

Department of Comparative Literature
Indiana University, Bloomington

Combating Plagiarism in the Undergraduate Composition Sequence:

CMLT-C145 and C146, Major Characters and Themes in Literature

The faculty and associate instructors of the Department of Comparative Literature are actively committed to discouraging and detecting plagiarism at all levels of university study. We firmly believe in reporting all instances of academic misconduct and have instituted serious penalties for the offense into our curriculum. Because C145 and C146 together constitute one of the main options through which undergraduates can fulfill their composition requirement, the Department has structured these two courses in such a way as to familiarize students with the basic concepts of critical analysis and clear argumentation while also aiding associate instructors in the construction and design of original prompts and assignments that discourage plagiarism. A full-time faculty member trains and supervises the associate instructors and directs the curriculum of the sequence, which ensures a uniform approach to preventing academic misconduct. The undergraduate composition sequence in Comparative Literature benefits from having both a specific agenda for its instructors to pursue as well as safeguards which are built into the curriculum.

The Department of Comparative Literature offers approximately eight to ten sections of C145 and C146 every semester. The faculty supervisor teaches one section a semester and associate instructors under his or her guidance teach the other sections. Before and during each semester, the supervisor holds workshops and training sessions devoted to the various aspects of teaching undergraduate composition. One of the important topics covered in these sessions is plagiarism.

- Our supervisor introduces the associate instructors to the option of using Turnitin.com, the on-line plagiarism detection tool to which IU has a subscription. Use of this tool is highly recommended to for those teaching C145 and C146, especially when student work is collected electronically.
- All AIs who are teaching C145 and/or C146 for the first time participate in a "grade normalizing" session with the supervisor and Dr. Laura Plummer of the Campus Writing Program. During this session, the group discusses methods for creating assignments that result in original student work. They also learn to detect instances of plagiarism through other on-line search engines besides Turnitin.com.
- The supervisor and AIs distribute pamphlets on avoiding plagiarism provided by the Campus Writing Program and discuss them with their students at the beginning of each semester. The official definition, scope, and disciplinary procedures for plagiarism are also covered at this time using the *Code of Student Rights, Responsibilities, and Conduct*.

- The supervisor is available throughout the academic year for AIs to consult over suspected cases of plagiarism, the weight of the evidence, the proper way to deal with the student in question, and the penalty for such misconduct.
- The topics for C145 and C146 change every semester. Topics are repeated sparingly, and not in consecutive years. This allows for fewer opportunities for essays from one semester to be submitted again for another term.
- Since the topic changes every semester, the texts for C145 and C146 also change from fall to spring in a given year. Book orders differ even when a topic repeats after two years. This ensures that new assignments and paper prompts are constantly being used, which deters academic misconduct.
- For C145 and C146 we use both canonical and non-canonical texts. The combination of new and more established reading materials, along with prompts which call for comparative essays, require students to employ the analytical skills they develop in class in creative and unusual ways.
- While all sections of C145 and C146 follow the same topic for the semester, they only have between four and six literary texts in common; this occupies approximately two-thirds of the semester. For the remainder of the term, individual instructors teach texts chosen just for their section. This arrangement discourages students in different sections from sharing work.
- All sections of C145 and C146 require preliminary drafts for each of the three essays that students write during the semester. This allows us to see evidence that the student is indeed building an essay from the ground up. Students who do not submit drafts are required to meet with the instructor to discuss their work.
- Many sections of C145 and C146 require individual conferences for all students for an essay, including those who submit drafts ahead of time. Face-to-face conversations like these help the instructor to develop some sense of the students' communication skills.