## Slipping From Paraphrase to Plagiarism
## The NSSR Graduate Writing Center

Sometimes students begin by making a sincere effort to paraphrase information from their sources, but as they continue to write, they take first a few words, then more, directly from the source texts, thus slipping – in many cases inadvertently – into plagiarism. The first excerpt below is from the website www.marxists.org. (This type of website is hardly an ideal source for a graduate essay; this one is poorly written, and contains a spelling error. Its partisan origin also suggests that it may be biased. You should be getting your information from books and journals which provide more complete and reliable information.)

After graduating from university, Marx moved to Bonn, hoping to
1 become a professor. However *the reactionary policy of the government made Marx abandon the idea of an academic career,* after Ludwig
2 Feuerbach had been deprived of his chair in 1832..... In the spring of 1847 Marx and Engels *joined the secret propaganda society called the*
3 *Communist League*. Marx and Engels took a prominent part in the League's Second Congress (London, November 1847), *at whose*
4 *request they drew up the Communist Manifesto,* which appeared in
5 February 1848. *With outstanding clarity,* this work outlines a new world-
6 conception based on materialism. *This document analysises* the realm
7,8 of social life; *the theory of the class struggle*; the tasks of the Communists; and the revolutionary *role of the proletariat* – the creators of a *new, communist society*.

The following excerpt is from a student essay. Plagiarized passages are italicized.

1 *Forbidden to seek a university career by the reactionary government,* Marx
2 moved into journalism... Marx and Engels later *joined a secret labor*
3 *organization named the Communist League, at whose request they wrote the "Communist Manifesto" in 1848.* In this short pamphlet they developed
4 what "was to be the most succinct expression of their views."[3] *With*
5 *outstanding clarity* (it was written for workers), *this document analyzes*
6 the economic development of capitalism, under the materialist *theory of the class struggle.* It shows that capitalism, like other previous social
8 systems, has its historical limitations, and therefore will have to be
7 overthrown and replaced by *a new "communist society."* Such a revolution reserves a central *"role for the proletariat."*

The student's work begins with an acceptable (though slightly inaccurate) paraphrase (1). It fails, however, to cite the source; the student is thus already guilty



of plagiarism. The paraphrase (2) then segues into words directly lifted from the source (3). A passage from another work is correctly documented with quotation marks and a note, but the remainder of the paragraph consists of phrases from the website, spliced together with other material – either the student's own, or taken from another source. Although some phrases like "the theory of the class struggle" are so commonplace that they would not ordinarily need to be cited, the constellation of borrowed phrases here is so dense that it constitutes plagiarism. The student encloses the last two phrases (one slightly misquoted) in quotation marks, but fails to provide a source note. According to the Modern Language Association guidelines, this, too, constitutes plagiarism.

Sometimes students believe that if they acknowledge a source correctly in some places, they have done enough. They then create a patchwork of paraphrase and copied material, containing some citations, but also other passages which **should** have been cited and enclosed in quotations.

The excerpt below is from a book by Eduardo Cadava; the following excerpt is from a student essay. Plagiarized passages are italicized.

1 *Awakening in his dark room, Marcel finds himself in a photographic space.*[64] *What whirls before him in this dark space is not only the changing, unseen walls, the doors, the furniture, but also all the things,*
2 *places, and years that remain written within his memory.* Like a spectator in the dark projection hall of a cinema, he encounters *a succession of images moving before him with a rapidity that, in bringing together the past and the present, prevents him from orienting himself in relation to*
3 *either the image, the past, or the present.* What is striking in the movement of the passage, however, is that Marcel's effort to orient himself is soon that of his body rather than of his mind. *It is the memory of his body that works to discover where he is. Within the Proustian*
4 *corpus it is the body that registers or records memories and impressions.*
5 An apparatus of memory, it finds itself, as Marcel says of the past, "encumbered with innumerable negatives" that, inscribed within it,
6 remain undeveloped by the mind (2:1020 / 4:474). That cognition and perception are dependent upon *the entirety of the corporeal sensorium* means that memory and its negatives *are irreducible to the operations of consciousness* and therefore cannot be brought to light: to remember within the space of the remembering body is to remember without knowing anything. In other words, *the body in Proust names a principle of articulation among writing, memory and materiality* that does not belong to the domain of knowledge.

1 *As he awakens, the narrator finds himself in a photographic space. What revolves around him in the dark space is not only the unseen walls and pieces of furniture but the ghostly images of things, places*
2 *and years that remain written in his memory. This succession of images moves around him, preventing him from orienting himself in*
3 *relation to the past or the present.* As Eduardo Cadava has noted, for both Benjamin and Proust, memory is in the first place a
6 memory of the body. "It is the memory of the body that works
4 to discover where he is. Within the Proustian corpus it is the
5 body that registers or records memories and impressions" (76).

As Benjamin also notices, *the body in Proust is a principle of articulation among writing, memory and materiality, and its operations, the entire corporeal sensorium, are irreducible to the operations of consciousness.*

The student essay begins by paraphrasing Cadava (1), and quickly moves to copying the passage almost word for word (2). A correctly acknowledged citation (3) then appears, followed by a passage composed almost entirely of phrases lifted from the same text, with slight rewording and reordering (6,4,5). Although the student may have thought that the one correct citation was adequate acknowledgment of the source, this is not the case. Even if there had been more of the student's own words here, this essay would be unacceptable. Your essays should be primarily your own work, not patchworks of paraphrase and quotation.

If you are not sure when or how to cite your sources, begin to inform yourself now. Fogelman Library offers workshops on using RefWorks software for citations and bibliographies, and reference librarians will meet with students individually and answer questions submitted online (for information on these services, go to library.newschool.edu). The tutors at the NSSR Writing Center (65 Fifth Ave., room 376A) will also be able to help you.

## Citing Sources Correctly: Examples of Various Formats

Although all students in all disciplines need to cite their sources correctly, the exact format for in-text citations, footnotes and endnotes varies from field to field. You need to find out which style is most appropriate for the



work you will be doing. Below are examples from student papers and published work, illustrating correct acknowledgment of sources. The student papers are anonymous. The sources for the published works are listed following the excerpts, in bibliographic styles matching those used in the works.

### 1. Excerpt from student paper using MLA-style in-text citations

Marx argues that only men are responsible for the unequal distribution of freedom in the world. The bourgeoisie, that is, distorts the essence of freedom to suit its own needs. It "transforms into eternal laws of nature and reason, the social forms...[of its] mode of production" (487).

Only one work by Marx is cited in this paper, so there is no need to specify it each time it is mentioned. The student has mentioned the title before, and full publication information appears in the bibliography. Here, the citation is introduced with a signal phrase ("Marx argues"), so only the page number is needed after the quote. The first two sentences of the excerpt briefly paraphrase Marx's general point, leading into the quote which is the student's focus, and the jumping-off point for her own detailed discussion of Marx's ideas. An ellipsis (…) signals that words have been omitted from the quoted passage, and the brackets surround material changed or added in order to make the truncated passage read more smoothly.

### 2. Excerpt from a student paper using in-text citations for primary sources, footnotes for secondary sources and commentary

One of the problems with this reading, however, is that it completely denies Nietzsche's "order of rank," which insists that we not treat as equal things that are not: "equality for equals, inequality for unequals," as Nietzsche puts it (TI IX 48; see also BGE 221).[7]

[7] See Daniel Ahern's book, *Nietzsche as Cultural Physician* (Penn State Press: University Park, 1995). Ahern argues that Nietzsche does in fact have standards insofar as he uses sickness and health as criteria for interpreting what is "good" and "bad" (p.4).

Since the vast majority of the citations in this paper are from Nietzsche, the student has used abbreviations for the works (TI = *Twilight of the Idols;* BGE = *Beyond Good and Evil).* A list of abbreviations is provided at the beginning of the paper. Note that when a work cited has numbered sections and subsections, these are often used rather than page numbers (e.g., TI IX 48), so that the passage can be located in any edition of the work. Here, the student also directs the reader to a related passage (BGE 221) and, in a footnote, to a related secondary source, providing full publication information and page number.

### 3. Excerpt from a published paper* using a version of APA format

Patterson made the same claim for her gorilla Michael. On one occasion, when Michael was told that he had already received his banana, he answered *what banana?* However, the banana was frozen and not fresh, and Patterson admitted that Michael may have just been confused (Patterson and Linden 1981:171). Patterson labeled another incident with Michael as a "lie" (Patterson and Linden 1981:174):

> One day in May 1978, when asked by volunteer Ellen Strong, "Who ripped my jacket?" Michael signed *Koko.* Ellen, knowing that the culprit was the short hairy one looking at her so innocently, repeated the question. This time he placed the blame on me. Finally he confessed. It was *Mike.*

Here, the writer paraphrases the information from the study cited, providing date of publication and page number after the paraphrase. A quote is then introduced with a signal phrase and source information (the latter could also have followed the quote). Because the quoted passage is more than forty words long (rules on this vary according to the citation system used), it is indented, set off from the surrounding text, and no quotation marks are used.

*Waal, F. de. 1986. Deception in the natural communication of chimpanzees.



In *Deception: Perspectives on human and nonhuman deceit,* ed. R. Mitchell and N. Thompson, 221-44. Albany: SUNY Press.

### 4. Excerpt from a book* using a version of Chicago-style endnotes

To be sure, it appears that Heidegger's understanding of National Socialism had little in common with the ideology of genocidal imperialism via which the movement has left its gruesome imprint on twentieth-century history. But we know that he was sufficiently convinced of National Socialism's "inner truth and greatness"[4] to have acquired the reputation of a zealous propagandist on behalf of the new regime in its initial stages.

4. The phrase Heidegger uses in *An Introduction to Metaphysics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), p. 199.

Here, full bibliographic information is provided in the first note referring to a given work. In later notes, only the author's last name, the work's title, and the page number are needed; a later note reads: "10. Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics,* p. 199 (translation slightly altered)." The first line of each note is indented five spaces.

*Wolin, Richard. "'Over the Line': Reflections on Heidegger and National Socialism."

Introduction. *The Heidegger Controversy.* Ed. Wolin. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993.