Professor's PLAGIARISM Policy

Plagiarism is when someone copies something that was written by someone else and presents it as his or her own work.

Plagiarism has become more widespread due to the ease of copying and pasting text using computers and the Internet. The most common practice is for a student to copy whole blocks of text (or even entire papers) off of the Internet, and neaten a few things up, and change a few things around to try to disguise the copying. The practice has become so common in some high schools and even colleges that many people don't even see it as a form of cheating.

- · **How to avoid it.**

Make no mistake about it: plagiarism is cheating. But some confusion about plagiarism is perhaps understandable. After all, when a student does research for an assignment, he/she is gathering information about a topic from other sources and presenting that information in their work. Where does proper research for an assignment end, and plagiarism begin?

THE RIGHTWAY TO DO RESEARCH FOR AN ASSIGNMENT: Gather information on a topic from several (documented) sources, process it, organize it, and present it using your own words and own organization. This is GOOD!

THE WRONGWAY (PLAGIARISM): Gather information on a topic by copying large blocks of text, piece those blocks of copied text together, neaten things up, and then change a few words to try to disguise the fact that most of the work was copied (and undocumented/referenced). This is CHEATING!!

The bottom line: to avoid plagiarism, use your OWN WORDS and your OWN ORGANIZATION in ALL writing you do for assignments, tests, and reports. If the assignment is classified as an independent research endeavor, then you CANNOT work together with other students to produce the same or very similar work.

It is OK (in fact necessary) to copy simple terms and definitions. It is NOT OK to copy whole phrases and entire paragraphs. If you do copy a phrase or paragraph, you must put quotation marks (" ") around it, and cite the source (give the author and title of the publication, web site, etc.). In general, I _strongly_ prefer that you

NOT quote entire blocks of text; doing this in a couple places is fine, but if you do it in excess, you will be docked points.   Rather, process the information and restate it using your own words and own organization. There is nothing like the act of writing things down in your own words to make you really learn concepts. And the act of writing for yourself makes you a better writer! (Whereas copying never made anyone a better writer.)

Note that the research assignments that you do <u>in this class</u> are INDEPENDENT type assignments, which means that you 1) do not have someone else do your research or writing, and 2) you do not work with other students to create a co-opted piece of writing. What is "OK" is to work with others in the locating, gathering and discussing of information, but NOT in the writing.

- · **How I catch plagiarism.**

Computer technology has made plagiarism easy to commit, but… computer technology *HAS ALSO MADE PLAGIARISM EASY TO CATCH!* Instructors today have access to a growing toolbox of quick and efficient programs and internet sites designed to detect plagiarism by searching for matches between student work and material available on the internet. THIS INCLUDES TERM PAPERS AVAILABLE AT CHEATER WEB SITES.

If I suspect an assignment or student term paper is partially or entirely plagiarized, I routinely submit the assignment to a plagiarism-detection web site, such as TURNITIN.com. A report comes back showing which internet sites match text in the student's paper or assignment, and how much of the text matches, word-for-word.   I also routinely compare student reports to see if students are "sharing" their work with each other.

- · **Consequences of sending me plagiarized work.**

The CONSEQUENCES will depend on how egregious the plagiarism is.

If a student submits a <u>100% copied paper</u> (like one purchased from a cheater web site, OR an identical paper to that of another student in the class), this represents the worst form of plagiarism, and may result in <u>EXPULSION FROM THE COURSE WITH A FAILING GRADE</u>.

More common is so-called "soft plagiarism," where the student copies bits and pieces of material from a bunch of different sources

and stitches it all together with perhaps some of their own writing mixed in, OR "shares" identical information with fellow student(s). This is still plagiarism, but it is somewhat less blatant. For this type of plagiarism, I have the following policy:

First violation – zero credit for the assignment, and an explanation to the student about how and why the work represents plagiarism.

Second violation - zero credit for the assignment, and with most likely expulsion from the course with a failing grade.

If you have any questions or need further clarification, please contact me at: oceanprof@seascisurf.com

Thanks for your attention.

- Ray Rector