

What Is Plagiarism?

SO JUST WHAT IS PLAGIARISM, ANYWAY? The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines plagiarism as “the wrongful appropriation or purloining, and publication as one’s own, of the ideas, or the expression of the ideas . . . of another.” It is derived from the Latin *plagiarius*, meaning “one who abducts the child or slave of another.” The word was first used in its current sense by the Roman poet Martial, in the first century AD, as a sarcastic put-down of another writer who had cribbed some of Martial’s verse.

Outright copying of someone else’s writing is only the most clear-cut form of plagiarism. The Modern Language Association provides a succinct but sweeping catalog of varieties of plagiarism in its *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*: “A writer who fails to give appropriate acknowledgment when repeating another’s wording or particularly apt term, paraphrasing another’s argument, or presenting another’s line of thinking is guilty of plagiarism.”

The term “plagiarism” applies to “the imitation of structure, research, and organization,” notes Laurie Stearns, a copyright lawyer in “Copy Wrong: Plagiarism, Process, Property, and the Law,” an essay appearing in the *California Law Review* in 1992. “Even facts or quotations can be plagiarized,” writes Ms. Stearns, “through the trick of citing to a quotation from a primary source rather than to the secondary source in which the plagiarist found it in order to conceal reliance on the secondary source.” In the sciences, “accusations of plagiarism may center on the content of discoveries or the interpretation of data rather than on specific phraseology.”

Defining just where influence ends and plagiarism begins can be a difficult question. Ralph Waldo Emerson, who wanted the American scholar to live in a state of radical originality, ended up conceding that “all my best ideas were stolen by the ancients.”

Even when an offender is caught red-handed, plagiarism itself is not a matter for the courts. Strictly speaking, plagiarism, as such, is not illegal—although copyright infringement is. Some forms of plagiarism also count as copyright infringement. Yet the terms are far from identical.

The *OED* defines plagiarism as the expropriation of either “the ideas, or the expression of the ideas . . . of another.” As Ms. Stearns notes in her law-review article, copyright statutes make a clear distinction

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International Agenda-Setting
 tion of a structural position from which one could compel attention to a
 star definition of a problem.
 examples show the role of access points in agenda-setting. Actors are
 deal upon the existence of access points to define their issue systematically,
 tional rules, communication flows, norms of behavior—formal and informal
 es within political systems—create these points. This process operates in
 tional politics as well. The rise of the ozone layer issue, for example, is
 d to activities of the UNEP staff, to an activist scientific community, and to
 l and other members of the “Toronto Group” of states which pressed this
 benedick, 1991). The UNEP, the forum for global environmental policy, was
 call an almost continuous series of international meetings on the topic; a
 ic consensus (emerging in 1984-1986; benedick, 1991:49) enabled advo-
 launch vigorous warnings from an authoritative, shared knowledge; and the
 ter the issue arose on its agenda in the early 1980s, directly manipulated its
 lled bilateral ties to flood other states with arguments and scientific
 sion. Each of these efforts involved utilizing access points from which global
 a, problem definition, and preferred solution (limit chlorofluorocarbons)
 e linked to create a new agenda item.
 s must evoke and utilize existing dimensions of international
 ic access points that arise from them. Knowledge refers to
 understandings which “serve as a guide to public policy” (Haas,
 8).
 sion channels, transnational communication patterns, insti-
 n of decision-making, arenas where an issue may be legitimately raised and
 cision rules; and diplomatic norms, shared understandings of the legitimate
 cive forms of formal interstate behavior.
 s must evoke and utilize existing access points to press favored agenda
 tu the practices of international relations in any one three state actors
 ty in regard to these points. Actors may possess or be favorably located to
 se points, enabling or strengthening their agenda-setting abilities. Or they
 ar from such points, they may lack or oppose dominant knowledges, appro-
 orms of diplomacy, and so forth. The former set of actors are structurally
 in agenda politics. The latter set face deep constraints. Lack of suitable
 curus suggests not only an inability to achieve salience, but an account-
 ability to control the issue definition and alternative specification pro-

TABLE 1. Agenda access points

International politics	Generic access points
	(1) sites of global knowledge production (2) appropriate (employable) contextual knowledge
trans channels	(1) linkages to transnational networks (2) brokerage positions vis-à-vis other actors (3) independent media
local	(1) formal or informal position in critical IC or regime (2) organizationally dependent capabilities (Koochale and Nye, 1989:36)
norms	(1) legitimated “action-forcing” events (summits, conferences, etc.) (2) knowledge-dependent access (structural attributes, differentiated status of great powers, special relationships, etc.) (3) appropriate (employable) general norms (law, reciprocity, etc.)

International crisis communication patterns between states. The analysis
 favors an American and European linkage to international networks.
 What methods in this field do the Europeans use in order to influence
 American policy? International level of decision-making refers to bilateral
 access points in this field. This discussion suggests that
 actors possess certain shared understandings on how to coordinate policy.
 Actors must find and utilize existing access points to press their
 favored agenda items. The process (i.e. the channel) of international
 relations during a crisis will depend upon the context and timing of the
 crisis. At any one time actors may be favorably located at access points
 enabling or strengthening their agenda-setting abilities. Or they may be
 structurally disadvantaged in crisis agenda-setting politics. The latter set face
 deep constraints. Lack of suitable access points causes not only an inability
 to achieve salience, but an accountability to control the issue definition and alternative specification process.

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The OED defines plagiarism as the expropriation of either "the ideas, or the expression of the ideas . . . of another." As Ms. Stearns notes in her law-review article, copyright statutes make a clear distinction between "expression" which the law protects against copying, and "ideas," which it does not.

If Smith copies a chapter from a book by Jones without permission, then the rights of the copyright holder have been violated. But suppose Smith paraphrases the chapter, argument by argument. In that case, Smith will have copied the ideas, but not the expression, of a copyrighted work. If no credit is given, then Jones has every reason to complain about being plagiarized. Still, assuming that Smith has been careful not to borrow any of the language of the original, it will not be an infringement of copyright.

In his essay "Plagiarism, Norms, and the Limits of Theft Law: Some Observations on the Use of Criminal Sanctions in Enforcing Intellectual Property Rights," appearing in the *Hastings Law Review* in 2002, Stuart P. Green, a professor of law at Louisiana State University at Baton Rouge, writes that copyright law "protects a primarily economic interest that a copyright holder has in her work . . . whereas the rule against plagiarism protects a personal, or moral, interest."

Mr. Green provides an extensive survey of the cultural history and legal implications of the concept of plagiarism. Perhaps the most intriguing, if puzzling, of his citations comes from the Talmud. There, an ancient scholar wrote that the person "who reports something in the name of the one who said it brings redemption into the world."

In a footnote, Mr. Green quotes a contemporary rabbi, Joseph Telushkin, who explains the reasoning: "If a person presents as her own an intelligent observation that she learned from another, then it would seem that she did so only to impress everyone with how 'bright' she is. But if she cites the source from whom she learned this information, then it would seem that her motive was to deepen everyone's understanding. And a world in which people share information and insights to advance understanding, and not just to advance themselves, is one well on its way to redemption."

—SCOTT MCLEEMEE

*J. of Leeds, plagiarized five pages
paper (top) by Steven G. Livingston,
cal science at Middle Tennessee State U.*

end of his plagiarism. In a 1996 es-
several sentences from a book pub-
lisher by Bill C. Malone, a country-mu-
sic University. A 1999 article Mr. Car-
ney several paragraphs that appear to be
copied on surf music.

with edition of *The Sounds of People*
on the geography of American mu-
sic Rowman & Littlefield. Mr. Carney
has contributed five essays. A blurb on
the professor "American geogra-
phologist."

merican geography's leading musicolo-
gists fewer than three authors. He even
in the sentence of his essay "Music and Place"
published earlier by Salvatore J. Natoli, the
publications for the National Council
on Arts.

do not stop there. On the following page,
150 words from an introductory-geog-
raphy in the same essay, along with copy-

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