**Legal Aspects in Plagiarism**

Although plagiarism in some contexts is considered theft or stealing, the concept does not exist in a legal sense, although the use of someone elses work in order to gain academic credit may meet some legal definitions of fraud. "Plagiarism" specifically is not mentioned in any current statute, either criminal or civil. Some cases may be treated as unfair competition or a violation of the doctrine of moral rights. The increased availability of intellectual property due to a rise in technology has furthered the debate as to whether copyright offences are criminal. In short, people are asked to use the guideline, "if you did not write it yourself, you must give credit".

Plagiarism is not the same as copyright infringement. While both terms may apply to a particular act, they are different concepts, and false claims of authorship may constitute plagiarism regardless of whether the material is protected by copyright. Copyright infringement is a violation of the rights of a copyright holder, when material whose use is restricted by copyright is used without consent. Plagiarism, in contrast, is concerned with the unearned increment to the plagiarizing author's reputation, or the obtaining of academic credit, that is achieved through false claims of authorship. Thus, plagiarism is considered a moral offense against the plagiarist's audience (for example, a reader, listener, or teacher).

Plagiarism is also considered a moral offense against anyone who has provided the plagiarist with a benefit in exchange for what is specifically supposed to be original content (for example, the plagiarist's publisher, employer, or teacher). In such cases, acts of plagiarism may sometimes also form part of a claim for breach of the plagiarist's contract, or, if done knowingly, for a civil wrong.