

The Shadow Scholar: The man who writes your students' papers tells his story

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The request came in by e-mail around 2 in the afternoon. It was from a previous customer, and she had urgent business. I quote her message here verbatim (if I had to put up with it, so should you): "You did me business ethics proposal for me I need proposal got approved pls can you will write me paper?" I've gotten pretty good at interpreting this kind of correspondence. The client had attached a document from her professor with details about the paper. She needed the first section in a week. Seventy-five pages. I told her no problem.

It truly was no problem. In the past year, I've written roughly 5,000 pages of scholarly literature, most on very tight deadlines. But you won't find my name on a single paper. I've written toward a master's degree in cognitive psychology, a Ph.D. in sociology, and a handful of postgraduate credits in international diplomacy. I've worked on bachelor's degrees in hospitality, business administration, and accounting. I've written for courses in history, cinema, labor relations, pharmacology, theology, sports management, maritime security, airline services, sustainability, municipal budgeting, marketing, philosophy, ethics, Eastern religion, postmodern architecture, anthropology, literature, and public administration. I've attended three dozen online universities. I've completed 12 graduate theses of 50 pages or more. All for someone else.

You've never heard of me, but there's a good chance that you've read some of my work. I'm a hired gun, a doctor of everything, an academic mercenary. My customers are your students. I promise you that. Somebody in your classroom uses a service that you can't detect, that you can't defend against, that you may not even know exists. I work at an online company that generates tens of thousands of dollars a month by creating original essays based on specific instructions provided by cheating students. I've worked there full time since 2004. On any day of the academic year, I am working on upward of 20 assignments.

In the midst of this great recession, business is booming. At busy times, during midterms and finals, my company's staff of roughly 50 writers is not large enough to satisfy the demands of students who will pay for our work and claim it as their own. You would be amazed by the incompetence of your students' writing. I have seen the word "desperate" misspelled every way you can imagine. And these students truly are desperate. They couldn't write a convincing grocery list, yet they are in graduate school. They really need help. They need help learning and, separately, they need help passing their courses. But they aren't getting it. . . .

I do a lot of work for seminary students. I like seminary students. They seem so blissfully unaware of the inherent contradiction in paying somebody to help them cheat in courses that are largely about walking in the light of God and providing an ethical model for others to follow. I have been commissioned to write many a passionate condemnation of America's moral decay as exemplified by abortion, gay marriage, or the teaching of evolution. All in all, we may presume that clerical authorities see these as a greater threat than the plagiarism committed by the future frocked.