginning of the first in-class lesson on plagiarism, have students independently complete the Plagiarism Attitude Scale.

2. If desired, have the students review their answers in pairs to see where they agree and/or disagree.

3. If desired, lead students in a class discussion on questions or disagreements that arise from the completion of the attitude scale.

4. Option: Have students put the scale aside for now and return to the scale later in the semester. Have students review their answers to the scale. Would they change their answers to any of the items? If so, why?

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**Handout: Plagiarism Attitude Scale**

**Directions**

This is an attitude scale, which measures how you feel about plagiarism. It is *not* a test with right and wrong answers. Please consider your honest opinions regarding the items and record your responses. Do *not* place your name on this scale. Your instructor may give you further instructions.

1. Sometimes I feel tempted to plagiarize because so many other students are doing it.
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - Neutral
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

2. I believe I know accurately what constitutes plagiarism and what does not.
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - Neutral
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

3. Plagiarism is as bad as stealing the final exam ahead of time and memorizing the answers.
4. If my roommate gives me permission to use his or her paper for one of my classes, I don’t think there is anything wrong with doing that.

5. Plagiarism is justified if the professor assigns too much work in the course.

6. The punishment for plagiarism in college should be light because we are young people just learning the ropes.

7. If a student buys or downloads free a whole research paper and turns it in unchanged with his or her name as the author, the student should be expelled from the university.

8. Plagiarism is against my ethical values.

9. Because plagiarism involves taking another person’s words and not his or her materials goods, plagiarism is no big deal.
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

10. It’s okay to use something you have written in the past to fulfill a new assignment because you can’t plagiarize yourself.
Strongly Agree
Agree
Neutral
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

11. If I lend a paper to another student to look at, and then that student turns it in as his or her own and is caught, I should not be punished also.

Strongly Agree
Agree
Neutral
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

12. If students caught plagiarizing received a special grade for cheating (such as XF) on their permanent transcript, that policy would deter many from plagiarizing.
Strongly Agree
Agree
Neutral
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

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Truth or Consequences

Time Estimate
50 minutes

Objective
To examine different cases of plagiarism reported in the media within context in order to identify the different ways plagiarism can be defined and to be aware of the various consequences.
Materials

- “Hamilton President Resigns Over Speech” (One copy per student in Group A)
- “Fame Can’t Excuse a Plagiarist” (One copy per student in Group B)
- “Washington Post Blogger Quits after Plagiarism Accusations” (One copy per student in Group C)
- “Hungary’s President Quits Over Alleged Plagiarism” (One copy per student in Group D)
- The following article is an alternative option for students who are fluent in more than one language. It treats the issue of plagiarism when translating a text from one language to another: “Plagiarism in China Fuels Debate on Intellectual Theft”
- This is another alternative article that does not treat one specific case of plagiarism but discusses plagiarism within the context of online publishing (e.g., on MySpace web pages): "Myspace: A Place for Plagiarism? (Part one)"
- “School Cheating Scandal Tests a Town’s Values” (One copy per student in the class for homework)

Procedures

1. Collect four or five articles (or links to the articles) on plagiarism cases in the news. These cases should identify different aspects of plagiarism. Assign the reading of these articles to be done at home before class or allow for time in class to read.

2. Divide students into groups of four or five, depending on how many articles you want to cover. Each group of students should be reading a different article. So, for example, the four students in Group A should read “Hamilton President Resigns Over Speech.” Group B should read “Fame Can’t Excuse a Plagiarist”, etc. As students read their article, they should complete the table titled “Truth or Consequences” as it pertains to their article. After each student has individually read his/her article, have students discuss the article within their group to make sure they understand the main points.

3. Divide students into new groups, each new group consisting of one student from Group A, Group B, etc. Each student then explains his/her article to the new group. The other students complete the Truth or Consequences Table as it pertains to each article.

4. After students have discussed their articles within their groups, complete the same table on the board, eliciting responses from the class. Discuss issues related to the articles as questions arise, including how context may change the definition and/or consequence of plagiarism.

5. Ask students to read back through their answers on the plagiarism attitude scale. In response to the articles read, would they change any of their answers on the scale? What questions do they still have about issues presented on the scale?

Homework

For homework, have students read the article “School Cheating Scandal Tests a Town’s Values.” Ask students to write a journal entry responding to the final consequence of the plagiarism case described in the article.
Possible Follow-up

An appropriate follow-up lesson to this one would be, for example, the lesson titled “Big Picture” or “Comparing Policies,” in which classroom policies on plagiarism are examined.

Computer Lab Option

If doing the reading in class, students can access the articles online and complete the Truth or Consequences table.

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Handout: Truth or Consequences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Main points of the article</th>
<th>Ways plagiarism is defined</th>
<th>Consequences of plagiarism</th>
<th>Something new you learned about plagiarism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hamilton President</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fame Can’t Excuse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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The Big Picture

Time Estimate

50 minutes
Objectives

To have students gain a larger understanding of the context of authorship, plagiarism, and intellectual property

Materials

Leigh Blackall, “It’s not plagiarism, it’s an easy essay”

Procedures

Pass out the article by Leigh Blackall and ask students to read it and be ready to discuss the main points afterward.

1. Break students into groups of 3 or 4 and ask them to respond to some of the questions that Blackall asks the essay writing company in his blog.

2. Ask students to report their group’s findings and mediate the conversation according to your own perspective. You can also ask some of the following questions during discussion:
   - How would they (the students) respond to the essay company’s answers?
   - Do they feel this practice is unethical?
   - What should happen to students that purchase an essay and get caught?
   - What does the company mean when they claim that their essays are “plagiarism-free”?
   - Can a purchased essay be plagiarism-free?
   - What is the difference between a copyrighted work and a plagiarized work?

Homework

Ask students to answer the following question: “Is plagiarism a matter of ethics or a matter of decisions made while writing? Are these two different?”

Computer Lab Option

Students can read Blackwell's blog online and then post their comments under the article. They can do this in class or on their own time. You can then review these comments for class the next day and continue the conversation if need be.

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**Authorship and Popular Plagiarism**

**Time Estimate**

40 minutes

**Objectives**

To have students gain a larger understanding of the context of authorship, plagiarism, and intellectual property.

**Materials**

Authorship and Popular Plagiarism handouts

**Procedures**

1. Split the class into two groups and then distribute article one to one group and handout two to the other. Give students a chance to read their articles:"Plagiarism: Everybody into the Pool" and "Threats and Responses: Intelligence Assessments." (10-15 min.)

2. After students have read the articles, ask each group to briefly summarize the article and explain the main points to the other half of class. This may involve choosing particular students to articulate each article. (5-10 min.)

3. Discuss the content of the article with students. (15 min.) You can certainly include any details or concerns students have, but there are some discussion questions to build upon:

   - What were some of the consequences for plagiarizing?
   - Do the consequences change in different contexts?
   - How many people do you think plagiarize often?
   - What are some of the motivations for doing so?
   - Are there situations where activities considered “plagiarism” is acceptable? Explain.
   - Why do you think people are so concerned about plagiarism issues?

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Copyright and Plagiarism

Time Estimate

30 minutes

Objective

Engage students in understanding the distinctions between copyright and plagiarism

Materials

Penn State: Copyright and Plagiarism

Scenarios handout

Procedures

1. Pass out the handouts and ask students to read the information that explains the differences between copyright and plagiarism. Follow up on their reading with a brief discussion of the distinction as you understand it. It may help to explain the copyright is a legal distinction based on property rights and plagiarism is a civil distinction based on the process of creating. (10-15 min.)

2. Go over the scenarios on the handout and engage students in a discussion as to whether they fit under the category of plagiarism of copyright violation and why. (10-15 min.)

Answers: 1. plagiarism 2. plagiarism, but could fit copyright violation 3. copyright violation 4. copyright violation 5. plagiarism

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Handout: Copyright and Plagiarism

Scenario 1

Jeff uses ideas and phrases from a very old book, one that no longer has any copyright, in his essay. He doesn’t cite the information, because the book isn’t legally protected by copyright. Is this plagiarism or copyright violation? Marco decides that his sister’s blog has some good information on it, so he borrows some for use in his own blog. He doesn’t bother to cite her. Is this plagiarism or copyright violation?
Scenario 2

Danielle writes an essay that’s she worked very hard on and sends it off to an academic journal after she finishes it. The journal sends her comments on the essay, including one that claims her research has already been done and that she can’t publish her work, because another person already has. If she does publish it, would it fall under plagiarism or copyright violation?

Scenario 3

Christina is in an R&B group that often samples other artists in their work. They make a demo CD for a record company and sell copies at their concerts and on their website. That CD includes songs with pieces of other artists’ material, but only small samples. They credit the other artists in their liner notes. Is this plagiarism or copyright violation?

Scenario 4

Giselle is writing an essay and decides that she needs some sources that she can’t find. Because no one will get hurt if she makes up some sources and their contents, she does so and uses those fictional sources in her essay. Is this plagiarism or copyright violation?

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Collaborative Authorship

Time Estimate

35 minutes

Objectives

To have students gain a larger understanding of our culture’s focus on individual authorship and when those expectations are not feasible.

Materials

Collaborative Authorship Handout

Procedures

1. Ask students to get in groups of 4 or 5 and have each group read a different scenario from the handout. After students have read the scenarios, ask each to discuss whether or not the type of authorship was “acceptable.” (10-15 minutes)
2. As a class, have each group explain their scenario to the rest of the students and then clarify what the group discussed about the scenario. Your role as in instructor is not to achieve unity among all students on these collaborative writing scenarios, but explore the possible outcomes from the actions described. You may want to highlight that standards of “acceptable” collaboration often depend upon context. It may also be advantageous to determine how your school’s plagiarism policy would read these actions. (20 minutes)

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Handout: Collaborative Authorship

Scenario 1

Molly has been working with a writing center tutor for her last paper. She’s been going to the writing center for about a week and has noticed that her writing center tutor offers a lot of great advice for her work, sometimes putting Molly’s thoughts into her own words. Many of her tutor’s phrases have found their way into Molly’s paper. If Molly turns the paper in for her class, has she individually authored it? Is that OK?

Scenario 2

Steve writes many Wikipedia pages, because he really likes to show his knowledge on particular topics. In Wikipedia, though, many people are allowed to edit and change articles. The original entry on “Hunting dogs” that Steve wrote has been changed dozens of times since he originally posted it. If Steve claims on a resume that he has written an encyclopedia entry on hunting dogs, has he individually authored it? Is that OK?

Scenario 3

Jeff writes a blog. In that blog he often posts information from other sources, often quoting much of the original material and providing a link to the original source. When people ask him what he does for fun, he says that he authors a blog. Is he the original author? Is it OK is he claims that he is?

Scenario 4

Chris was working with a professor on a project. The professor eventually finished her half and moved on to something else, leaving Chris with the resultant data. Chris uses that data in her new project and writes an article for publication. Is Chris allowed to claim that she is the original author? If she does is that OK?
Scenario 5

Carla is working on a paper for her economics class and knows her roommate took the class the previous year. She asks her roommate for help with the paper and uses a lot of her roommate’s resources and ideas. Carla later turns the paper in for credit. Can she claim that she is the original author? Is that OK?

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Defining Our Terms

Time Estimate

30 minutes

Objective

Engage students in a discussion on the terms that determine what can be defined as plagiarism

Materials

Chalkboard/whiteboard

Computer Lab Option Materials

Digital projector

Procedure

1. Put the following terms on the board and ask students to work in pairs, thinking up short definitions for the terms:
   - common knowledge
   - originality
   - own work
   - author
   - borrowing
2. As pairs of students report on their work, begin writing down significant words and phrases for each term.

3. If the class does not reach a consensus on these terms, that’s OK. It’s more important that you bring the plurality of definitions to light and expose these relatively “simple” terms for what they really are: contextually sensitive elements of a definition of plagiarism.

**Computer Lab Option**

Compose the definition on the instructor’s digital projector, or if you have time, have students search online for definitions of these terms and include them in your brainstorming discussion.

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**Class Plagiarism Policy**

**Time Estimate**

40 minutes

**Objective**

Engage students in defining plagiarism for your course.

**Materials**

Chalkboard/whiteboard

**Computer Lab Option Materials**

Digital projector

**Procedures**

1. Ask students their definitions and place those definitions on one side of the board. Then, locating all of the main verbs and nouns, try to create a composite sentence out of the responses. (10 minutes) Hint: the sentence will likely follow something like this formula:
“The use of someone’s else’s ideas presented as your own without proper citation.” The underlined sections often include a number of synonyms and related nouns/verbs.

2. When the class agrees on a general definition, ask students what the course policy should be for failure to adhere to that definition, considering that there are different types of plagiarism:

- Excessive repetition (poor paraphrasing of another’s words)
- Improper citation (failure to cite properly)
- Improper Idea borrowing (failure to cite another’s ideas)
- Fraud (creation of false sources)
- Forgery (turning in another person’s work as your own)

3. Explain what these types of plagiarism mean and put them on the board, asking students what the policy should be for each type of “offense.” If the class does not come to an agreement on these terms, that’s OK. (15 minutes)

**Computer Lab Option**

Compose the definition on the instructor’s digital projector, or, if you have extra time, when brainstorming, ask students to search for further definitions online and use them in your brainstorming task.

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**Comparing Policies**

**Time Estimate**

30 minutes

**Objectives**

To have students understand the differences between what their school recommends and what other critics suggest

**Materials**

Your own institution’s plagiarism policy

Procedures

1. In groups of two, students will read their institution’s official plagiarism and academic dishonesty policy and takes notes on the article, focusing on definitions of plagiarism

2. Students then compare this policy to the policy Rebecca Moore Howard provides in her article "Plagiarisms, Authorships, and the Academic Death Penalty"

3. The pairs of students will then move into groups of 4 (2 pairs of 2) and discuss the main differences between the two policies

4. The instructor will lead class discussion on the differences and students’ opinions of their institution’s policy

Homework

Students can develop a short policy statement for the course—work that would lead into the lesson plan on creating a course plagiarism definition.

Computer Lab Option

Instead of discussing the different policies in groups, students can discuss the policies through a discussion board set up before class. If possible, share the university’s policy during class time and have students annotate and comment on the document, discussing their comments and questions during class time.

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Handout: Comparing Policies


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It is perhaps never the case that a writer composes "original" material, free of any influence. It might be more accurate to think of creativity, of fresh combinations made from existing sources, or fresh implications for existing materials. An important requirement of most academic writing is acknowledging one's sources. We all work from sources, even when we are being creative.
American academic culture demands that writers who use the exact words of a source supply quotation marks at the beginning and end of the quotation, so that the reader can know where the voice of the source begins and ends. In addition, the writer must use footnotes, parenthetical notes, or endnotes to cite the source, so that the reader can consult that source if he or she chooses. Writers must also acknowledge the sources not only of words but also of ideas, insofar as is possible, even when they are not quoting word for word. Moreover, in final-draft writing, academic writers may not paraphrase a source by using its phrases and sentences, with a few changes in grammar or word choice—even when the source is cited. Plagiarism is the representation of a source's words or ideas as one's own. Plagiarism occurs when a writer fails to supply quotation marks for exact quotations; fails to cite the sources of his or her ideas; or adopts the phrasing of his or her sources, with changes in grammar or word choice. Plagiarism takes three different forms—cheating, non-attribution of sources, and patchwriting:

1. **Cheating:** Borrowing, purchasing, or otherwise obtaining work composed by someone else and submitting it under one's own name. The minimum penalty is an "F" in the course; the maximum penalty, suspension from the university.

2. **Non-attribution:** Writing one's own paper but including passages copied exactly from the work of another (regardless of whether that work is published or unpublished or whether it comes from a printed or electronic source) without providing (a) footnotes, endnotes, or parenthetical notes that cite the source and (b) quotation marks or block indentation to indicate precisely what has been copied from the source. Because non-attribution is sometimes the result of a student's inexperience with conventions of academic writing, instruction in source attribution and subsequent revision of the paper may be the instructor's most appropriate response. Non-attribution can alternatively be the result of a student's intent to deceive, in which case the minimum penalty is an "F" in the course and the maximum penalty, suspension from the university.

3. **Patchwriting:** Writing passages that are not copied exactly but that have nevertheless been borrowed from another source, with some changes—a practice which *The Bedford Handbook for Writers* calls "paraphrasing the source's language too closely" (477). This "patchwriting" is plagiarism regardless of whether one supplies footnotes, endnotes, or parenthetical notes that acknowledge the source. However, patchwriting is not always a form of academic dishonesty; it is not always committed by immoral writers. Often it is a form of writing that learners employ when they are unfamiliar with the words and ideas about which they are writing. In this situation, patchwriting can actually help the learner begin to understand the unfamiliar material. Yet it is a transitional writing form; it is never acceptable for final-draft academic writing, for it demonstrates that the writer does not fully understand the source from which he or she is patchwriting. Because patchwriting can result from a student's inexperience with conventions of academic writing, instruction in quotation and source attribution and a request for subsequent revision of the paper may be an appropriate response for the instructor. But because patchwriting often results from a student's unfamiliarity with the words and ideas of a source text, instruction in the material discussed in the source and a request for subsequent revision of the paper is even more frequently the appropriate response. Patchwriting can also be the result of a student's intent to deceive, in which case the minimum penalty is an "F" in the course and the maximum penalty, suspension from the university.

**Additional advice for students:**

Both citation (footnotes, parenthetical notes, or endnotes) and quotation marks are required whenever you copy exact words and phrases from a source. When you paraphrase or summarize but do not copy exactly, citation is still required. When in doubt, cite; over-citation is an error, but under-citation is plagiarism. Your citations should follow a recognized style sheet; you should not make up your own system. If your instructor does not specify a style sheet, you may
want to adopt the MLA style, which is described in *The Bedford Handbook for Writers*, or the APA system. The sources you should cite include not only printed materials but also electronic sources. Most style sheets are currently publishing new editions that provide advice for citing sources obtained by computer-materials from the Internet or CD Rom disks, for example. The sources you should cite also include contributions that others may make to your drafts in progress—friends, family, classmates, and tutors who gave you ideas for your essay or who made suggestions for its improvement. Writers customarily provide a single discursive footnote to acknowledge such contributions. Often the footnote appears at the end of the title or the first paragraph of the essay. Usually one to three sentences, naming the contributors to the paper and sketching the nature and extent of their contributions, suffice. Patchwriting, the third type of plagiarism listed above, is an issue somewhat more complicated than that of citation. For example, a student who had never before studied theories of mythology read the following passage:

The world of the Ancient Near East, however, was familiar with myth of a rather different kind, myth as the spoken word which accompanied the performance of certain all-important religious rituals. (Davidson 11)

The student then wrote a paper that included this patchwriting:

Davidson explains ritual myths as concepts that are illustrated through spoken words but are also accompanied by the performance of religious ceremonies.

(Qtd. in Howard 237).

The student deleted many phrases from the original (such as "The world of the Ancient Near East") and substituted synonyms ("ceremonies" for "rituals," for example). But the structure of the student's prose is that of Davidson, following exactly the latter half of Davidson's sentence. The student obviously did not write this passage with the intention of deceiving, for he acknowledges that these are Davidson's ideas ("Davidson explains"). The student's motivation sprang from neither a lack of morality nor an ignorance of footnoting procedures, but rather from a difficulty in understanding Davidson's text. Patchwriting in such a situation can be an effective means of helping the writer understand difficult material; blending the words and phrasing of the source with one's own words and phrasing may have helped the student comprehend the source. But it is not an acceptable practice for public writing—for the papers that one hands in.

Patchwriting can help the student toward comprehending the source; but patchwriting itself demonstrates that the student does not yet understand that source. The next step beyond patchwriting—a step whereby you can come to understand the text—is effective summary: Read the source through quickly to get its general ideas, perhaps reading only the first sentence of each paragraph. Then re-read, more slowly. Go through it a third time and take notes. Then let some time elapse—a half hour should be enough—and with the book closed, write your own summary of it. (Never try to summarize or paraphrase a source while looking at that source.) With the book closed, what you write will be in your own words and sentences. Once you have drafted your summary, go back to the book and check to see if any of your phrasing resembles that of the source; if so, quote it exactly. Provide page citations for both your paraphrases and for quotations. Also, check your version to see what you forgot; what you forgot is usually what you didn't understand. Now it is time to visit your instructor for additional help in understanding the material. But you must never let yourself fall into patchwriting as a substitute for understanding the material.