Academic Honesty

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Why Academic Dishonesty is Bad

• It’s dishonest!
  – Misrepresents your effort
  – Disrespectful of the original authors
  – Disrespectful of students who do their work honestly

• It’s a feckless and unproductive use of your time — time spent cheating is time you could be spending learning

• It wastes instructor/TA time
  (even if you’re not caught!)
Why Academic Dishonesty in Graduate School Shows Especially Poor Judgment

- Grades aren’t that important
- Ignoring the ethical issues, the risk/reward equation doesn’t make sense – grades barely count, and the penalties are severe (small upside, huge downside)
- Unlike undergraduate education, most classes you take are on topics aligned with your interests and future plans
- You’re cheating yourself!
- Forget any bad habits or ideas about “acceptable” cheating that you had as an undergrad. Put that part of your life in the past, and *leave it there.*

What Happens if You’re Caught Cheating in Class

- You will be in the center of a sh*tstorm
- Automatic reduction of at least 1/3 grade for entire class per instance
- Score of zero on any assignments involved
- Undergrads: Duke honor code takes precedence
- Grads:
  - Your DGS will be contacted, the graduate school administration will be informed, and you will have a black mark on your record
  - You are likely to be put on probation (best case)
  - You may be thrown out of graduate school (worst case)
  - Your advisor (if you have one) will be contacted
  - If you have an advisor he/she may disown you
  - If you don’t have an advisor, you may have trouble finding one
Why Academic Dishonesty in Graduate Students Sends a Chill Down the Spine of Professors

• If you cheat in classes, why wouldn’t you cheat in research?

• The academic publication mechanism is strongly based upon trust
  – Reviewers might catch suspicious looking results
  – Impossible for reviewers to reproduce all experiments or search all archives to check for plagiarism
  – Authors usually enjoy an implicit assumption of honesty

• When trust is violated, editors, reviewers and readers are outraged

• Advisor-student relationships are strongly based upon trust
  (same as arguments for reviewers)

• A dishonest result in a paper doesn’t just bring one person down; it brings down every author

Rules of Thumb
Both for Class and Research

• If you are unsure about what is permitted ASK!

• Always look for opportunities to give credit/thanks for ideas that have inspired you
  – Giving credit earns friends
  – Failing to give credit earns enemies
Stupid Cr*p Students Have Gotten Caught Doing Before

• Copying from another student during the exam
• Using mobile devices to search for answers during an exam
• Submitting code from the internet for a homework assignment
• Writing an entire paper from sentence fragments of other papers
• Copying figures from textbooks without citing them
• Submitting answers that were found on the web
• Searching the web for “similar” problems and basing answers on the solution to these similar problems
• Submitting another student’s code or proof
• Submitting answers from previous years or from similar courses taught at other universities

I give this talk every year...

• ...and yet somebody gets in deep trouble almost every year.

• I hate to see this happen, so please make this a good year for all of us!