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**INFS 19**  
Spring 2009

**COPYCATS:  
Celebrity plagiarists  
and the psychology of fraud**

**Syllabus**  
March 31, 2009

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**Course information**

Number: INFS 19  
Title: Copycats: Celebrity plagiarists and the psychology of fraud  
ID: 228-057-202  
Quarter: spring 2009  
Location: Room 110A, Sproul Hall  
Time: Tuesday, 10:00–10:50am

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**Instructor information**

Instructor: Jonathan Furner  
Office: Room 224, GSE&IS Building  
Email: [furner@gseis.ucla.edu](mailto:furner@gseis.ucla.edu)  
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Office hours: Wednesday, 1:00–4:00pm

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**Catalog description**

*"19. Fiat Lux Seminars.* Seminars focus on discussion and critical thinking of specific issues and current topics of importance, taught by Information Studies faculty members in their areas of expertise and illuminating many paths of discovery at UCLA." Hmm ... How about this instead:

What do Joe Biden, Coldplay, Martin Luther King, Jr., Osama bin Laden, Vladimir Putin, and H. G. Wells have in common? They have all been accused of copying with intent to defraud. These days, in the age of copy-and-paste and Google, plagiarism is not only easier to commit but also easier to detect than ever before. What drives successful historians, journalists, novelists, entertainers, scientific researchers, and other professionals—even students—to engage in activity whose fraudulent nature is so likely to be discovered? In this course, we will take a look at some recent scandals involving high-profile authors and institutions, exploring plagiarists' motivations, methods, and mistakes. We will also look at various definitions and classifications of plagiaristic activity, examining ways that conceptions of "good" and "bad" copying vary over time and across cultures, and discuss the technology and politics of plagiarism-detection systems.

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## Methods

Each week the instructor will lead a discussion, based on a few readings (mainly articles published in the *New York Times*). It's important that everyone comes to class well prepared, ready to discuss the week's readings.

The readings will be available from the course website, accessible through UCLA's Common Collaboration and Learning Environment (CCLE). To access the course website, go to <http://ccle.ucla.edu/>, click on "Spring 09" under "Education and Information Studies," then click on page "7," then click on "2009 Spring INF STD19 LEC1 (FURNER)," then click on "Login," then enter your UCLA Logon ID and Password (i.e., your Bruin Online ID), and click on "Sign In Now."

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## Syllabus

<i>Week</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Assignments</i>
1	Tuesday, March 31	Introduction and overview.	-
2	Tuesday, April 7	Music—Coldplay.	-
3	Tuesday, April 14	Popular fiction—Kaavya Viswanathan.	-
4	Tuesday, April 21	Politics—Joseph R. Biden.	-
5	Tuesday, April 28	Popular history—Doris Kearns Goodwin.	-
6	Tuesday, May 5	Science—Vijay R. Soman.	-
7	Tuesday, May 12	Journalism—Jayson Blair.	-
8	Tuesday, May 19	Literature—Ian McEwan.	-
9	Tuesday, May 26	Theology—Martin Luther King, Jr.	-
10	Tuesday, June 2	Visual art—Giorgio de Chirico.	-
11	Tuesday, June 9	[NO CLASS]	-

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## Assignments

There are four assignments for this course: (1) do all of each week's readings before class; (2) come to class on time, ready to discuss the readings; (3) participate actively in classroom discussion; and (4) attend every class session. A grade of "Pass" will be awarded to everyone who completes all of these assignments.

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## Reading list

### Week 1: Introduction and overview

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No readings.

### Week 2: Music—**Coldplay**

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Itzkoff, Dave. 2008. Joe Satriani sues Coldplay for cold plagiarism. *New York Times*, Arts Beat [blog], December 5. Available online at: <http://artsbeat.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/12/05/joe-satriani-sues-coldplay-for-cold-plagiarism/>

Itzkoff, Dave. 2008. Coldplay responds to infringement claim. *New York Times*, Arts Beat [blog], December 9. Available online at: <http://artsbeat.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/12/09/coldplay-responds-to-infringement-claim/>

Conner-Simons, Adam. 2007. Picking up what they're laying down. *Gelf Magazine*, July 24. Available online at: [http://www.gelfmagazine.com/archives/picking\\_up\\_what\\_theyre\\_laying\\_down.php](http://www.gelfmagazine.com/archives/picking_up_what_theyre_laying_down.php)

Bonus reading:

Cronin, Charles, et al. 2007. Bright Tunes Music v. Harrisongs Music: 420 F. Supp. 177 (S.D.N.Y. 1976). *Copyright Infringement Project*. Los Angeles, CA; New York, NY: UCLA Intellectual Property Project & Columbia Law School. Available online at: [http://cip.law.ucla.edu/cases/case\\_brightharrisongs.html](http://cip.law.ucla.edu/cases/case_brightharrisongs.html)

### Week 3: Popular fiction—**Kaavya Viswanathan**

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Smith, Dinitia. 2006. A “How to get into college by really, really trying” novel. *New York Times*, Books, April 6. Available online at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/06/books/06opal.htm>

Smith, Dinitia. 2006. Harvard novelist says copying was unintentional. *New York Times*, Books, April 25. Available online at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/25/books/25book.html>

Smith, Dinitia. 2006. Novelist says she read copied books several times. *New York Times*, Books, April 27. Available online at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/27/books/27author.html>

Rich, Motoko, and Dinitia Smith. 2006. First, plot and character; then, find an author. *New York Times*, Books, April 27. Available online at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/27/books/27pack.html>

### Week 4: Politics—**Joseph R. Biden**

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Dowd, Maureen. 1987. Biden's debate finale: An echo from abroad. *New York Times*, U.S., September 12. Available online at: <http://www.nytimes.com/1987/09/12/us/biden-s-debate-finale-an-echo-from-abroad.html>

Dionne, E. J., Jr. 1987. Biden was accused of plagiarism in law school. *New York Times*, U.S., September 17. Available online at: <http://www.nytimes.com/1987/09/17/us/biden-was-accused-of-plagiarism-in-law-school.html>

Dionne, E. J., Jr. 1987. Biden admits plagiarism in school but says it was not “malevolent.” *New York Times*, U.S., September 18. Available online at: <http://www.nytimes.com/1987/09/18/us/biden-admits-plagiarism-in-school-but-says-it-was-not-malevolent.html>

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Week 5: Popular history—**Doris Kearns Goodwin**

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Kirkpatrick, David D. 2002. Historian says publisher quickly settled copying dispute. *New York Times*, U.S., January 23. Available online at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/01/23/us/historian-says-publisher-quickly-settled-copying-dispute.html>

Eakin, Emily. 2002. Stop, historians! Don’t copy that passage! Computers are watching. *New York Times*, Books, January 26. Available online at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/01/26/books/think-tank-stop-historians-don-t-copy-that-passage-computers-are-watching.html>

Kirkpatrick, David D. 2002. Historian says borrowing was wider than known. *New York Times*, February 23. Available online at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/02/23/us/historian-says-borrowing-was-wider-than-known.html>

McTaggart, Lynne. 2002. Fame can’t excuse a plagiarist. *New York Times*, Opinion, March 16. Available online at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/03/16/opinion/fame-can-t-excuse-a-plagiarist.html>

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Week 6: Science—**Vijay R. Soman**

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Hunt, Morton. 1981. A fraud that shook the world of science. *New York Times*, Magazine, November 1. Available online at: <http://www.nytimes.com/1981/11/01/magazine/a-fraud-that-shook-the-world-of-science.html>

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Week 7: Journalism—**Jayson Blair**

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*New York Times*. 2003. Times reporter who resigned leaves long trail of deception. *New York Times*, May 11. Available online at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/05/11/national/11PAPE.html>

Steinberg, Jacques. 2004. Ex-reporter for the *Times* tells in book of deceptions. *New York Times*, U.S., February 27. Available online at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/02/27/us/ex-reporter-for-the-times-tells-in-book-of-deceptions.html>

Bonus reading:

*New York Times*. 2003. Witnesses and documents unveil deceptions in a reporter’s work. *New York Times*, U.S., May 11. Available online at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/05/11/us/correcting-record-witnesses-documents-unveil-deceptions-reporter-s-work.html>

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Week 8: Literature—**Ian McEwan**

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Cowell, Alan. 2006. Eyebrows are raised over passages in a best seller by Ian McEwan. *New York Times*, Books, November 28. Available online at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/11/28/books/28aton.html>

Isherwood, Charles. 2006. Her life, his art, your call. *New York Times*, Week in Review, December 3. Available online at:  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/12/03/weekinreview/03isherwood.html>

Lyall, Sarah. 2006. Novelists defend one of their own against a plagiarism charge. *New York Times*, Arts, December 7. Available online at:  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/12/07/books/07pync.html>

#### Week 9: Theology – **Martin Luther King, Jr.**

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De Palma, Anthony. 1990. Plagiarism seen by scholars in King's Ph.D. dissertation. *New York Times*, U.S., November 10. Available online at:  
<http://www.nytimes.com/1990/11/10/us/plagiarism-seen-by-scholars-in-king-s-phd-dissertation.html>

*New York Times*. 1990. Widow says writer didn't care that King copied. *New York Times*, U.S., November 11. Available online at: <http://www.nytimes.com/1990/11/11/us/widow-says-writer-didn-t-care-that-king-copied.html>

*New York Times*. 1991. Boston U. panel finds plagiarism by Dr. King. *New York Times*, U.S., October 11. Available online at: <http://www.nytimes.com/1991/10/11/us/boston-u-panel-finds-plagiarism-by-dr-king.html>

Bonus reading:

Martin Luther King, Jr., Papers Project. (1991). The student papers of Martin Luther King, Jr.: A summary statement on research. *Journal of American History* 78, no. 1: 23-31.

#### Week 10: Visual art – **Giorgio de Chirico**

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Russell, John. 1984. The irony of Chirico. *New York Times*, Arts, April 27. Available online at:  
<http://www.nytimes.com/1984/04/27/arts/art-the-irony-of-chirico.html>

Kimmelman, Michael. 1991. An ambitious effort to praise de Chirico's later works. *New York Times*, Arts, January 4. Available online at: <http://www.nytimes.com/1991/01/04/arts/review-art-an-ambitious-effort-to-praise-de-chirico-s-later-works.html>

Kimmelman, Michael. 1996. The riddler of modernism. *New York Times*, Arts, September 13. Available online at: <http://www.nytimes.com/1996/09/13/arts/the-riddler-of-modernism.html>

Bonus reading:

Hirsh, Jennifer. 2004. Representing repetition: Appropriation in de Chirico and after. In *Italian modernism*, ed. Luca Somigli and Mario Moroni, 403-445. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

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## **Faculty biographical statement**

Jonathan Furner is an associate professor in the Department of Information Studies, which is part of the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies (GSE&IS). Dr. Furner is primarily interested in how “memory institutions”—museums, archives, and libraries—organize their collections, and how access to the resources in those collections can be improved by applying “metadata” to the resources. He is permanently worried that he has already forgotten that the ideas he thinks were his own were in fact someone else’s.