



Copyright for Students and Researchers

What is copyright?

- Copyright is the right of authors to control the use of their work for a period of time. It is also designed to promote creativity and learning.
- All original work that is fixed in a tangible form of expression is copyrighted, even when it does not include a copyright symbol or notice. This includes — but is not limited to — books, journal articles, web sites, music, photographs, computer programs, and audiovisual materials.
- Copyright is federal law, Title 17 of the United States Code, and it includes penalties for infringement.
- The Copyright Law includes exceptions for teaching, research, scholarship, criticism, comment, and news reporting.

Steps to determine use of material

1. **Is the work protected by copyright?** Items published in the United States prior to 1923 are in the public domain; they can be used without seeking permission. Items published after 1923 may be protected. Copyrights extend for 70 years after the death of the author. Work produced by the U.S. government is most likely in the public domain.
2. **How will the work be used?** Incorporating copyrighted material into a paper for class and posting material on a website have different copyright requirements. The broader the access to a work the more copyright considerations are involved.
3. **What exceptions apply?** When using copyrighted work, determine if exceptions to the copyright law apply allowing you to use the work without seeking permission. Consult the [Fair Use Check List](#) and weigh each factor to make your determination.
4. **Is permission needed?** When the exceptions do not apply seek permission to use the copyrighted material. It is wise to request the permission in writing and keep all documents associated with your request.

Considerations when preparing papers, theses, and projects

- You are both an author and copyright holder of all of your original work, as well as a user of other's copyrighted works.
- Other's works and third-party-content in your paper must be authorized under the [Fair Use](#) exception or used by permission of the rights holder, and you must always give credit to the original author.
- The Seminary may require you to submit your work to Theological Research Exchange Network, a company that collects, organizes, and disseminates theses, dissertations, and papers from seminaries, academic societies, and conferences across the country. You will have to sign an agreement with TREN for them to accept your work. This is a non-exclusive license that authorizes them to use your work as described in the agreement. When you sign a non-exclusive license you retain the copyright of your work.
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