

Topics for Engaging Students in Discussion of Academic Integrity Expectations

1. **Why you value academic integrity in your classroom:** The value of academic integrity may seem obvious to you, but students are often puzzled by academic integrity standards, particularly with regard to use of sources and collaboration. Students are accustomed to the exchange of unattributed ideas and information on websites and in social media. They know that politicians and corporate leaders often deliver speeches written by unnamed assistants. They may realize that unspecified editors substantially revise the words of journalists. And many students notice that some faculty take tremendous care with citation in written work but fail to cite sources for oral and visual work, for example, in classroom Power Point presentations. Expectations vary by context when it comes to collaboration, as well. Some instructors encourage students to study exams from past semesters and require group projects, group writing and group laboratory work. Other instructors forbid these practices. Students need to hear directly from you. Why do you value academic integrity in your classroom? How do you define academic integrity in your classroom? Where do you draw the line between allowed and prohibited collaboration on group work or joint studying?
 - a. **Making your personal case for academic integrity:** What experiences have you had with academic integrity – or the absence of it? How do concerns about academic integrity affect your teaching and your research? Talk with students about ethical dilemmas you have faced in your academic career and how you have responded. Discuss what you hope students will gain from your class and how their own academic integrity and that of their fellow students affects their learning. Why and how does it matter, now and in the future?
 - b. **Connect academic integrity to the learning that gives a degree its value:** Current news coverage of higher education focuses primarily on its cost, the economic importance of a college (or graduate) degree, and the need for colleges and universities to do a better job to ensure that students who begin a degree complete it. Show your students a news clip featuring discussion of education among the Presidential candidates. What is missing from this conversation? Often, there is little or no discussion of the learning a degree is designed to represent. Engage students in discussion of what they are learning in your course and its significance.
 - c. **The central role of research in academia:** Ask students what they know about your job. Most students know little about the work faculty and instructors do beyond teaching. Telling students about your area of expertise, the role that research plays in your career, and how citing and being cited by other academics affects you will help explain the value placed on citation in academia – and the expectation that students will cite sources they use even though only a minority of students expect to enter academia themselves.

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- d. **How research works:** Students often imagine academic research as a one-shot deal, a quick event that confirms a hypothesis or answers a question immediately – forever. Walking students through an exercise designed to illustrate the evolution of an important research question in your field (particularly including the construction and destruction of consensus around answers to that research question) can help students appreciate the value of tracing the intellectual contributions of multiple researchers over long periods of time in understanding the evolution of knowledge. Another good exercise involves assigning students to read a peer-reviewed journal article in your field. Ask students to analyze the structure of the article: How many sections are there? What is the purpose of each section? Which sections contain more or fewer citations. What explains this variation? Additional useful talking points: Compare failure to cite sources to physical theft or to omitting a relative from a family tree. Students will laugh if you ask how many of them stole a cell phone last summer or left grandma off the family tree, but they'll get the point.
2. **What are the university-wide academic integrity (AI) expectations at SU, and what additional expectations apply in your classroom?** Our [website](#) features a variety of information about SU's university-wide expectations. The one-page "[What Students Need to Know About Academic Integrity](#)," reiterates information provided to SU students twice an academic year in MySlice during pre-term check-in at the beginning of the fall and spring semesters. (At these times, students must update emergency contact information and provide an electronic signature agreeing that they will abide by the University's AI expectations. Until they sign, students are unable to navigate to student information pages, including pages they need to view grades and change their course schedule.) The more detailed statement reproduces the entire discussion of academic integrity expectations contained in SU's [Academic Integrity Policy](#).
 - a. **Understanding SU's AI expectations:** Depending on the nature and level of your course, you may wish to give students a copy of the "[AI Expectations at SU: An Introduction](#)" and invite students to comment and ask questions. Caution students against assuming that they know everything they need to know about these expectations. Remind them that the bar for citation is higher in academia than in many other fields. Do they realize that they must receive written permission from both instructors before submitting the same written work in two courses? Do they understand the presumptive penalty for a first violation of academic integrity and how it varies by undergraduate or graduate status?
 - b. **Understanding course-specific expectations:** Regardless of the subject and level of your course, you should discuss what forms of collaboration will be allowed and what forms of collaboration will be prohibited in your course. If you consider the sharing of homework assignments or exams from current or past semester to violate academic integrity, you should make this clear to students. Similarly, you should draw clear distinctions for student if you allow collaboration in the initial phases of a project or laboratory assignment, but expect the final or written work to be performed independently.

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- c. **Using case studies to engage students in discussion of gray areas within AI standards:** Included in this package of materials is a page (“[Academic Integrity Case Studies](#)”) of three case studies designed to help students to consider varied aspects of academic integrity. Feel free to use these case studies in your classes and to modify them to reflect realistic questions students might have about permissible and prohibited behavior in your courses with regard to citation and collaboration. If you develop additional case studies you are willing to share with other faculty, email them to aio@syr.edu. We’ll put them on our website and cite you as our source. Note: Some students prefer to think of academic integrity as straightforward and want you, the instructor, to tell them what to do and what not to do. It may be helpful to have students read the recent *Chronicle of Higher Education* article “[Confuse Students to Help Them Learn](#)” (8/14/2014 by Steve Kolowich).
3. **Giving students opportunities to hone their citation skills:** Many, if not most, students need help in understanding standard citation practices when summarizing, paraphrasing and quoting other peoples’ ideas and words. Included in this package is a set of exercises (see “[Tools for Teaching Use of Sources](#)”) for helping student develop these skills. Our exercises draw from two websites featured on our own website: [The Harvard Guide to Using of Sources](#) and the [Purdue Online Writing Lab \(OWL\)](#). Both provide wonderful, specific information defining what it means to summarize, paraphrase and quote from a source as well as relevant citation standards in each case.
 - a. If writing and citation feature prominently in your course, you may want to consider developing a longer assignment to help students practice their citation skills. One option is to have students practice with an initial writing assignment involving readings related to your course and subject matter. Another option involves asking students to write about academic integrity itself or plagiarism cases specifically. Links to some recent articles on these topics can be found on our website, academicintegrity.syr.edu, including coverage of alleged plagiarism cases involving the website BuzzFeed, Montana Senator John Walsh, UNLV literature professor Mustapha Marrouchi, and members of the Notre Dame football team. You may also be interested in a writing assignment developed by English instructor Jeff Karon (“[A Positive Solution for Plagiarism](#),” *Chronicle of Higher Education*, September 18, 2012), who directs his students to download, read and critique a paper produced by a paper mill.

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4. **Why do students (and others) cheat? Is college cheating on the rise?** A number of resources are available if you would like to engage students in discussion of research on the prevalence of cheating in college and factors that discourage – or encourage – cheating in college and elsewhere. These include:
 - a. For discussion of academic integrity in research, recent news coverage of debate over sociologist Alice Goffman's dissertation-turned-2014 book *On the Run: Fugitive Life in an American City*, may be of interest. Several news outlets have covered this controversy, including: Marc Parry's "[Conflict Over Sociologist's Narrative Puts Spotlight on Ethnography](#)" (*Chronicle of Higher Education*, June 12, 2015); Leon Neyfakh's "[The Ethics of Ethnography](#)" (Slate.com, June 18, 2015); and Paul Campos' "[Alice Goffman's Implausible Ethnography](#)" (*Chronicle of Higher Education*, August 21, 2015).
 - b. Duke University professor of psychology and behavioral economics Dan Ariely, author of *The (Honest) Truth about Dishonesty* (Harper Collins, 2012), maintains [The \(Honest\) Truth About Dishonesty](#), a webpage describing his research, including tests of the efficacy of reminders and pledges on exams and essays (e.g. "I pledge that this work is solely my own...") and his response to the illegal downloading of his book. A review of Ariely's book by Joome Suh (*Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, volume 52, issue 1, January 2013, pp. 106-107) is available through the SU library website via Web of Science.
 - c. Rutgers Management professor Donald McCabe, the grandfather of research on the prevalence of college cheating, summarizes his research with collaborators Linda Kleve Trevino and Kenneth D. Butterfield in "Cheating in Academic Institutions: A Decade of Research" (*Ethics & Behavior*, 2001, volume 11, issue 3, pp. 219-232), which you can download from the SU library website via Web of Science.

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- d. Assumptino College English professor James Lang (*Cheating Lessons: Learning from Academic Dishonesty*, Harvard University Press, 2013) focuses on four contextual factors that, in his reading of the cognitive psychology literature, encourage classroom cheating and what faculty can do to create contexts that discourage cheating. The four factors Lang identifies are an emphasis on performance versus mastery of knowledge, high-stakes testing and evaluation, extrinsic versus intrinsic student motivation, and low expectations of success among students (*Cheating Lessons*, chapter 2, pp. 18-35). Lang summarized his arguments in an August 4, 2013 Boston Globe article provocatively titled “[How College Classes Encourage Cheating](#)”. Ursinus College Politics [Professor Jonathan Marks’ criticism of Lang](#) for, in Marks’ view, failing to adequately address questions of character in cheating appeared in the *Inside Higher Education* in October 2013. This article, like Lang’s *Globe* piece, could spur good classroom discussion.
5. If you have ideas, comments, or additional material about academic integrity that you would like to let us know about, please email it to aio@syr.edu. We will be posting additional articles on our website over the course of the academic year.