Abstract discussion will be held on Wednesday, March 4th at 8:00PM in MCC (Stokes).

Friends:
An Honor Council Academic Trial
Released Spring 2015

This abstract was not released in accordance to the timeline specified by the Students’ Association Constitution. The confronting party consented to the release of the abstract. The confronted party consented to the release of the abstract. (The addition of this disclaimer began in Spring 2010).

Key:
Professor Ross Geller: Confronting Party
Joey Tribbiani: Confronted Party
Phoebe Buffay: Confronted Party
Professor Monica Geller: Expert Assistant to the Jury and Co-teacher of the course
Topics About Central Perk (CNPK200): Course

Case Summary:

Two students in [CNPK200: Topics About Central Perk] were confronted by one of the course professors for suspicion of inappropriate collaboration on the final exam. The case was sent to an academic trial. Because the students’ answers were so similar and because the jury was mostly unfamiliar with the subject matter, an expert from the [CNPK] department gave his assistance. This case is significant because it involved both a discussion on what ‘inappropriate collaboration’ entails and on the difficulties experienced by international students with different academic backgrounds.

Fact-Finding and Statement of Violation:

All trial parties and jury were present. Additionally, the jury consented during the preliminary meeting to bring in an impartial expert on [Central Perk], to provide discipline-specific background for the jury. [Professor Monica Geller] was the expert who came to the trial. During this portion, the jury had the following documents on hand: statements from trial parties, the exams of both students, and notes which the students had studied.

Fact-finding portion began with [Professor Ross Geller’s] explanation of his suspicion of inappropriate collaboration that led to his confrontation. He explained that despite the
the open-ended nature of the final exam questions—which the jury was given a copy of—[Joey] and [Phoebe] each submitted responses that mirrored each other, down to uncanny syntactical similarities and mistakes on the same details. Responses on some questions were very obviously similar, and others also suggested inappropriate collaboration. The logical progression of both of their responses was the same, which was very unusual given the nature of the questions. There were many students enrolled in the course, and none of the other exams bore resemblance to those of [Phoebe] and [Joey]. Upon realizing the similarity between [Joey] and [Phoebe]’s exams when grading, [Professor Ross] emailed the two students individually asking for a possible explanation. They both responded that they reviewed all of their information for the exam together. However, [Ross] and the other professors co-teaching the course agreed that the level of similarity between the exams could not arise from merely studying closely together, and therefore he felt that Honor Council intervention was necessary.

[Phoebe] then explained that she was surprised by the confrontation. She pointed out that she took her exam in [the Rockefeller Center] separately from [Joey]. [Phoebe] also explained that the exam style was very different from what she had been accustomed to in her previous academic experiences as an international student. Therefore, they reviewed extensively for the exam together. [Joey] also maintained that they studied everything together. He explained that when he was initially asked about similar exam responses, he thought that it was in reference to question 4 because there was a similar question in the textbook. [Joey] also said that he and [Phoebe] reviewed old exams of students who had taken this course in the past to study potential questions and answers. He also stated that he took the exam in [Bloomingdale’s].

Fact-finding then moved into more specific similarities between the exams and questions from the jury. [Professor Ross] asked the students about their use of a specific phrase of inaccurate jargon in one of the questions. This was particularly striking because the phrase as it stood did not mean anything, yet they both cited it verbatim in their responses. [Phoebe] and [Joey] stated that they used notes of two students who previously took the course. They showed the jury these notes. One of the students had written the same incorrect phrase, but the other student had used the correct version. [Phoebe] and [Joey] explained that since they reviewed together and wrote practice responses together, they both accidentally took the phrase from one of the students’ notes and remembered the concept that way. [Ross] listened to their explanation and conceded that he could understand where the incorrect phrase came from, but he still firmly believed that both responses to question 3 were too similar to be a result of honest academic activity. [Phoebe] then explained that they studied using the method they were accustomed to, from their education in their home country, where they habitually predetermined the possible exam questions and memorized possible answers.

A juror asked [Professor Ross] about what students are given to prepare for exams. He explained that class lectures, smaller discussion sections, projects, and assigned readings throughout the semester are intended to prepare students for the exam. Furthermore, group work and peer learning is encouraged. He reiterated that the exam questions are written such that they are unlikely to cause “spit back.”

The expert witness, [Professor Monica Geller] was then asked about her perception of the
exam questions and whether she felt that the similarity of the responses could arise from merely studying together. [Professor Monica] responded that the questions asked were creatively designed and were not ones that students could anticipate in their studying. Furthermore, 3-4 pieces of information need to come together to answer the questions, making it highly unlikely that students would have identical paragraph structure such as [Phoebe] and [Joey] had. To this the students responded that they had taken all of their [CNPK] classes together and had the same academic background prior to enrolling at Haverford, and therefore they had learned to think in the same logic. They had also memorized responses together. [Ross] explained that it didn’t surprise him that the students would memorize responses together but that the similarity, given the complexity of the questions, was unjustifiable. He also explained that he had never used the second exam question. While he could see how they could get a partially similar answer using the notes they both used to study for question 3, this did not explain similarity on other parts of the question.

[Joey] again stated that he had never seen any of the questions prior to the exam. He brought in a copy of his phone records to demonstrate that he had made no calls during the exam. He stated that he received a C on the exam, and that if he had wished to be academically dishonest he would have used the web instead of collaborating with [Phoebe].

[Professor Ross] showed the students how their responses to question 1 both gave the least obvious of the four possible answers, which were moreover inconsistent with the notes they claimed to have studied. At this point, nobody present had anything more to add, and fact-finding closed and the jury entered deliberations.

The jury decided that they wished to speak to [Joey] and [Phoebe] without the confronting party’s presence. The jury thought that this might increase their comfort with the process and may bring to light new information. The jury reconvened with the two students for a second fact-finding, but no new information was presented. The jury then entered final deliberations on a statement of violation.

During deliberations the jury decided that while it did not want to accuse the students of lying about the extent of their collaboration, the evidence presented, discussion with all trial parties, and discussion with the impartial expert demonstrated a discrepancy. The jury found it hard to conceive of how multiple answers to mostly brand new questions that synthesize concepts could have been anticipated and memorized. Furthermore, the jury agreed that if the students had not collaborated during the actual exam, the collaboration beforehand was too close, such that their exam work did not demonstrate their own original thinking. Jurors agreed that “inappropriate collaboration” results in the production of unoriginal work, which goes against the spirit of academic integrity. The jury reached this conclusion after a long and thoughtful discussion, and even so the agreement to a violation of the Honor Code was not unanimous. The jury reached the following statement of violation:

“[Joey] and [Phoebe] violated the Honor Code by presenting work that resulted from inappropriate collaboration.” (nine jurors consented, one stood outside)
Circumstantial Portion and Tentative Resolutions:

The confronted party asked the jury to thoroughly explain how it had consented to the statement of violation, and each jury member answered individually. Fact-finding was lengthy and took place over two meetings, so many points were raised which would normally be discussed during circumstantial portion. The most notable of the circumstances were the stresses of finals week, the concern of both students about their performance in the course, and their background as international students with a very different academic tradition. The students still maintained that they did not collaborate during the exam, but they were willing to accept that their answers had been remarkably similar, which could suggest that their collaboration prior to the exam had surpassed what was usually acceptable. After reviewing the circumstances of the case, the trial moved on to proposed resolutions. [Professor Ross] was not present for this portion of the trial but sent the following message about his proposed resolutions:

Regarding suggested resolutions: I would suggest that since the violation was a collaboration, that both students receive a zero on that final. As the case pertains to this assignment alone, it seems logical for them to receive all points earned on other assignments in the class. I don't recollect what these are, but it is likely that they will not pass the class. Regarding restoration, I am still at unease with the event (and in the dark as to how it could have happened). Letters of apology to me and the other professor's co-teaching the course (last semester, not this semester, as they are the only ones aware of the incident) might ease things a bit, particularly if they explained what happened.

The chair read this message aloud. [Joey] and [Phoebe] agreed with the letter idea but felt that a zero on the entire exam was unfair because they felt that there were parts of the exam that did reflect their own individual understanding, and that it would be punitive to retract points on those sections. More specifically, [Joey] and [Phoebe] felt that they should be allowed to keep credit on questions 1 and 4.

Additionally, the jury discussed with the confronted party possible resolutions to address education.\(^1\) They agreed with the jury that developing study strategies to ensure their full academic integrity, and being prepared to avoid any violations of the Honor Code in the future, should be addressed in the resolutions. After hearing proposed resolutions from [Phoebe] and [Joey], the jury entered deliberations and composed the following tentative resolutions:

1. The jury recommends that marks on exams be adjusted to reflect individual understanding of the material. More specifically, the jury recommends that [Phoebe] and [Joey] receive a zero on questions 1-3. The jury recommends that [Phoebe] and [Joey] receive credit on question 4.
2. [Joey] and [Phoebe] will each consult with an OAR staff member to develop individual study strategies that encourage maintaining academic integrity.
3. [Joey] and [Phoebe] will each individually compose letters to the professors of

\(^1\) The goals of an Honor Council trial are education, restoration, and accountability; these were explained during the trial process.
Finalizing Resolutions:

During this portion, all of the resolutions were explained to [Joey] and [Phoebe]. There were no further questions or disagreements about resolutions. After [Joey], [Phoebe], and [Professor Ross] left, the jury consented to the following resolutions:

1. The jury recommends that marks on exams be adjusted to reflect individual understanding of the material. More specifically, the jury recommends that [Phoebe] and [Joey] receive a zero on questions 1-3. The jury recommends that [Phoebe] and [Joey] receive credit on question 4. (All jurors consented.)
2. [Joey] and [Phoebe] will each consult with an OAR staff member to develop individual study strategies that encourage maintaining academic integrity. (All jurors consented.)
3. [Joey] and [Phoebe] will each individually compose letters to the professors of [CNPK200: Topics About Central Perk] explaining their actions surrounding their violation of the Honor Code as well as their experiences with the restorative process. (All jurors consented.)
4. [Joey] and [Phoebe] will each individually compose a letter to the community to be released with the abstract explaining how their understanding of appropriate collaboration changed during the trial process. (All jurors consented.)
5. The jury recommends that this process not be reported on applications to institutions of higher education. (All jurors consented.)

Resolutions as a whole: All jurors consented.

Post-Trial:

Letter to the Community:
Dear Haverford community,

I am writing to discuss my thoughts on appropriate collaboration. In the class [CNPK200], I collaborated inappropriately with another student. I am really regretful of what I have done. I am remorse of my act and its consequences. Ever since I came to Haverford, I considered the Honor Code to be a very important aspect of Haverford. I never thought one day I would break the honor code. I am deeply apologetic to the Haverford community and professor.

Before I was brought on the trial, I never thought that inappropriate collaboration ever existed. My [CNPK200] class was a challenge for me since I have never been taught in such a way that
open-ended questions would be asked in exams. I was taught that the way to prepare for the exam on this particular subject is to remember all the notes and key concepts on the textbook. During the preparation for the exam, I collaborated with another student to memorize all the concepts and notes. For some of the concepts, we did not fully understand the logic behind them and simply memorized the answers. During the trial, I realized that I should not have written down answers without fully understanding them, as one’s work should represent one’s own understanding. What I have done was a mistake. Learning is not about being able to answer all the questions on the exam, but to grasp new knowledge. Collaboration should be based on the fact that both parties understand the concepts, not simply memorizing the notes.

I have learnt my mistakes during the trial process and have deeper understanding of collaboration. I should take the responsibility to follow this system of trust when I sign on the honor code that “I hereby accept the Haverford Honor Code, realizing that it is my duty to uphold the Honor Code and the concepts of personal and collective responsibility upon which it is based.” I would like to again apologize for what I have done and would like to redeem the breach of trust in the Haverford community.

**Discussion Questions:**
1. How would you define “inappropriate collaboration”?
2. What can Haverford do to help international students adjust to its expectations of academic work?
3. Might the outcome of the trial have been different if the jury were formed without the multicultural juror requirements?