

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: YDS'S COMMITMENT TO HONEST SCHOLARSHIP

Academic integrity is a core value of the Yale Divinity School community. It includes honesty and fairness in our scholarship and research, respect for each other, and responsibility for our conduct.¹ These are commitments that govern us as a community of learning. Excellent scholarship rests on honest originality, and this honesty takes many forms. It means, among other things, truth in presentation, diligence and precision in citing works and ideas we have used, and acknowledging our collaborations with others.

As history of religions scholar Bruce Lincoln writes, “Those who enter a field that constitutes itself as one of rigorous, disciplined inquiry do so in good faith. They pledge that their labor is honest, in token of which they ‘show their work’ or ‘cite their sources.’ Second, they go beyond offering their results to an audience of consumers. They also display the processes through which they arrived at those results for an audience of would-be critics, whom they accept as peers and superiors consistent with their control over the knowledge and principles that constitute the field. Third, they agree that if any challenges are forthcoming to their data, methods, or results, they will consider them thoroughly, defending or revising their positions as necessary, learning and/or teaching in the process.”²

Plagiarism, whether deliberate or through negligence or ignorance, is a serious violation of conduct at Yale Divinity School. Plagiarism is defined as “the use of another’s work, words, or ideas without attribution.”³ Because cultural norms vary, it is important for all students to understand that plagiarism is considered a form of academic dishonesty and a serious violation of academic integrity.

Other forms of academic dishonesty include the following:

- unauthorized collaboration
- falsifying data
- submitting the same or a similar paper for multiple classes without explicit permission from all of the instructors involved
- submitting for a course material previously published (electronically or in print)
- quoting from a paper you have written for another context
- copying from another student on exams or assignments
- the use of unauthorized materials during examinations.⁴

The prohibition on plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty applies to all kinds of academic and scholarly work, such as:

- short classroom assignments
- papers
- exams
- class presentations
- conference presentations
- publications, whether print or online.

Failing to acknowledge sources and credit influence is considered a form of theft. Material drawn from the Internet is no different than material drawn from other sources and must also be cited appropriately. Most faculty at the Divinity School prefer that students cite using guidelines from *The Chicago Manual of Style*. Extensive resources for citing appropriately and avoiding plagiarism are available from the Yale Poorvu Center for Teaching and Learning: <https://poorvucenter.yale.edu/writing/using-sources>.

Scholarly work often involves *collaboration*. However, collaboration on an assignment is appropriate only if explicitly authorized by the instructor of the course. The fact that an instructor has authorized collaboration of a specific kind on a specific assignment does not mean that other forms of collaboration, or collaboration on other assignments, is also authorized. If students are uncertain about whether collaboration is permissible, and of what sort, they should consult with the course instructor.

Further information on avoiding plagiarism and appropriate citation is available in the Yale Divinity School Student Handbook under Learning and Planning Resources and from the Poorvu Center: <https://poorvucenter.yale.edu/writing/using-sources/understanding-and-avoiding-plagiarism>.

Suspected cases of academic dishonesty are referred to the Professional Studies Committee. A detailed description of the procedures for handling such cases is available on the Divinity website.

¹ Yale Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, “Conduct, Professional Ethics, and Reporting Misconduct,” <https://gsas.yale.edu/resources-students/conduct-professional-ethics-reporting-misconduct>.

² Bruce Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth: Narrative, Ideology, and Scholarship* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 209.

³ Poorvu Center for Teaching and Learning, Yale University, “What Is Plagiarism?” <https://poorvucenter.yale.edu/writing/using-sources/understanding-and-avoiding-plagiarism/what-plagiarism>.

⁴ Yale Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, "Conduct, Professional Ethics, and Reporting Misconduct," <https://gsas.yale.edu/resources-students/conduct-professional-ethics-reporting-misconduct>.