Gilmore Girls Abstract Discussion Minutes from February 23, 2011

Present: Anna Brockway, Florencia Foxley, Jacob Horn, Jacob Axelrod, Alex Tonsing, Lizzie Douglas, Kate Mahoney, and MaeBeth Fentress

1. Introductions

2. General Comments
   a. Anna – Student who was doing all she could to keep up in this class and was failed by resources at Haverford. Do you guys think this is a problem? Do you think that stress is enough of a reason to do this?
   b. JLH – I feel like this was like the Dora abstract, but is incredibly lenient. Not to say that the jury should have been less forgiving, but wonders about the premise behind the issue.
   c. JA – The problem with that is that there are three violations – lying, plagiarism, and stealing. Understands the rationale, but it was a very serious violation.
      i. Anna – So do you think the jury took stress too much in consideration?
      ii. JA – can’t say for sure because I wasn’t on the jury, but would have preferred if the fact-finding had focused more on the violation itself and then talked about the stress. The stress superseded the act, took over the procedure.
   d. Lizzie – I know it says that she had anxiety in the past, but everyone is stressed. She could have withdrawn or taken it p/f and reacted to the situation better before the final.
      i. Florencia – but she was trying to take it for a minor, then she had to take it for a grade
      ii. Lizzie – I guess I’m biased because I took a class for a minor p/f
      iii. MaeBeth – you can take a class p/f for a minor at Bryn Mawr.
   e. Anna – So the stress was inappropriate?
      i. JA – that’s what we sound like, but I just mean that the stress took over the procedure, like the resolutions took second place to the stress
      ii. Alex – I think it would be nice to try to separate the stress from the Fact-Finding, but when it is such a pressing concern, you can’t just tell someone to stop being stressed.
      iii. JA – But if you look at the resolutions, there is little accountability.
      iv. Florencia – but the jury had to look at the broader picture, because it’s absurd that someone was struggling so much and not getting access to the resources she needed. Have to fix the system.
      v. Anna – I agree with Florencia, the system failed this student and the abstract is written in such a way to garner this sympathy. I think there is a distinction between saying I was stressed out, and it
added to why I cheated and all the things that were supposed to help me failed me, thus I was stressed out.

vi. Lizzie – I agree, but like JLH said, if you aren’t going to be sympathetic to Dora, don’t be sympathetic to Rory.
   1. Anna and Alex – but there are different juries
   2. JA – the juries aren’t supposed to be objective, or be driven by precedent. But it is a flaw of the system, and is strange and frustrating.

vii. JLH – I feel insensitive feeling this way, and I can’t fully understand what she went to, but I have to wonder if you are finding all these things unhelpful, there have to be warning signs that you have to take into account and withdraw, or whatever. I wouldn’t feel right saying that the college didn’t do enough to get me a good grade. I think the issue was a lot more serious than the jury treated it. The trial doesn’t address the “stealing” from the professor. I don’t know to what extent you can hold the school accountable for your failing a class.
   1. MaeBeth – and that stands even when a dean and professor are telling you not to quit and that you can do it?
      a. JLH – I guess that’s a fair point. But still.
   2. MaeBeth – what do you think about the fact that as a Bryn Mawr student, she was not prepared to take this class? The departments are so different and do not prepare you to take classes at Haverford.
      a. JLH – I don’t think it’s a fair system to have deans telling you that, but I don’t think it makes plagiarism ok.
   3. Lizzie – There are so many options leading into the class to not be in this situation. You have to accept that you are held to the standards of the institution
   4. Florencia – But being told incorrect or not any information about the resources available to you is totally unacceptable. Deans are there to help you, it’s their job. Same with professors.

f. Anna – to what extent should professors be responsible for helping students?
   i. Alex – I think it’s their job. If a student reaches out to you, you have to teach the student.
   ii. Jacob – did the student vocalize that the sessions weren’t helpful? Because otherwise what can the professor do?
   iii. MaeBeth – The issue happened that everyone knew she was going to fail, but no one said she was allowed to quit. Not for lack of support from the professor, but for lack of support on the part of the institution (mostly Bryn Mawr). She needed more pushing from the professor to join study groups, but if a dean is telling you don’t withdraw, I wouldn’t. Would you?

These minutes reflect the opinions of Florencia Foxley and Ian Gavigan, the Council Co-Secretaries (ffoxley@hc or igavigan@hc) and are neither approved nor reviewed by the rest of Council. Questions/comments? Email code@hc!
iv. Lizzie – it also has to do with your experiences, if you are used to having people help you, you would be sympathetic; but if you came from a tougher background, you would be less sympathetic.

v. MaeBeth – Well if you think she didn’t do enough, how should the resolutions reflect that?

3. Resolutions
   a. JA – I find it hard to believe that if you fail a final exam in a class for which you are already in danger of failing, that you ended up passing the class.
      i. MaeBeth – I think the jury agreed with you
   b. JLH – I’m shocked that separation wasn’t at least discussed
   c. Lizzie – Not sure if you can make someone talk to a professional, but maybe that should have been considered, how to handle her anxiety.
      i. Anna – I don’t think saying you need to work through your issues so you can take more classes is really relevant, considering that she is a senior.
   d. MaeBeth – we can also only separate a BM student from Haverford.
   e. Lizzie – I don’t think they should have been more lenient with her because she was in her last semester
      i. Anna – but you could argue that separating her as a second semester senior would be way more harsh than if she was a sophomore.
      ii. Alex – I hate saying that some things go for one year and not another, but I agree. A senior would have an incredible hard time transferring, whereas a sophomore would not
   f. JLH – I don’t think she should have been separated, but the fact that it wasn’t even discussed sends a message to the community about how seriously we take plagiarism.

4. Kate Changes the Subject
   a. Kate – What do people think about restoration with the community? I think this issue is a huge breach with the community. That someone could take my test like Rory did is scary and reading this abstract, I don’t think that trust has been restored.
      i. JLH – It doesn’t seem like that was an issue at all for the jury
      ii. Lizzie – it’s also putting another student at risk of losing credibility with a professor
         1. Anna – how would you address that?
            a. Lizzie – I have no idea
            b. Kate – I don’t know how you would change it, but the possibility of that is scary and I wish that had been addressed.
            c. JA – the community stuff wasn’t that important (or seemed that way). There is the idea that when you are going to graduate, the community isn’t the most important, since you are leaving it.
               i. Anna – what do we think of that idea?
1. Lizzie – I think you are a community member as an alum too.

2. Alex – I don’t think it has any affect on it. You have a degree from here, still a part of this institution

iii. Florencia – but that problem with the other student being made a victim didn’t happen, so would making resolutions about that be overreacting?

   1. Lizzie – but the stealing is still a violation of this trust that we have when we put an exam in the box.

5. Changing Your Story
   a. Anna – What do we think of Rory’s claim that she wanted “time to reflect” about the other two answers?
      i. Kate – I think it is complete bullshit. What do you need to reflect about? Would have wanted her to just come clean.
      ii. JA – There is the pride issue of admitting that you couldn’t complete a single question. Not that that makes it right, but is something we should think about. Should have taken the time to reflect before confessing at all.
      iii. Lizzie – flat out lying is no good. But the ability to self-deny to the point that you don’t remember what you cheated on is something that we should take seriously, because it is something that happens.

6. Final Comments
   a. None
   b. Moment of Silence