Academic Integrity for UWM Graduate Students: Focus on Plagiarism

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PLAGIARISM: AN OVERVIEW

- What plagiarism is:
  1. Use of others’ ideas or work without adequate attribution; or
  2. Use of others’ words without adequate citation; or
  3. Use of others’ words with citation but without quotation marks
- Any one of these lapses counts as plagiarism.
WHY I CARE ABOUT PLAGIARISM AND WANT YOU TO, TOO

- Students who are plagiarizing are not learning.
- I have caught plagiarism most semesters at UWM, among undergraduates and graduate students.
- One person alone cannot stop plagiarism. We need an institutional, cultural campaign.

WHY PLAGIARISM IS BAD

1. Stealing/dishonest
2. Undermines student’s own opportunity to learn
3. Undermines the general value of the UWM degree
4. Affects what teachers can do in a class: research papers are not feasible.
5. Degrees based on plagiarized work are not valuable, undermines UWM’s reputation
TIPS FOR PRE-EMPTING PLAGIARISM
(COURTESY OF PROF. AIMS MCGUINNESS)

- “Paraphrase and cite”
- In-class exercise on paraphrasing
  - Discuss what is successful and what is not
  - Emphasize that even paraphrases need citations
- Discuss use of quotation marks, including rules for bloc quotations
- Students must meet with instructor for permission to use sources not assigned—must bring the source for instructor’s review and explain how they intend to use it
- Incremental drafting, with multiple meetings, penultimate draft due before end of semester

PRE-EMPTING PLAGIARISM

- Set a serious tone on the first day of class
- Second chance on paper submission day
  - When students turn in papers, tell them what plagiarism is. Say that if they have used someone else’s words without quotation marks, they can take the papers home and revise them, then resubmit the next day with no penalty for being late.
  - Don’t accept papers without citations—make students resubmit
TIPS FOR CATCHING PLAGIARISM

☐ Things to be suspicious of
  ◦ Wild variations in quality of prose within paper
  ◦ Paper seems much smarter than student’s in-class performance suggests
    ☐ Caution: might just be a quiet student
  ◦ Provides information not based on assigned materials
  ◦ Footnotes that make no sense

TIPS FOR CATCHING PLAGIARISM

☐ More things to be suspicious of
  ◦ Footnotes for materials not assigned in the class, when students were not required to go outside assigned readings
  ◦ Inclusion of very specific information, such as you would find in an expert’s work
  ◦ Strange typos
  ◦ Square bracket footnotes like those used in Wikipedia entries
TIPS FOR CATCHING PLAGIARISM

- Additional approaches
  - Read the Wikipedia entries on your topic
  - Do a quick skim of the whole batch for tone. Anything seem unusual?
  - Google suspicious turns of phrase that don’t seem like undergraduate vocabulary
  - Google the basic term for the topic
    - Often but not always one of the first hits
  - Check JSTOR (for humanities) or Google Books or Scholar

STUCK?

- Possible that the plagiarism was from a book, like in the old days
- Possible that the paper was purchased
- Ask a colleague for assistance—perhaps they will recognize the source
- Possible the student did not plagiarize—look at the cited sources
- Caution: Never accuse without proof.
HOW TO DOCUMENT PLAGIARISM

- Don’t try to save paper—print everything
- As soon as you suspect plagiarism, photocopy the paper; set the original aside in a secure location; work with the copy
- Print out the website/photocopy source
- Do not contact the student until you have done the research yourself. If you are a TA, consult the instructor.

HOW TO DOCUMENT PLAGIARISM

- On the assignment:
  - Circle suspicious passages in one color
  - Use a second color to document verbatim passages
    - Be very careful to highlight only the transcribed words
    - Minor changes in phrasing is a sign of the intention to deceive
  - Use a third color to document close paraphrases
- Use the same colors to mark up the source
- Alternative to photocopying and marking with a highlighter: use Track Changes function. You will still need copies of the sources, appropriately marked up.
UWM PROCEDURES

- Procedures laid out online: http://www4.uwm.edu/acad_aff/policy/academicmisconduct.cfm
- If you are a TA, consult the Instructor.
- If you are an Instructor, consult the Investigating Officer
- Offer to meet with student to discuss; document the meeting
- Instructor decision and sanctions
- Formal letter with finding sent by postal mail to student
- Student has right of appeal
- Document every case. Do not simply administer sanctions without the process.

SUMMARY

- Be alert to possibility of plagiarism while you are grading
- Document before making accusations
- Follow UWM misconduct procedures
  - http://www4.uwm.edu/acad_aff/policy/academicmisconduct.cfm
- I am happy to present a more detailed workshop to TAs. Email Amanda Seligman at seligman@uwm.edu to schedule.