Fall 2016 – SOWK 305 – Outcome 2 – define and detect plagiarism

After this session, students will be able to define and detect plagiarism.

Directions

1. Working on your own, read the below background reading and answer the exercise questions.
2. Working as a group, discuss your answers and thoughts about the material.
3. Formulate a list of the most important points your group believes the rest of class should know.
4. Turn in your sheet at the end of class.

Background Reading

Everybody’s Talking About Plagiarism. What Is It, Exactly?

The Chronicle of Higher Education – Ticker Blog
July 19, 2016 by Fernanda Zamudio-Suaréz

Plagiarism has long been one of the cardinal sins of academe. But on Tuesday it was on the lips of people nationwide, thanks to a seemingly unlikely source: the Republican National Convention.

The presumptive Republican presidential nominee Donald J. Trump’s wife, Melania Trump, gave a speech that appeared to plagiarize parts of the speech Michelle Obama delivered when her husband was first nominated, at the 2008 Democratic National Convention, in Denver.

Academics, some of whom deal with plagiarism on a regular basis, were quick to condemn Ms. Trump’s remarks on social media as a clear example of plagiarism. But exactly what constitutes plagiarism might be less clear to a general audience.

Why do people plagiarize, and what are the consequences? Let’s evaluate:

What’s plagiarism? And why do people do it?

Scholars tend to disagree on what plagiarism is and how to distinguish it from paraphrasing. Many scholars say plagiarism is defined as five or more words used directly from another source without attribution.

Sometimes plagiarism is an obvious copy-and-paste job, while other times it’s more subtle. Some papers are littered with other sources’ language, but using only a few words at a time, as James M. Lang, an English professor at Assumption College, wrote for The Chronicle last year. Then there’s self-plagiarism, which can also land scholars and writers in hot water.

Though there’s not one reason students plagiarize, many times they copy other people’s work when they feel overwhelmed. And international students, particularly those from China, can be more prone to plagiarism because they come from a culture where individualism is less enshrined.

What happens when someone is caught plagiarizing?

If it’s a student, swift consequences can follow. More on that in the next section.
It’s a professor or administrator, the consequences can vary — from demotion to firing to other discipline.

And politicians are not immune. Since 2011 a handful of German and other European politicians have been accused of plagiarizing their academic work or doctoral theses. In those cases, either the politicians’ credentials were revoked or they chose to step down from their posts.

In 2008, Hillary Clinton’s presidential campaign tried to label Barack Obama a plagiarist for using rhetoric similar to that of a friend and supporter, Deval Patrick, a former governor of Massachusetts. Mr. Obama maintained that he had asked permission to borrow the lines, and the label didn’t stick.

In 1987, Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr., then a U.S. senator from Delaware, dropped out of the 1988 presidential race after rumors circulated that he had copied a speech by the leaders of Britain’s Labour Party.

When people are confronted with indisputable evidence of plagiarism, their reactions vary, from skirting responsibility to shifting the blame to a research assistant.

What are colleges and universities doing to combat plagiarism?

In an attempt to better police students who plagiarize, some colleges and universities use the software Turnitin. The software works to detect plagiarism and is mainly used for undergraduate assignments, but that model may be changing. At the University of Central Florida, graduate students are also required to use the software for their dissertations.

Some professors are pushing back on that practice, saying it builds a sense of distrust from the institution. Concerns about the software also derive from students’ unease about giving their work to a company that may profit from it.

When students are caught plagiarizing, consequences vary. Some academics feel pressure from their institutions to follow protocol for all students who are caught cheating, while others feel a sense of duty in academe to catch the students before they move further in their careers.
Examples of intentional and unintentional plagiarism

Intentional Plagiarism:

- Copying a friend’s or classmate’s work
- Buying or borrowing papers
- Cutting and pasting blocks of text without providing documentation of the original source
- Borrowing images and other media without documentation of the original source
- Publishing work on the Web without the permission of the creator of a work.

Unintentional Plagiarism:

- Careless paraphrasing
- Poor documentation of sources
- Quoting excessively
- Failure to use your own ideas or words

List taken from the University of Texas at Austin tutorial on plagiarism:
http://www.lib.utexas.edu/services/instruction/learningmodules/plagiarism/
Exercise 1

Have a look at some of the sites listed in the image to the left. (Just Google: purchase college research papers)

Be ready to tell the class some things about these services.

Is submitting a paper purchased from one of these sites an example of plagiarism?

Yes

No

Why or why not?
Exercise 2

Read the text in the image to the left. It compares language from an Amazon.com book review and a student’s paper.

Is this an example of plagiarism?

Yes

No

Why or why not?
Exercise 3

Read this passage from a research article.

Do the authors of this passage make it clear from where the information comes? Why or why not?

Did the authors craft their sentences well? Why or why not?

Reporting on their longitudinal study on the strengths and limitations of foster care, Sinclair, Baker, Wilson, and Gibbs (2005) found fewer placement disruptions and small improvements in children’s happiness, behaviour and relationships when fostered by warm, child-oriented carers. However, in their study of young children in foster care, Hardy and colleagues (2013) exposed various deficiencies in meeting children’s needs. They found that while 67% of the children in their sample had mental health concerns, most were not receiving appropriate interventions. The study also highlighted the lack of physical contact between the carers and children and in cases where developmental delay was present, low levels of vocalisation and reciprocity between babies and carers. Carers misinterpreted children’s signals, which were often weak or confused. For example, when children were hurt, tired or distressed, some foster carers believed that the children were not in need of, or did not want their care. Other children in the study would communicate distress or frustration, but then reject the foster carers’ attempts to help or comfort them. Hardy and colleagues (2013) concluded,

Carers tended to feel that they should wait for the child to signal readiness for closer contact, but as avoidant responses were so clearly ingrained in many children, it was observed how a pattern of distant relating between carer and child could become an established norm. (p. 271)

In the United States, Stovall-McClough and Dozier (2004) reported similar phenomena. They observed the differences between those children placed in foster care under 10 months of age, who developed secure attachments and those placed over the age of 10 months, who exhibited insecure behaviours. Importantly, they found that when the older children avoided their foster parents, the foster parents too responded with withdrawal. When the children exhibited resistance by way of difficulty in settling once distressed, foster parents responded with impatience and irritability. Dozier, Bick and Bernard (2011) stressed the importance of identifying such patterns early in placement and ensuring that appropriate interventions are made available.

In this article, we consider the role that poor early foster care experiences had on the risk of a
Read this passage from a research article. (Start with the sentence, “The terms foster care and foster home . . .”)

Do the authors of this passage make it clear where ideas are coming from? Why or why not?

Did the authors craft their sentences well? Why or why not?

The above items are taken from, or inspired by, the Info Power Tutorial from the University of Wyoming:

http://tip.uwyo.edu/utilizing/utilizing11b.html
http://tip.uwyo.edu/utilizing/utilizing12.html

Exercise 4
What should the rest of class know?

Prepare a brief list of key points your group believes the rest of the class must know.

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What do you still need?

After doing all of this, what do you still have questions about?
Notes for Group Presentations

Group 1 – define and detect plagiarism

Group 2 – define examples of intellectual property

Group 3 – describe copyright

Group 4 – describe why citing the work of others is important

Group 5 – identify the elements of citations for journal articles and books

Group 6 – construct citations

Group 7 – employ citations to locate a resource