Abstract Discussions Tuesday, April 15 and Wednesday, April 16 at 8:00 PM in Zubrow

Antigone and Professor Sophocles
An Honor Council Academic Trial
Released April 2008
This abstract was not released in accordance with the abstract timeline in the Constitution.

Introduction:
After reading Antigone’s final paper for his Ancient Greek Theater course, Professor Sophocles concluded that the work was not her own. An internet search on his part turned up a copy of the paper in English, which led him to confront her via a phone call over break. He expressed his suspicions that she had plagiarized the entirety of the paper, as well as the first paragraph of a shorter paper that had been due earlier that week. Antigone, a Bryn Mawr student, admitted to both acts of plagiarism and brought herself to Haverford’s Honor Council, at the instruction of her dean. Both parties then submitted formal statements to Honor Council.

Fact Finding:
Professor Sophocles’ Statement:
In speaking to the jury, Professor Sophocles reiterated the claims of his written statement: that he suspected Antigone’s final paper of having been plagiarized because of its exceptional quality. Additionally, he believed the essay sounded like it had originally been written in English and then translated into Ancient Greek. He confirmed his suspicions by finding the essay (in English) on the Internet. He then searched for another paper she had handed in earlier in the week and found the first paragraph online as well.

Antigone’s Statement:
Antigone told the jury that she had little to add to her formal statement and the comments of Professor Sophocles. She admitted to both instances of plagiarism: translating an entire paper from English to Ancient Greek, and directly taking a paragraph from an online essay and using it word-for-word in the shorter paper. Antigone reiterated how poor her decisions to plagiarize had been and expressed her hope that she would get a chance to regain the community’s trust.

After opening the floor for questions from the jury, it was established that Antigone’s final paper consisted of a translation of an English essay into Ancient Greek and contained no original work of her own. Only the first paragraph of the shorter essay had been plagiarized.

One juror asked Antigone if she had ever plagiarized before, and although this question pertained more to the circumstantial portion, Antigone answered before the Chair could instruct her to postpone her response. She stated that she had plagiarized on a response paper the previous year, an incident which had resulted in a Bryn Mawr Honor Board trial.
Jury Deliberations:

With both Antigone and Professor Sophocles in agreement that there was a violation of the Honor Code and since their accounts as to the extent of the plagiarism were consistent, there was little debate that a violation had indeed occurred. The jury discussed the use of the phrase “gross plagiarism.” The jury concluded that although Antigone’s act might constitute gross plagiarism, a more precise formulation was possible. Based on the fact that Antigone’s plagiarism spanned two papers, and that both acts were intentional, the jury came to the following statement of violation. No jury members stood outside consensus on the statement.

Statement of Violation:

We find that Antigone has violated the Haverford Honor Code by committing acts of plagiarism in two separate papers. Both acts were intentional; taken together they constitute extensive plagiarism.

Circumstantial Portion:
Antigone explained to the jury the circumstances that surrounded her decision to plagiarize. She began by noting that no circumstances could possibly excuse her actions, calling her behavior the result of “stupid decisions” for which she took full responsibility. She noted that in both the previous case at Bryn Mawr and the current case, the periods during which she plagiarized were marked by a great deal of stress, which she felt contributed to her decisions to plagiarize.

Antigone had very positive things to say about Professor Sophocles, but acknowledged that she had felt trapped by her fears that she would not be able to do work at the high level that he expected. She had a solid grasp of the material for her final paper, but had not been certain of how to structure her ideas in order to write it. She added that the paper did not count for much of the final grade and that she had done well enough throughout the semester that she could have passed the course without writing a paper at all.

Jury Questions:
When asked about her relationship with Professor Sophocles after the confrontation, Antigone said that she thought that it was “good,” despite the breach of trust and the pain that her actions had caused him. After the confrontation, Antigone had decided not to take a course that he was teaching even though she had registered for it. Since then, however, she said that Professor Sophocles had been very supportive of her and had offered himself as a resource for whenever she had personal or academic concerns, including assistance with papers. When the jury questioned Antigone about her previous plagiarism, it became evident that the cases differed somewhat; the first instance resulted from stress over a personal issue, which had also forced her to miss several weeks of school.
A juror asked Antigone if she always thought about plagiarism when she was in an academically stressful period. She said that she did, but feeling that “obviously, [she was] just bad at plagiarizing” usually dissuaded her. When asked whether she had considered turning herself in, Antigone answered that her actions “weighed on her” because of how much she liked Professor Sophocles, but that she probably would never have turned herself in because it would have been a disappointment to him, and because knowing that it would be her second trial had made her anxious about the consequences.

When asked to present suggestions for resolutions, Antigone suggested the publication of an abstract to educate the community. She did not want to be separated from Bryn Mawr, but she said she would understand if the jury did not want her to have further academic involvement with Haverford. Antigone admitted that separation from Haverford would be a blow to her academic career, as she had hoped to major at Haverford and she would like to take another class with Professor Sophocles at some point. Antigone also mentioned that her family would not allow her to take time away from academics and she would enroll in another school if she left Bryn Mawr for a semester.

**Deliberations:**
Professor Sophocles declined to offer any suggested resolutions, which deprived the jury of an opportunity to gauge how he was feeling about the trial process and Antigone’s violation. However, due to the timing of the trial, he had already given Antigone a failing grade for the course and had begun to work with her to restore their relationship, two of the areas in which juries are often most guided by professors’ suggested resolutions.

The jury discussed the resolutions that Antigone had suggested and a number of others brought forward by jurors. They believed that Antigone needed to work on stress management and felt that meeting with her dean would be the best way to identify all her options. The jury also felt a letter from Antigone about her experience would educate the community and give Antigone a public forum in which to voice her reflections on her plagiarism and on the trial process.

Jurors felt that separation seemed like a necessary part of holding Antigone accountable for her actions and bringing her to further reflection. Though the jury was initially most interested in separation from Haverford, they began to seriously consider separation from Bryn Mawr as well. There was uncertainty as to whether this was within the jury’s power, but most felt that it was necessary to at least strongly recommend it to the Bryn Mawr deans. They were concerned by the fact that Antigone had already been through the trial process for an academic issue and had plagiarized again, this time extensively. However, they also believed that if Antigone were prevented from further engagement with the academic community at Haverford through multiple semesters of separation she would merely be made “Bryn Mawr’s problem.” A shorter period of separation from both schools (rather than a longer separation from only Haverford) would result in a better process of restoration to the Haverford community. Jurors also felt strongly that the way that separation would be viewed by the community members reading the abstract would be both educational and restorative.
Jurors felt strongly that Antigone needed to reflect on the meaning of the Honor Code and how she would feel rejoining the community after her separation. They eventually settled on a request that she contact the Co-Chairs of Honor Council with a statement of commitment to the Code as she returned to Haverford after separation.

**Tentative Resolutions:**

With all jurors consenting, the jury reached the following Tentative Resolutions:

1. **Antigone will be separated from Haverford for 1 semester, 2 if she is not separated from Bryn Mawr.**
2. **We recommend that Antigone be separated from Bryn Mawr for 1 semester.**
3. **Antigone will meet with her dean to discuss options for stress management.**
4. **Antigone will write a letter to the community upon her return from separation.**
5. **Antigone will contact the Honor Council chair(s) with a statement of commitment to the Honor Code upon her return from separation.**

Antigone and Professor Sophocles were contacted with the tentative resolutions. Upon meeting again, the jury changed the wording of the fifth resolution to allow for Antigone to rejoin the community and abide by both Honor Codes without necessarily supporting them fully. The Jury also decided that this commitment to abide by the Code should be a condition for her return to the community. They then consented to all of the resolutions.

Upon reconvening, both parties supported the resolutions and called them fair. Antigone noted that she trusted the jury’s judgment, but she found it difficult not to see the resolutions as being punitive, although she understood that there must necessarily be consequences to her actions. Jurors explained their reasoning behind the resolutions and added that they hoped that after her separation she would feel that the community trusted her again, and that she was a member of the community who fully deserved that trust.

**Final Resolutions:**

Jurors discussed and continued to support all the resolutions, including separation. The jury considered how their resolutions worked toward the goals of education, restoration, and accountability, commenting that the resolutions fulfilled those goals “to the best of [the jury’s] ability,” and that they should not necessarily expect Antigone to like the resolutions. Jurors also felt that there was nothing more that they could do to restore the relationship between the parties, since they seemed to be restoring the relationship on their own. The jury consented to each of the following final resolutions individually and as a whole, with no members standing outside of consensus:

1. **Antigone will be separated from Haverford College for one semester, two if not separated from Bryn Mawr College.**
2. **We recommend that Antigone be separated from Bryn Mawr College for one semester.**
3. **Antigone will meet with her dean to discuss options for stress management to be implemented starting this semester.**
4. **Antigone will write a letter to the community upon her return from separation.**
5. Antigone will contact the (Co-)Chair(s) of Honor Council to express her willingness to abide by the Code in order to return to the Haverford community.

Post-Trial
After the trial the Chair presented Antigone with her letter of final resolutions. Antigone had already met with her dean, who had informed her that Bryn Mawr wished not only to uphold the resolution to separate, but planned to extend the period of separation from one to two semesters. Honor Council was concerned by this decision; the jury had been clear in its recommendation of one semester, and while the decision to extend the separation was certainly within the power of Bryn Mawr’s administration, it was a decision being made by individuals who had not been involved in the trial. The Chair contacted Antigone’s dean at Bryn Mawr to express Council’s concern and to learn more about why the decision had been made. The dean reported that at Bryn Mawr a year-long separation was customary for students leaving the College for either academic or psychological reasons, both of which she felt may have been at play in Antigone’s case, but on hearing the Chair’s and Council’s continued concerns, she suggested that Bryn Mawr’s Honor Board might review the case. The Chair and the jury’s liaison met with the Head and a member of Bryn Mawr’s Honor Board to present the case to them and give them a copy of the full, written Chair’s report. Ultimately, Bryn Mawr’s deans decided that an extension to two semesters of separation would only have been appropriate had Psychological Services made such a recommendation. Regardless of the outcome, members of the Honor Board and Honor Council and deans on both campuses began to meet to clarify and standardize procedures for use in future cases.

Discussion Questions:
1. What is the role of a Haverford jury in determining how a student should repair a breach of trust with the Bryn Mawr community?
2. Could or should there be some kind of joint Bryn Mawr-Haverford jury for a trial of a Bryn Mawr student at Haverford (and vice versa)?
3. Does the restoration of trust between the confronted party and the jury also constitute a restoration of trust with the greater community? To what extent should juries consider the expectations of the community when determining resolutions?
4. How much should a jury consider what somebody would do while separated when considering separation as a possible resolution?
Dear Community,

I am writing to you all to express my sentiments regarding my experience in breaking the honor code and consequently having to face the Honor Council. I will not get into the details concerning my case, but I will say that I have learnt a great deal from my experience.

Having broken the Honor Code, I had to face the consequence and those began with dealing with the Honor Council. Before I express my sentiments towards the whole process, I do want to assure the community that I do feel I have grown from this but there were many aspects throughout my trial that left a bitter taste in my mouth.

One should know that when one faces the Honor Council, one also faces a randomly selected jury from the community. Although this might seem normal and beneficial to the process, I believe that it works against the defendant’s anonymity. About 10 people or more had to decide what was to be done with me and my case, two of them or so only being on the Honor Council and the rest of them being ordinary members of the community. This was very difficult for me as I felt that although this jury had been sworn to secrecy, they apparently could still inform their friends or roommates if they became suspicious of their involvement in the trial. This is an issue that seriously posed a problem for me. I definitely feel that I really had no control over who knew my business. Ultimately, I am convinced that my anonymity was compromised at one point or another in some way or another.

Although the process was relatively fair, looking back I do feel that the Honor Council contradicted itself by assuring me that the process would not be punitive and then punish me. I fully accept responsibility for my actions but do feel that as much as they claimed to want my input and feelings towards the process, they very well knew that even my input was being judged by the jury. Ultimately, I believe that the trial process etc…is in need of great ameliorations.

Like I previously stated, this has been a growth experience for me. Like they say, “you live and you learn”, well I surely learnt my lesson. I believe that everything happens for a reason and that one must always gracefully accept the consequences of their actions, but since it was demanded of me to write a truthful letter to the community about my sentiments and experience in dealing with a trial, then here is it. I want to clarify that this is in no way an attack on that jury or the members of the council, it is merely my opinion based on my experience. I wish for not one to have to face a trial and wish the new Honor Council all the best in their endeavors.