Reworking the Policing of Plagiarism: Borrowings from Basic Writing, Authorship Studies, and the Citation Project

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ABSTRACT: In this essay, I examine the sociopolitical consequences of policing plagiarism and evaluating students’ ethics within the context of basic writing’s longstanding tradition of remediating and reshaping pedagogies, ideological stances, and what counts as academic writing. With the hope of illustrating how we might be more intentional about resisting policing tactics, I provide a handful of anecdotes demonstrating how scholarship on authorship and plagiarism, alongside my research with the Citation Project (a large-scale study of student source use), has helped me rework source use in the classroom as a practice within a larger system of values in academic discourse. I argue that we teachers of basic writing, alongside all teachers of composition, must examine our own values placed on source use, acknowledge these values as cultural rather than natural, and then work collaboratively with students to demystify and contest the very values we hold and expect students to also share and uphold. And in doing so, I believe we may further contribute to the field’s ongoing endeavor of reworking academic English in ways that make the language and its writing more accessible to and representative of all of its many users.

KEYWORDS: academic discourse; basic writing; Citation Project; pedagogy; plagiarism; source use

Plagiarism scholar Rebecca Moore Howard illustrated nearly twenty years ago in Standing in the Shadows of Giants: Plagiarists, Authors, Collaborators that plagiarism is a challenging concept to define, especially due to the blurry lines of intention and authorship. She argued for educators to treat plagiarism contextually and to stop vilifying students for unintentional errors like inaccurate source use and inadequate paraphrasing (see also Buranen and Roy; Howard “A Plagiarism Pentimento”; Howard and Robillard; Pennycook; Price; Robillard; Shi “Cultural Backgrounds,” “Textual Borrowing”; Valentine). For decades now, teachers of writing across contexts have begun

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acknowledging the need to complicate our understandings and treatments of plagiarism, taking into consideration varying degrees of offense and intention and the reality that assessing intention is not always clear-cut. Students turning in research papers with inaccurate or incomplete citations by no means equates to students copying verbatim into their essay full paragraphs from a source without attribution, which by no means equates to students seeking editing services or purchasing entire papers to submit as their own. When dealing with what we may suspect to be ineffective academic source use, it is critical to investigate contributing factors and treat each assumed act of plagiarism individually, scrupulously, and contextually.

Despite the many advances in plagiarism studies, it is still not far-fetched to assume, as Candace Spigelman and Kami Day did in 2006, that “most faculty in higher education regard plagiarism as an academic sin” (139). Disparaging attitudes felt toward students persist (and get circulated in publications and in our small talk on campus and at conferences), such as the assumption that students are merely careless, unethical, or negligent, that they are prone to copying and pasting from the internet without much regard to the ethics or consequences. I have certainly found myself policing students’ perspectives and source-use practices, thinking things like, “That’s not an academic way to use sources; it’s just not right. I’d do it this way,” or “That’s not a good attitude to have about source use!” or “This student’s borrowing from this source utterly disregards academic values and the strategies I taught in class!” I see in these responses uncritical assumptions deeming academic source use as superior and students’ differing ways with language and source use as unethical, unfitting for academic contexts, or, at best, inferior. And I see what composition teachers Spigelman and Day have acknowledged: that the issue of plagiarism is “emotionally saturated” (139, see also Biswas; Robillard “We Won’t Get Fooled Again”). Our responses to student source use are anything but neutral. Just as our emotions might soar when observing students who have excelled in adopting academic discourse and source use, we often can’t help but to care about and even get worked up over what we observe as improper or careless practices. Our time and pedagogical investment alone is reason enough to expect and accept our emotional investment in students’ learning or lack thereof.

Basic writing teachers and scholars are no strangers to staring emotions, discursive hegemony, and cross-cultural conflict straight in the face, especially for the purposes of glaring inward at ourselves. Indeed, arguably more so in basic writing than in other enclaves of composition studies, scholars and teachers strive to develop self-reflection both in our students
and in us. Our willingness to develop consciousness-raising tactics that help us politicize, criticize, and re-envision our values and practices invites our pedagogies to transform and to be transformative. Mina Shaughnessy’s *Errors and Expectations* not only paved the way for the subfield of basic writing; it prompted a tradition of “remediating” our own pedagogical knowledge and methods. And while we haven’t stopped since, such reflexive qualities necessitate growing and ongoing introspections. That’s because although we’ve long recognized the emotional baggage accompanying hegemonic discourse, the challenge endures in basic writing and far beyond of acknowledging and effectively contesting our deep-seated and deeply felt assumptions about what’s academic writing and what’s not—emotions that keep us, consciously or not, focused on “guarding the tower” from “those who do not seem to belong in the community” (Shaughnessy, “Diving In” 234). Source use is but one of many discursive features of academic writing to which we hold ideological and emotional attachments that may influence exclusionary perspectives and practices.

As Bruce Horner called us to do in “Relocating Basic Writing,” we ought to keep central to our pedagogies our field’s understanding of “correctness” as arbitrary, which may help us avoid uncritically deeming deviations to academic discourse as errors and deficits, including, I’d add, in students’ source use. Assuming standardized approaches to source use are inherently superior not only runs counter to what we know about how language and writing works and evolves; it is also unethical in its tacit upholding of standard language ideologies that maintain social and racial hierarchies through subordinating and oppressing all language users who defy, consciously and not, standardized practices, especially those students who identify as people of color, immigrants, children of immigrants, and English language learners. Particularly because these student populations have long comprised basic writing classrooms, “the basic writing course” as Horner argues, “is a site for the ongoing and culturally crucial task of reworking English and its writing” (16). For me, theory and pedagogy on the teaching of source use and the treatment of plagiarism remains a topic ripe for reworking, particularly in the context of basic writing, which undeniably remains a veteran discipline for contesting the language and language practices of the academy. It’s worth emphasizing, then, that reworking source use affords more than uncovering best pedagogical practices; it serves also to reshape—although, admittedly, far more slowly and modestly than perhaps we’d like—the cultural values and language ideologies upheld across the globe (and largely perpetuated in our very classrooms) that hierarchize languages and their users.
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In what follows, I begin by examining the sociopolitical consequences of policing plagiarism and evaluating students’ ethics. Then, with the hope of illustrating how we might be more intentional about resisting policing tactics, I provide a handful of anecdotes from my own attempts to apply composition theory and research to my teaching of effective academic source use. More specifically, I demonstrate how scholarship on authorship and plagiarism, alongside my research with the Citation Project (a large-scale study of student source use), has helped me rework source use as a practice within a larger system of values in academic discourse. I argue that we teachers of basic writing, alongside all teachers of composition, must examine our own values placed on source use, acknowledge these values as cultural rather than natural, and then work collaboratively with students to demystify and contest the very values we hold and expect students to also share and uphold. And in doing so, I believe, we may further contribute to the field’s ongoing endeavor of reworking academic English in ways that make the language and its writing more accessible to and representative of all of its many users.

Policing Plagiarism, Evaluating Ethics

It is my wish that teachers across the disciplines would collectively heed to Howard’s plea in her 2001 article published in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* to “Forget about Policing Plagiarism. Just Teach.” As Howard argues, when we teachers focus on policing, “we risk becoming the enemies rather than the mentors of our students” (n.p.). Policing students’ ineffective uses of sources, particularly in cases where intention is indiscernible, can damage teacher-student relationships, shut down opportunities for learning, rouse harmful anxiety and embarrassment in students, and exclude students from higher education and career prospects (in cases where expulsion is sought). Further, policing plagiarism works to perpetuate perceptions deeming students’ language and literacy practices inferior and unethical, which, in and of itself, can further provoke lasting material consequences for students. Thus, we can liken such practices to the sorts of “othering” and “cultural deficit” pedagogies long criticized in basic writing as a major perpetrator in the politics of remediation (Soliday). Assuming students and their literacies are inferior or immoral—and, thus, in need of policing—perpetuates historical misconceptions of diverse student populations as being culturally incompatible within academic communities. But, as Mary Soliday reminds us in *The Politics of Remediation*, institutional systems and discourses (alongside the material realities of students) are the real culprits leveraging the successes,
or not, of basic writing students, not students themselves and not their respective cultures.

My own interest in the politics of policing plagiarism soared in 2012. While conducting research on writing and the internationalization at a private university, I interviewed over a dozen administrators from across programs and disciplines who worked regularly with international graduate students. Three of my participants mentioned a troubling case in which an international graduate student was at the time being kicked out of the university for plagiarism charges. According to the participants I interviewed, the investigation revealed that the student, who had a strong GPA and an even better reputation among faculty, had borrowed too closely from some of her sources. Apparently, the student openly cited those sources in her thesis, was working under the close mentorship of her faculty advisor (who regularly read her work and never suspected irresponsible source use), and was herself under the impression that she was using sources effectively and ethically. All three participants who mentioned the case expressed disapproval of the program’s and institution’s decision, while one shared her belief that this was an intentional scare tactic designed to ward off potential plagiarists among incoming international graduate students. I never learned whatever came of this student and whether she was ever able to complete her graduate studies and pursue her career of choice. Indeed, all that I knew came to me anecdotally. But needless to say, the case shook me. Among many other concerns, I began to wonder, if a high achieving and highly celebrated graduate international student was susceptible to such harsh punishment over what appears to be an unintentional misuse of sources, what risks face our students who do not hold such status, standing, and privilege? This was a case that, for me, made unquestionably clear the material and gatekeeping effects of “guarding the tower” by way of policing source use.

Basic writing’s longstanding tradition of acknowledging the politics of academic discourse and remediation, alongside its commitment to negotiating struggle and conflict in the composition classroom, provides useful frameworks for re-envisioning pedagogical and institutional approaches to addressing plagiarism and the teaching of effective academic source use. Min-Zhan Lu in 1991 deconstructed essentialist views of language that treat language as apolitical and that perpetuate a “politics of linguistic innocence” (27). Such a stance, said Lu, leads teachers to overlook “the political dimensions of the linguistic choices students make in their writing” (27). Viewing language instead as “a site of struggle among competing discourses,” Lu emphasized the need to help students learn how to better “respond to
the potential dissonance between academic discourse and their home discourses” (27). Today, we readily acknowledge the impossibility of teaching academic discourse in politically and ideologically innocent ways. Just as Lu encouraged us to do in the early 90’s, we must continue to acknowledge the tensions between home and school discourses, including source-use practices and the concept of plagiarism, recognizing that our practices and values are cultural, ideological, and political.

Consider another case from an international graduate student who attended the same private university mentioned above. While working together in the writing center one day on the student’s research paper, I observed what appeared to be missing quotation marks around a passage followed by a citation. I inquired, and the student’s response led to a forty-minute discussion of his writing process and of US academic source-use practices. He readily acknowledged that the section I noticed was indeed copied from the source he cited. He went on to explain how every sentence in his 8-page paper was likewise copied from a source. I learned that the bulk of his process for writing involved reading and re-reading for days on end. He would identify across his sources what he considered to be—based on his topic or central idea—the most central, compelling, and representative points and connections. Some passages he borrowed were multiple sentences, but many were far shorter. After copying each passage verbatim onto sheets and sheets of paper, he cut them into individual strips. Scattering all of the excerpts across his living room floor, he began to meticulously string them together—adjusting, adding, and removing passages and parts of passages until he was satisfied with the harmony he sought to create. With his order set, he typed it all up, spending additional hours revising his prose, adding transitions and citations, and accounting for discrepancies in verb form, noun number, tone, word choice, and other grammatical and mechanical inconsistencies. He felt his writing and his writing process were masterful, and I agreed. His painstaking process, which led to a product not valued in US academic discourse, was undeniably rigorous, intellectual, artful, and—by my reading—effective in illustrating his nuanced synthesis of complex ideas represented across multiple texts.

Students’ cultural, linguistic, and national backgrounds have long been cited in plagiarism research as informing their source-use practices (e.g., Currie; Kirkland and Saunders; Shi “Cultural Background,” “Textual Borrowing”). Among other issues raised, scholars have suggested that some students, depending on their backgrounds, may not be aware of which textual borrowing practices are allowed and effective and which are not in US
academic contexts. We can certainly interpret the example above as a case supporting that claim. This student openly and proudly recounted his writing process, expressed surprise over my explanations of source-use practices deemed acceptable and not, and further expressed serious concern over the consequences facing students who engaged sources as he did. He shared his experiences writing in his home country that further supported the notion that his unawareness was culturally rooted. However, there is more worth considering here beyond acknowledging that cultural differences were a factor. He also expressed anxiety and remorse over having to dramatically alter his own writing practices; he was at once both frantic about the work he now faced in revising and in grief over a sense of loss he felt imagining abandoning the artifact he so devotedly and artfully crafted. I recall him staring at his pages, shaking his head and questioning softly but repeatedly, “This is wrong?” It seemed in that moment he was struggling to cope with an emotional response he was not often accustomed to facing: a sense of failure. In his home country, he was a high-ranking educational administrator and leader, and he always presented himself and treated his graduate studies as a serious scholar. Having to confront his own diligent practices under the framework of US source-use ideologies (which deemed his practices unfit and unethical) seemed a shocking and painful experience.

Undoubtedly, the kinds of source-use practices occurring outside of US academia—in students’ homes, in the media, and across nations and cultures—may be at odds at times with what we expect in our classrooms and in academia at large. This realization affords us the chance to rework our pedagogies so that they take into account what students already know and do, and what students want or need to know and do to thrive during their stay in academia. But perhaps more importantly, acknowledging the cultural constructedness and hegemonic consequences of US academic practices, including source use, affords us the chance to rework our very own notions about teaching and about what constitutes effective writing. Rather than linger over the differences in students’ source-use knowledge and practices or panic over how to “catch up” these students, we can and should complicate and even contest—among colleagues and with students—the very ideologies that hierarchize literacy practices and the students who use them.

I want to acknowledge, however, that when I claim that instructors should move beyond policing students, I do not mean to suggest that we invite a free-for-all when it comes to source use, documentation, or academic integrity. As indicated above, there are varying degrees of what constitutes plagiarism, and we ought not let slide the most egregious acts of plagiarism,
such as students purchasing papers or copying/pasting bodies of work with the intent to pass it off as their own. Upon leaving the writing center, the international graduate student I worked with that day went on to carefully revise his draft and to polish—over the next several months and after many more writing center consultations—his paraphrasing, summarizing, synthesizing, and citation skills to meet US academic expectations. And over those months, he was very clear about how grateful and excited he was to meet those standards. Thus, I recognize the need for instructors to use their expertise and to work with students to gain the knowledge and skills they seek. And I further understand the need for instructors to use their best judgment when blatant plagiarism is detected and to devise appropriate strategies for dealing with this and any type of plagiarism, including, when necessary, through establishing and ensuring due process in instructors’ respective departments, programs, and institutions.

What I hope to demonstrate here instead is the need to be increasingly thoughtful of and intentional about how we treat the less-so-obvious accounts of plagiarism (such as improper or missing citations, copied sections missing quotations, and ineffective paraphrase), as well as the need to draw on self-remediating traditions in basic writing to reframe our dispositions and practices regarding source use and plagiarism and to rework our understandings of effective academic writing. To be fair, the move to police may be one that results out of caring—caring about teaching students what they’ll need to know to succeed in and beyond academia, caring about hard work and students’ intellectual advancement, and caring about academic standards and values. In fact, my bet is that teachers in basic writing and beyond are doing their best to accomplish these goals, all while working within many constraints. But, as we’ve long realized in basic writing, learning the language, grammar, syntax, styles, and genres of academic discourse influences how and what students think, which among its positive assimilative effects can also be devastating to some students, especially students of color, immigrants, transmigrants, English language learners, and working-class students who may struggle to manage the push and pull of their different communities, languages, and identities. We must further see this issue as applicable in academic practices like citation and in the use and synthesis of sources. Following self-remediating traditions in basic writing, we must be ever mindful of our biases toward academic discourse and of the fact that our own buy in is socially and culturally constructed.

We in basic writing, and in academia writ large, share beliefs about the need to draw on sources, which sources are appropriate, how to integrate
sources into writing, how to best acknowledge and cite sources. While certain scholarly source-use beliefs and practices are upheld outside of academia (such as US copyright laws and the very real penalties for using ideas/content without permission), we cannot deny that our practices are based on ideologies developed historically in academic communities. Acknowledging source use as cultural invites us to interrogate what are too often uncritical preferences for academic source use.

As has been well documented and historicized, the conceptual development of “authorship” is a cultural invention wherein capitalistic ideologies serve as major forces in establishing the myths of autonomy and originality in Western contexts. Our understandings of what constitutes authorship are thus motivated by profit-driven enterprises, which we can readily connect to the advent of the printing press and later to conceptualizations of intellectual property and the forging of copyright laws. Roland Barthes is often called on in this scholarship for contesting the prospect of “originality” in authorship, defining a composition instead as “a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture” so much that “the writer can only imitate a gesture that is always anterior, never original” (146). Michel Foucault conceives Western views of the author as either heroic (since, historically and culturally, texts have been viewed as religiously transcended, sacred, creative, and original works) or dead (since the form and product of writing outlives the life of the author and since it is not evident to readers that the author is a historically, socially, and culturally shaped individual). Both Barthes and Foucault, therefore, critique normalized assumptions and practices that inaccurately position the author as original, autonomous, or detached from historical and cultural contexts. They help us see that authorship is necessarily about borrowing and that the terms we set for how to borrow are cultural.

Scholars like Thomas Inge criticize English and composition for holding on to such traditional definitions of authorship—mainly the narrow view that the author works alone and is considered what Jack Stillinger calls a “solitary genius”—despite our recognition that all texts are constructed based on various influences of social and political interactions, including those interactions amongst multiple individuals during composition and revision processes. Inge posits that our habit of viewing texts as unique works of individual authors (instead of collaborative pieces) falsely substantiates an idealistic view of how literary texts are constructed. Further, ideologies privileging an individual, creative “genius” writer are the basis of the fundamental definition of plagiarism. These problematic value systems—which
are antithetical to basic writing perspectives on collaborative learning and the literacy development of diverse writers—may also explain, according to Ron Scollon, the difficulty experienced or resistance seemingly displayed by some intercultural students since their understanding of source use may stem from different ideological bases (6).¹ Applied to the present issue, knowing why we as a culture place so much value on originality and autonomy may help us process those teaching moments when we feel shaken to learn, for instance, that a student sought help with editing. Indeed, upholding assumptions of authorship as a decontextualized, dehistoricized, and individualized creative exercise is counterproductive to all learning environments, including and especially in basic writing where students may come from the most vulnerable communities.

While we are not in the business of policing or converting students to adopt our ethics, we are professionally equipped to work with students to demystify the values that drive the intertextual moves we make in academic writing. I argue for the need to recognize and honor students’ different practices and goals, but I also recognize, of course, that many students wish to gain practice and expertise in academic discourse (at least to achieve success during their college careers, if not for other ambitions beyond). We as their basic writing teachers can and should work with them to gain strategies for better understanding what is expected in academic culture when it comes to source use and other rhetorical practices. But demystifying what is expected is not and should not be the same as falling into problematic and downright unjust binaries such as right/wrong and good/bad.

As teachers of student populations viewed under deficit frameworks, many of us are already accustomed to questioning and transforming our own visceral responses to students and their writing. And, certainly, teachers in basic writing and far beyond already take the time to consult with students in hopes of determining intention and teaching rather than penalizing students who do not use sources effectively in academic contexts. For instructors who investigate and get to know the student and circumstances, they may be less likely to penalize those who they believe to be ethical or trying their best. Nevertheless, being judges of ethics is unavoidably tricky. That’s because it also follows that some teachers may be more likely to penalize those students who they perceive as unethical or undeserving, or at least those who they have little evidence to believe otherwise. Clearly, we cannot be sure that some students are unethical or underserving, which is why it is worth emphasizing this as a perception and not a certainty. I appreciate Judy Angona’s cry for teachers to “be committed to judging [students’] actions
wisely” and to “wield the power we hold humbly, with unwavering respect for the lives and futures of those entrusted to our care” (209). And yet, I find unsettling even well-intentioned acknowledgements that “occasional lapses of judgment that can result in the submission of plagiarized work” can come from “even the most dedicated and honest student” who may “be overwhelmed by the heavy workloads and unremitting deadlines that define academic success” (209). On the one hand, this perspective reminds us to assume the best in students and to, accordingly, give them credit; on the other hand, it reifies a tendency to assume we are authorized and effective judges of who is “dedicated and honest,” and correspondingly, who is not. These are troubling assumptions, especially given what we know about basic writers being among the most vulnerable students, students too often deemed unfit for academia.

Given the politics of plagiarism, we would better honor students and attain more sound pedagogy if we were more mindful and proactive in our responses to instances where we sense ineffective and unethical source use. While approaches to better handling the teaching of plagiarism will necessarily vary to address the situated needs of localized contexts, there are three fundamental goals I wish to highlight here for basic writing instructors.

First, we should pause and question ourselves when our instincts tell us an essay feels inauthentic, and we should be mindful of moments when we jump on Google to search for phrases that feel more sophisticated than we assume the student is. Along the same lines, we may want to reconsider supporting corporations like Turnitin.com that profit from policing students and from archiving their essays (Howard “Should Educators”). Howard suggests these approaches lead to “replacing the student-teacher relationship with the criminal-police relationship” (“Forget about Policing Plagiarism,” n.p.), a shaky social dynamic I’m guessing most basic writing teachers wouldn’t consciously pursue.

Second, it is important that we resist hierarchizing ethics, remembering that students’ knowledge of and ethics surrounding source use are different, not inferior. I suspect this perspective (that students’ source-use knowledge and practices are different, not inferior) may disturb some academic professionals who may have grown frustrated by the most egregious of plagiarism offenses that many of us have experienced or heard about. I can hear some readers asking of me, “How can you say our knowledge on source use isn’t preferable to students, some of which know nothing about it, while others assume it’s acceptable to have their roommates write their papers!” I acknowledge this concern, and I recognize, of course, that we are experts and their teachers.
But I see more promise when teachers avoid assuming their understanding and treatment of writing are superior to students. So steeped in our professional expertise and academic culture, we forget that academic practices are not truths with a capital ‘T’. Relatedly, we should recall, as Lu reminded us long ago, that “students’ fear of acculturation and the accompanying sense of contradiction and ambiguity” are not to be seen as a deficits (32). Thus, we cannot overlook students’ anxiety—conscious and self-proclaimed, or not—regarding the ways they may transform in response to engaging and attaining academic discourse, as well as the ways they may react to policing practices.

Third, we need to develop teaching practices that examine and address academic and institutional ideals for effective academic source use but that avoid policing agendas that diminish our own teacherly ethos, pitting students against us and, correspondingly, pitting us against them. We can examine with students their and others’ affective responses to academic discourse in order for students to determine their own critical stances on the values of (and problems with) academic discourse. Rather than treating citation in the basic writing classroom as a procedural editing practice weeding out error, we could and should treat source use and citation as rhetorical moves within discursive styles, situated across specific communities and negotiated by both readers and writers.²

Classroom Applications: Borrowing from Authorship Studies

When addressing source use in my own composition classrooms, I have tried to incorporate some of what I’ve learned from authorship studies so that students also come to understand writing from sources as socially constructed rather than universal or commonsensical. Likewise, I have drawn on my experiences studying student source-use practices with a team of Citation Project researchers, and I attempt to apply this knowledge by working alongside students to also critically analyze theirs and others’ source uses. The narratives of pedagogical experiences that follow, while brief, aim to exemplify a handful of classroom approaches that begin to deconstruct with students the cultural and value-ridden aspects of academic source use.³

I have found that drawing on research in authorship studies, especially the theoretical perspectives summarized in the last section, can help open up classroom conversations about the cultural and political dynamics of academic source use. Indeed, one means by which we may work to develop a critical consciousness in our students about effective academic source use
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is to examine with students these very theories from authorship studies, guiding students to better understand just what it is we in academia expect, why, and even to consider whether we as teachers and students perceive these cultural logics as sensible and effective, or not. Such conversations also clarify why we expect students to work solitarily despite the undeniable values of collaboration, and they may invite us to rethink and problematize the demands for solitary learning in the first place.

I teach first-year composition courses at City College of New York, a senior CUNY campus celebrated for its astonishing diversity, and perhaps best known in composition studies for its contributions to basic writing made possible through the seminal research of Mina Shaughnessy and Marilyn Sternglass. It is typical in any given composition class at City College for most students to be of color and multilingual (with many using English as an additional language), and for there to be more than a dozen different native countries and languages represented among students. The twenty-eight filled desks barely fit within most classrooms. Although the space constraints may not be conducive to learning, most students—who in their late teens and early twenties are already familiar with the consequences of linguistic and racial hierarchies—are well equipped for critical investigations into academic norms and language ideologies. As such, I treat the politics of language as a topic of inquiry in my composition classes, assigning readings and assignments that not only aim to help students gain the academic writing skills expected in first-year composition but to also begin to “recognize the role of language attitudes and standards in empowering, oppressing, and hierarchizing languages and their users” (Watson and Shapiro).

As part of this curriculum—during their second major writing assignment, a researched argument essay—I engage students in examining the cultural politics of effective source use in academic contexts. To start, I pose to students an array of questions about source-use practices, many of which can be addressed based on students’ experiences and knowledges of US history, pop culture, and copyright. The purpose of the questions is to invite students to critically understand and even begin to challenge what they, like many of their teachers past and present, may have taken for granted as commonsense or incontestably sanctioned. For instance, in my spring 2017 composition course at City College, I posed the following questions:

1. Why do writers use sources? Why do writers cite sources?
2. Where do we more commonly see source use? What does it look like?
3. What do we know about how source use varies across cultures and other contexts?

4. Why do we value sources and source use so much in academia?

5. What constitutes plagiarism? What are the different “kinds” or “degrees” of plagiarism?

6. Why do we treat and punish plagiarism the ways that we do?

7. What might be the relationship between our treatment of plagiarism in academia and long-held Western values that suggest language can be owned and therefore stolen?

8. What other Western cultural values do we see in our source-use practices? For instance, why might we focus on distinguishing our voice from others? What does an emphasis on individualism suggest about our values?

While I admit these conversations can take a bit of warming up, students in my 2017 course were noticeably quiet. They were a chatty group and even though we’d spent the last several weeks investigating the problems with standard language ideology and with treating academic writing as a normalized communicative construct, they hesitated to place academic source use under these same frameworks. Indeed, as I came to realize, though to no big surprise, they were expecting me to lecture on how serious of an offense it is to plagiarize, rather than for to talk about, for instance, how thought-provoking it is that in this culture we think we can own language. After some prodding with this very notion—that we think we can own language—students expressed agreement that this belief is indeed sort of silly.

With the ice broken, students had much more to say. They brought up examples from pop culture, such as the absurdity of Paris Hilton trying to copyright the phrase, “That’s hot.” We then talked about the politics of publication and how odd it is that so many citizens in our country don’t have access to the same printed knowledge that we do as members of higher education institutions, one student questioning, “How come my mom can’t access what I can through the CCNY library?” Two students shared past instances where they had felt they were trying their best but a teacher still assumed, without solid evidence, that they had cheated. Most admitted not feeling confident that they’ll ever become expert at knowing how to cite and document sources in their bibliographies, and don’t really understand why they get into so much trouble for putting commas in the wrong places when quoting. In past semesters, students who grew up in other cultures shared their confusion over quotations and why we in the West dismiss the value of memorizing content in favor of inventing new ideas, and why we expect
undergraduates to invent new ideas in the first place when they’re here to learn, examples which I added to the discussion. We went on to joke about the obsessiveness of formatting styles in academic culture, while acknowledging the benefit of settling on certain conventions when publishing work. We drew connections between capitalistic economies and the notion that language can make profits, and thus, be considered stolen when borrowed without attributing as expected. We recognized that academia is built on textual knowledge and so, in many ways, texts serve as our currency. We began to see how such market-driven notions translate into ethical expectations, so-called “honor codes,” and individualist assessment in higher education. And we also talked about the cognitive value of “inventing” even while still soaking in new knowledge.

We talked about these examples, and many more, that suggest source use as cultural and political. And some students, I hope, found comfort in realizing there’s a whole lot of confusion over what constitutes plagiarism and effective academic source use. Conversations like this give students and me an opportunity to dig up together some of the oft-invisible cultural values inherent in our source uses. I can’t claim that I get through all of the above questions all the time, nor to ever feeling satisfied that these issues are addressed with students as thoroughly as I’d like. Nevertheless, my larger pedagogical aim seems to get accomplished in that I start inviting students to shift from viewing plagiarism and source use dogmatically, toward understanding plagiarism and source use as constructed (and, thus, worthy of our critical deconstruction). These large group discussions, it seems to me, heighten critical awareness, soften the blow of policy, and position me on their side, precisely where I ought to be.

I also find that there are both challenges and benefits to bringing up what can be emotionally charged discussions on source use. Our conversation in the 2017 course got particularly heated when we reflected on the high-stakes practice of teachers policing students’ source use and ethics. After all, as I emphasized herein and with students that day, assumptions about students’ ethics are inextricably tied to students’ bodies and identities; meanwhile, the consequences of plagiarism charges can have lasting material effects on students. We discussed and then students wrote about for homework the case of Tiffany C. Martínez, an undergraduate student at Suffolk University, who made headlines in academic circles when she exposed being confronted before her peers by an English professor who considered some of the language appearing in her essay to be “too academic” and judged as “not [her] language” (Zamudio-Suaréz). Through analysis of this
public example, some students argued that suspicion of students’ intentions and ownership of language is driven by communicative hierarchies, while other students emphasized that these biases are fueled, consciously or not, by racist assumptions.

While research on the intersections of race and plagiarism have not yet surfaced in academic circles (to my knowledge), when given the opportunity to interrogate the issue, students readily recognized that racism is a real player in the political project of plagiarism. Students concluded that cases like Martínez’s provide disconcerting evidence that judgments about students’ ownership of written language may at times be based on their identities and on their spoken language, which, as I helped to contextualize, goes against what research shows about the cognitive and social abilities of language users who code-switch across languages and dialects. The case of Martínez serves as a useful reminder to students and teachers alike that we cannot assume, based on what someone looks like or sounds like, what their writing will look like and sound like. And we can’t make assumptions about the kind of person they are or what they care about. As these sorts of judgments are made unconsciously, we must be diligent about reflecting on our own day-to-day assumptions about and responses to plagiarism and authorship.

By sharing insights from authorship studies with students, and by shaping class discussion around those issues, my aim is to inform students about the larger contexts and purposes of source-use practices, and to critically consider the extent to which source-use practices are treated for what they are: cultural and ethical belief systems and procedures. If we teachers approach source-use practices dialogically—acknowledging them as cultural, political, and value-ridden moves—we can build better relationships with students by demystifying ideological expectations embedded in academic discourse rather than attempting to convert them to our ideological systems or, worse, police and penalize them for their differences or lack of knowledge. Instead of focusing on classroom procedures such as lecturing about plagiarism, using scare tactics, and assigning exercises or quizzes to train students how to avoid plagiarism, I believe our labors are better spent working with students to deconstruct the value systems in academia many of us see as common sense but forget are actually cultural and hegemonic constructions.

**Classroom Applications: Borrowing from the Citation Project**

My next set of brief pedagogical examples stems from my efforts to apply to my teaching insights from the Citation Project (hereafter, CP), a
multi-institution empirical study of students’ source-use practices. Like my immersion in authorship studies, my experience with the CP has helped shape how I treat source use when I teach composition. Using citation content analysis, CP research helps reveal the extent to which students are engaging with sources in ways deemed effective in academia. The CP originated out of Syracuse University in 2008 through a single-institution pilot study that was presented in Howard, Tanya K. Rodrigue, and Tricia Serviss’ “Writing from Sources, Writing from Sentences.” Later research conducted through the CP involved dozens of college composition teacher-researchers from across 16 US higher education institutions who collectively studied 174 college student research papers in order to code, among some other things, whether students were summarizing, paraphrasing, patchwriting, or copying with and without quotations (“The Citation Project”).

I participated in the CP from 2009 to 2014 and had the privilege of gaining invaluable insights from CP Principle Researchers Sandra Jamieson and Rebecca Moore Howard, the larger team of researchers working across the nation, as well as the rigorous research methodology the CP utilized. After extensive training and the initial collection and selection processes of source-based student essays, CP researchers like myself work to locate and closely review all sources cited in a given essay’s works cited or bibliography page, systematically isolate the source uses within the body of the student essay, compare the actual source with the student’s source use, analyze and code the ways in which students are borrowing from their sources, and then norm results with a fellow CP researcher. Thus, all 174 student essays were coded by at least two trained researchers who, for every coded instance within a given paper, reveal their results to their CP colleague and work to reconcile any differences. In cases where differences can’t be resolved, a third and usually senior CP researcher joins the coding and reconciliation process.

In my classrooms, I tell students about the CP and share some of its findings. Two examples of compelling CP discoveries I often disclose include the finding that ~70% of students’ citations come from the first two pages of their sources (“Unraveling”), and that students’ engagement with sources is often limited to the sentence level (and thus instances of summary in research writing are rare, while the summaries that do emerge are regularly incomplete or inaccurate) (Howard, Rodrigue, and Serviss). I get a laugh every time I share with students that I’m quite aware that 70% of the time they may be just scanning the first two pages of their sources to grab a quote and move on. We talk about how this habit may be further indicative of how, often, too little time is put into reading sources thoroughly and, then, how
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that translates into them being less prepared to write accurate and comprehensive summaries of their texts.

Some of the more fruitful discussions I have with students, however, revolve around the concept of patchwriting. Patchwriting, as defined by Howard in 1999, is the “copying from a source text and then deleting some words, altering grammatical structures, or plugging in one-for-one substitutes” (“New Abolitionism” 89). Building from this definition, the CP explains that “Patchwriting involves restating a phrase, clause, or one or more sentences while staying close to the language or syntax of the source” (“Research Methods”). Howard suggests that rather than treating patchwriting as we do other forms and degrees of plagiarism, we should understand it as “a move toward membership in a discourse community” (Standing 7) and, thus, evidence of students learning and practicing paraphrase and other rhetorical moves expected in academic writing. Understanding patchwriting as a learning strategy and as evidence of a novice attempting to gain entrance within a new community of writers, rather than simply an act of plagiarism, certainly complicates cases where students are penalized for unintentionally borrowing too much form sources, as was the case with the international graduate student I referenced earlier.

When my students and I discussed patchwriting in my 2017 composition course, many admitted to being unaware that teachers may consider patchwriting plagiarism, and some expressed shock given their realization that they were explicitly taught by former teachers to patchwrite, though their teachers called it paraphrase. Thus, they assumed paraphrase consisted of “Restating a phrase, clause, or one or more sentences” even if their sentences remained “close to the language or syntax of the source” (“Research Methods”). To sharpen their ability to distinguish between paraphrase and patchwriting, we analyzed examples of patchwriting, and students came to know that paraphrase is indeed what they should be striving to produce. I reasoned with students that paraphrasing will enhance their reading comprehension and offer them more practice with varying their sentence structures. We thus got to talking about syntax, too, and whether we agreed that imitating syntax constitutes plagiarism, especially if the content is different and if our aim is to practice the kinds of syntactical constructions found in academic writing.5

During this discussion of patchwriting, as is typically the case for this lesson, I also took a moment to share with students some of the reflections co-researchers and I expressed while participating in the CP. As teacher-researchers we regularly found ourselves astounded when coding papers
Missy Watson

to observe patchwriting in a majority of student writing samples. For us, this served as support for Howard’s theory that patchwriting is indeed a way in which students learn to paraphrase and begin engaging in academic discourse. After all, we wouldn’t assume that if most students are patchwriting, most must be cheaters; rather, we should interpret this as evidence that patchwriting, as part of learning, is a move we may come to expect from writers new to the communities for which they are writing. I encouraged students to be at peace if they’ve been patchwriting up to this point. After all, I reminded them, it’s a learning strategy. But I acknowledged that paraphrase is far more highly valued in academic writing than patchwriting and that, unfortunately, teachers and institutions alike may still be inclined to penalize or even expel students for patchwriting offenses.

I should also note here that the regularity of patchwriting in student papers led us CP researchers to realize that had we not engaged in such close analysis of students’ citations, we would have probably overlooked a majority of these instances as teachers assessing these papers. Importantly, we as CP researchers did not conclude from this finding that we must police more often when we grade in order to uncover all the many instances of patchwriting we now know are out there; instead, we further recognized just how problematic it is, period, when we police and then penalize those “spottable” instances of patchwriting. This is because, as we can imagine, the students with the most easily detectable patchwriting occurrences may very well be those who find themselves in basic writing classrooms—students who have had less practice with the English language and, more specifically, with the variety of standardized English expected in their academic papers. More specifically, for instance, we as teachers may be able to more easily spot patchwriting in papers written by students who use English as an additional language in comparison to native English speakers who may have more exposure to and practice with English and academic discourse. But that doesn’t mean that native English speakers who appear to already match even our highest expectations for academic writing aren’t patchwriting; they just may integrate their patchwriting in more seamless and less obvious ways, at least to the naked eye. This means our teacherly judgments in those moments where we detect plagiarism and patchwriting, as discussed earlier, may be incredibly discriminatory. Such a finding calls for challenging instinctive moves to police, especially when there may be a tendency to police certain students, usually those already disadvantaged, over others.

When talking about these and other findings afforded by the CP, my aim is to incite dialog with students about plagiarism and source use, topics
that too many have only been introduced to through scare tactics or drilling. I want students to know that source-use practices are hard—that most writers are (or at some point were) struggling to engage in academic writing and to integrate sources effectively. I openly tell them I vividly recall patchwriting my way to learning academic discourse. I also tell them that I’ve hired editors to review my writing in the past. We discuss the politics of academics’ use of editors being perceived differently than when students have their roommates edit their English papers. I welcome them to join me in critical discussions about just how problematic it is that we demonize and penalize patchwriting and collaboration, including getting help with editing. And these concessions, I’ve found, help students and me extend our collective understanding of source-use practices, and the values we have about them, as inherently cultural and political. I hope with these conversations, students begin to see that we’re on the same side, that I’m not determined to police them, that instead I wish to help them better understand what may be expected when they participate in academic discourse, and why.

I also spend time teaching students how to study their own source-use practices in ways similar to how researchers for the CP coded citation practices. In my 2017 course, like in semesters before and after, I began by defining and exemplifying with students different “moves” writers use to integrate sources, including summarizing, paraphrasing, patchwriting, quoting, and copying (see Appendix A for the handout I distribute). Once students grasped our shared definitions and had a more critical understanding of the values and politics attached to varying source uses, I tasked them with analyzing and coding their own source integration. Students brought in a full draft of a source-heavy essay and full copies of all their sources cited. Their mini self-study began with these instructions: “The goal of this workshop is for you to take a closer look at what you do when integrating sources into your writing. Do you primarily quote? Do you summarize? Do you use quotation marks when you borrow exact passages from texts? Do you patchwrite?” Students thus combed through their papers to identify and determine (in each instance a source was used) whether they were summarizing, paraphrasing, patchwriting, quoting, or copying (see Appendix B for the handout used to guide students through this exercise). Students further coded each source use to indicate the page from the source, just as we did as researchers in the CP, in order to see whether they’re relying on only the first and second pages. Again, as mentioned, all of these definitions and practices are taken directly from the CP methodology, and so, I tell students, “this assignment is about you acting as a researcher of your own writing.”
Once they had studied their source uses and shared findings with a classmate, I asked students to reflect on and write about their experience and what observations they made, noting especially their plans for revision given whatever patterns in their source use they uncovered. More specifically, I wrote up on the board, “Might you need to include more summary? Rewrite any passages so that they’re a stronger paraphrase and not patchwriting? Format the passage so that it’s a quote and not a copy? Reread any texts to determine the main argument or to draw on passages from later pages?”

Next, the highlight of this exercise, in my view, was the moment after students studied their source uses and we all came together to discuss findings. I asked students how many of them made each “move,” and I jotted down our results on the board. It may come as no surprise that a majority of source uses students cited were quotes, while patchwriting came in second. These results are typical across semesters. We then discussed again why we might want to summarize sources before zooming in with a quote or paraphrase, why we strive to move from patchwriting to paraphrase, and indeed, why we might vary our moves so that we’re not just quoting again and again. While I found there were far fewer instances of copying without quotations that students found in their papers, I still made a point to introduce that strategy as one frowned upon and considered plagiarism in academic discourse.

I didn’t collect these worksheets, signaling again to students that I’m not interested in policing their current approaches. But I found that after this set of lessons the issue of academic source use came up later in both private and public conversations with students. For instance, one student whom I’ll call Lilly approached me after class the day of our Citation Project workshop. She confided that she coded a large majority of her source uses as patchwriting, and she expressed her surprise in realizing she had been patchwriting for years with much success. I recall Lilly saying, “But I’m an honors student,” as if such status made her patchwriting practices all the more sinful, or, rather, as if she no longer truly deserved or earned the status she held. I reminded her that patchwriting is normal and that even professors like myself engaged in patchwriting in our pursuit to master academic discourse. I reassured her that her ability to recognize her source-use practices and her willingness to share her realizations were strengths. Lilly followed up on the issue the following class to make sure I knew, perhaps out of a lingering concern over the ethics and consequences of plagiarism, that she adjusted all of her patchwriting instances in her research paper to be paraphrases instead.
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As these instructional narratives aim to illustrate, we can engage students in analyzing academic source use to discover what intertextual practices academics do, why (historically and culturally) they do it, and whether we as teachers and students wish to problematize and contest such values and practices. We can further help students pay more attention to their own source-use practices, providing useful context and terminology to help them gain strategies more highly valued in academic contexts. Such pedagogical approaches move us beyond policing plagiarism, and instead invite us to investigate and critically question with students the discursive and ideological precedent for academic source-use conventions.

Anecdotally speaking, students from my classes in multiple institutional settings have responded favorably to these lessons. Indeed, many welcome the opportunity to deconstruct and criticize normalized practices in and beyond academia. Some have made clear how much the Citation Project findings and practices motivated them to pay more attention to their own patchwriting and to put more effort into improving their paraphrasing practices. And every semester—during open discussions where students suggest what I should keep or change the next time I teach the course—I have a few students who cite this lesson as the most meaningful of the term. When assessing students’ source-driven writing, I notice fewer quote-heavy research papers and more instances of summary and of effective paraphrase.

Through the co-inquiry and self-assessment that students experience through these lessons, I believe they may gain a fuller understanding of where they are as writers when it comes to source integration, what sorts of moves they may strive for to better match their writing to expectations in academic discourse, and how they might get there. And they also develop more critical perspectives on citation as a cultural practice, which I see as affording students invaluable metacognitive benefits. Just as metalinguistic awareness aids in the learning of new languages and potentially transferring knowledge across contexts (Ellis; Downs; Long; Matsuda; Schmidt), I believe that building meta-awareness about source use—that is, challenging students to reflect on their own writerly habits and to objectify source use as a practice that they have been socially constructed to understand in culturally situated ways—will enhance students’ knowledge of, and skills with, composing source-based writing.
Conclusion

By drawing on authorship studies and inviting basic writing students to engage in Citation Project methods to analyze their own source-use practices, we can move beyond lecturing about plagiarism, encouraging uncritical memorization of citation rules, or harping on the consequences of plagiarism. We can instead treat source use in Westernized academic contexts as a topic of inquiry, in and of itself.6

The critical approaches to teaching academic source use that I advocate for here can be aligned to what Jane Hindman deemed in 1999 as the process of “inventing academic discourse” whereby students and faculty work collaboratively to assess and authorize knowledge-making practices and to “make strange” what is typically assumed by insiders as “natural” in academic discourse. As Hindman explained, “Crucial to this invention process is students’ participation, for it empowers not just their critical consciousness but ours, destabilizes not just their inscription but our reinscription in the academy’s language and methods” (30). Inviting and acknowledging students’ perspectives and discursive practices, including source-use practices, in the words of Hindman, would “require us to recognize the ideology informing our own commonplace knowledge and language” and would “surely de-center our insider vision” (30). Developing critical consciousness in us and our students through contextualizing and analyzing of source use, I believe, could be an additional means by which instructors adopting critical pedagogies in the basic writing classroom can work to “de-center our insider vision.” Basic writing is particularly poised for such an approach, and basic writers have the most to gain from disrupting the still too-often overlooked hegemony of academic discourse.

When we can treat the expectations for authoring and the “moves” for incorporating sources into our writing as value-ridden cultural practices at their core, we can help students to better understand, deconstruct, and practice these moves with heightened metacognitive and critical awareness. Ultimately, I believe that with careful, reflective, and collective efforts, we might all agree to stop policing students and instead use our labors to design better pedagogical approaches, as Howard encouraged us to do so long ago.

Acknowledgments

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Howard, whose research and mentorship has been instrumental to my approaches to researching and teaching students about plagiarism. I wish to also express my appreciation to Hope Parisi for her kindness, encouragement, and vital feedback during the review process.

Notes

1. See Peter Jaszi and Martha Woodmansee for another useful historicization of copyright as tied to romantic notions of author. See also Bloch, Donahue, and Pennycook for overviews on how the notion of plagiarism emerges in Western thinking and varies across cultural contexts.

2. Influencing my approach is M. J. Braun and Sarah Prineas’ call to help students understand why academics place so much value on giving credit to the words and ideas of another, as well as Kathryn Valentine’s move to consider plagiarism as a literacy practice and a discursive construction (89).

3. Amy Robillard and Kelly Ritter have designed entire courses and assignments around topics in authorship studies whereby they investigate with students the cultural work and political layers informing the textual practice of plagiarism (Robillard “Situating Plagiarism”) and the rhetorics of online paper mills (Ritter). Margaret Price also offers a useful classroom practice: she tasks students in her classes with co-composing course policies on plagiarism as a way to highlight the issue as being more complex and to make discussions more meaningful to students. These scholars offer noteworthy models to borrow from in our own basic writing classrooms.

4. In the past, I have supplemented these discussions with readings. I have found the excerpt from Pennycook’s “Borrowing Others’ Words: Text, Ownership, Memory, and Plagiarism,” titled, “The Originality Myth: From Divine to Discursive Ventriloquy” to be especially helpful in facilitating discussions around the historical and ideological reasons for contemporary source-use practices, beliefs, and policies, as well as David Finkelstein’s “History of the Book, Authorship, Book Design, and Publishing.”

5. While I haven’t used it yet, I’m betting Sarah R. Wakefield’s “Instructional Note: Using Music Sampling to Teach Research Skills” would be a great way to explore borrowing, remixing, and imitation. Wakefield teaches the “philosophy of citation” by drawing on the music of Sean
(P-Diddy) Combs who is known for his sampling, appropriation, and imitation of previous hit songs from other artists.

6. Like any pedagogical approach, there are challenges and limitations worth considering here. Inserting new approaches requires additional labor from the instructor, often without the financial support of their institutions. Instructors may also struggle to find time in an already-stretched curriculum. I should emphasize, then, that a broad-strokes discussion of Western authorship can be accomplished surprisingly quickly, as can the activity whereby students study their own source use in a given paper. When under time constraints, I’ve dedicated just a single class period, which can still spark critical discussions and practices. Lastly, for those concerned about students not having access to printing, teachers can ask students to have all documents accessible on their phones or laptops. Alternatively, the class might meet in a computer lab for the Citation Project part of the lesson since students won’t have to print and since they can use the search function to locate quotes in their source files.

Works Cited


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*The Citation Project: Preventing Plagiarism, Teaching Writing*. citationproject.net.


HANDOUT: “MOVES” WRITERS MAKE WHEN USING SOURCES

Adapted from citationproject.net

The following definitions were written by Sandra Jamieson and Rebecca Moore Howard of the Citation Project. You’ll be using them to analyze your own source uses in your Research Paper.

**Summarizing:** Restating and compressing the main points of an entire text or at least three or more consecutive sentences in the text, reducing the summarized passage by at least 50% and using 20% or less of the language from that passage.

**Paraphrasing:** Restating a phrase, clause, or one or two sentences while using no more than 20% of the language of the source.

**Patchwriting:** Restating a phrase, clause, or one or more sentences while staying close to the language or syntax of the source.

**Quoting:** A passage in a student text that is (a) copied exactly and (b) marked as quotation, either by using quotation marks or by block indenting. If, however, words have been changed or rearranged or if pieces of the passage have been deleted or additional words added, the passage should be marked as patchwriting, not quotation.

**Copying:** A passage in a student text that is (a) copied exactly and (b) not marked as quotation. If, however, words have been changed or rearranged or if pieces of the passage have been deleted or additional words added, the passage should be marked as patchwriting, not quotation.
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Appendix B

WORKSHEET: SOURCE-USE WORKSHOP

The goal of this workshop is for you to take a closer look at what you do when integrating sources into your writing. Do you primarily quote? Do you summarize? Do you use quotation marks when you borrow exact passages from texts? Do you patchwrite? In a way, this assignment is about you acting as a researcher of your own writing. Ideally, you’ll gain some meta-awareness about academic writing and about you as a writer.

Step 1: Take out your draft. Locate your first source use and identify where it begins and where it ends. Draw a square around the entire source use. Mark in your margins “#1”. Note: If you have a full sentence of your own interpretations and claims, this should be considered a break from the source use (even if the discussion is related).

Step 2: Read through your Box #1 source use. Then, go back to the actual source (in print or otherwise) that you referenced in Box #1. Locate the exact place/passage in your text where you are borrowing information. Compare the text’s passage with your Box #1 and try to decipher whether you are summarizing, paraphrasing, patchwriting, quoting, or copying. If you’re still confused about patchwriting, see the example at http://awelu.srv.lu.se/academic-integrity/plagiarism/different-kinds-of-plagiarism/patchwriting. If you’re undecided between paraphrase and patchwriting, you may need to compare closely the language and syntax in the passage from the text with your language and syntax in Box #1. Once you’ve decided on which move(s) you’re making (and there can be more than one), mark this/these in your margins (i.e., if you’re quoting, write “quoting” in the margins). Then, mark your results in the table below.

Step 3: Repeat Steps 1 and 2 for the next 5-7 source uses (for a total of 6-8).

Step 4: Share your process and findings with a classmate. If you found that you were summarizing, paraphrasing, or patchwriting, consult with your peer to see if s/he agrees with your conclusions.
**Step 5:** Based on your findings and your discussion with your classmate, reflect on any patterns you observe and write down any notes you have for revisions you need to make. Do you need to include more summary? Do you need to rewrite any passages so that they’re a stronger paraphrase and not patchwriting? Do you need to format the passage so that it’s a quote and not a copy? Do you need to reread any texts to determine the main argument or to draw on passages from later pages?

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