

Approaches to Addressing Plagiarism
Department of African American and African Diaspora Studies

The Department of African American and African Diaspora Studies offers the following option for satisfying the English Composition requirement in the College of Arts and Sciences: AAAD-A141-A142 (4-4 cr.), Introduction to Writing and the Study of Black Literature. The following ideas are the result of consulting a number of faculty in the department.

The department passes out the following handout to students at the beginning of the A141-A142 classes:

PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is another word for stealing – stealing someone else’s ideas. Since ideas are what a university is all about, cheating is taken seriously here and penalized severely. To avoid even the suspicion of plagiarism, remember the following:

Students must not allow others (friends, not even tutors) to conduct research or prepare their papers.

Students must not submit work done in one course for another course.

Students must not glance at another student’s tests during an exam or use notes or books where these are not allowed in examinations.

Other people’s ideas must be cited in footnotes or endnotes. This includes not just quotes but also ideas, opinions, theories, and even general facts and statistics if they are not common knowledge. If you look at any scholarly journal with footnotes at the bottom of the page, you will see that they cover a fourth to half of the page. Citing appropriately can show that you have done enough research to support your arguments. This is not the chore you might think it is if you write down titles and page numbers as you take your notes. Plan ahead.

For minor infractions, penalties will result in an “F” on the paper or test. An accused student has the opportunity to respond before any action is taken. All penalties are reported to the Office of Student Ethics/Dean of Students. They check an offender’s record and more penalties can be imposed if there are prior offenses. So take care to thank the people from whom you got your ideas (that’s what footnotes are). And do your own work – it’s the best way to learn in the long run.

In addition, AAAD indicates its anti-plagiarism position by publishing statements on the topic in other course syllabi. Such language, for example, appears on the AAAD-A493

syllabus, since this course is the culminating research and writing class for all majors: “Plagiarism has been committed when an individual takes another person’s written work and passes it on as if he/she is the author of such work. Students should know that such an action constitutes academic dishonesty.” The warning to students further includes the following statements: “Students should be extremely careful about copying material from the internet and/or other sources into your own work. Referencing your sources is critical in academic writing. Know that you have also crossed over the line into the world of plagiarism if you “cut” text and then “paste” it into your paper without properly citing your sources (with quotation marks and/or proper citations). Plagiarism, as you know, carries very serious consequences. Refer to pp. 201-204 in *The Craft of Research*, and to *Student Code of Rights, Responsibilities, and Conduct*, which is available on the web at: <http://dsa.indiana.edu/Code/index1.html> .

Other faculty members have referred students to internet discussions of plagiarism at websites such as: <http://matcmadison.edu/is/writingcenter/plagiarism.htm>. Still others have passed out handouts addressing plagiarism as part of a larger discussion of the research and writing processes. These statements emphasize that students should avoid plagiarism by (1) summarizing in their own words with reference to citations and (2) documenting the approach used to obtain the data, indicating the methodology utilized and/or the author’s context or framework. These statements also include an explanation of how paraphrasing might function in the paper.