



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on January 3, 2024

Plagiarism No Longer Punishable at Harvard; AP: Plagiarism a New Right-wing Conspiracy Theory

Harvard University has apparently decided that plagiarism is no longer an academic crime.

Though plagiarizing President Claudine Gay “resigned,” she will stay on as a professor at the university, and probably earn the same salary she earned while mismanaging the nation’s oldest university.

What that means for students is unclear, but what it means for present and future black leaders and students at the school is very clear. They won’t be held to the rigorous standards the university advertises in its guide to using sources, which is very clear about what constitutes plagiarism. And they needn’t worry about Harvard’s Honor Code.

Meanwhile, the leftist Associated Press reported that accusations of plagiarism is a “new conservative weapon against colleges.”

Thus has the narrative been set.

Gay Stays, Guide Ignored

Though [Gay clearly stole](#) the work of [other academics](#) for [her doctoral thesis](#) and other work, the university doesn’t much care. That might be one reason it [declared her innocent](#) before completing an “investigation” of the dishonest scholarship.

“Outgoing Harvard University president Claudine Gay will still likely earn nearly \$900,000 a year despite being forced to resign her position as the school’s top administrator,” the [New York Post reported](#):

Political science professor Gay — who stepped down amid a tempest of allegations that she did not do enough to combat antisemitism and academic plagiarism Tuesday — will return to a position on the Cambridge, Mass., school’s faculty.

Prior to being named president just six months ago, Gay earned \$879,079 as a faculty of arts and sciences dean in 2021 and \$824,068 in 2020, according to records published by the university.

Her new position was not specified Tuesday, but she is expected to receive a salary comparable to what she previously received — if not higher.

Understandably, that doesn’t sit well with some students, the newspaper noted of a letter to the



Nina R/Wikimedia Commons
Harvard Yard



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Crimson, the university newspaper.

“Gay’s getting off easy,” a student member of the university [honor council wrote](#). Noting that students convicted of plagiarizing must withdraw for at least two semesters, the student wrote that “strict sanctions are necessary to demonstrate that our community values academic integrity. Cheating on exams is not okay. Plagiarism is not okay.”

Plagiarism is “the act of either intentionally OR unintentionally submitting work that was written by someone else,” the [university guidebook says](#):

If you turn in a paper that was written by someone else, or if you turn in a paper in which you have included material from any source without citing that source, you have plagiarized.

Looking at Gay’s record, it’s clear she plagiarized and violated the university’s [honor code](#):

Members of the Harvard College community commit themselves to producing academic work of integrity — that is, work that adheres to the scholarly and intellectual standards of accurate attribution of sources, appropriate collection and use of data, and transparent acknowledgement of the contribution of others to their ideas, discoveries, interpretations, and conclusions. Cheating on exams or problem sets, plagiarizing or misrepresenting the ideas or language of someone else as one’s own, falsifying data, or any other instance of academic dishonesty violates the standards of our community, as well as the standards of the wider world of learning and affairs.

In the 2020-21 school year, the [Crimson reported](#), 27 students were booted for “academic dishonesty.”

But Gay keeps a job at the once-reputable school.

Weaponized Charge

Not that Gay’s plagiarism matters to the leftist mainstream media, most notably The Associated Press. It claimed that “the threat of unearthing plagiarism, a cardinal sin in academia, [is] a possible new weapon in conservative attacks on higher education.”

Because “political foes,” not “academic peers,” revealed Gay’s literary theft, [AP averred](#), the charges are obviously suspect:

Christopher Rufo, a conservative activist who helped orchestrate the effort, celebrated her departure as a win in his campaign against elite institutions of higher education. On X, formerly Twitter, he wrote “SCALPED,” as if Gay was a trophy of violence, invoking a gruesome practice taken up by white colonists who sought to eradicate Native Americans.

“Tomorrow, we get back to the fight,” he said on X, describing a “playbook” against institutions deemed too liberal by conservatives. His latest target: efforts to promote diversity, equity and inclusion in education and business.

“We must not stop until we have abolished DEI ideology from every institution in America,” he said. In another post, he announced a new “plagiarism hunting fund,” vowing to “expose the rot in the Ivy League and restore truth, rather than racialist ideology, as the highest principle in academic life.”



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Apparently, AP is unaware that American Indians [were scalping each other](#) long before “white colonists” showed up, and that DEI has wrecked American universities. That aside, the “campaign against Gay and other Ivy League presidents” is a vast right-wing conspiracy to “remake higher education.”

A black former president of Dillard University told AP he is particularly worried that blacks must work that much harder to succeed. Walter M. Kimbrough recalled that his mother said that blacks at universities “always have to be twice, three times as good.”

Not until the 15th of AP’s 23-paragraph story do readers learn that Gay did indeed plagiarize, which the wire service happily whitewashed with the claims that Harvard exonerated her:

A review ordered by Harvard acknowledged “duplicative language” and missing quotation marks, but it concluded the errors “were not considered intentional or reckless” and didn’t rise to misconduct.

And, of course, AP found the customary leftist to craft a new narrative. [Irene Mulvey](#), headmistress of the American Association of University Professors, said plagiarism could be “weaponized.”

“There is a right-wing political attack on higher education right now, which feels like an existential threat to the academic freedom that has made American higher education the envy of the world,” Mulvey told AP:

She worries Gay’s departure will put a new strain on college presidents. In addition to their work courting donors, policymakers and alumni, presidents are supposed to protect faculty from interference so they can research unimpeded.

“For presidents to be taken down like this, it does not bode well for academic freedom,” she said. “I think it’ll chill the climate for academic freedom. And it may make university presidents less likely to speak out against this inappropriate interference for fear of losing their jobs or being targeted.”

Yet AP, Mulvey, Harvard, and others don’t seem worried that not holding Gay the same standards as her peers and students is what [President George W. Bush](#) called “the soft bigotry of low expectations.” Nor, apparently, do they care that the university’s Honor Code is now worthless.



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