

Academic Honesty

Department of English
College of the Holy Cross



Academic work is based upon trust. In order for your instructors to help you improve the quality of your work and also to evaluate it, they have to be able to trust that it is your own. If you abuse that trust, you undermine the shared understanding that makes the academic enterprise possible.

Whenever you make use of outside sources for language or ideas, you must acknowledge them in formal citations. Failure to do so constitutes plagiarism, a serious academic offense.

The policy of the College is and must be very strict: if you plagiarize—if you present someone else’s work or ideas as your own—you receive a letter in your college file and two semesters of academic probation. If you do it again, you are suspended from the College for one year. Anyone caught plagiarizing for a third time will be expelled from the College.

What sources must I acknowledge?

You must acknowledge the source of any idea that is not your own,

whether it is from your roommate,
or a book or article you have read,
or a web site,
or a high school class,
or your mother or father.

Two possible exceptions are class handouts and statements made in class. Some professors will ask you to cite class handouts and discussion; others will let you consider these as belonging to a domain of ideas which the class shares, and thus not require you to cite them. Check with your professor.

How can I use sources responsibly?

In many upper-level English courses, and even in some CRAW courses, you may be asked to consult or research outside sources. There is a world full of books and essays that you can learn from—works of criticism and commentary by experienced readers. When appropriate, you should avail yourself of this material in order to arrive at and inform an understanding that is **your own**.

There are many ways of doing this. You can use a borrowed idea to advance an argument that is yours. You can argue in support of it; you can argue its limitations. If you support the borrowed idea, you can give your own reasons for doing so. Or, you can provide conflicting interpretations and say why you prefer one to the other.

Plagiarism is more broadly defined than some students realize. You must cite your sources in **all** of the following situations:

1. When quoting a text directly.
2. When rephrasing a text and quoting parts of it directly.
3. When you completely rephrase the text and do not directly quote any part of it. Note that in order to rephrase a text you must change both its wording and its syntax. You may not reproduce the same form of sentence and simply plug new words in.
4. When you include **any ideas** taken from a source, even if you do not use any of its original language or sentence patterns.

How do I cite sources correctly?

The English Department follows the citation formats of the Modern Language Association and the *Chicago Manual of Style*. You should ask your professor which citation format he or she prefers. Summaries of both formats can be found at <http://www.dianahacker.com/resdoc/humanities/english.html>. More comprehensive versions can be found in the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* (Dinand [Ref] LB2369.M53) and the *Chicago Manual of Style* (Dinand [Ref] Z253 .U69).

Be generous in acknowledging help from any quarter, and when in doubt, err on the side of generosity. If you have any questions, consult your instructor **before** you turn in your paper. Students often think that if they cite a source it will make their essay seem weak—as if they didn't have anything worthwhile of their own to say. But the opposite is true. Citing the ideas of others shows that you have engaged, responsibly, in the exciting and ongoing debate that is the study of literature.

The full statement of the College policy on Academic honesty may be found at www.holycross.edu/sites/default/files/files/registrar/academic_honesty_policy.pdf