



**AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT  
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH**

**ENGLISH 204  
FALL 2002-2003  
FINAL EXAMINATION**

**Time Allowed: 3 Hours**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Section:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** Passages A and B both discuss the issue of student cheating, mainly focusing on electronic plagiarism. Critique Passage A, synthesizing information from B to support your thesis.

**Passage A:**

**Is Plagiarism Big Business Online?**  
by  
**Peter Dizikes**  
**ABC News—May 7, 2002**

1. Warshauer, a professor of history at Central Connecticut State University in New Britain, Conn., had assigned a paper to a class on 19<sup>th</sup>- century American history, requiring the students to do original research using primary-source documents. But when he started looking at one student's work, he immediately sensed something was amiss. "I read the first paragraph, and I said, 'This kid used William Freehling's Prelude to the Civil War,'" says Warshauer, citing a well-known text. Perusing the paper further, he noticed the student had lifted passages from two other history books.
2. So Warshauer summoned the student and accused him of plagiarism—only to be met with a hostile response.
3. "The student denied, denied and denied," says Warshauer. "Then his father called me and yelled at me on the phone." The case went to a formal disciplinary hearing—at which, Warshauer claims, the father threatened to punch him.
4. Finally, after a drawn-out inquiry into the case, the student got off lightly—much to the surprise of Warshauer, who had helped draft the academic misconduct policy at the university and thought he was looking at an open-and-shut case.

5. "I was angry about it," says Warshauer.
6. And he's hardly alone. Across the United States this month, as professors read their students' term papers, countless examples will surface in which students try to pass off the work of others as their own, further frustrating professors and leading educators to wonder if the country is witnessing a plague of plagiarism.

#### **Perception of an Increase—But the Numbers Hint Otherwise**

7. Indeed, with popular historians Doris Kearns Goodwin and Stephen Ambrose having been shown in recent months to have plagiarized from other historians, and with plagiarism cases in secondary schools gaining national publicity, it feels to some professors as if the practice has never been more prevalent.
8. "A lot of people do think it's on the rise," says Kathy Cooke, a professor of history at Quinnipiac University in Hamden, Conn. And many of those academics are concerned that the development of the Internet means students can plagiarize with just a few clicks of a mouse.
9. "I think there is a perception that it is increasing," says Warshauer. He has initiated a survey of professors' attitudes about plagiarism on the History News Network, an online academic resource, and expects to tabulate the results in June.
10. But others think the current level of concern represents an overreaction.
11. "There's a certain amount of hysteria, I think," says Patrick Scanlon, a professor of communications at the Rochester Institute of Technology in New York who has just completed a student survey about plagiarism. Scanlon says that in his study, "the levels of self-reported plagiarism... are roughly the same as levels in the last 30 to 40 years."
12. While it is virtually impossible to discern just how many students plagiarize, Scanlon believes that about 25 percent of all students—a "substantial minority," in his words—will admit to doing so. And the students in Scanlon's survey think up to 80 percent of their peers are cheating.

#### **Intentional Copying or Ignorance?**

13. Another point of contention on campuses is whether or not most plagiarizing students are intentionally copying the work of others, or simply uninformed about the basic rules of research and citation.
14. "I think the majority of students know what plagiarism is," says Warshauer. "They damn well know when they're copying or cutting and pasting."

15. But others say they encounter students who, they believe, have just never been taught right from wrong in the world of research and writing.
16. "There are students who do these things out of an ignorance of proper citation methods," says Scanlon.
17. And Brian Gaines, a professor of political science at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, believes secondary or even primary schools should better explain to students what plagiarism is and why it is wrong.
18. "I don't think schools are doing a good enough job," says Gains, who conducted a recent study about ways of deterring plagiarism. "Even in elementary schools, the first time we wrote a report using an encyclopedia, the grade-school teacher told us, 'Read it, then close it and put it away. Take notes on cue cards and use those.'"
19. Such suspicions of lax standards at lower levels is only reinforced by events such as a case at a high school in Piper, Kan., last fall. Christine Pelton, a biology teacher, gave a failing grade to 28 students for plagiarizing an assignment in which they had to describe leaves.
20. After complaints from parents, the school district superintendent ordered Pelton to give the students lesser penalties—prompting her resignation. The school board upheld the superintendent's decision after reviewing the case in April.

#### **More Copying From the Web**

21. Whether or not plagiarism as a whole is on the rise, however, educators tend to agree that the proportion of plagiarism done using the Web has certainly gone up.
22. "The students have shifted from using traditional sources to using online sources," says Warshauer.
23. That includes both students who do not understand the concept of plagiarism and those simply looking to get away with it.
24. According to Gaines, students now go to the Web, "download a paragraph from one source and download from another, and write a couple of linking sentences, and they think that's OK."
25. The vast majority of academic research on the Internet, of course, has been put there in good faith. But, adds Diane Waryold, executive director of the Center for Academic Integrity at Duke University in Durham, N.C., "I think there's this misconception that if you get it off the Web, it's free. But for anything that is not your words or your thoughts, you should be letting us know where it came from."

### Using the Web to Fight Back

26. Still, if the Internet has made it possible for students to plagiarize without even leaving their dorm rooms, it has also given professors hope that catching cheaters will be easier than ever.
27. As professors learn more about the Internet—and as younger, more computer-savvy professors enter the academic world—an increasing number are conducting online searches, using Google or other search engines, when they see suspicious passages or oddly familiar phrases.
28. And anti-plagiarism Web sites are gaining recognition. For instance, more and more educators can now use [www.turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com), a site that checks passages against an accumulated database of papers to look for matches. Other professors are developing databases of their own, tailored to the jargon of their specialty.
29. And while not all professors are convinced such databases work, the mere presence of such tools might help curb copying among students.
30. For instance, in Gaines' study—conducted along with Bear Braumoeller, a professor of government at Harvard University in Cambridge, Mass., verbal warnings about plagiarism had little effect on students. However, the promise that their papers would be checked by plagiarism-detection software “seemed to concentrate minds wonderfully,” Gaines and Braumoeller wrote.
31. Other professors, having learned from unhappy experiences, are convinced that simply emphasizing to students the importance of not plagiarizing, early and often is a semester, can work to good effect.
32. “I do think it is possible to stop students from giving you plagiarism,” says Warshauer. “I started making a point of saying it was wrong, and I get one per semester or one per year now.”

**Passage B:**

**Survey: Many Students Say Cheating's OK**

by

**Kathy Slobogin**

**CNN- April 5, 2002**

1. That's not exactly the lesson most people want students to be learning in high school, but it's what 17-year-old Alice Newhall, a senior in a top high school in northern Virginia, says she believes. There's growing evidence she's not alone.
  - A national survey by Rutgers's Management Education Center of 4,500 high school students found that 75 percent of them engage in serious cheating.
  - More than half have plagiarized work they found on the Internet.
  - Perhaps most disturbing, many of them don't see anything wrong with cheating: Some 50 percent of those responding to the survey said they don't think copying questions and answers from a test is even cheating.
2. Newhall, a B student at George Mason High School, says students have very little sense of moral outrage about cheating. For many, she says, the pressure to do well academically and compete for good colleges has made cheating a way to survive high school.
3. "What's important is getting ahead," says Newhall. "The better grades you have, the better school you get into, the better you're going to do in life. And if you learn to cut corners to do that, you're going to be saving yourself time and energy. In the real world, that's what's going to be going on. The better you do, that's what shows. It's not how moral you were in getting there."

**Access to Info**

4. Some say the Internet has exacerbated the problem, making electronic plagiarism as easy as having a modem and a credit card. There are many Web sites like schoolsucks.com where you can download a paper on nearly any subject for \$9.95 per page.
5. Schools have begun to fight Internet plagiarism with the students' own weapons.
6. George Mason High School is one of thousands of schools that have contracted with a company called turnitin.com, which allows teachers to submit student papers. The company then searches the Web for matching prose. Within 48 hours, the teacher gets the paper back, color-coded for plagiarism.
7. Turnitin.com representatives say about a third of the papers they receive have some amount of plagiarism.

### Surveying the shifty

8. "Students today find it so much easier to rationalize their cheating," says Donald McCabe, the Rutgers professor who conducted the nationwide survey on high school cheating.
9. McCabe polled the students in his survey for reasons they cheat. Beside academic pressure, he says he found the most common response was that the adult world sets such poor examples.
10. "I think kids today are looking to adults and society for a moral compass," he says, "and when they see the behavior occurring there, they don't understand why they should be held to a higher standard."
11. Of course, not all students cheat. Mike Denny, also a senior at George Mason High School, thinks it's simply wrong. But he says a sense of honor that would prevent cheating seems lacking in high school.
12. "Honor seems like it's a concept of the past," says Denny. "Something like chivalry and knights and maybe a Victorian passé thing that no one really believes in any more."
13. Denny also blames a high school culture where grades and test scores are more important than integrity.
14. "By now many of us are so jaded we feel like our whole life has just been taught for one test," he says. "Things such as who you are and standing by your word and what not, that's something that we haven't really been taught."
15. Companies like turnitin.com may be part of the solution, but Donald McCabe says he thinks such policing action is just a Band-Aid for a moral deficit that schools and parents should address.
16. "I subscribe to the theory that suggests we'd be much better off promoting integrity among our students rather than trying to police their dishonesty," says McCabe.