



## Plagiarism

### General Information and Resources

provided by the

Department of English and American Studies

Note that you are obliged to read and watch the information and videos provided here with the utmost attention and care and to confirm as much by signing the *Declaration of Authorship* which is to be attached to every submission – be it to obtain graded or ungraded credit.

#### What is plagiarism?

“Plagiarism is the **unacknowledged use** of material authored by someone else, either **by taking the precise phrasing of that individual** or **by rephrasing their ideas**”

(Olsson 2009: 23)

To plagiarize means “**to steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one's own [and to] use (another's production) without crediting the source**”

(Merriam Webster 2022)

Note that...

- for plagiarism to exist the material used must be **unacknowledged** or **not acknowledged properly** or **used to excess**.
- a title, a (historical) fact or an idea that is common knowledge is **not protectible content** and, therefore, no indication of references is required (e.g., “When the Twin Towers were hit on September 11, 2001...”).
- a concept becomes protectible when its **meaning is dependent on the context** in which it was originally expressed.
- it **does not matter whether** the unacknowledged material is **reproduced in speech** or in **writing** – the originator must always be indicated.
- it **does not matter whether** you plagiarize **on purpose** or **by accident**. Plagiarism is **always unacceptable**.
- nowadays, powerful **software** is available which **enables the detection** of plagiarized paragraphs.

Please also see:

- [Plagiarism: Lesson One - YouTube](#) (Young 2016) (on plagiarism in general)
- [Student to Student: Verbal Citation – YouTube](#) (Valencia Speech 2017) (on oral citations)
- [Orally Citing a Source in a Speech](#) (Janene Davison 2015) (on oral citations)

## The consequences of plagiarism

“Plagiarists are seen not only as dishonest but also as incompetent, incapable of doing research and expressing original thought”

(*MLA Handbook 7*)

Note that...

- the academic community **rigorously defends intellectual property**.
- **plagiarism** is considered a **serious offence** against scholarship.
- **plagiarism may lead to...**
  - **expulsion** / the **loss** of the **opportunity to graduate**.
  - a **loss of trust** in students and institutions (remember that, as students of our university, **you represent this university**).
  - **job loss**.

## How to avoid plagiarism

- To avoid plagiarism, be mindful of the citation conventions provided by the **MLA** or the **APA** (Note that, in general, it does not matter which conventions you choose as long as they are consistently applied! However, there may be certain preferences in the individual fields of study, e.g., MLA in Literary and Cultural Studies and APA in Linguistics).
- Check your sources and your list of references **before handing in the paper** and make sure that...
  - you **adequately acknowledge** all passages that were **entirely or in part** produced by somebody else.
  - the **sources indicated in the text match the list of references**.
  - you are mindful of the **difference** between **direct** and **indirect** quotations (see examples below).

Please also see: [Lesson 2 - How to Avoid Plagiarism - YouTube](#) (BVC Upgrading: 2018)

## Plagiarism – some examples

Example from an essay by Wendy Martin in *Columbia Literary History of the United States* on page 625:

“Some of Dickinson’s most powerful poems express her firmly held conviction that life cannot be fully comprehended without an understanding of death.”

***Obvious plagiarism: using direct quotes without indicating the source***

It is Dickinson’s firmly held conviction that life cannot be fully comprehended without an understanding of death.

***Accidental plagiarism: using paraphrases or someone else’s idea(s) without indicating the source***

Emily Dickinson firmly believed that we cannot fully comprehend life unless we also understand death.

**or**

In my analysis I will use Dickinson’s most famous poems to argue that she believed in the complementarity of life and death.

**How to cite correctly**

Direct Quote:

Emily Dickinson’s writings point to a “firmly held conviction that life cannot be fully comprehended without an understanding of death” (Martin 625).

Note the difference between MLA (used above) and the APA:

(Martin 625) → MLA: (*author’s surname page*)

(Martin 1988: 625) → APA: (*author’s surname year of publication: page*)

**or**

Paraphrasing the source text:

Martin claims that Emily Dickinson was of the decided opinion that we cannot fully comprehend life unless we also understand death (625).

→ (*page(s)*)

Note the difference between MLA (used above) and the APA:

(625) → MLA: (*page*)

(cf. 1988: 625) → APA: (*cf. [i.e. confer] year: page*)

**Additional Information and Resources**

- Additional information on how to cite sources correctly can be found in the [Guidelines: How to Write an Academic Paper](#)
- Neville, Colin. *The Complete Guide to Referencing and Avoiding Plagiarism*. Maidenhead: Open UP, 2010.