

APPENDIX J

POLICY REGARDING PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is the act of representing the written work of someone else as your own. Representing the writing, ideas, or intellectual property of another as one's own is an act of theft and dishonesty. Both stealing and deceitfulness violate the character of God and the nature and message of the Gospel. Christians understand the God revealed in Christ to be a God who is trustworthy and faithful, a God who is giving and loving. The act of plagiarism entails dishonesty and disrespect for the person and rights of the actual author, and so is an act which entails selfishness and untrustworthiness, i.e. violates the character of God. Since Christians are called to conduct their lives in accord with the character of God, such behavior is completely unacceptable at a seminary and is certainly an act which does not become a minister. Such violation of the fundamental ethical norms of the Christian community is, therefore, treated with the utmost seriousness.

DEFINITION

Plagiarism is “[t]he unauthorized use or close imitation of the language and thoughts of another author and the representation of them as one's own original work.”¹ It is universally regarded as a violation of the standards of the academic community. Plagiarism occurs when a person uses another's words, ideas, or thoughts without either acknowledging in the text that they belong to another or documenting their source in a footnote or endnote. Acknowledgement that the words and phrases are not one's own must be done through the use of quotation marks and citation of source. Naming the source of the words without placing them in quotation marks is plagiarism. (See Example A below.)

EXAMPLES

Besides extensive verbatim quoting of material which belongs to another without giving credit to that person, plagiarism occurs in various other ways. Below are some examples:

1. Verbatim quoting of a sentence(s) without putting it in quotation marks.

Original material from Paul Tillich, Dynamics of Faith, page 16:

This element of uncertainty in faith cannot be removed, it must be accepted. And the element in faith which accepts this is courage.

To write the following without any quotation marks and documentation through footnote/endnote is plagiarism:

Paul Tillich believes that uncertainty in faith cannot be removed, it must be accepted. He believes that the element in faith which accepts this is courage.

¹ *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language*, second edition (New York: Random House, 1987), 1479.

2. Use of “another’s wording or particularly apt term”²

Original material from Henri Nouwen, Lifesigns, page 45:

Everything we read in the papers, hear on the radio, and see on television about the condition of the world seems to confirm the saying: “homo homini lupus,” human beings are wolves to each other.

To use Nouwen’s phrase without acknowledging its source is plagiarism:

Sometimes the way we treat our brothers and sisters in the church shows that even Christians can be wolves to each other.

3. Changing a word here or there (“a few omissions, a few substitutions of synonyms, a few changes in the tense of verbs. If you are so near to quoting, it would be better to give an exact quotation and to use quotation marks.”³)

Original material from Locke Bowman, Teaching for Christian Hearts, Souls, and Minds, 69:

In the ministry of teaching, we are being called to raise learners’ consciousness to the possibility, vision, and promise of being one with other baptized believers.

To write the following as a paraphrase is plagiarism:

In the teaching ministry, we are called to nurture students’ consciousness to the possibility, vision, and promise of being united with all baptized Christians. (Bowman, 69)

4. Paraphrasing another person’s argument or line of thinking

Original material from Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon, Resident Aliens, 30-32:

Christianity is mostly a matter of politics – politics as defined by the gospel. The call to be a part of the gospel is a joyful call to be adopted by an alien people, to join a countercultural phenomenon, a new polis called church...The challenge of Jesus is the political dilemma of how to be faithful to a strange community, which is shaped by a story of how God is with us...

In the 1960’s people often said things like, “The real business of the church is in the world,” and “the world sets the agenda for the church...” The American church was said...to consist of two types of “public” church and the “private” church...

American ecclesiology, however, is not adequately described as a dichotomy between private and public...because both conservative and liberal churches...[assume] a basically Constantinian approach to the issue of church and world...[They feel] that their task [is] to motivate their people to get involved in politics.

² MLA Handbook, 26

³ J. Raymond Hendrickson, *The Research Paper* (New York: Holt, 1957), xiv-xv, quoted in “Policy on cheating and Plagiarism,” Christian Theological Seminary

To write the following is plagiarism:

A center core of Christianity is politics. However, politics as lived by Christians must be defined by the gospel. The gospel leads us to experience ourselves as countercultural in the political realm. While some have seen the American church divided into “public” and “private” churches, both must reinterpret themselves as countercultural. The failure of both conservative and liberal churches is that they have followed a Constantinian approach to church and world. The issue is not to get Christians involved in politics. The issue is not to accommodate to the culture, but live in tension with it.

PRINCIPLES

1. Give the source of every fact, idea, or argument which is not your own.
2. Set off by quotation marks or indent and single space (using Turabian criteria) all significant words, phrases, sentence and multi-sentence quotes, which are borrowed from another and cite their source.
3. “...[C]redit the source from which you actually got the material, not the original source from which your source got it. As much as possible,...verify the material in the original source; when you have done so, you may cite the original source as your own.”⁴

SANCTIONS

Plagiarism in student work will be dealt with in the following manner:

1. Each faculty member has the authority to determine what constitutes a violation serious enough to submit to the Plagiarism Review Board (PRB) for penalty determination. The PRB recommends a five-point scale (“1” referring to the least serious, “5” referring to the most serious) to assess the gravity of a particular violation. The following general guidelines apply:
 - Minor citation errors include the failure to footnote a quoted source.
 - Multiple minor citation errors include the failure to footnote quoted sources; serious citation errors including the failure to put a quoted source in quotation marks (even if the source is footnoted); failure to site a source; or, multiple instances of minor violations; multiple, serious citation errors, including the failure to put a quoted source in quotation marks (even if the source is footnoted); failure to cite sources in footnotes; or changing a few words in a quotation without identifying the passage as a quotation.
 - Serious citation errors include substantial sections of a paper (or the whole of a paper) that do not contain quotation marks and/or footnoted sources; or substantial sections of a paper (or the whole of a paper) in which the writer has changed a few words in a source without identifying the passage as a quotation.
2. The procedure for reporting plagiarism violations varies according to the degree of seriousness as follows:

⁴ Hendrickson, xv.

- **Minor Violations:** The faculty member must submit to the PRB a brief, summative report (via e-mail or letter) for minor violations. The PRB will maintain files to keep track of these reports. Faculty members will check for prior violations and may also ask students to seek the assistance of the Writing Center. A pattern of minor violations will escalate the severity of the offense and so move the violation from the minor to the major category.
- **Major Violations:** The faculty member must submit relevant documents to the PRB so that the PRB may render a final determination of the appropriate penalty.

3. The PRB possesses the authority to render penalties for plagiarism violations. The faculty member may make a recommendation, but final penalty determination remains under the auspices of the PRB. Penalties may include those listed below; however, the PRB may assess additional penalties at its own discretion.

- lowering the grade for a particular course assignment;
- assessing a failing grade for a particular course assignment (“F”);
- lowering the final grade for a course;
- assessing a failing final course grade (“F”);
- suspension from LTS;
- expulsion from LTS.