

For Discussion in Your Classroom: Case Studies in Academic Integrity

Case 1: Johannes is taking a course in 20th century Latin American history. The class is conducted in Spanish. Johannes has fallen behind in the class and has not begun a 10-page essay due the next morning. Stressed about the essay, Johannes stays up until 3 a.m. to finish a draft and emails it to his mother, asking her to point out any grammar errors and to suggest revisions to strengthen his arguments. When Johannes wakes up at 9 a.m., he finds a reply email from his mother, incorporates her suggestions, and turns the paper in on time at 11 a.m.

Is Johannes' behavior academically dishonest? Does it violate SU's AI policy? Would similar behavior be permissible in your course? Why or why not?

What if all writing assignments for the class must be in Spanish, and Johannes' mother is a native Spanish speaker? Does this change anything? Why or why not?

What if Johannes' mother has included a passage from a Spanish-language encyclopedia in the revisions she sent to him without providing a citation? Does this change anything? Why or why not?

Case 2: Emily is taking an upper-level political science class. Her professor asks students in the class to write a critique summarizing their own views on the strengths and weaknesses of arguments made by the author of a controversial new book on mass incarceration. Not knowing much about the subject, Emily decides to gather ideas for her critique by going online. She finds and reads three reviews of the book. Emily agrees with the views expressed by two of the reviewers and incorporates their opinions into her critique. Because she is drawing on the reviewers' opinions – not facts – and because she agrees with those opinions, Emily does not cite the two reviews.

Is Emily's behavior academically dishonest? Does it violate SU's AI policy? Would similar behavior be permissible in your course? Why or why not?

What if Emily disagrees strongly with one critique she reads and makes the opposite argument in her own critique? Does anything change? Should Emily cite the critique she disagreed with?

Case 3: During his online exam in Chemistry, Jon gets nervous that he does not fully understand question 3 and will score poorly as a result. Jon texts his friend Chris who has a Chegg account. Chris shares his account information, and Jon uses it to post to the question to Chegg. Fifty minutes later, Jon sees that two different answers have been posted. Jon chooses the answer he thinks is more likely to be correct, makes a couple of small changes, and uses this answer in his exam submission. Several other students in the course have Chegg accounts, see the question Jon posted to Chegg, and use one of the answers in their exam submissions. Mary is not in the class but receives exam question 2 from a friend and posts it to Chegg before the deadline for exam submissions passes.

Who has violated academic integrity expectations? Jon? Chris? Other Chemistry students who use the answers posted to Chegg? What about Mary – and her friend? Why or why not?

Case 4: Four students who live in the same learning community take a large chemistry class. The class breaks into small groups for labs, some of which are held on Mondays, others on Wednesdays. Ashley, whose lab meets on Monday, lends Sam a copy of her lab report so that he will be prepared for his lab on Wednesday.

Has Sam been academically dishonest? Has Ashley? Would similar behavior be permissible in your course? Why or why not?