Amoury and Professor Chilmark

An Honor Council Academic Trial

Abstract Released Fall 2002

Abstract Discussion:

October 10, 2002 at 12.30 and 7.30 in the Sunken Lounge

Introduction: Amoury was a student in Professor Chilmark's class. Amoury handed in an assignment to Professor Chilmark with several passages that the Professor suspected were not Amoury's work. After confronting Amoury and agreeing to contact Honor Council, both parties submitted statements. Honor Council came to consensus on a suspicion of violation.

Fact Finding:

Professor Chilmark's statement:

Professor Chilmark assigned his class a written assignment in which primary sources were allowed to support arguments presented in the paper. After reading Amoury's paper, the professor noticed a sentence that seemed out of place. The wording was awkward and uncharacteristic of Amoury's work. Amoury's argument itself within the suspicious passage was unrelated to the topic at hand. Professor Chilmark ran a search on the internet, resulting in the discovery of several documents that matched certain passages in Amoury's paper both in word and in idea. Amoury included no citations or quotes regarding the passages in question. Professor Chilmark contacted Honor Council after confronting Amoury.

Amoury's Statement

Amoury stated that he found the idea behind the disputed passage from the internet. He stated that he was correctly incorporating outside sources within the boundaries described at the start of the assignment, as he understood them. Amoury explained that he assumed plagiarism meant the direct, word-for-word copying of material from an outside source. Amoury explained that at the time he wrote the paper, he did not consider using an idea from a secondary source and putting it in his own words an act of plagiarism.

Jury Questions:

The jury asked a number of clarifying questions in order to better understand the situation.

Jury Deliberations:

The jury viewed the passage in question both on Amoury's paper and from the source he used from the internet. The jury agreed that the passage constituted plagiarism as no citations or quotes were used to separate Amoury's argument from that of the author on the internet. The jury
was also concerned with Amoury's statement that he did not regard his use of another person's idea in his paper as plagiarism. Though Amoury did not always use the internet document verbatim in his own paper, the jury considered his passage in question to be plagiarized because it used another person's unique idea and scholarship. The instructions of the professor were not followed as he did not use a primary source. The jury focused on the plagiarism itself as the primary issue at hand and came to consensus on the following statement of violation.

**Statement of Violation:**

By presenting another person's work as his own, the student committed an act of plagiarism.

**Circumstantial:**

*Professor Chilmark's Statement:*

The Chair of the trial explained to the jury that the professor was contacted. He did not attend the circumstantial portion. No new issues were raised with regards to the statement.

*Amoury's Statement:*

Amoury stated that he accepted the jury's finding, though reiterated his understanding of plagiarism at the time he wrote the paper. He explained that he still had a good working relationship with the professor.

**Jury Deliberation:**

The jury deliberated at the length how to address accountability regarding class and paper grade reductions. The jury was in disagreement over whether Amoury should fail both the paper and the course, just the paper, or just the course. Other jurors felt Amoury should receive up to the minimum passing grade for the course, leaving open the possibility that Amoury could fail the course, but not making that determination as a jury. Issues discussed included the possibility of how a failure in the course could affect the student's major. Deliberation touched briefly on separation, though the statement of violation did not state the act of plagiarism was "gross," which usually results in separation. The jury took note of the fact that a positive working relationship existed between both Professor Chilmark and Amoury. Finally, the jury wished to address within its resolutions education regarding the use of outside sources in papers and how to correctly cite, incorporate, and quote outside passages and sources. The jury came to preliminary consensus on the following resolutions.
Resolutions:

1. The student will receive a 0.0 on the paper.

2. The student will receive a grade no higher than a 1.0 for the course.

3. The student will meet with the professor with the goal of re-working the paper until both parties are satisfied that he has a sound knowledge of proper usage of secondary sources and the distinction between an original argument and representing another person's work as his own.

Presentation of Resolutions:

Both parties were unable to meet with the jury for a formal presentation of resolutions, and thus both parties were contacted through email with the resolutions. The jury again discussed the resolutions after the required break from the case, and came to final consensus on the resolutions above.

Questions:

Did the jury adequately address accountability, repairing a breach of trust, and education?

Should the jury have addressed as a violation the fact that Amoury did not follow instructions regarding the usage of primary vs. secondary sources?

Should Amoury have failed the course?