

Citations & Copyright in Digital Research & Teaching

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As we work to move our writing classes online, many of us are renewing our attention to questions of copyright and fair use. On the one hand, transitioning to an online format means thinking through ways to make copyrighted information accessible in online teaching modules and digital projects. On the other hand, instructors are compelled to think about how to instruct students about citation practice, and how to legally reproduce materials in multimodal projects.

First, read UVa Library's resource, [NEW: Rapidly Shifting Your Course from In-Person to Remote](#) - the most straightforward and encompassing introduction you'll find to questions of using and reproducing materials in an online classroom.

As you adapt your assignments to the online medium, you may also be developing multimodal assignments. And if you've decided to write prompts for traditional research papers, you may also be wondering how to teach students about incorporating and citing their sources. Geared towards instructors and using the phrases, "Use Fairly, Not Too Much, Have Reasons," the "[Fair Use in Seven Words](#)" video produced by the UVa Library explains how to stay within the bounds of copyright law without limiting the materials that you're using in the classroom. The video is particularly useful because it's not overwhelming. Instead, it encourages you to trust your intuition as an instructor when selecting materials for use.

If you're looking for a deeper dive into questions of copyright and fair use, consider reading the Center for Media and Social Impact (CMSI)'s brief "[Statement of Best Practices in Fair Use](#)." The statement describes 4 overarching situations in which filmmakers can employ copyrighted materials for fair use, describes the principles undergirding the legality of each situation, and explains each situation's limitations. Fundamentally, **if the instructor is acting reasonably and in good faith in light of general practices in their field, and if the instructor has 1) transformed the material by repurposing it rather than simply repeating it, and 2) used an amount of the material appropriate to its new use, then that instructor is probably within their rights of fair use.**

There are also a number of legible, user-friendly sources available for you to share with your students to introduce them to concepts of fair use, copyright, and citation best practices. UVa Library's [Library Tutorials for Embedding](#) (one of their many [Resources for Teaching Online](#)) includes a series of short interactive modules that you can directly embed in your Collab course using the links associated with each tutorial. These modules are aimed at students, and can be assigned before research assignments. Most relevant to questions of citation and copyright are the modules titled "[How Do I Use Information Correctly?](#)," which provides short introductions to intellectual property, copyright, fair use, and public domain, and "[Information Ethics: Citations](#)," which includes introductions to, examples of, and activities about paraphrasing, summarizing, and plagiarizing. While it's a little beyond the scope of this page, the module called "[What is Authority?](#)" also includes useful information related to citation practices: it engages with popular and scholarly sources, highlights the features of a peer-reviewed source, and discusses the qualities of authority and authorship.

In line with this conversation about citation best practices and fair use in the digital classroom, **consider rejecting punitive and surveilling methods that assume 1) that students will cheat, and 2) that you are in a de facto adversarial relationship with your students.** To read more about the differences between pedagogy that foregrounds solidarity and pedagogy that assumes the worst of students, see Jeffrey Moro's "[Against Cop Shit](#)." Our students deserve our trust!

In addition to citing or reproducing the Honor Code on your syllabus, **consider having conversations with students about copyright, intellectual property, and fair use, and instructing them about research best-practices.** Librarians at Alderman are available to accommodate your students for a class visit to teach them research methods, and writing courses that focus on a particular subject have the option of specializing their research methods class visits by working subject librarians--the Music Research Librarian for a Writing About Music class, for example. We are also lucky to have Brandon Butler (bcb4y@virginia.edu), Director of Information Policy and copyright expert, available for consultation.

Bibliography

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