Further Explanations of Self-Plagiarism

Part 1: Rationale

Self-plagiarism is defined as a form of academic dishonesty. In certain instances, expanding on one's own work across multiple courses is appropriate, and avoiding self-plagiarism means that a student who would like to build upon previously submitted work does so openly by obtaining the professor's approval in advance. This way, the professor can safeguard the objectives of his/her course by making sure that the student's use of work completed for other courses is appropriate in the new context.

This issue has been examined in recent years by professional organizations such as the American Psychological Association (APA) and the Modern Language Association (MLA). Furthermore, SLU's University-wide Academic Integrity Policy defines both plagiarism and self-plagiarism in similar terms to those proposed here. The University-wide policy is available via the following link: https://www.slu.edu/academics/graduate/university-wide_academic_integrity_policy_final_6-26-15.pdf

Part 2: Sample scenarios

Scenarios 1 through 3 represent possible examples of self-plagiarism; Scenario 4 shows an example in which a fictitious student does not self-plagiarize.

Scenario 1: Self-plagiarism. A student takes two foreign language courses over two semesters. Each course requires that the student attend a different cultural event outside of class and submit a short paper discussing the experience. The goal of attending multiple events is to give the student exposure to the culture whose language s/he is studying; therefore, attending a different event each time is important since it allows multiple opportunities for learning. However, instead of attending two separate events as required, a student simply changes the date and the course title on his first assignment and submits it to the instructor of his following course as though he had completed it separately.

Scenario 2: Self-plagiarism. In the spring, a student submits a paper that she wrote for a political science class the previous fall to complete an assignment for a Women's and Gender Studies course. The student made minor modifications to the first and last paragraphs to better align the paper with the Women's and Gender Studies course. The student did not discuss this possibility with the Women's and Gender Studies instructor ahead of time, since her goal was to simply save time and avoid having to write two separate papers, even though writing a paper specifically aligned with this course is an integral part of the learning process.

Scenario 3: Self-plagiarism. A student submits a painting in his Painting I class and decides the following semester to submit it again in Painting II without revealing to the professor of Painting II that the work in question was a project that was completed for a previous class.

Scenario 4: Acceptable procedure that avoids self-plagiarism. A student has written a paper for an English class and thinks it would be an appropriate topic for a speech she will have to make for her Public Speaking course. She consults the professor of the Public Speaking class to confirm that using this previously-submitted paper would be allowed as the basis for her speech. In the discussion that

followed, the professor of the Public Speaking course and the student explored ways in which the student could expand on the work she previously completed and adapt it to the current class.