

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, including the use of text-generating software, is no different than material drawn from other sources and must also be cited appropriately. Most faculty at the Divinity School prefer that students follow the citation guidelines of *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 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. All requests to drop or otherwise change enrollment in a course while a charge of academic misconduct is pending shall be subject to approval by the committee. The committee reserves the right to record a failing grade for the course on a transcript even if the student has dropped or otherwise modified the course enrollment.

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>.

PROCEDURES FOR HANDLING SUSPECTED CASES OF ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

An instructor who suspects academic dishonesty should refer the case to the Professional Studies Committee. It is a good practice for the instructor to interview the student or students who appear to be guilty of academic dishonesty before referring the matter to the Professional Studies Committee, in order to make absolutely certain that an allegation of academic dishonesty is warranted. Instructors may wish to consult with the associate dean of academic affairs in making this determination. If an allegation

of academic dishonesty is warranted, the instructor should forward the materials supporting the charge, accompanied by a cover letter assessing the nature, extent, and gravity of the offense, to the chair of the Professional Studies Committee. In cases of alleged plagiarism, for example, the committee needs a thorough identification of the improperly used sources, keyed to the passages in which they appear in the student's essay, from the instructor. Except in unusual circumstances, an instructor who has alleged dishonesty on the part of a student is not required to attend the student's interview with the committee, since the documents in the case are almost always sufficient for the committee's deliberations.

For the sake of consistency, impartiality, fairness, and due process in treating cases of academic dishonesty, it is essential that all such cases be referred to the Professional Studies Committee rather than being settled privately between instructor and student.

Upon receiving an allegation of academic dishonesty, the chair of the Professional Studies Committee will contact the student or students to advise them of the allegations and inform them of the procedures. The student will be offered the opportunity to respond to the charges in a written statement to the committee. The committee will make every effort to consider the case at its next regularly scheduled meeting. The committee reviews the allegations, evidence, and student statement, and makes a determination of guilt. If the student is found guilty of academic dishonesty, the committee assigns a penalty. Whether the offense was intentional is not taken into account in determining guilt but is considered when assigning a penalty. Penalties vary in proportion to the severity of the offense and range from the requirement to redo the assignment or submit an additional assignment; to failure of the assignment; to academic probation; to failure of the course; to suspension for a term or year; to expulsion from the School. The decision to suspend or expel a student is made by the General Faculty upon recommendation by the Professional Studies Committee. If the committee is considering one of these serious penalties, the student shall have the right to appear in person before the committee and may bring one individual with them to offer support: a faculty adviser, Student Affairs staff person, friend, or other member of the YDS community.