Plagiarism
...and how to avoid it
The bad news

- In U.S., plagiarism is a serious offense
- Possible consequences of plagiarism
  - Failing grade on paper
  - Failing grade for course
  - Loss of student visa status in extreme cases
The good news

- Plagiarism is avoidable if you
  - Understand what plagiarism is
  - Understand what citation is
  - Look at your writing like your reader does
Plagiarism – What is it?

- Submitting a paper you didn’t write yourself
  - Everyone knows this is cheating!
Plagiarism – What is it?

• Submitting a paper you didn’t write yourself  *Cheating*

• Copying from sources and pretending you wrote it yourself
  • We all know this is cheating, too!
Plagiarism – What is it?

• Submitting a paper you didn’t write yourself  *Cheating*

• Copying from sources and pretending you wrote it yourself  *Cheating*

• Using a source and saying it is a different source
  • Also cheating (even if an accident)!
Plagiarism – What is it?

• Submitting a paper you didn’t write yourself  **Cheating!**
• Copying from sources and pretending you wrote it yourself  **Cheating!**
• Using a source and saying it is a different source  **Cheating!**

• You use author’s ideas and words without giving author credit
  • This is main source of plagiarism!
  • Confusing – even for Americans!
  • Let’s learn to avoid this!
“Talking” to your reader

• Make clear who said/thought what
  • Sometimes you use the exact same words as author
  • Sometimes you paraphrase author
  • But always, you make it clear which words/thoughts are author’s, which are yours

• Readers understand because you follow certain conventions (agreed upon ways of doing things)
Writing conventions

• When borrowing author’s exact same words
  • Cite your author
  • Use quotation marks around borrowed words

• Even when paraphrasing author’s information
  • Cite your author

• Always, when reporting author’s information
  • Cite your author
Cite your author!

- Cite? What does “cite” mean?
  - According to President Obama, the economy…
    He goes on to say…
  - Lee (2007) argues that inflation will…
  - The army’s actions were “incomprehensible and reprehensible” (Adams & Morten, 232).
- All bold words above are examples of citation.
  - Different disciplines/professors require different citation styles – be sure to ask
**What are you telling your reader?**

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<tr>
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<th>What it means to the reader</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>The passage is someone else’s information in that person’s exact words.</td>
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### What are you telling your reader?

**Example**

The link between cell phone use and grade point average needs further investigation.

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- **Example**
  Survey results found that cell phone use is “negatively predictive of overall grade point average” (Svinicki 19).
• **Example**
  Survey results found that increased cell phone use corresponds to lower grade point average (Svinicki).
To be clear...

- Plagiarism can happen when your citation (or lack of it)
  - Tells your reader one thing, but you meant something else

- Example: you paraphrase an author’s words but you do not cite the author
  - You just told your reader that it is YOUR idea
  - But in reality, it is the AUTHOR’s idea
  - Maybe you forgot or misunderstood the convention, but still...it is plagiarism

- Let’s take a quiz
Is this plagiarism?

• Excerpt from article by Svinicki
  Survey results from 1500 college students about their cell phone use found that increased use was negatively predictive of overall grade point average.

• Student’s sentence
  Svinicki’s research on cell phone use found that increased use was negatively predictive of overall grade point average.
Yes! This is plagiarism!

- **Excerpt from article by Svinicki**
  Survey results from 1500 college students about their cell phone use found that increased use was negatively predictive of overall grade point average.

- **Student’s sentence**
  Svinicki’s research on cell phone use found that increased use was negatively predictive of overall grade point average.

- **Red text** should be inside quotation marks because they are the author’s exact words!

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  Survey results from 1500 college students about their cell phone use found that increased use was negatively predictive of overall grade point average.

• Student’s sentence
  Survey results found that increased cell phone use corresponds to lower grade point average (Svinicki).
No. This is NOT plagiarism.

- **Excerpt from article by Svinicki**
  Survey results from 1500 college students about their cell phone use found that increased use was negatively predictive of overall grade point average.

- **Student’s sentence**
  Svinicki’s research cell phone use found that increased use was negatively predictive of overall grade point average.

- The student paraphrased Svinicki’s information and cited Svinicki.

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Why does plagiarism matter?

- U.S. education system values independent thinking
  - You need to differentiate between author’s ideas and your own reaction to them
  - Professors value independent thinking even more when it draws upon research into the ideas of others – citation shows you did such research
- U. S. law stresses intellectual property rights
  - By citing author’s ideas, you respect ownership of work and ideas
How to protect yourself

• Know what plagiarism is

• Learn how to cite, paraphrase, and quote

• Ask your TA, your professor, Student Writing Support for help

• You are in a different culture – don’t be afraid to ask how things work
Resources

- Handbooks teach citation, paraphrase, grammar
  - available in U bookstore, online, U libraries
Resources

- **Student Writing Support**
  - Free face-to-face help with your writing projects
  - [http://writing.umn.edu/sws/](http://writing.umn.edu/sws/)

- **Online tutorials**
  - The best is Indiana University’s [https://www.indiana.edu/~istd/](https://www.indiana.edu/~istd/)
  - U Library Tutorials [https://www.lib.umn.edu/instruction/tutorials](https://www.lib.umn.edu/instruction/tutorials)
Resources

- Citation software
  - Refworks, Zotero, Mendeley – free through University Library
  - Automatically creates reference entries in citation method of your choice (MLA, APA, AMA, etc.)
  - Attend free library workshops for Refworks and Zotero
You will do fine…

- Don’t be scared – just be aware
- Ask questions
- Ask for help if you need it – students and staff love to tell you how things work
- Enjoy your exciting new experience abroad
A special thanks to Katie Levin in Student Writing Support (SWS) for her “What Are You Telling Your Readers?” approach to plagiarism