

# POLICY ON ACADEMIC HONESTY

The Department of Astronomy has adopted a policy on academic honesty which is based on the policy of the Division of Rhetoric and Composition. That document follows this page and describes our policy on plagiarism and collusion. These policies apply to any paper written for a class. (They are also good guidelines for papers written for publication, but the issue in the section under collusion on editing papers is usually handled with coauthorship or acknowledgments in research papers prepared for publication.)

The issue of collusion on homework and take-home tests is not addressed in the document of the Rhetoric and Composition Department. As a general rule, no cooperation of any kind is acceptable on take-home tests; but some cooperation on homework is encouraged by many teachers. It is the responsibility of each student to find out what policy applies in a given class.

You should read the policy and be sure that you understand it completely. If anything is not clear, discuss the policy with the graduate advisor. Once you have understood the policy, sign the page saying you have understood the policy and return it to the graduate advisor.

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## STATEMENT ON SCHOLASTIC RESPONSIBILITY

The writing you do in the Division of Rhetoric and Composition (DRC) courses must be your own. Passing off the work of others as your own can be either plagiarism or collusion. Both are scholastic offenses that the DRC will not tolerate. The definitions and descriptions below will help you know what acts constitute either violation.

### PLAGIARISM:

The General Information Catalog of the University of Texas at Austin defines plagiarism as follows:

...the appropriation, buying, receiving as a gift, or obtaining by any means another's work and the unacknowledged submission or incorporation of it in one's own written work offered for credit (p. 173).

1. You commit plagiarism if you fail to acknowledge the sources of any information in your paper which is not either common knowledge or personal knowledge. Common knowledge includes facts, dates, events, information, and concepts that belong generally to the educated public. Even if you used a reference book to discover the dates of George Washington's presidency, for example, you would not have to acknowledge the source because those dates fall into the range of historical common knowledge. If you borrowed material that interpreted or commented on Washington's presidency, however, you would be expected to cite your source. You can acknowledge a source through in-text

citations, attribution lines (for example, "Gloria Steinem observes in 'Erotica and Pornography. . .'), footnotes, or other forms of documentation approved by your instructor.

2. You commit plagiarism if you fail to acknowledge direct quotation either by using quotation marks when quoting short passages or indentation when quoting longer passages. Without the quotation marks or indentation, a passage copied directly from a source might be considered plagiarized even if it were followed by an in-text citation or a footnote: the citation or footnote acknowledges that you have a source but it does not indicate that you have borrowed someone else's exact words. If you use the language of a source, word-for-word, you must use quotation marks or block indentation.
3. You commit plagiarism if you merely paraphrase the original words of your source. Some students think that they can avoid a charge of plagiarism by changing a few words in each sentence they copy, or by rearranging the shape of phrases or the order of sentences in a paragraph. This is not true. When you take notes, you must be careful to put ideas in your own words, or to use direct quotation when you are relying on phrases borrowed directly from a source.
4. You commit plagiarism if you borrow the ideas, examples, or structure of your source without acknowledging it. You can be guilty of plagiarism if you systematically borrow the ideas and organization of a source even if the language of your piece is substantially original. A student who, for example, reports on a major news event by using exactly the same ideas in the same order as they appear in an article in Time or Newsweek might be accused of plagiarism.
5. You commit plagiarism if you take, buy, or receive a paper written by someone else and present it as your own.
6. You commit plagiarism if you use one paper for two different courses, or reuse a paper previously submitted for credit, without the prior approval of the instructor or instructors.

If you want to use words, ideas, or the structure of a selection such as the passage below from Harper's, you may do so correctly in two ways.

"Medical costs will bankrupt this country if they continue on their current trajectory. And there are no data to demonstrate that improved management techniques will solve the problem. "Managed care" and "managed competition" might save money in the short run (though the examples of some other managed industries-such as the utilities and airlines do not inspire confidence). But the bulk of the savings achieved by Health Maintenance Organizations has been achieved by cutting back on expensive, unprofitable facilities such as burn centers, neonatal-intensive-care units, emergency rooms and the like. In other words, HMOs conduct what amounts to a hidden form of healthcare rationing-confident that municipal and university hospitals are still around to pick up the slack (Gaylin 62)." Gaylin, Willard M.D. "Faulty Diagnosis: Why Clinton's Healthcare Plan Won't Cure What Ails Us." Harper's (Oct. 1993): 57-64.

1) You may quote from the passage directly, using appropriate citations and quotation marks or (when the quotation is lengthy) indentation. For example:

Willard Gaylin, a professor of psychiatry at Columbia Medical School, maintains that "medical costs will bankrupt this country if they continue on their current trajectory. And there are no data to demonstrate that improved management techniques will solve the problem" (62).

2) You may report the information in your own words, acknowledging Gaylin as your source and using an in-text citation to indicate the location of the passage:

Doctor Gaylin, for instance, does not believe that the improved management techniques proposed by the Clinton administration will solve the problem of rising medical costs, because the cost-cutting measures followed by HMOs under the current system will not be feasible when all Americans belong to such health collectives (62).

You may not simply change a few words or phrases and call the material your own, even if you acknowledge a source. The following passage based on Gaylin's original would be considered plagiarism--with or without an in-text citation or footnote:

Medical expenses will ruin America if we stay on our current path. There is no evidence that better management techniques will fix the trouble. "Managed care" may save some money today, but the way things are we will still pay for expensive, unprofitable care tomorrow.

You may not call the work your own if you change the language in the original passage but closely follow its organization, ideas, and examples. Most instructors would consider the following passage too much like Gaylin's original to be considered acceptable as a student's work:

Our country will go broke if it follows on its current path. And there is no information that says we can get out of this mess through better management. HMOs are successful today because they leave the county and teaching hospitals to fund costly, unprofitable specialized care (Gaylin 62).

#### COLLUSION:

The General information Catalog of the University of Texas at Austin defines collusion as follows:

...the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing written work offered for credit, or collaboration with another person to commit a work offered for credit, or

...collaboration with another person to commit a violation of any section of the rules on scholastic responsibility (p. 173).

1. You commit collusion if you allow someone else to write your papers.
2. You also commit collusion if you allow someone else to edit your papers. It is scholastically dishonest for students to employ tutors to correct, edit, or modify essays in any substantive fashion. The same reservations and restrictions apply, within reason, to any outside assistance you may receive from a

parent, friend, roommate, or academic tutor. Any changes, deletions, rearrangements, additions, or corrections made in your essays should represent your own work. If you want assistance in a course beyond that which your instructor can offer in class or in conference, you can use the DRC's Undergraduate Writing Center (UWC) in the UGL or the Learning Skills Center (LSC) in Jester A332. Tutors at these facilities are trained to comment on essays and to offer advice without editing or rewriting papers.

#### PERMISSIBLE TUTORING:

Corrections made in your essays should be your own work. In other words, your readers can tell you the kinds of errors you make, but cannot correct them for you. Below is an example of the tutoring you may receive.

The time has come for the University of Texas to adopt domestic partner legislation. Having argued about this issue in Austin, many colleges, such as Swarthmore, Stanford, and the University of Wisconsin offer life and health insurance to the romantic partners of their employees. The partners in domestic partnerships are gay, lesbian, or heterosexual; they have to live with someone employed by the colleges offering benefits. They also have to register with the colleges' personnel offices if they want benefits. The city of Austin already gives its employees these benefits, it's time for the university to do the same.

#### PENALTIES:

If you have any question or doubts for a given essay about the way you are employing sources or getting assistance in writing a paper, consult your instructor before handing it in. The penalties for plagiarism or collusion can be severe. In all demonstrable cases of either offense, the DRC recommends that its instructors fail the student for the entire course, not just for the paper. However, the penalty in a given case is at the discretion of the individual instructor. Your instructor must discuss any charge of scholastic dishonesty directly with you, and may also refer you to the Director or Associate Director of the DRC. In most instances, a plagiarism or collusion case is resolved either between student and instructor, or between instructor, student, and Director or Associate Director. If it is not, a student does have a right to a hearing before a designated university official and a right to make an appeal to the Office of the Dean of Students.

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#### PLAGIARISM

1. What is plagiarism?

The Modern Languages Association Style Manual (Actert and Gibaldi 1985, MLA, New York, p. 4) defines plagiarism as:

...the use of another person's ideas or expression in your writing without acknowledging the source. The word comes from the Latin word *plagiarius* ('kidnapper').

The manual goes on to say:

...to plagiarize is to give the impression that you have written or thought something that you have instead borrowed from someone else...

This latter definition bears careful scrutiny. Note especially that it is still possible to "give the impression that you have written something you have in fact borrowed" even if you cite the original text. What the reader might think about the source of the ideas and words in your text should be the guiding principle as you try to determine whether a citation is needed and how that citation should be made.

## 2. Plagiarism Without Citation

You cannot hand in to a course instructor or submit for publication any work which is not wholly original, unless it contains proper citations of borrowed phrases or ideas. References at the end of a paper are insufficient since they do not permit the reader to discern what parts of the text and which ideas are original and which are borrowed. In our field, the sole exceptions to this rule have to do with universal knowledge; it is not necessary to provide a citation for an idea of which every knowledgeable reader will know the source. Examples of this category include Newton's laws,  $v = HoD$ ,  $L = 47rr2aT4$ , etc. Any other words, thoughts, or equations which are not appearing for the first time ever in your work must receive a proper citation, even if you have derived the result or come to the conclusion independently. In the case of equations you derive from first principles or models or observing results you obtain yourself, failure to cite prior work is not necessarily plagiarism, but it is certainly discourteous and hinders the reader's search for the facts.

## 3. Plagiarism With Citation

Merely including references to pre-published work next to or near borrowed expressions does not necessarily meet the obligation to make clear what has been borrowed from another person's work. The implicit understanding in our field is that a citation refers to the ideas or results described in the preceding text and not to the words or phrases themselves.

1. Plagiarism by unacknowledged quotation; Shapiro and Field (1976 *Ap. J.*, 205, 762)  
write:

The layer of rising hot gas in this "galactic fountain" is expected to extend to ~ 103 pc on either side of the plane, so that, in the absence of absorption, the soft X-ray background intensity at the poles should be 5 times that in the galactic plane.

If I were to write a paper repeating this sentence verbatim with a citation,

The layer of rising hot gas in this "galactic fountain" is expected to extend to ~ 103 pc on either side of the plane, so that, in the absence of absorption, the soft X-ray background intensity at the poles should be 5 times that in the galactic plane (Shapiro and Field 1976).

I would be committing plagiarism. Why? I have clearly done a proper job of acknowledging the ideas contained in the previous work. What I have failed to do is to make clear that the words are not my own.

For example, I might have borrowed the sentence so that the text of my paper read as follows:

The galactic fountain predicts a specific large-scale distribution of soft X-ray emission. Under some conditions, the layer of rising hot gas in the "galactic fountain" is expected to extend ~ 103 pc on either side of the plane so that, in the absence of absorption, the soft X-ray background intensity at the poles should be 5 times that in the galactic plane (Shapiro and Field 1976). We will now compare this prediction to actual observations.

Even though there is a citation here, if I continually borrow sentences like this it will never be clear which text is original and which is lifted from the cited work.

The solution to the problem is that any literal borrowings must be clearly labeled. This is accomplished for small passages by using quotation marks and a citation immediately following the quote. Longer passages should appear following a colon as a separate, indented paragraph with a citation preceding or immediately following the quote. Check with a style manual, a copy of the journal, or an editor if you are submitting something for publication and need to know the correct format for a long quotation.

2. Plagiarism by paraphrase. Merely re-writing sentences does not constitute original work. You must completely re-express the ideas contained in the sentences and then acknowledge the source of the ideas. For example, if I had written in a paper:

The "galactic fountain" model predicts that the layer of hot gas will extend around 103 pc out of the plane so that, when no absorption is present, the soft X-ray background toward  $b = \pm 90^\circ$  will be ~ 5 times that at  $b = 0$ . (Shapiro and Field 1976)

I have not provided adequate acknowledgment and am therefore plagiarizing. Why? Because the reader has no way of knowing that I have cribbed not only the result, but also the syntax and the organization of ideas, from the original source.

There are two possible solutions to the problem of proper attribution of paraphrases:

(1) Make it clear that you are paraphrasing; "Shapiro and Field (1976) maintain that the 'galactic fountain' model predicts . . .  $b = 0$ ."

(2) Retain the thought but rewrite it in your own words.

There is a simple geometric argument which can predict the distribution of the soft X-ray background as a function of galactic latitude: Toward  $b = 0$ , if there is no attenuation of soft X-rays by the gas, the  $\sim 103$  pc extent of the galactic fountain will determine the intensity. In the plane, attenuation will lead to a much smaller effective path length and to a  $\sim 5$  times lower soft X-ray flux (Shapiro and Field 1976).