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Policy on Academic Dishonesty*

Academic dishonesty (e.g., cheating on exams, plagiarism) is a serious offense. All work that you submit in this class must be your own original work, and must have been generated by you specifically for the assignments. Academic dishonesty can take on many forms including, but not limited to, the use of prohibited materials during examinations, having one's own assignments completed by a third party, submit the identical paper in two different courses, and plagiarism—each of which is a serious offense. Repeated offenses may lead to the expulsion from the university.

What is plagiarism? Whereas most acts of academic dishonesty are obvious, students are sometimes unclear what “plagiarism” entails. Plagiarism means that you incorporate another author's work into your own, but create the impression that you yourself are the original author. For instance, it is plagiarism when you cut and paste another author's text into your own paper, but do not clearly mark it as a quote and do not credit the original source. Another example of plagiarism is when you use another author's text, but change the syntax and vocabulary only slightly. Yet another instance of plagiarism involves using another person's ideas and presenting them as your own. The web offers a number of great resources on the subject of plagiarism that help you decide when you need to credit another author and when something can be assumed to be common knowledge (in which case you do not need to credit a source). See, e.g., <http://libweb.uoregon.edu/guides/plagiarism/students/>.

How to avoid plagiarism? When writing a paper, focus on what and how you want to say something, not on the language another author used. The easiest way is to follow a “closed source” policy: That is, when you have read a paper, book or website that is relevant to a paper that you are writing, close it and put it aside before you write your own text. Once you are done, go over your paper again and make sure that have not inadvertently copied another person's language. Likewise, make sure that you do not pretend that another person's insights are your own.

Keep in mind that plagiarism is more easily detected than you might think. Many instructors and graders have access to the same resources as you (e.g., the internet) and routinely check up whether any text you have submitted appears elsewhere. If you are in doubt whether something constitutes plagiarism or not, ask your instructor or TA.

* Policy on Academic Dishonesty, Department of Sociology, UNR.