INFORMATION ETHICS & ACADEMIC INTEGRITY
Intellectual honesty is the foundation of an academic community. As a student at Weber State University, you are responsible for using the materials you collect and incorporate in your assignments and papers in an ethical manner. This means that you must:

- respect the rights of authors by crediting original sources for all information you use
- think critically about quality
- do your own research and writing

Incorporating the work of others is perfectly acceptable in academic writing, but you have a responsibility to let your audience know when you are using someone else’s ideas and credit those sources appropriately.

A number of concepts related to academic integrity will be examined in this module, including: cheating, plagiarism, ethical group work, falsification/misrepresentation, intellectual property rights (copyright infringement and piracy), public domain, and fair use.

**ETHICAL GROUP WORK**

In many courses, you will work with others on group projects. For these types of assignments, part of your grade may be based on joint efforts, and part may be based on your own work. To avoid confusion and possible violations of academic integrity, you must clearly understand what work must be done independently and what work may be done collaboratively.

The standards for collaboration vary from course to course. Some professors permit students to work on case studies or turn in assignments together, while others allow students to discuss the cases but require them to write up their own answers. Some prohibit any collaboration at all on assignments. In a computer science course, students may be encouraged to think through various programming strategies together but are prohibited from sharing the actual code with each other.

In an ideal situation, your professor will make explicit his or her expectations for your academic work in the syllabus or in the assignment directions. If the expectations and rules are unstated or unclear to you, ask your professor.
CHEATING, FALSIFICATION/MISREPRESENTATION

There are many types of cheating, the penalties for which range from failing a test or assignment, to receiving an E for the class, to expulsion from the university. Here are a few examples of cheating:

- Copying homework, a test, or an assignment from another student
- Plagiarizing by downloading information or entire papers from the Internet
- Cell phone cheating by text-messaging answers to other students, taking a picture of the test and e-mailing it to another student, or downloading information from the Internet
- Getting test questions, answers, or a paper from a student in a previous period or school year
- Bringing a permitted graphing calculator into a test loaded with answer material which was previously input into the computer portion of the calculator
- Instant Messaging while completing homework to divide the work amongst several classmates

Falsification/misrepresentation is giving information that is false in some way. Incorrect citing of research sources is a common example of accidental falsification. Usually it happens by mistake or because someone’s in a hurry. Either way, it’s still considered academic dishonesty. Here are a few examples:

- You need at least one book and one article for your paper. You can’t find a book that looks good, so you make up a title and cite it in your reference list. Your instructor verifies your citations and fails you for the assignment.
- You are doing an experiment and your results don’t turn out the way you thought they would so you make up results that support the hypothesis.
- You are doing an experiment but don’t have time to get the results so you ask a classmate who did a similar experiment if you can use their results.
- You think a quote came from one source but it really came from another and you accidentally cite it wrong.
- You combine perfectly cited sources with copied text from sources that you don’t cite.
- You make up a quote by an author that sounds like it could have come from the author of a source because it better supports your thesis.
- You accidentally misinterpret the argument of a source and cite that argument as what the author said.

So, how do you avoid cheating? The simple answer is just don’t do it. The more complex answer is to try to avoid situations that make cheating seem like a good idea. Take care of yourself and don’t overcommit. Good people who cheat do so because they are tired, overworked, and stressed out. If you need help, ask for it before you get to the point where cheating seems like a good idea.
Intellectual property rights are the rights of a creator to control the works he or she has created. This includes, but is not limited to, books, articles, music, software, paintings, games, plays, photographs, and movies. According to U.S. law, once a work is created, it is copyrighted. The creator of the work has the right to determine how his/her work may be used, with one exception; this exception is known as fair use.

**FAIR USE**

Fair use is a limitation on the copyright holder’s rights. It is the fair use doctrine that allows you to quote information, use pictures, etc. in research papers and presentations. So what’s okay under fair use? Usually, you may do the following for research papers, class presentations, and art projects:

- Quote brief passages from a book, article or website if you give proper credit
- Copy a map or chart into a research paper if you give proper credit
- Use a small snip of music if you give proper credit
- Use an image if you give proper credit
- Use downloads and software that are explicitly labeled by the creator as free to use.
- Make copies for your own use (e.g., ripping music from legally purchased CDs or music downloads to another format such as MP3s, burning a “mix” CD from music that you legally own, or printing/downloading/photocopying a journal article for your own use.)

And what’s NOT okay under fair use?

- Sharing copyrighted files (unless you have explicit permission, preferably written and signed, from the owner of the material)
- Posting copyrighted material on a website without permission
- Selling (most commercial uses of copyrighted material require special licenses from the copyright owner)

Music piracy or other copyright infringement is illegal. In an academic setting, it’s also considered unethical. If you choose to engage in this activity, be prepared to deal with any consequences. While most lawsuits involve major players like published authors or radio stations, the Recording Industry Association of America and other groups have been pursuing lawsuits against private individuals, especially college students. For example:

- A Boston University student was ordered to pay $675,000 for illegally downloading and sharing 30 songs (from Information Week: [http://www.informationweek.com/applications/piracy-verdict-gets-student-fined-$675000/d/d-id/1081892?](http://www.informationweek.com/applications/piracy-verdict-gets-student-fined-$675000/d/d-id/1081892?)).
• A Minnesota woman was fined $1.9 million for illegally downloading 24 songs (from CNN: http://www.cnn.com/2009/CRIME/06/18/minnesota.music.download.fine/index.html).

In general, the more contained the use of the information (e.g., for one class) and the more educational the purpose, the more likely something is to be allowed under fair use. Use for commercial or strictly entertainment purposes is rarely allowable under the fair use doctrine.

Unethical use of information extends beyond just music. For example:

• Many Instagram users are finding their images on others’ sites: http://www.theguardian.com/technology/us-news-blog/2013/feb/05/instagram-users-fightback-stolen-photos

• Shepard Fairey’s Obama poster controversy, in which the famous “Hope” poster of Obama was found to be based on an AP photo taken several years earlier: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barack_Obama_%22Hope%22_poster

• YouTube videos posted by gamers are coming under scrutiny for copyright violations: http://www.wired.com/2015/03/nintendo-youtube-creators/?mbid=social_fb

PUBLIC DOMAIN

Public domain means the work is no longer protected by copyright, but you must give credit for public domain works or you are guilty of plagiarism. Examples of materials in the public domain include:

• Most federal publications (e.g., Congressional reports, Supreme Court decisions).
• Works where the copyright has expired. This one is tricky because the law keeps changing and it’s different in the U.S. from other countries. In the U.S., this includes all works published or recorded before January 1, 1923 and some works published between 1924-1964. While a work like Tom Sawyer may be in the public domain, a specific version of the work may still be copyrighted or the introduction and the notes may be copyrighted.
• Things NOT protected under copyright. This includes short phrases (e.g., “Make my day” from the movie Dirty Harry) and facts, theories and ideas (someone’s interpretation or writings about facts, theories and ideas IS copyrighted).
• Works where the author has explicitly declared that the work is in the public domain (e.g., some free music downloads, free software).
Plagiarism is using someone else’s work without giving credit. It can happen either on purpose or accidentally. Either way, it’s considered academic dishonesty. Examples of plagiarism include using others’ ideas, thoughts, or conversation in your own paper without citing them; paraphrasing or summarizing other people’s work without citing it; copying images or text from the Web without proper acknowledgement; or borrowing facts or statistics that are not common knowledge without proper acknowledgement.

If you get caught plagiarizing at a university, the penalties range from losing points on a question to expulsion. In most instances, a student gets a failing grade on the plagiarized assignment. However, an instructor can legitimately fail a student for the entire course for one instance of plagiarism.

You might be wondering, do I have to cite everything I write? The answer is no. Sometimes, you’ll use information from other sources to support your argument, and you need to cite those sources. But, as a general rule, if a fact or piece of information is generally known and accepted (for example, that Salt Lake City is the capital of Utah, or that Ronald Reagan was an actor before he became president of the United States) you do not need to cite the source. This is called common knowledge.

Deciding which facts or pieces of information require citation and which do not is not always easy. The concept of common knowledge can never be assumed; what is commonly known will vary widely for different audiences. Keep in mind that your professor is the primary audience for your work. If you are uncertain about whether to cite, ASK. If you do not have that opportunity, use the general rule of when in doubt, cite.

**TYPES OF PLAGIARISM**

There are several different types of plagiarism.

1. **Direct plagiarism** is the most obvious. This is copying something word for word without using quotation marks or citing the author. This is considered the most serious type.
2. **Accidental/unintentional plagiarism** is the most common type and happens when students don’t intend to plagiarize, but fail to cite sources correctly or copy too much of the source’s original wording while trying to paraphrase or summarize the passage. Even when you put something in your own words, you must still cite the original source! Here’s the ORIGINAL text from page 927 of an article called “Can students really multitask? An experimental study of instant messaging while reading” that was published in volume 54 of *Computers & Education*:

Students often “multitask” with electronic media while doing schoolwork. We examined the effects of one form of media often used in such multitasking, instant messaging (IM). We predicted that students who engaged in IMing while reading a typical academic psychology passage online would take longer to read the passage and would perform more poorly on a test of comprehension of the passage. Participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions (IM before reading, IM during reading, or no IM). We found that students took significantly longer to read the passage when they IMed during reading (not including time taken to IM) than in other conditions. However, test performance did not differ by condition. Students who are managing busy lives may think they are accomplishing more by multitasking, but our findings suggest they will actually need more time to achieve the same level of performance on an academic task.

Here is an example of an unacceptable paraphrase that is so close to the original source it could be considered direct plagiarism. In this case, the student has only changed around a few words and failed to cite the original source:

> College students will sometimes multitask with electronic media while doing schoolwork. Effects of one form of media often used in such multitasking, instant messaging (IM), were examined. It was predicted that students who IMed while reading a typical academic passage would take longer to read it and would perform more poorly on a test of the passage. Participants were randomly assigned to one of three groups: IM before reading, IM during reading, or no IM. Students took much longer to read the passage when they IMed during reading than in the other groups. Students think they can do more by multitasking, but they will need more time to achieve the same level of performance on an academic task.

The paragraph above is also problematic because some of the words the student did change do not convey the specific meaning of the original. For example, the original text did not specify college students and was also focused on a specific type of passage (“a typical academic psychology passage online”). The author of the paragraph described the passage as a “typical academic passage,” which could refer to a print source. Here’s another unacceptable example. Once again, the student writing this passage uses too much of the original wording. In addition, he did not cite the original study.
Students will sometimes IM while doing schoolwork, and will take longer to read a typical academic passage and perform more poorly on tests on that passage. Students who are managing busy lives may think they are accomplishing more by multitasking, they will actually need more time to achieve the same level of performance on an academic task than they would without IMing.

In the unacceptable example above, the student used too much of the original wording. In addition, he did not cite the original study.

3. **Self-plagiarism** is reusing your own work or modifying something you have already written. Using the entire paper is cheating. Even if you just use portions of the paper, you must give credit to yourself. Submitting identical or similar work in more than one course is subject to the same penalties as plagiarism. You must get permission from each instructor to use previous work, and once you obtain permission, you must cite your own previous paper to avoid plagiarism.

**AVOIDING PLAGIARISM**

Plagiarism is a very serious offense. However, if you cite your sources appropriately by quoting, paraphrasing, or summarizing, you can avoid plagiarism. Why is it so important to cite your sources?

- Citing your sources provides readers with information about where you found your sources, enabling them to locate and read these sources and pursue your topic further.
- It also places your work within the larger framework of study on your topic and adds credibility and authority to your own writing.
- Citing sources gathered during your research helps you build your argument.
- Documenting your sources will enable you to avoid plagiarism.

This short video will provide an overview of plagiarism and resources you can use to avoid it: [http://library.weber.edu/il/libs1704/textbook/videos/Plagiarism.html](http://library.weber.edu/il/libs1704/textbook/videos/Plagiarism.html)
QUOTING: Copy the passage word for word, place those words in quotation marks, and cite the source in which you found the quote:

Breivik (1991) states that “knowing how to locate and select the information they need is a means of personal empowerment for students” (p. 87).

This example follows APA style formatting. The author's name, date, and page number are given.

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This example follows MLA style formatting. The author's name is given, and the page number follows at the end of the quotation.

If you are quoting lengthy passages, such as whole paragraphs, use block indentation and a citation:

According to one researcher:

Knowing how to locate and select the information they need is a means of personal empowerment for students. It allows them to verify or refute expert opinion and to become independent seekers of truth. By letting students experience the excitement of their own quests for knowledge, this kind of literacy creates the motivation for pursuing learning throughout their lives. In our efforts to combat illiteracy, information literacy - not just teaching people how to read - should be our goal (Breivik, 1991, pp. 87-8)

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APA style uses block indentation along with the author's last name, date, and page numbers.

MLA style sets long quotations off from the text; quotation marks are omitted. Page number is given in parentheses after the final period.
PARAPHRASING: To paraphrase, you simply restate the information from a source using your own words. A paraphrased passage will be about the same length as the original passage and does not need quotes. However, you MUST cite the source. One way to paraphrase a passage is to use an attributive tag, such as According to Brown,... or Brown believed that... Here are some examples:

APA style uses author's last name and date.

Breivik (1991) believed that the skills involved in being information literate, such as the ability to locate and choose relevant information, as well as the ability to synthesize that information, will allow students to make their own decisions about the validity of that information, as well as become independent life-long learners.

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SUMMARIZING: Include only the main ideas of a source in your own words, leaving out specific details. Summaries are shorter than paraphrased passages. They are simply a brief distillation of the writer's ideas. You do NOT need to use quotes, but the summarized passage must still be cited. You cite summarized passages just like you cite paraphrased passages, as in these examples:

These examples follow APA style formatting for summaries. The author’s last name and date are provided.

According to Breivik (1991), becoming information literate empowers students to become more independent, and fosters life-long learning tendencies.

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Becoming information literate empowers students to become more independent, and fosters life-long learning tendencies (Breivik, 87).
The following videos and online resources will help you understand the various aspects of information ethics and academic integrity presented in this course.

**Copyright on Campus** focuses on the use of copyrighted materials on campus, including a discussion on fair use and public domain.
http://www.copyright.com/content/cc3/en/toolbar/education/resources/copyright_on_campus.html

**Copyright Basics** explains the basics of copyright, including what copyright is, rights of copyright holders, what types of materials are and are not protected by copyright, the basics of fair use and public domain,
http://www.copyright.com/content/cc3/en/toolbar/education/resources/copyright_basics1.html

**How to Avoid Plagiarism**
http://library.weber.edu/il/libs1704/textbook/videos/Plagiarism.html

**APA In Text Citation** walks you through the process of citing material in your paper.
http://library.weber.edu/il/libs1704/textbook/videos/APAInText.html

Use the **Digital Slider Copyright Tool** to find out if something is copyrighted:
http://librarycopyright.net/resources/digitalslider/