Money and property are the currency of the economic world. Stealing money or property is an ethical violation and a criminal act. Offenders are punished and ignorance of the law is no excuse.

Words and ideas are the “currency” of the academic world. Stealing words or ideas is a grievous violation of scholarly norms. Offenders will be punished and ignorance about plagiarism is no excuse. It is the student’s responsibility to understand what plagiarism is and to refrain from engaging in it.

While it can take many forms, plagiarism essentially involves presenting someone else’s words or ideas as if they are your own. If you have ever “cut and pasted” content from another source into your own work without acknowledgement, you have engaged in plagiarism.

The most common forms of plagiarism can be easily avoided by following two basic rules. First, if you are literally reproducing someone else’s words in your own academic work, place those words in quotation marks immediately followed by a specific citation and reference so the reader can easily locate the original source.

Second, if you are paraphrasing someone else’s idea that is original, unique or otherwise distinct to them, you should also provide an immediate citation and reference so the reader can easily locate the original source.

Whenever drawing on the work of others, the basic safeguard is to always acknowledge the source of specific words or distinctive ideas and never create the impression that they are your own work.

The Department of Sociology and Corrections has adopted the following policy concerning plagiarism. For a first offense, the instructor will, at their discretion, -grade the assignment with an “F” and average this into the course grade OR -give the student an “F” for the course AND/OR -refer the matter to the director of student conduct for stronger sanctions.

The department will maintain a database of first offenses. If a student commits a second offense involving the same or any other course and instructor, the department will recommend to the student conduct board that the student be expelled from the university. The Department Chair and program coordinator have the authority to act on behalf of the Department in all incidents of academic dishonesty (if there is a conflict of interest the Chair will select an alternative).

While this policy is specifically about plagiarism, the same general guidelines apply to all other forms of academic misconduct (cheating on exams, etc.) as well.