
Sociology 250
Spring 2011
T & R 3:00-4:25
Fowler 202

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Welcome to Race and Ethnicity in American Society

Sociology confers on you an extraordinary autonomy, especially when you don't use it as a weapon against others, or an instrument of defence, but rather as a weapon against yourself, an instrument of vigilance.

– Pierre Bourdieu

...the truth is that there are no races: there is nothing in the world that can do all we ask race to do for us.

– Kwame Anthony Appiah

CLASS DESCRIPTION

This course provides a sociological perspective on race and ethnicity in the United States. Such a perspective suggests that:

- (1) Racial and ethnic categories – including ‘white’ – are not objective measures of biological difference, but the result of historical struggles over economic resources, political access, and cultural identity. These categories are being made and remade as meaningful today.
- (2) Racism and ethnic prejudice and their corollary, white privilege, are not simply the properties of (bad) individuals. Racial and ethnic prejudice are also institutionalized (part of our social organizations and, thus, the social structure), cultural (part of collective meaning making), and social psychological (part of our unconscious psychologies). Institutions and cultural products often reaffirm both conscious and unconscious prejudices.
- (3) Racial and ethnic conflict is not simply a matter of prejudice. It reflects a constellation of ideological commitments (to ideas like individualism, meritocracy, and laissez faire capitalism) and serves to preserve material class privilege. Understanding how beliefs about race intersect with other beliefs individuals hold helps us think through interpersonal and societal conflicts that are overtly racialized as well as those that appear colorblind.

GRADE BREAKDOWN

Assignment	Points	Percent of Grade
Participation:	25	12.5
Journal:	25	12.5
Analyses:		
Identity:	50	25
Pop Culture:	50	25
News:	50	25

REQUIRED READING

Course Reader. The course reader can be assessed through Moodle (<http://moodle.oxy.edu/>).

You will be split into four groups. On some days, you will all read the same material, on other days, you will read the material assigned to your group, and on still other days, you will do a combination of both. While your group may do more reading than another group on some days, I have carefully distributed the readings so that the reading load is even across the semester.

For group-specific material, you should come to class prepared to explain your reading(s) to the 3/4ths of the students who did not read the same material. You are responsible for knowing, however, all of the material in the class. Thus, other students will depend on your explanation of your readings and you will depend on theirs. In many cases, readings that you were not directly assigned might be useful for your papers and I will expect you to use them accordingly.

TWO NOTES ON SMARTS

Myth: “A” students are smarter than other students.

Fact: College is a unique institution with its own rules and skills. You will not simply get an A because you are smart. Being smart *at college* means learning a specific skill set. Since you are competing with students who are also smart, getting an A in a course is a combination of effort, prior knowledge, experience, and luck. If you are a frosh, you may find that you must work harder to get the same grade as a senior who has much more experience at excelling in college classrooms and, thus, knows better how to do it. If this is your first sociology class, you may find that you have to work harder to get the same grade as someone who has taken sociology classes before and, thus, has more background knowledge to apply and with which to absorb new sociological knowledge. In these cases, be patient with yourself. Don’t put pressure on yourself to get straight As from the get go. Give yourself a break. Acknowledge that there will be a learning curve and give yourself some time to climb it. Do your best and look forward to when you will be the one with knowledge and experience.

Myth: We are born with a certain level of intelligence that remains static throughout our lives.

Fact: The mind is like the body. If you use it, it becomes stronger. If it is strong in one area, it may be weak in another. You can improve your critical thinking, reasoning skills, ability to absorb new information, emotional intelligence, and more. But it isn’t necessarily fun. Like working out your body, working out your mind can be uncomfortable, even painful. You’re not really challenging and improving your mind until it hurts a little. So you may find that learning in this class (and others) is kind of like suffering. It’s okay. It doesn’t mean that you’re not smart, it means that you’re getting even smarter.

COURSE POLICIES

- *Office Hours:* While my office hours are only three hours a week, I encourage you to make an appointment outside of office hours or come by my office anytime to see if I'm available. I am happy to discuss class concepts, college more generally, musings about majors, future planning, or graduate school.
- *Feedback:* I love getting feedback on my teaching and how the class is going. I value your input and I am willing to make changes to the class according to your preferences. Please share with me any comments, suggestions, and ideas you may have, and help me make this a great class. If you would like to do so anonymously, you can type and print out a note and drop it in my mailbox in South Swan Trailer D.
- *Class Demeanor:* As a student at Occidental and as a member of this class you must hold yourself and your peers to the highest standards of civil engagement and discourse. Chatting with your neighbor is frowned upon when I am lecturing, and it is absolutely impermissible when other students are trying to participate. While we may find ourselves disagreeing, we must do so with respect, a commitment to hearing what others have to say, and a willingness to think and rethink our own positions. Personal insults have no place in the college classroom.
- *Grading Inquires:* All inquires/disagreements regarding grades will be handled during my office hours or at another mutually agreeable time. Under no circumstance will grades be discussed immediately before, during, or after class.
- *Make-up Exams:* Make-up exams will generally not be given without appropriate official documentation excusing the absence. Please do not make me ask for it, simply bring the documentation with you to my office. For those students with an excused absence, a research paper may be assigned in place of the exam.
- *Special Accommodations/Learning Differences:* If you require some special assistance for classes/exams, please let me know as soon as possible. Responsibility for alerting me to the disability and making the proper arrangements are your responsibility, but I will do whatever I can to help. If you have questions or concerns about what constitutes a learning disability, I encourage you to contact the friendly folks over at the Center for Academic Excellence (-2849).
- *Accessibility:* I want my course to be as accessible to as many different people as possible. If there is any reason why the standard approach to college classrooms or coursework is difficult for you to accomplish, please come talk to me about it. This includes those of you with a learning or physical disability (as discussed above), those of you who have other emotional or psychological challenges, those of you who have had past experiences that make discussing gender anxiety-producing (and you may be surprised as the course continues), those of you whose parents did not go to college (and can't help you understand the system as well as other parents might), those of you who are too shy to actively participate, those of you who have more responsibility than the typical college student (such as dependent parents, children, or an especially heavy work-load outside of school), and other situations I can't anticipate. The earlier you come to see me, the more I can do to try to work with you to alleviate the unique disadvantages you might face. I prefer that you come in the first two weeks but, if you do not and you decide you would like to, please do not hesitate to come to me at any time.

COURSE POLICIES (CONTINUED)

- *Assignments*: A hard copy of all papers/assignments must be handed in at the scheduled time (I do not accept papers by email). Late assignments are docked ½ grade per day. Computer and printing problems are not a good excuse for missing a deadline. Make sure to print your papers early enough to be able to address any problems before class. Keep a paper and electronic copy of everything you hand in until you receive your course grade.
- *Academic Integrity*: Academic integrity violations, including plagiarism, will be taken very seriously. If you are not sure about what constitutes a violation of academic integrity, please see me as soon as possible. A description of Occidental's academic ethics policies is available in the Student Handbook and on the following webpage:
<http://departments.oxy.edu/studentlife/studenthandbook/academic.policies/>
- *Flexibility*: This syllabus only provides an approximate schedule for the course. I will discuss changes to the syllabus in class. It is your responsibility to keep up to date on class events and requirements. In addition, I reserve the right to give in-class quizzes on the readings if necessary (and re-calculate the distribution of graded material in accordance with this change).

COURSE SCHEDULE

Tuesday, Jan. 18 – Introduction

No Readings.

Thursday, Jan. 20 – Introduction (continued)

All: • *Breaking the Silence* by Tatum
 • *Failing to See* by Dalton

Tuesday, Jan. 25 – Introduction (continued)

All: • *Ethnicity and Race* by Cornell & Hartman

Group One: • *Optional Ethnicities* by Waters

Group Two: • *Ethnic and Racial Identities of Second Generation Black Immigrants in New York City* by Waters

Group Three: • *The Continuing Significance of Race* by Feagin

Group Four: • *What White Supremacists Taught a Jewish Scholar About Identity* by Ferber

Part One: Theorizing Race and Ethnicity

Thursday, Jan. 27 – The Social Construction of Race and Ethnicity

No Readings.

Film in class: *The Difference Between Us*

REMINDER: JOURNAL ENTRY DUE IN CLASS

Tuesday, Feb. 1 – The Social Construction of Race and Ethnicity (continued)

- All: ● *Just Walk On By* by Staples
- Group One: ● *Beyond Black* by Rockquemore & Brunnsma
- Group Two: ● *Are Asian Americans Becoming “White”?* by Zhou
- Group Three: ● *Brown-Skinned White Girls* by Twine

Thursday, Feb. 3 – The Emergence of Race as a Concept

No Readings.

Film in class: *The Story We Tell*

REMINDER: JOURNAL ENTRY DUE IN CLASS

Tuesday, Feb. 8 – The Emergence of Race as a Concept (continued)

- Group One: ● *Real Indians* by Garrouette
- Group Two: ● *Becoming Hispanic* by Foley
- Group Three: ● *White Negroes* by Pieterse
- Group Four: ● *Asian American Panethnicity* by Espiritu

Thursday, Feb. 10 – Discussion of First Analysis

No Readings.

REMINDER: FIRST PAPER DUE IN CLASS

REMINDER: JOURNAL ENTRY DUE IN CLASS

Part Two: The Reproduction of Racial and Ethnic Inequality

Tuesday, Feb. 15 – Cultural Racism

- All: ● *An Overview of Trends in Social and Economic Well-Being, by Race* by Blank
- *Television and the Politics of Representation* by Lewis & Jhally
- Group One: ● *TV Arabs* by Shaheen
- Group Two: ● *Ling Woo in Historical Context* by Sun
- Group Three: ● *Distorted Reality* by Lichter & Amundson
- Group Four: ● *Winnebagos, Cherokees, Apaches, and Dakotas* by Merskin
- *The Model Minority* by Wu

Thursday, Feb. 17 – Cultural Racism (continued)

- All: ● *Toy Theory* by DuCille
- *Flesh-Toned* by Wade & Sharp

REMINDER: JOURNAL ENTRY DUE IN CLASS

Tuesday, Feb. 22 – Social Psychology

- All:
- *Naughty by Nature* by Ferguson
 - *Skull Face and the Self-Fulfilling Stereotype* by Wade & Sharp
 - Harvard Implicit Test Website: <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/>
 - *Racism in the English Language* by Moore

Thursday, Feb. 24 – Social Psychology (continued)

No Readings.

Special Event: Brett Wheeler on Cognitive Dissonance, Jazz, and the Black Musician

REMINDER: JOURNAL ENTRY DUE IN CLASS

Tuesday, Mar. 1 – Discussion of Second Analysis

No Readings.

REMINDER: SECOND PAPER DUE IN CLASS

Thursday, Mar. 3 – Institutional Racism

No Readings.

Film in class: *The Way We Live*

REMINDER: JOURNAL ENTRY DUE IN CLASS

SPRING BREAK (Monday, March 8th to Friday, March 11th)

Tuesday, Mar. 15 – Institutional Racism (continued)

- All:
- *Transformative Assets, the Racial Wealth Gap and the American Dream* by Shapiro
 - *Fences and Neighbors* by Farley & Squires

Group One: ● *Environmental Justice in the 21st Century* by Bullard

Group Two: ● *Savage Inequalities* by Kozol

Group Three: ● *Why Are There No Supermarkets in My Neighborhood* by Zenk et al.

Thursday, Mar. 17 – Institutional Racism (continued)

All: ● TBA.

Special Event: Kenjus Watson, MEd on Race and Higher Education

REMINDER: JOURNAL ENTRY DUE IN CLASS

Tuesday, Mar. 22 – Institutional Racism (continued)

- All: • *Oppression* by Frye
- Group One: • *Race and Criminal Justice* by Escobar
- Group Two: • *Race and Criminalization* by Davis
- Group Three: • *The Mark of a Criminal Record* by Pager
- Group Four: • *And the Poor Get Prison* by Reiman
-

Thursday, Mar. 24 – NO CLASS

Tuesday, Mar. 29 – White Privilege

- All: • *White Privilege* by McIntosh
-

Part Three: Understanding Racial Conflict

Thursday, Mar. 31 – Interpersonal Conflict

- All: • *Color Blind Privilege* by Gallagher
- *Is the Benign Really Harmless?* by Rains
- Satirical Website: www.rent-a-negro.com
-

REMINDER: JOURNAL ENTRY DUE IN CLASS

Tuesday, Apr. 5 – Interpersonal Conflict (continued)

- No Readings.
- Film in class: *Black.White*
-

Thursday, Apr. 7 – Interpersonal Conflict (continued)

- No Readings.
- Film in class: *Black.White*
-

REMINDER: JOURNAL ENTRY DUE IN CLASS

Tuesday, Apr. 12 – Interpersonal Conflict (continued)

- Group One: • *Blaming the Victim* by Ryan
- Group Two: • *Race and Criminalization* by Davis
- Group Three: • *Unmasking Racism* by Mueller et al.
- Group Four: • *Invisible Woman* by DeMott
-

Thursday, Apr. 14 – Societal Conflict

- No Readings.
- Film in class: *Ethnic Notions*
-

REMINDER: JOURNAL ENTRY DUE IN CLASS

Tuesday, Apr. 19 – Societal Conflict (continued)

- Group One: ● *When the Melting Pot Boils Over* by Waldinger
Group Two: ● *From Racial Oppression to Economic Class Subordination* by Wilson
Group Three: ● *The Uses of Poverty* by Gans
Group Four: ● “*We Are All Americans*” by Bonilla-Silva & Guber
● *(In)Secure Times* by Fine et al.

Thursday, Apr. 21 – Social Change

- Group One: ● *The Minority Rights Revolution* by Skrentny
Group Two: ● *The Genius of the Civil Rights Movement* by Morris
Group Three: ● *How the New Working Class Can Transform Urban America* by Kelly
Group Four: ● *American Racial and Ethnic Politics in the 21st Century* by Hochschild

REMINDER: JOURNAL ENTRY DUE IN CLASS

Tuesday, Apr. 26 – Discussion of Third Analysis

No Readings.

REMINDER: THIRD PAPER DUE IN CLASS

Thursday, Apr. 28 – Closing Thoughts

ASSIGNMENTS

Participation (25 points)

Participation will be evaluated for each day of class. You earn participation credit for discussing the readings as well as sharing stories, thoughts, and opinions, asking questions, and responding to student inquiries. If you are absent, you will not earn participation points. Absences can be excused if they are for a legitimate reason (e.g. documented illness, family emergencies, etc.).

Attention Athletes: The participation policy applies to athletes. I understand that there may be an occasional conflict between class and your games or practices. However, do realize that any athletic activity that causes you to miss class more than two or three times in a semester is bound to have a significant negative effect on your participation grade. If you expect more than two or three conflicts between class and your athletic commitments, please speak with me as soon as possible so that we may decide whether it makes sense for you to take this class.

Journals (25 points)

Journal entries are due every Thursday. They are designed to promote your engagement with the course material and open a line of communication between you and I. In your journal entries, respond to a reading by writing about what was interesting, infuriating, lame, wrong, exciting, etc about it and why. Each entry is also an opportunity to trace your thoughts, feelings, and insights. *If you have concerns about class material, tone, or climate, this is an excellent place to let me know.*

Journal entries should be at least $3/4^{\text{th}}$ of a page (stick with 12 point, Times New Roman font with reasonable margins and avoiding excessive spaces). They are graded pass (2 points), partial pass (1 point), and no pass (0 points). A journal entry will receive full credit if it (1) explicitly addresses at least one reading, (2) is non-ambiguously *at least* $3/4$ page single-spaced, and (3) shows a good effort to engage with the material.

ASSIGNMENTS (CONTINUED)

Analyses (50 points each)

Our everyday lives are saturated with racial and ethnic meaning. For these assignments, you are required to use concepts and readings from the class to analyze your own world.

First Analysis: Reflecting on your Racial and Ethnic Identity

Reflect on your own racial and ethnic identities, tying them into history, culture, and the social construction of these categories. Consider: What are your racial and ethnic identities? Where did they come from? How do you know them? How are they reproduced in your life? How do they interact with other parts of your identity? Are they important to you? Why? Are they troubled? That is, do you or other people find that they cause confusion or distress? How and why?

Second Analysis: Race and Ethnicity in Popular Culture

Turn your critical eye to one manifestation of popular culture: a magazine, a website, a television show, a movie, or a product line. Taking your case in its entirety, explore how it reproduces or challenges racial and ethnic categories. Consider: Who is the audience? Who is represented? How are they represented? What racial and/or ethnic categories are being reproduced or challenged? How? Where is whiteness? Are relations between different groups presented? How? What lessons do you think a reader/viewer is likely to learn?

Third Analysis: Race- and Ethnicity-Related Controversy in the News

Choose a topic that is overtly or, you think, covertly about race or ethnicity—for example, slavery reparations, Guantanamo Bay, affirmative action, Asian American success, immigration, the demographics of the United States, Obama's presidency, inner city crime, the war on drugs, migrant farmwork, Sotomayor's nomination to the Supreme court, the Jena Six, tribal gaming, poverty on reservations, or racial profiling—and investigate the way in which this issue is discussed in ten news articles in light of course material about interpersonal and societal conflict. Consider: Do the reporters discuss race and ethnicity explicitly or implicitly? If implicitly, how do they nonetheless trigger racial and ethnic meaning? What ideological commitments does the reporter's story belie? On what ideological commitments is he or she counting on among his or her readers? To what degree is the discussion about ideological commitments? And which? Is this topic also about material (dis)advantage? How do you know? Basically, what is this fight about? What different positions are being taken? And how can you explain those positions by considering the ideological commitments of the position-takers?

Logistics and Tips for Analyses:

Analyses should not exceed three single-spaced pages in 12 point Times New Roman font with reasonable margins. Unusually wide or narrow margins or unusually large or small fonts only call attention to your effort to avoid meeting the expectations of the assignment.

Since engagement with the class material is an important part of this assignment, **I require references to at least four separate readings or class concepts in each paper.**

- A “reference” is the inclusion of a concept or an author’s argument (which sometimes, but not always, includes the use of a quotation). A good use of conceptual material is one that (1) helps push your analysis farther than it would have gone without the idea referenced and (2) draws from the unique and main points of the reading in question (as opposed to the introductory material or findings it cites from other studies).
- References to more complex ideas (“schema”) are likely to impress me more than references to simple ideas (“stereotype”) and make for a more sophisticated analysis. As you read over the concepts and think about your paper, don't just use the ones you remember. Look up the ones you don't. It's those difficult ones that will give you a good paper.
- Additional references (more than four) are also likely to improve your grade as it suggests you are deep in the material and often complexifies your analysis.
- You need not include a bibliography if you use only class material.

Grading will consider the extent to which you conform to the assignment, your understanding of the concept(s), and the sophistication of your analysis. An “A” paper is not a good paper, it is a great paper. See GENERAL PAPER GUIDELINES AND TIPS and LETTER GRADES in this syllabus for ideas.

To maximize your chance of getting a high grade, concentrate on writing an analysis that is sociological. Consider what is distinct about a sociological perspective on the case at hand. You should be looking for evidence of particular social processes so as to apply sociological concepts to everyday life. I am not looking for attributions of right and wrong (for example, explanations of who was racist). I am looking for an analysis that helps us learn something about how the world works by applying a sociological lens. To this end, be sure that you provide an analytic description of what you are studying: focus on drawing an overall conclusion about the case you are looking at; choose details that relate to the points you making (rather than trying to say everything about it); and organize your presentation so that the relationship between the details and your overall point is clear.

LETTER GRADES

Letter grades in this class have the following meaning:

- A Outstanding performance. You have demonstrated very thorough knowledge and understanding of all the material, truly superior critical thinking, and expressed insightful and original thoughts clearly. You have completed all required assignments and they have consistently been among the best in the class.
- B Good performance. You have demonstrated solid knowledge and understanding of the material and good critical thinking. You have also shown the ability to express your ideas clearly. You have completed all required assignments and they have been of good quality.
- C Satisfactory performance. You have demonstrated basic knowledge and understanding of the major concepts taught in the class and some critical thinking. You have completed all or most of the required assignments and they have routinely been free of significant problems.
- D Deficient performance. You have only acquired a limited understanding of the class material. You have failed to complete all the required assignments and they have routinely had serious problems.
- F Failure. You have failed to learn a sufficient proportion of the basic concepts and ideas taught in the class. You have failed to complete many required assignments and they have routinely had serious problems.

Your final grades will be calculated according to a standard curve, unless that curve results in grades that are unacceptably low. I will curve up if necessary. This is at my discretion. Generally, I center my curve at a C+. Be forewarned, this is much lower than many other professors at Occidental.

GENERAL PAPER GUIDELINES AND TIPS

1. Expectations and grading:
 - a. In papers you are expected to take concepts raised in the readings and apply them to analyze some sort of empirical material in the way that sociologists would. Thus you are looking at and for evidence of particular social processes in the material of everyday life.
 - b. To maximize your chance of getting a high grade, concentrate on writing an analysis that is sociological. Consider what is distinct about a sociological perspective on the case at hand. Be sure that you provide an analytic description of what you are studying: focus on drawing an overall conclusion about the case you are looking at; choose details that relate to the points you making (rather than trying to say everything about it); and organize your presentation so that the relationship between the details and your overall point is clear.
 - c. Do not be concerned with being “right.” These papers are an exercise in applying sociological concepts. Feel free to speculate, posit, consider, even boldly guess about what is going on. Absolutely nothing rides on whether you are right in your analysis... not your grade, not your relationships with the people you care about, not the future of the human race, not world peace, nothing! So don’t worry! Just experiment with the ideas. I am not expecting you to be right, I am concerned with your understanding of the ideas, your open-mindedness in applying them, and the depth of your analysis.
 - d. Productive disagreement with theory is good. Productive disagreement builds on or expands the theory. Non-productive disagreement rejects it without improving it. If you know of an instance in which the theory doesn’t seem to apply, fix it instead of dismissing it.
 - e. Further, you’ll need to be careful to not confuse your own subjective interpretation with sociological ones and to not make value statements in substitution for critical thinking. For example, if you are an ardent individualist and think that everyone’s lives are impacted only by their personal decisions, you still have to write a sociological paper that considers the impact of the social world on individuals in order to demonstrate that you understand the class material. Writing such a paper may be frustrating if you don’t believe it, but it isn’t going to hurt you and is consequence-less (e.g., no one will get an unfair free ride from the system if you write a sociological paper). My concern is that you understand the material *and you must demonstrate that you do*. In contrast, *whether you believe it is not central to this course* and you can write a disclaimer on the paper if that makes you feel better.
2. Since these are short papers, concision is key. The best papers will pack a lot of interesting material into four pages. I recommend writing a longer paper and then shortening it by cutting out the redundant material and wordiness. Here are some ideas.
 - a. Introductions and Conclusions. I care most about your critical thinking. Tell me what you’re going to do in the introduction and what you have done in the conclusion. Otherwise, stick to the case. *Please* do not waste time on flowery and optimistic introductions or damning and pessimistic conclusions. I’m more interested in your analysis than in your predictions about the future or moral commitments. This is satisfying to write but doesn’t help your grade, so be stingy and save the space you have for the analysis itself.

- b. You should always be specific about where the material you are discussing comes from: provide the citation not only for direct quotes but also for paraphrases in your own words. You need not give a full reference for material that is on the syllabus, but the author's name, publication year, and the page number if it references less than the author's whole argument – are always required. When citing your sources, use only the last name, year of publication, and page number if needed (for example, Brown 1999: p. 2). Do not write in the title or full name, this wastes your precious space.
 - c. Edit several times. Reading your paper over (especially out loud) will allow you to cut out redundancies and find shorter ways to say the same thing. Having a friend read it is also very helpful.
 - d. Make sure you never say the same thing twice. Read is closely and make sure. Never say "In other words..." or "That is..." Just say it clearly the first time. Don't use synonyms in a row when you could just use one well-chosen word.
 - e. Try to think of some ways that you can cut down on how long each sentence. Can I make this sentence less wordy?
 - f. Does my introduction and/or conclusion have some "fluff" in it? Is everything in those two paragraphs really important to the content of my paper? If not, cut it and don't worry about it sounding smooth.
 - g. Definitely complain a lot. Just kidding. Concision in writing is an extremely frustrating skill to develop, but incredibly valuable to have. I feel your pain. I struggle with it still... which is why I think it's so important to encourage you to work on it.
3. Grading will consider the extent to which you conform to the assignment, your understanding of the concepts, and the sophistication of your analysis. An "A" paper is not a good paper, it is a great paper. If you want to improve your grade:
- a. Don't underestimate how hard you might have to think. Think hard about your case before you start to write and be willing to learn something in the process of writing your paper. Sometimes, when ideas are complicated, your mind is too unstructured a place to make sense of things and paper is much more concrete.
 - b. Be willing to expand what you already know. Don't assume you already know everything about the case. Ask yourself, what can this case teach me?
 - c. Ask yourself, is it really so simple? Can this be made more complex/sophisticated? Is there more going on here?
 - d. Stay up on class material and review it with your case in mind.
 - e. Write a minimum of three drafts.
 - f. Go to the writing center (<http://departments.oxy.edu/cae>) and get help with your papers whether you're a good writer or not. Everyone can get better. Make your appointments early.
 - g. Come see me! I'm nice.

PLAGIARISM PRIMER¹

Introduction

Plagiarism is a form of cheating that constitutes the academic equivalent of theft. A student who plagiarizes a paper is no different from one who looks at a fellow student's answer during an exam or who copies homework answers from a classmate.

Exactly What IS Plagiarism?

The definition below is taken from *Avoiding Plagiarism—A Guide for Students* on the University of Oregon website:

Plagiarism is the representation of someone else's words, ideas, or data as one's own work. When a student submits work for credit that includes the words, ideas, or data of others, the source must be acknowledged by the use of complete, accurate, and specific references, such as footnotes or parenthetical citations that lead to complete references at the end of the paper... On written assignments, verbatim statements from other sources must be enclosed by quotation marks or set off from regular text as indented block quotes [such as this one], and full credit must be given via citation. Failure to follow these guidelines constitutes plagiarism (University of Oregon 2006).

Even if all sources in the paper are properly quoted, paraphrased, cited and referenced, the following actions still constitute plagiarism:

- Copying an entire paper or sections of a paper from internet sites providing pre-written assignments, either for purchase or for free
- Copying sections from internet sources and inserting them into an assignment, unless the source is clearly cited (see the example above)
- Borrowing or stealing a paper written by someone else for a current or previous course
- Hiring someone else to complete an assignment and then putting your name on it
- Submitting an assignment completed by someone else, for any reason
- Completing an assignment for someone else for that person to turn in as his or her own

Types of Plagiarism

In *The Art of Public Speaking* Stephen E. Lucas (2004) identifies three distinct types of plagiarism:

- Global plagiarism: stealing an entire paper word-for-word from another source and passes it off as his or her own. Lucas calls this “the most blatant—and unforgivable—kind of plagiarism” and refers to it as “grossly unethical” (p. 43).
- Patchwork plagiarism: copying sections of a paper word-for-word from several sources and then fitting them together into a whole paper. Lucas describes this as “essentially a cut-and-paste job of ideas and words that are not your own” (p. 45). This is cheating.
- Incremental plagiarism: failing to give credit for specific parts or “increments” of the paper that were borrowed from other sources. A fair amount of plagiarism among college students falls into this category. You will save yourself a lot of trouble if you remember that any time you quote or paraphrase a source, you are obliged to credit the original source.

Does That Mean I Should Include a Citation for Every Single Fact in My Paper?

No, it doesn't. Citation is not required for information that is considered common knowledge. Common knowledge has been defined as "facts, dates, events, information, and concepts that belong generally to an educated public. No individual owns the facts about history, physics, social behavior, geography, current events, popular culture, and so on" (Hairston and Ruszkiewicz 1993: 614).

Regarding common knowledge, an article titled *Plagiarism: What It Is and How to Recognize and Avoid It* on Indiana University's website provides two examples. Here's the first:

John F. Kennedy was elected President of the United States in 1960.

This information is considered general knowledge; it is not necessary to document this fact. However, facts not generally known and ideas or opinions that interpret facts must always be cited. Here's the second example:

According to the American Family Leave Coalition's new book, *Family Issues and Congress*, President Bush's relationship with Congress has hindered family leave legislation (p. 6).

This idea that Bush's "relationship with Congress has hindered family leave legislation" is **not** a fact. It is an opinion, and the source of this opinion must be cited (Indiana University 2006).

How Can I Avoid Plagiarism?

Students tend to run into problems with plagiarism when they fail to quote sources properly. When you use someone else's words, you quote that person. Any use of someone else's exact words must be placed inside quotation marks or indented in a block quote (see examples above). The source of the quote must be clearly documented with a citation in the text (including page number of the quote in the original) and a full reference of the source in either a footnote or a references page at the end of the paper. *Failure to cite a direct quote, both in the text and in a reference page (or footnote) is plagiarism.*

Let's look at an example of correct documentation. Here is an original source:

Buddhadasa's conception of human beings as active controllers of their own material and spiritual progress is most clearly presented in his view of work as integrating both social and spiritual activity. —Peter Jackson, *Buddhadasa: A Buddhist Thinker for the Modern World*, p. 200.

Here is how a student properly cited this source when used in a paper:

Jackson (1988) wrote, "Buddhadasa's conception of human beings as active controllers of their own material and spiritual progress is most clearly presented in his view of work as integrating both social and spiritual activity" (p. 200).

To avoid plagiarism when quoting a source, you must do four things:

- Accurately quote the original author's words (that is, be sure you have not changed any words or left out words without using ellipses—the three periods that indicate missing text)

- Enclose the quotation within quotation marks or indent the quotation into a block quote
- Follow each quotation with a citation of the page number, like this: (p. 200)
- Provide a full reference of all citations either in a footnote or a references page at the end of the paper

Students also often encounter problems when they fail to paraphrase sources properly. Whenever you use someone else's ideas but put them into your own words you are paraphrasing that source. Although the words are yours, the ideas come from another source—that is, you did not think of them on your own—and that source must be documented with an in-text citation in parentheses and a reference in the bibliography at the end of the paper. *Failure to do so is plagiarism.*

Let's look at an example of correct paraphrasing and citation. The following is the original source:

If the existence of a signing ape was unsettling for linguists, it was also startling news for animal behaviorists. —Flora Davis, *Eloquent Animals: A Study in Animal Communication*, p. 26.

Here is how a student correctly paraphrased and cited the original:

According to Flora Davis (1988), linguists and animal behaviorists were unprepared for the news that an ape could communicate with its trainers through sign language (p. 26).

To avoid plagiarism when paraphrasing you must do three things:

- Create a distinct sentence structure that is appreciably different from the original work (paraphrasing does **not** mean merely changing a couple of words from the original text)
- Check the paraphrasing carefully against the original text, making sure the same words or phrases have not been used inadvertently
- Acknowledge the source through correct in-text citation and a reference in the bibliography

Examples: Is It Plagiarism?

Here is a passage from a master's thesis by Diane Rousseau:

Tobacco use is a costly destructive behaviour in our society, responsible for social, economic and personal costs. Thus, many non-profit groups and government agencies world-wide have turned to social marketing to try to reduce the incidence of smoking. Social marketing has been viewed as a force for change and is defined as “the application of the logic of marketing to societal goals” (Kotler and Zaltman, 1971, p. 3). Governments have actively tried to reduce cigarette consumption by banning cigarette advertising, by providing legislation to control smoking and by issuing public service advertisements. —Rousseau, Diane. 1996. *Effectiveness of Fear Appeals in Anti-Smoking Advertisements*. Unpublished master's thesis. Concordia University, Montreal.

Compare that passage to the paragraph below, submitted by a student as part of a research paper:

Tobacco use is a costly destructive behavior in our society, responsible for social, economic and personal costs. This is the reason many non-profit groups (such as the “Truth” campaign) have turned to social marketing to try to reduce smoking. Governments have tried to reduce cigarette consumption by banning cigarette ads, banning smoking in public buildings, and by issuing public service announcements.

Is this plagiarism? Absolutely. Other than making a few superficial changes (such as changing the spelling of “behaviour” to the American spelling and substituting “announcements” for “advertisements” in the last sentence) and adding a small aside about the “Truth” campaign, the student copied Rousseau’s exact words without giving her credit. This is one of the most egregious forms of plagiarism: theft of someone else’s words and ideas without making it clear whose they are.

Some students mistakenly think they can use a source’s exact words without quotation marks as long as they provide some type of credit at the beginning or end of the paragraph. Suppose, for example, the plagiarist above had written the following:

Rousseau (1996) said tobacco use is a costly destructive behavior in our society, responsible for social, economic and personal costs.

Is that plagiarism? Yes. Although the student gave proper credit to the source at the beginning of the passage, the exact words of the source were not enclosed in quotation marks. *This is plagiarism.*

What if the student included a citation in parentheses at the end of the passage, like this:

Governments have tried to reduce cigarette consumption by banning cigarette ads, banning smoking in public buildings, and by issuing public service advertisements (Rousseau 1996).

Is that plagiarism? Yes, it is. Again, though credit is given to the author, the exact words are still not enclosed in quotation marks. *This is plagiarism.*

Providing References

Purdue University (2006) cautions students to cite a source whenever they do any of the following:

- Use quotation marks around another persons exact words, whether spoken or written
- Use another person’s words as the basis for their own words (paraphrasing)
- Build their ideas around another person’s ideas, opinions, or theories
- Refer to facts, statistics, graphs, or information not considered common knowledge

Plagiarism and the Internet

Indiana University (2006) recognizes that the internet has made plagiarism easier for students who would rather take the easy way out or who don’t know any better. The IU website acknowledges that the web “has become a more popular source of information for student papers, and many questions have arisen about how to avoid plagiarizing these sources.”² The

rule is simple: If you would cite material taken from a book, journal, or other source, you must cite the same material when it is taken from an internet source.

Selecting vast sections of text from one or more websites, pasting them into a document, and then slapping a title and your name on the top is beyond a doubt plagiarism—and the worst kind, global plagiarism. It is also extremely easy for professors to catch. Don't take the risk.

What Will Happen to Me If I Plagiarize and Get Caught?

All suspected cases of plagiarism are reported to the Committee on Academic Standing and Student Conduct. At this stage, the Judicial Examiner takes over investigation of the charge. If the student is found guilty, the student will receive a mandatory penalty. There is no discretion (i.e. leniency for special circumstances) on the part of the professor, the Judicial Examiner, or the committee. These can be found here:

<http://departments.oxy.edu/studentlife/studenthandbook/academic.policies/sanctions.html>.

¹ Modified from “A Primer on Plagiarism” (unpublished manuscript) by Paul Husselbee, Department of Communications at Southern Utah University, with permission of the author.

Additional References

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² For most websites no page number is available. Be sure to cite the webpage author in-text and in the reference page. If you have downloaded a PDF or other file that provides clear page numbers for the text, you must cite them.

Syllabus Acknowledgement Contract

For: Race and Ethnicity in American Society with Lisa Wade, PhD

- I have read and understand the requirements for completion of this course.
- I know the assignment dates specified in the syllabus and understand that a documented medical emergency or prior consent of the instructor are the only reasons I may be allowed to make up for a late or missed assignment.
- I have read and understand the course policies.
 - I promise not to engage in academic misconduct of any sort.
 - I have read and understand the Plagiarism Primer.
- I know that I should contact the instructor for all course-related concerns.

Name (Print): _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____