Academic Dishonesty in the Online Learning Environment

- Why should we talk about this?
- What reasons do students give for dishonesty?
- What can instructors do to reduce academic dishonesty?
- What should I do if academic honesty is breached?
- Helpful links
Why should we talk about this?

• Studies from the 1960s to now consistently show that more than 50% of college students admit to cheating at least once
  
  - Types: plagiarism, copying from someone else on homework or exams, using forbidden means during exams, fabrication of data, etc.

• There is a perception that it’s easier to cheat in online courses & there are many sites that aid in cheating

  - e.g. Sites that answer homework & exam questions (Chegg.com, CourseHero.com, Bartleby.com, etc.)

  - e.g. Sites that write papers or even take your course (TakeYourClass.com, BoostMyGrade.com, etc.)
Is there more cheating in online courses?

- Data is slim, but often suggests that the *rates* of cheating stay about the same in online courses but the *type* of cheating changes.

- Data also shows students are *less likely to get caught* when cheating in online courses.
Who and why it hurts:

• Can rob other students of points if there is a curve

• Affects college’s reputation, reducing degree quality

• Scholarship providers, financial aid, employers, graduate programs, etc. aren’t given accurate data

• Creates atmosphere not conducive to learning
  
  o Lowers quality of graduate’s skills & knowledge
    
    o can cause employers to offer less money for positions requiring the degree
  
  o Discourages honest students & lowers morale

  o Discourages faculty, who often take it as a slight against them & a violation of their trust
What reasons do students give for dishonesty?

- “It is necessary.”
  - Need high GPA for medical/graduate school, etc. or family pressure
  - Will lose financial aid/scholarship or eligibility for sports
  - Can’t afford or don’t want to re-take course

- “The class/professor is unfair anyway so I can break the rules.”
  - Some report it as a way to “get back at” the professor

- “Others are doing it so I can/should too.”
  - Peer pressure/following norms of peer group

- “It’s not a big deal so why not?”

- “I’m out of time – it’s due today.”
  - Poor time management
  - Overcommitted on coursework/employment/extracurriculars/family

Neil deGrasse Tyson
@neiltyson

When Students cheat on exams it's because our School System values grades more than Students value learning.

1:59pm - 14 Apr 13
What can instructors do to reduce academic dishonesty?

(We can’t prevent it entirely.)

• 1. Make expectations clear
• 2. Reduce pressure
• 3. Reduce opportunity
• 4. Other ideas
1. Make expectations clear

- Include instructions on the syllabus or assignment with what is allowed & what is not
  
  - some studies show this alone can reduce cheating & it’s helpful for honor code cases

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**Quiz Instructions**

You will have 80 minutes to complete this exam. You may only submit it one time. It will be auto-graded (out of 100 points) and will show up in your gradebook right away.

You may:

- use your own notes that you made (e.g. exam review), digital or printed
- use the PowerPoint slides from class
- use your textbook
- use scratch paper
  
  - Note: this is timed and many questions are application style – if you don’t study and instead rely only on notes, it is unlikely you will perform well on the exam

You may NOT:

- use any online resources
- use anyone else (e.g. a friend, Chegg, GroupMe, etc.)
- screenshot, copy/paste, print, or share any of the exam questions - there should be no record of the questions when you are finished
  
  - Note: any violations will result in a zero on the exam plus a report to the Honor Code Council at minimum, and may result in an F in the course overall

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**Geography, Submitted by Professor Mike Kerwin:**

**Academic Misconduct:** While I advocate collaborative learning and teamwork, I firmly believe that each individual should maintain the highest ethical standards in all of life’s endeavors. Plagiarism, cheating, and other misconduct are serious violations of the University’s Honor Code policies regarding academic integrity.

For further information, please see the Office of Student Conduct’s website at [www.du.edu/honorcode](http://www.du.edu/honorcode) for the Honor Code Statement and [http://www.du.edu/studentlife/ces/policies](http://www.du.edu/studentlife/ces/policies) for information on the Student Conduct Policies and Procedures.

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**Languages and Literatures, Submitted by Professor Rachel Walsh:**

**ASSISTANCE:** Some students have difficulty deciding what constitutes "help" and what constitutes "cheating." Asking a friend for assistance with a particularly difficult point, discussing an assignment together after you have completed it, using on-line aids, can all constitute legitimate assistance under proper circumstances unless the instructor has indicated otherwise. Working on individual assignments together, sharing answers, asking friends to complete assignments for you, all constitute cheating. For more information about the Academic Misconduct policy at DU, please refer to the Honor Code at [www.du.edu/honorcode](http://www.du.edu/honorcode).
2. Reduce pressure

- Thoughtful late policies
- Thoughtful extension policies
- Encourage students to reach out for help
- Allow for open notes or similar if/when appropriate
- Less high-stakes assignments, more low-stakes if possible

**DO NOT FORGET THAT I AM HERE FOR YOU**
I understand that:
- Some of you are new to University-level classes
- Some of you are taking full load of classes or even overload
- Some of you are working part-time or full-time
- Some of you might be taking care of your parents or might be parents yourself
- Some of you might be veterans or might be in R.O.T.C.
- Some of you might have complicated health issues
- Some of you might have disabilities (physical or learning)
- Some of you might be athletes, performers, etc.
- Some of you might be non-native speakers
- Some of you might be first generation students
- Some of you might be members of LGBTQ+ community
- Some of you are BIPOC students dealing with racism and microaggressions on daily basis
- This class will be made of students of different racial profiles, cultural backgrounds, different religions, different levels of privilege.
- ALL OF YOU ARE STRESSED OUT BECAUSE OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND TRANSITION TO ONLINE PLATFORM
  - I am here for you.
  - I want you all to know that you should never be afraid to ask me from help regarding class material but also regarding other issues you might have.
  - I will do my best to help you and support you or if I cannot help, I will do my best to find those who can.
  - Make sure you take care of yourselves.
  - Grades are not important when your PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH is suffering.
  - IF YOU NEED HELP, ASK FOR IT. THERE IS NO SHAME IN ASKING.

**SELF CARE**
Here are some resources available to you as Texas State University students:
- 24-hour crisis hotline: 877-466-0660 (tell them you’re a Texas State student)
- Rape Crisis/Family Violence hotline: 800-700-4292
- National Suicide hotline: https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/
- National Domestic Violence hotline: 1-800-799-SAFE
- Dean of Students https://www.dos.txstate.edu
- HealthyCats https://www.healthcenter.txstate.edu/healthycats/Peer-Education.html
- Health Center https://www.healthcenter.txstate.edu
- Office of Disability Services https://www.ods.txstate.edu
- Counseling center: https://www.counseling.txstate.edu, 512-245-2200
- EmWave is a "fun entertaining stress relief technology that helps balance your emotions, mind and body." Watch tutorial and visit counseling center to set up an EmWave appointment. https://www.counseling.txstate.edu/Self-Help---Resources/Transforming-Stress/Em-Wave.html
- Therapy Assistance Online, an interactive, dynamic, and easy-to-access online program is available to the Texas State community and provides skill building exercises in support of anxiety, depression, and other common concerns. https://www.counseling.txstate.edu/Self-Help---Resources/TAO---Therapy-Assistance-Online-0.html

Syllabus excerpt from Dr. Anica Lee at TXST
3. Reduce opportunity

- Follow exam best practices *(at end of presentation)*
  - *timing, question banks, randomization, wording*

- Use turnitin.com for written assignments

- Rotate (or create new) assignments and questions

- Search to find compromised content online
  - *recommend Socratic for searching*
  - *take it down or avoid asking same question again*

- Carefully consider proctoring choices
  - *Zoom, Examity, Proctorio, lock-down browsers, etc.*
4. Other ideas

- Carefully consider the assessments given
  - might not have to be all high-stakes, multiple choice exams

- Carefully consider what’s “cheating”
  - working on a question with a friend could be seen as helpful peer learning, and looking up a question in a book can be seen as empowering the student to find answers, helping them to further learn it
  - on the other hand, answers posted online so that future students will see them before or during the exam doesn’t actually enhance the student’s knowledge or skills
4. Other ideas

- For written assignments:
  - Require drafts (aids with time management)
  - Can allow student to submit to turnitin.com, see their scores, & make changes as needed

- Give low-stakes formative assessments to help build confidence on bigger assessments

- Clearly explain why each assignment is important & what it teaches students or how it prepares them

- Have students sign honor pledge (mixed research on effectiveness)

- Require deep learning on academic integrity as an assignment
  - e.g. passing the Indiana University Plagiarism test [https://plagiarism.iu.edu/certificationTests/](https://plagiarism.iu.edu/certificationTests/)
What to do if academic integrity is breached?

• It is important to report - don’t ignore it or just give a zero and move on
  o students should be held accountable
  o reduces likelihood of repeating
  o schools have policies & procedures to help identify and counsel serial offenders

• Follow University Honor Code process
  o link for Texas State process at presentation end

Academic Integrity is the bedrock of the educational enterprise
At Texas State University, we train the next generation of citizens, and society demands that our graduates be ethical, accountable and respectful.

WE ARE BOBCATS: We Are Academically Successful
• We go to class
• We are prepared
• We follow the Honor Code

As a Bobcat, you share responsibility for academic integrity
You’re responsible for:
• Completing your academic assignments according to the expectations of each individual instructor
• Learning and demonstrating your individual level of competence through each assignment so the instructor can evaluate and certify your knowledge and abilities
• Ensuring that you’re honest, transparent and accountable in all your student activities

The Texas State University academic community constructs new knowledge and invents solutions to the world’s problems, and society trusts that we do this in morally responsible ways with the utmost transparency, fairness and responsibility.

Without integrity, we fail to meet those expectations, the reputation of Texas State is threatened, and the value of your degree is diminished.

https://www.txstate.edu/honorcodecouncil/Academic-Integrity.html
How do I remove online material?

• Can ask student to take it down

• Can often submit a form regarding copyright infringement
  o e.g. https://www.coursehero.com/takedown-notice/#/

• Or you can use a generic contact form to request content removal
  o e.g. https://www.bartleby.com/about/contact

• Chegg.com: only the HCC Chair, Vice Chair, or Dean of a college can request – just let one of us know and we’ll get it taken care of
  o honorcode@txstate.edu
  o davenport@txstate.edu
  o clieneck@txstate.edu
Helpful Links

• About online proctoring and request online proctoring:
  https://www.distancelearning.txstate.edu/faculty/about-proctoring.html
  https://www.distancelearning.txstate.edu/faculty/request-proctoring.html
  (requires sign-on)

• Faculty checklist for responding to academic dishonesty:
  https://www.txstate.edu/honorcodecouncil/Reporting-Misconduct--Faculty/Faculty-Member-Checklist.html

• Cristian Lieneck’s Honor Code Series videos:
  https://www.facdvs.txstate.edu/Videos/Honor-Code-Series.html

• Office of Distance and Extended Learning Faculty Resources
  https://www.distancelearning.txstate.edu/faculty/Faculty-Resources-for-Distance-Education.html

• Faculty Development training and connection opportunities
  https://www.facdvs.txstate.edu/
Questions? Thoughts? Contact me anytime!

• Rachel Davenport – davenport@txstate.edu
  o Senior Lecturer in Biology at Texas State University
  o Interim Chair of the University Honor Code Council
Exam Best Practice 1: **Timing**

- **Synchronous classes:** Give exams during scheduled class time
  - *All students take the exam at the same time* (reduces academic dishonesty & allows you to monitor in real-time by email in case students run into trouble)

- **Asynchronous classes:** Give them a window of time to start
  - *e.g. an 8-12-hour window when you would be monitoring email in case issues arise*

- **How much time to allow for an exam?**
  - *Create exam → take the exam yourself → triple your time for student estimate*
  - *How many questions did you ask when giving a similar exam in-person in the past? Replicate that.*
  - *Did students finish quickly? Decrease time next time. Did they not have enough time? Increase time next time.*
  - *Don’t forget to add time for ODS students*
Exam Best Practice 2: **Question Banks**

- Build question banks tied to learning objectives
  - *Create a pool of questions for each topic / learning objective*
  - *Set to draw at random from each pool so each student has a different exam but still has the same number of questions covering the exact same learning objectives*

Exam Best Practice 3: **Randomize Order**

- Scramble answer order for each student
  - *If possible (it’s not in Canvas), scramble question order too*
  - *Do not use “all of the above” as an answer choice – replace with “all of the listed choices are correct”*
Exam Best Practice 4: Consider Question Wording

- Re-word questions so that they are harder to look up in the notes
  - e.g. if notes say "immuno-protective," can use "supports the immune system" on the exam

- Use more conceptual questions (application-based, hypotheticals, higher level Bloom’s)

- Ask questions that use material from multiple content areas
  - e.g. Which of these is false? list facts from throughout the content being tested on – makes it time-consuming and tedious to look up but easy to answer for students that actually studied

And don’t forget to:
- Make expectations clear before and during the assignment
- Search the questions you are considering → if you find one on the internet with little effort, edit it to make it different