Abstract discussions will be held Wednesday, November 2 and Thursday, November 3 at 7 PM in Ryan Gym

Crayola and Professor Rose Art
An Honor Council Academic Trial
Released Fall 2011

This abstract was completed in accordance with the timeline in the Constitution. The confronting and confronted parties were given the opportunity to review this abstract prior to its release.

(The addition of this disclaimer began Fall 2010.)

Introduction

Crayola was a Coloring major from Bryn Mawr enrolled in Professor Rose Art's Extralinear Coloring seminar at Haverford. In this course, students were expected to submit two long response papers. If these papers included material from other sources, Professor Art expected students to observe the principles of proper citation. In grading Crayola's two papers at the end of the semester, Professor Art noticed some portions of the work that seemed to be in Crayola's style, while others sections appeared to be from some other source, though they were not cited. After searching online, the professor found that Crayola had in fact quoted phrases and information from online sources without proper attribution. Professor Art confronted Crayola via e-mail and asked that Crayola bring the case to Honor Council as a potential instance of plagiarism. Because the case came to the attention of Honor Council at the very end of the semester, and because Crayola would be leaving the Bi-Co directly following the end of the semester, Honor Council consented to modify jury procedures in order to expedite the trial. The jury consisted of three jurors from Honor Council and three jurors from the faculty and staff. The trial was conducted in two meetings: preliminary/fact-finding, and circumstantial/finalizing resolutions.

Fact-Finding:

Professor Rose Art's Statement:

In Extralinear Coloring, an upper-level course cross-listed in the Coloring and Finger Painting departments, Professor Art asked students to submit answers to two discussion questions after each class. Each student was also asked to choose two of these assignments in the course of the semester as the basis for longer response papers. If these papers included
material from other sources, Professor Rose Art expected to observe the principles of proper
citation, and she made these expectations explicit in handouts and on the syllabus.

Crayola, like many of the students in the class, waited until the end of the semester to
submit her response papers; the second paper was in fact submitted at the last moment possible.
Because of professional obligations outside Haverford and the lateness of submission, Professor
Art had to grade both of Crayola's papers in the last few weekends of the semester. When
Professor Art looked at Crayola's essays, she noticed some portions that seemed to be in
Crayola's voice, with which she was familiar from Crayola's class presentations, while others
seemed to be from other sources. Professor Art then did some research on the internet and found
that in fact Crayola had used phrases from various websites, along with original information
generated by other researchers, in her papers without identifying the material as quoted or citing
her sources. Professor Art presented extensive evidence to support her contention in the form of
copies of the relevant internet pages with material common to them and Crayola's papers
highlighted; the extent of overlap was considerable. In some cases, the sources of the material
used were identified, but not by quotation marks or citation; in others, the material was treated as
Crayola's original work, again without citation.

Crayola's Statement:

Crayola explained that her method of paper writing involved copying and pasting
material researched on the web into her notes. She used a date and last-name citation style for
her papers and did not think she could unknowingly plagiarize. She added, however, that her
previous professors in scientific disciplines had not been particularly attentive to the principles of
proper citation, and that at least her first paper had been written under severe time pressure, so
she acknowledged that questions of citation were not uppermost in her mind.

Jury Deliberations and Statement of Violation

After hearing the statements from both Professor Art and Crayola, the jury deliberated.
All concurred that plagiarism had occurred. The jury consented to the following Statement of
Violation, with no jurors standing outside of consensus:

Crayola violated the Honor Code by representing others’ words as her own when she used
large portions of primary and secondary sources without quotation, both with and without
attribution.

Circumstantial Portion

Crayola began the discussion. She felt that with many of the statements she had inserted
without quotation marks, there was no alternative way of phrasing. Because paraphrasing was
impossible, Crayola felt these constituted common knowledge and therefore did not require
citation. She added that most professors did not want students to cite material from online
sources like Wikipedia, so she had not done so. Crayola identified her composition method as
one of copying and pasting paragraphs from her notes, which in turn had been copied and pasted from the online sources she had consulted, into her papers.

Professor Art then stressed that it was never all right to quote something word for word unless it was set off by quotes. She had had problems in this area in the past, and consequently made sure that in this class she was extremely clear about the principles of citation. Likewise, she encouraged students to avoid the scientific procedural style used by Crayola in her papers, since she felt that it could lead to students' lack of understanding. She acknowledged that it is difficult to rephrase technical scientific material, but certainly possible, and that to her knowledge, other students did not have difficulties in this respect in their response papers.

Crayola responded that she had written fewer than six papers in her major, and had never even written context for coloring projects like this one. She had looked at the preferred citation handout Professor Art had distributed, had noticed that the citation requirements were unfamiliar, but was not sure if she had read it thoroughly. She acknowledged that she probably was not thinking carefully, and that this was at least due in part to rushing to finish the semester and graduate.

Professor Art then stated that she had really enjoyed having Crayola as a student, that she had found her engaged and excited about the topic, that Crayola had chosen a difficult topic for a required presentation, and that there was no evidence of this kind of plagiarism in other work that Crayola had done during the seminar. She said that in the future she would make it clear that students were not to turn in both required response papers at the end of the semester, and regretted that she was unable to look at the first paper and identify the problem before the second one was written.

**Proposed Resolutions**

Crayola proposed that getting zeroes on both assignments would be fair. Prof. Art said that that had been her proposed resolution, as well, and could still result in Crayola receiving credit for the course. A juror clarified that Crayola did not need the course to graduate. Crayola agreed, but said that she was applying to medical schools in the summer and needed the course for that reason.

When the possible resolutions of separation or receiving a zero were raised by the jury, Crayola said that she hoped it would not come to that. Although this was a significant violation, the rest of the work in the course, which was considerable, was her own.

Prof. Art felt that separation was not appropriate, and she was uncertain if the violations committed warranted the automatic assignment of a failing grade (0.0) in the class, though the violation was fairly significant. That said, she would need to do some calculations to determine if receiving zeroes on both assignments would result mathematically in a failing grade for the class. The two papers constituted 30% of the grade, and she would get credit for doing well in other aspects of the class.

Crayola proposed talking with the BMC Curriculum Committee about her education at BMC, with an emphasis on her lack of education about proper citation. She also proposed a first-year education component and that freshman writing seminars have content specific to science
writing. Prof. Art proposed possibly developing a document for professors to facilitate discussion of these issues with their classes, particularly in the sciences.

They discussed the fact that other professors had not been as strict about citation, and that some professors do not confront for small violations, creating confusion and inconsistency.

The proposed resolutions portion concluded, and the confronted and confronting parties left so that the jury could deliberate.

**Tentative Resolutions**

The jury quickly agreed that the minimum appropriate resolution would be failing the two papers, while separation was too harsh. A juror reminded that the jury can suggest a grade adjustment between a failing grade for the course (0.0) and just failing the papers. One juror remarked that the disrespect for the class was extreme, and that even if she failed the class she would still graduate, so perhaps the jury should consider a recommendation to fail the class. Another juror pointed out that Crayola’s prior experience with professors who were more lax about issues of citation may have been a contributing factor, to which a third responded that it was still her responsibility. After some debate, it was agreed that Crayola should not receive major credit for this course to highlight the gravity of this incident, and so a recommendation to the professor for a semester grade of at most 1.7 would be warranted.

The jury consented to the following tentative resolutions:

1. **Crayola will receive a 0.0 on both plagiarized assignments, and her final grade in the course will not exceed a 1.7. (no jurors stood outside)**
2. **Crayola will read Maud McInerney's essay on plagiarism. (no jurors stood outside)**
3. **Crayola will write a letter to the community reflecting on her experiences and on Maud's essay. This letter will be released with the abstract for this case. This letter will be submitted to the Honor Council Co-Chairs by the beginning of the summer. (no jurors stood outside)**
4. **Crayola will submit a letter to Bryn Mawr's Curriculum Committee, explaining her experience with scientific writing at Bryn Mawr and her recommendations for how best to educate other students about these issues. This letter will be submitted by the beginning of the next semester. We strongly suggest that Crayola meet with members of the Committee to present these ideas, if possible. (no jurors stood outside)**
5. **When Crayola submits this letter, she will also send a copy to the current Honor Council Co-Chairs, who will then forward an anonymous copy of the letter to Haverford's Educational Policy Committee (EPC). (no jurors stood outside)**
6. **We support Crayola’s idea to work with freshman advisors and writing seminars on these issues, if she so chooses. (no jurors stood outside)**

The jury consented on the resolutions as a whole (no jurors stood outside).
Finalizing Resolutions

Professor Art was unable to attend this portion of the meeting, having left while the jury was deliberating. The chair read through the resolutions one by one, and the jury helped explain their reasoning as they went. Crayola was comfortable with all of them. The jury was unable to contact Professor Art about these resolutions, and thus consented upon them pending Professor Art’s acceptance of them. The jury first consented to each resolution individually and then to the group of resolutions as a whole:

Final Resolutions

1. Crayola will receive a 0.0 on both plagiarized assignments, and her final grade in the course will not exceed a 1.7. (no jurors stood outside)
2. Crayola will read Maud McInerney’s essay on plagiarism. (no jurors stood outside)
3. Crayola will write a letter to the community reflecting on her experiences and on Maud’s essay. This letter will be released with the abstract for this case. This letter will be submitted to the Honor Council Co-Chairs by the beginning of the summer. (no jurors stood outside)
4. Crayola will submit a letter to Bryn Mawr’s Curriculum Committee, explaining her experience with scientific writing at Bryn Mawr and her recommendations for how best to educate other students about these issues. This letter will be submitted by September 1st. We strongly suggest that Crayola meet with members of the committee to present these ideas, if possible. (no jurors stood outside)
5. When Crayola submits this letter, she will also send a copy to the current Honor Council Co-Chairs, who will then forward an anonymous copy of the letter to Haverford’s Educational Policy Committee (EPC). (no jurors stood outside)
6. We support Crayola’s idea to work with freshman advisors and writing seminars on these issues, if she so chooses. (no jurors stood outside)

The jury consented on the resolutions as a whole (no jurors stood outside). Professor Rose Art accepted the resolutions.
Crayola’s Letter

Dear Honor Council,

My experience with the honor board has been an eye opening one. Plagiarism is a serious issue. Maud McInerney, Associate Professor of English describes plagiarism as “committing an act of intellectual theft” (1999). After all one goes to college to expand one’s knowledge and build up her toolbox to create new ideas, using other people’s work and ideas as one’s own is a violation of the honor code, resulting in loss of integrity in one’s own work.

Plagiarism is still plagiarism, even if you didn’t mean to; however the intentions behind plagiarism will affect how one behaves after the fact. When I set out to write my papers I had no intentions of plagiarizing. The class wasn’t necessary for my major or for graduation requirements; I took this simply for my own interest. Plagiarism on these papers was a result mainly of lack of knowledge of proper writing techniques and citation and carelessness, an honest mistake that I will never repeat again.

My case with the honor council was indeed stressful. I came into the case baffled, surprised, stunned and left embarrassed and relieved. I was embarrassed that I could have gone four year in college without realizing that when it comes to scientific writing it may take more effort to prevent plagiarism and give proper credit to other scientists. I was relieved that my collages and professors didn’t change their perception of myself and my previous or future work, due to my mistake. I take full credit for my actions and know that by repeating other people’s work, I am being dishonest. I will learn from my mistake.

Thank you,

Crayola

Discussion Questions

1. Do you think that Honor Council made the right choice in modifying trial procedures in order to expedite the trial? What is the comparative importance of a prompt trial versus staying within normal trial procedure?
2. If an assignment is partially plagiarized, should that result in a failing grade for the whole assignment? What merit does original work have in an assignment that contains plagiarism?
3. How should plagiarism education at Haverford be addressed when it comes to Bryn Mawr students?