Gustav and Natalia
Honor Council Academic Trial
Abstract Released Fall 2001
Abstract Discussion: Tuesday, Oct. 2, 1 p.m. in the Bryn Mawr Room (DC)
Tuesday, Oct. 2, 10:15 p.m. in Founders Common Room

Note: Two abstract discussions are being held to allow faculty to attend. Both discussions are open to the entire community.

Introduction: After receiving Gustav’s final exam, Professor Natalia noticed several sections that appeared to be heavily plagiarized. Because of this, Professor Natalia looked at a previous paper submitted by Gustav and found instances of plagiarism in that paper as well, following which she asked him to contact Honor Council. Council discussed the statements, and came to consensus on a suspicion of violation.

Fact Finding: The events in this trial were somewhat confusing, and so a timeline has been inserted below.

Professor Natalia shared her statement with the jury first.

Professor Natalia’s Statement: Professor Natalia first encountered a documentation problem in one of the papers that Gustav had submitted, noticing that he had paraphrased parts of a work discussed in class to build his paper without citing the source. She asked him to resubmit the paper with proper documentation, and accompanied her request with a packet on how to properly document a paper. The documentation she requested was completed, and the paper handed back in.

Later in the semester, Gustav e-mailed what he thought was the final exam to Professor Natalia with the promise of several other e-mails and attachments to come, but when she opened the attachment, she found a revised version of a previous paper, not the final exam. She never received more e-mails and never got a hardcopy of the exam before Gustav left for break. A short time later, his dean was able to track him down and explain the problem to him, and Gustav said he would find the exam and e-mail it as soon as possible. This happened three days later, but still before grades for the course were due. His dean advised Professor Natalia not to read the paper, for it had in fact been turned in past the exam due date.

Professor Natalia followed this advice and gave Gustav a 0.0 for the course. Gustav told her that he believed he had sent the exam before he left, not realizing that he had in fact sent a revised version of an earlier paper. He explained that when he went to print the document out in a computer lab (after sending the first e-mail from his room), he found that his disk was corrupted, and that he could not access most of his files. The student worker in the computer lab where he had sent the paper confirmed that he had in fact lost some files that day, but could not remember which files were lost. In light of this, Professor Natalia decided to read the paper. As she did so, she found indications that the work was largely plagiarized, and by using the internet she discovered several sources that had been copied into the exam word for word. After this, she went back to his previous paper and found more sections that had been copied both word for word and in heavy paraphrase.
The professor explained that Gustav's transgressions on the exam were exacerbated by the instructions for the exam that prohibited using the internet or the library for anything more than background research, and this necessarily excluded using either as a source for the exam.

**Gustav's Statement:** Gustav started by recognizing that he did in fact plagiarize on the final exam, but that he did so without any malicious intent. He then explained the situation that he found himself in around that time. He generally put off his work until the last minute and had left this exam until the very end of the exam period under the impression that the exam was limited to 3 hours of work. Believing that research through the internet was permitted, he studied ahead of time by looking on the internet for information pertaining to the subject, and took hand-written notes (often word for word) from what he found. When he picked up the exam, he discovered that it wasn't a timed exam. Faced with very little time to work, Gustav typed up what he had written in his notes in order to complete the exam. He explained that he couldn't distinguish his thoughts from those he had found when looking over his notes, and therefore couldn't document his sources.

When he couldn't open the paper to print it, he e-mailed an attachment to Professor Natalia and left it at that, for he had gotten an e-mail from her saying she wouldn't be in her office, and he had to leave for home.

He explained that he had followed a similar method in preparing for the earlier plagiarized paper. He again found himself with little time, and so just used what was in his notes to complete the paper.

The jury then asked both Professor Natalia and Gustav several questions to get the following information.

Professor Natalia handed out and explained the questions as well as the instructions for the final in class. Gustav said he was there, but didn't recall this discussion. He clarified that he had sent the first attachment from his room, and then went to print the paper in a computer lab when his disk crashed.

When Gustav was asked by Professor Natalia to add documentation to the first paper, he did not think about the possibility that he might have needed more documentation than the one source Professor Natalia had mentioned. This is why he did not document his other sources in his revision. Gustav saw his use of the internet as an effort to gain a background perspective on the material, but then felt forced to use it in his paper because of the time crunch.

Professor Natalia gained confidence that the exam was plagiarized due to an abrupt style shift in the writing to that of a graduate student, and this was the impetus that led her to check the rest of the exam more rigorously.

**Jury Deliberations**

Professor Natalia provided the jury with the paper and the exam and bolded the sections that she felt were paraphrased or copied, and gave the URLs for the sources. In order to determine the extent of the plagiarism on the two papers, the jury looked at these websites. In reading through the purportedly plagiarized sections of the paper and comparing them with the internet sources, it became clear that significant portions of both works had been taken from the work of others. Some sections were paraphrased (usually with only slight modifications from the original source), while others were copied word for word. The jury was then left to determine how serious the plagiarism was by examining the amount and pervasiveness of the copied material in the two works. Because such large portions (sometimes whole paragraphs) throughout the paper and final exam were word-for-word and paraphrased quotations, without documentation, the jury came to consensus on the following statements of violation:

- The student violated the Honor Code by grossly plagiarizing a paper.
- The student violated the Honor Code by grossly plagiarizing the final exam.
Circumstantial Portion

The jury reconvened with the confronted and confronting parties and asked for circumstantial information to aid the jury in finding appropriate resolutions. Each party was also asked to suggest resolutions to address the issues of accountability, education and repairing the breach of trust.

The jury heard from Professor Natalia first.

Professor Natalia felt that Gustav never truly recognized what he had done before the trial took place. She suggested that he be required to undergo a psychiatric evaluation prior to being able to reenter the Haverford community. This recommendation was motivated by what she saw to be a massive denial of the true nature of his violation. She also asked that the student be separated for two semesters.

Gustav started by explaining that it had been easy for him to succeed in high school, and that he had adapted to a stable environment there. Because of this, entering Haverford was a very difficult adjustment to learning a new way of doing things and dealing with a heavier workload. He wanted to make the people around him (family, friends etc) happy, and consequently spread himself very thin in order to do this. At first, he did fairly well academically, but his parents urged him to do better. The following semester, his grades went down, and he hid his poor performance from his parents and friends. He wanted to solve his problems on his own and didn't want anyone to know that he was struggling. To keep up an appearance of well-being, Gustav focused on doing well in areas that others would notice, and found that he could let his academics go without anyone knowing.

Gustav’s mother found his grades, and was understanding about his problem. They agreed to not tell his father about his academic troubles because Gustav was afraid of letting him down. Gustav saw this as a big obstacle that kept him from getting his work done, for it weighed on his mind. He did just enough work to get by in that semester. If he had put something off too long, he usually would not hand it in due to the poor quality of the work. He finally confided in one of his professors about his problems, hoping for another resource in dealing with his problems. The professor trivialized his problems and said that he didn't belong at Haverford.

In the subsequent semester, Gustav was still putting off his work as much as possible, but he was now handing in everything that he did regardless of the quality of the work. It was during this time that he plagiarized the two works. After committing the first plagiarism, Gustav had blocked out what he had done, and so when asked to revise the paper and add documentation, he believed that all he had to do was provide the documentation Professor Natalia asked for, and did not document the other sources he had used.

He also blocked out his plagiarism on the final after leaving for break, and told the jury that he was glad Professor Natalia had called him on it because it forced him to confront the ways in which he was deceiving himself. This realization led him to seek counseling. He also disclosed that after Professor Natalia had made the accusations, she told him she did not want any contact from him or his parents anymore, until the matter went to trial.

Gustav also had more information to give to the jury that cannot be included in this abstract for reasons related to confidentiality.

He closed his statement by affirming that all these informative tidbits merely serve to explain his state of mind during the time when the plagiarism took place, and that he does not see them in any way clearing or condoning his actions.

The jury asked him for resolutions that he felt would be appropriate to address the concerns of the jury and the community. He suggested failing the course, continuing his counseling, undergoing separation, writing a letter
to the community and rewriting the two plagiarized documents. He also indicated his desire to be involved in some way with the community when he returns, through Students' or Honor Council, Eighth Dimension or something along those lines. He stated his intentions to continue his education outside of Haverford in order to ensure that he will be capable of handling the workload once he returns.

**Jury Deliberation**

In deciding on resolutions, the jury is trying to address the following three concerns: accountability, education and repairing the breach of trust (with the professor and the community). These discussions are based on the facts of what the confronted party actually did and the severity of the resolutions is mitigated by the circumstances surrounding the violation.

In regard to separation, the jury found itself trying to determine to what extent the student needed to be held accountable. Because there were two plagiarisms involved, the jury felt that only one semester would not be sufficient, though it did have reservations about separating the student for a full year. Ultimately, the jury decided that two semesters were necessary because of the extent of plagiarism. The jury also recommended to Professor Natalia that the student receive a 0.0 for the course in order to hold him accountable in another way.

The jury felt that an extremely serious rift had formed between the professor and the student, and searched for ways in which this breach of trust could be repaired. It seemed that Gustav and Professor Natalia had many issues between them that needed to be aired and addressed, and so the jury came up with the idea of a mediated dialogue that would take place either during the student's separation or following his return. The jury also discussed the possibility of the student rewriting the two works that he had plagiarized, both in order to show the professor his ability to write a paper in his own words as well as to give him practice in using his own ideas to construct the arguments made.

There was much heated discussion on the jury in regards to the suggestion of Professor Natalia that the student be required to undergo psychiatric evaluation prior to his reentry. The discussion turned to whether or not it is the jury's place to dictate the recovery of a student or require him to undergo any sort of counseling or evaluation at all. Juror 1 felt very strongly that this could be valuable for his rehabilitation and Juror 2 felt very strongly that it is unacceptable for anyone other than the student to decide the course of his treatment. Juror 1 attempted to stand outside of consensus on the resolutions after several hours, but was strongly discouraged by several jurors from doing this, and so reached consensus without any mention of these issues in the resolutions.

The last area that the jury needed to deal with was how Gustav would repair the breach of trust he had created with the community, and felt this would be best served with a letter to the community. In order to avoid the inflammatory outcome of Hamlet's letter, the jury also attempted to give the letter some direction and specificity, while trying to strike a balance such that the jury was not telling him what to say or how to say it. The jury also decided that Gustav should meet with his dean before returning in order to assure that he is capable of reentering the community.

Following many hours of deliberation on these issues, the jury reached consensus on the following tentative resolutions.

1. The student will be separated for the next two consecutive semesters.
2. The student will receive a 0.0 for the course.
3. During the separation, the professor and student will engage in a mediated dialogue with the goal of repairing the breach of trust.
4. The student will rewrite the paper and retake the final exam. Both will be submitted to the

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1 Refer to the *Hamlet and Polonious* abstract released in Spring 2001.
professor for evaluation with no credit.

5. Before returning from separation, the student will meet with his dean to facilitate his reentry into the community.

6. The student will write a letter to the community reflecting on how his actions caused a breach of trust with the students and faculty of the Haverford community.

The jury reconvened with Gustav and presented the resolutions to him (Professor Natalia could not attend, but sent her thoughts on the resolutions to the chair of the trial). Gustav was disturbed by his two-semester separation and felt that that was too much time for him to spend away from Haverford. He requested that the length be reduced to one semester, though he indicated that he well understood why the jury saw two semesters as necessary. All the other resolutions sounded appropriate and reasonable to Gustav.

Professor Natalia explained that she could not accept the third and fourth resolutions (the mediated dialogue and reading the papers) for personal reasons. She also felt that the student’s attitude about the plagiarism was evasive and that as such they could not come to any understanding, for she felt that they held irreconcilable views of the events and the motivation behind the plagiarism.

Following these presentations, the jury then met to decide if the resolutions needed to be adjusted and if so, in what way.

**Stage Two Jury Deliberations**

Professor Natalia felt that Gustav had never really understood the full nature of his violation, and at this point, she did not feel that it was right for the two of them to attempt direct contact required by resolution numbers three and four. The jury recognized that she could not be asked to take part in the resolutions, and so changed the third and fourth resolutions to facilitate that by making the dialogue a written one and having the papers instead submitted to Gustav’s dean.

The jury got the sense from Gustav’s response to the tentative resolutions that he did not have a full grasp on the gravity of his violation. It seemed he felt that once he had fixed the circumstances surrounding the plagiarism, he had finished the process necessary to reenter the community. Because of this, the jury tried to find another way for Gustav to come to better understand why plagiarism was such a serious offence when taken out of the context of his personal situation and circumstances. To try and address this, the jury came up with the idea of having Gustav do a project that would make him work with the issue of academic integrity in some way. Possibilities suggested to him were tutoring children and keeping a journal of his experience in doing that, and presenting that journal as the project, though the jury stressed that the design and nature of the project were totally up to him, as long as he was augmenting his understanding of academic integrity in some way.

Following these deliberations, the jury reached final consensus on the following set of resolutions.

1. The student will be separated for the next two consecutive semesters.
2. The student will receive a 0.0 for the course.
3. The professor and student will engage in a mediated, written dialogue with the goal of repairing the breach of trust.
4. The student will rewrite the paper and retake the final exam. Both will be submitted to his dean for evaluation with no credit.
5. During his separation, the student will design and complete a project addressing the importance of academic integrity and incorporating his experiences away from Haverford.
6. Before returning from separation, the student will meet with his dean to facilitate his reentry into the community.
7. The student will write a letter to the community reflecting on how his actions caused a breach of trust with the students and faculty of the Haverford community.

Questions

1.) Should there be / Is there a "statute of limitations" on how long a student can be confronted about plagiarism?

2.) What is an Honor Council jury's jurisdiction when it comes to psychological evaluation and treatment?

3.) To what extent are professors bound to the resolutions (aside from grades) that the jury presents them with? Should they have any obligation to fulfill them? Under the Honor Code? As members of the community?

4.) Is the basic starting point of "one semester of separation per plagiarized paper/exam" valid?

5.) Should there be a limit to the number of resolutions allowed when addressing serious violations?