You have the option to submit the research paper, the book review and the letter to a member of Congress to turnitin.com, a plagiarism-prevention service. If you do not wish to use turnitin.com, you must send your paper to me in Word or other accessible electronic format as an email attachment, in addition to handing in a physical copy.

Once you decide whether or not you want to use turnitin.com, you need to submit to me a signed copy of the turnitin.com form distributed in class (and also available on the course homepage). The form is due no later than January 17th.

**How turnitin.com works—and what it can and cannot do**

Turnitin.com produces an “originality report” on submitted papers by comparing them against an enormous database of online, published and unpublished sources.

The report will assign a colored index, based on the amount of matching text found: blue (no matching text), green (1%-24%), yellow (25-49%), orange (50-74%), and red (75-100%). You should carefully evaluate your use of sources with a yellow report. An orange or red report suggests a definite problem.

Remember that turnitin.com *cannot* accuse anyone of plagiarism. All it can do is highlight text that appears in substantially the same form in other sources in its database. Obviously direct quotations are likely to be flagged; if you quote something from, say, Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World*, it’s likely been quoted by others, which turnitin.com will likely pick up. As long as you use quotation marks and cite the passage correctly, ignore the fact that the “originality report” highlights it—except, perhaps, if “originality report” shows that you draw too high a proportion of your essay’s words from other authors. In that case, you need to ask yourself if the paper would not be more effective if you relied more on your voice and less on the voice of others. As Frederick Crews advises in *The Random House Handbook*: “quote only where that language makes a difference” (p. 98). Remember, however, that over-reliance on quotation is a stylistic issue, not an intellectual dishonesty problem.

A dishonesty problem arises only if you appropriate the words and substantial ideas of others without proper quotation or acknowledgment in citation. If you cut-and-paste from the Wikipedia entry on Craig Venter, pass it off as your own prose and fail to acknowl-
edge the source, then this represents punishable intellectual dishonesty. A machine cannot determine where a passage falls on the spectrum between hone quotation and dishonest plagiarism. This requires human judgment. The “originality report” can alert you to possible issues and give the opportunity to address them before making your final submission.

You are not in trouble if the “originality report” reveals that an unacceptably large portion of your paper appeared elsewhere without adequate attribution. You can rewrite it and resubmit it to the service for a new report. You will only be held accountable for plagiarism in the draft you physically hand in to me in class.

Assignment deadlines will not be extended, however; you will have to accept the late penalty if you do not have time to finish a rewrite before the assignment is due in class. Keep in mind that the late penalty is 15 points and the penalty for plagiarism is course failure.

If you have any questions or concerns about the “originality report”, and whether or not something in your paper might pose a plagiarism issue, ask me about it.

Your paper will be docked 5 points if you forget to submit it to turnitin.com (if you’re using that service) or email it to me as an attachment (if you’re not) before the class period in which it is due. I will not record a grade for a paper until it has been submitted to turnitin.com or submitted to me electronically.