“Planets” Abstract Discussion  
March 30, 2010  
6:00pm, Ryan Gym  
People Present: Ian, Anna, Emily, Steven, Andy, Kate, Rushmore (late), Jacob (late), Noah (late)  

NOTE: My computer died halfway through the discussion and took the minutes with it. What follows is not the whole discussion.  

Emily - Jury came to statement of nonviolation. What is your reaction?  
Andy - I thought it was remarkable that no one stood outside of consensus, especially since a number of jurors stated that they had lingering concerns.  
Emily - That’s interesting because in a case where there would be so much doubt with so much disagreement, it is interesting that there was no standing outside of consensus.  
Steven - I think you had to came a non-violation statement for all the reasons you list here. You didn’t have enough evidence to say anything definitive.  
Emily - To what extent do you think it’s an addition thing or subtraction thing? Is it that there wasn’t enough evidence to implicate them or would... [can’t figure out how to say it]  
Steven - If Mars and Jupiter hadn’t done such a good job of making their defense, printing out a three-page sheet of why it wasn’t them, I could see this trial going differently  
Emily - I guess the jury’s reasoning according to the last bullet point shows a lack of compelling evidence to the contrary versus to what extent do they need to have evidence to show they didn’t collaborate? Is this distinction making any sense?  
Rushmore - The Honor Code doesn’t specify, we’re not the Government specifying innocent until proven guilty. HC doesn’t say innocent until proven guilty, it’s up to the jury to decide that.  
Anna - I think we operate to believe them until we can’t anymore. The Prof was saying they’re guilty, so in that case it was that they were guilty until proven innocent. Here it was opposite, one of the jury felt that the prof kept on only saying “That isn’t possible” while the students are presenting lots of information. They proved themselves innocent because the prof couldn’t say anything  
Steven - I mean the prof did have other profs backing him  
Emily - What do you think of that?  
Steven - Did the jury talk to the other profs?  
Emily - They only reviewed statements  
Anna - Maybe we should read the letter from the prof?  
[Emily rips only the crust off a slice of pizza while Jacob Horn walks in late]  
Emily - So we just read through the letter and the whole abstract. So, reactions to the letter?  
Andy - I can’t imagine having outside experts being involved in the HC trial process for the sake of confidentiality as well as just having the relevant parties involved. Experts just don’t seem to sit well in the process.  
Steven - Do you mean experts in terms of Swat profs or people who took the course in the past?  
Andy - If it so happens that the students’ peers have experience in the field, that might be okay, but having Swat profs doesn’t seem appropriate  
Emily - Returning to the first discussion question [reads question]
Steven - I definitely agree. Given the analogy that the prof gives... if this is a 300 level math course and no one understands the math, it makes no sense. On the other hand, if you’re a student with advanced training you probably know the people involved. I do think it would be helpful to have a student with knowledge of that coursework.

Rushmore - When juries are selected, there is a process of the parties reviewing the jury and then the jury being able to remove themselves. I imagine in a small dept. it’s really easy for HC to email everyone in that dept. Somehow it comes out that most of the ppl. in the dept. got emails about being on jury.

Emily - There’s the issue of not only knowing the students but knowing the profs. Anna - Potentially you could circumvent the issue by having, with the math example, calling on a physics student and they wouldn't necessarily have the same conflict of interest problems.

Steven - I don’t know if it’s true. The subjects are different enough that it’s hard to say.

Ian - I’m uncomfortable with boundaries put up between kinds of trials (nat sci/soc sci/hum)

Emily - But there are real differences among plagiarisms in math and english.

Ian - Plagiarism can take lots of forms, it isn’t that straightforward.

Emily - Do you think there would be a weird dynamic on the jury of having “experts” that have more weight? Steven - It could be a problem. You have more than one person on the jury for checks and balances.

Rushmore/Anna - You could randomly have someone on the jury who is an expert in dept.

Emily - Or do we trust jurors to make decision as a group?

Steven - One person can block consensus. If the person is absolutely sure that things were wrong.

Jacob - If nothing were to change with jury composition and you have a prof in the room who says you don’t understand things, I think if you were to have an outside opinion from a colleague or whatever, that may help clarify things and the jury hears this and says that it’s a very valuable idea. Is there an avenue for that right now to solicit an opinion of their own choosing?

Emily - Juries have a lot of power to consent to do things, and often the jury has the choice to look at the actual paper or actual exam. If the jury consented to doing that, it’s possible but there aren’t guidelines.

Anna - If it comes up in the discussion and the jury is like we really wish we could talk to someone about it, they can consent to it.

Steven - Can the jury show it to someone outside the jury?

Anna - They would have to talk to the parties.

Rushmore - Going back to the idea of expert jury members, they don’t exist in the real world. There’s complex science going on that they gloss over in the shows, but in a real case they have to bring in experts who can talk to everyday people and convince them that this science is sound. It seems to me like there’s a way in the real world that is possible here without an expert jury member.

Jacob - I feel like if an outside prof from Swat would come in, the prof is in an odd position to go with the students or with the colleague. Obviously we rely on everyone to be okay with that, but at the same time, every student knows what they’re getting into with honor council but as soon as a Swat prof gets an email from HC getting them to look at something... they still have to work
with each other. I don’t know if I was just brought over here if I would feel weirdness breaking
with my colleague who brought me into this.
Emily - It’s like in-group/out-group processes. You have profs and you have students and in this
decision you’re a prof you’re a prof, they’re some sort of loyalty there
Anna - I have a question. Prof seems kind of upset, given that we don’t have procedures that ask
for expert jury members, coming from here what would you do to make the prof feel better? Is
there anything you can do?
Andy - The jury stated its rationale, and this letter lacks a discussion of that. They had five or six
points explaining the statement of non-violation. It seems like Galaxy had more issue with the
questions and resolutions rather than the rationale between statement of non-violation.
Anna - The prof is giving this analogy that they clearly could not have not cheated. I agree with
you, but how do you move on from that
Andy - i think it’s an impasse
Rushmore - We came to this community and signed the Honor Code and while fac/staff don’t
have to abide by it who could work elsewhere if they wanted, they choose to come here and part
of that is choosing to become part of the community and accept that the honor code is part of that
community. As unfortunate as it is for his faith to be shattered, Galaxy should accept their
decision because it’s the community he’s chosen to be part of.
Ian - All efforts should be made to communicate that to the prof.
Jacob - The jury isn’t saying that the students didn’t cheat, they’re saying they are slightly
uncomfortable with what happened but can’t come to statement of violation
Emily - Returning to this idea of how much evidence there has to be before finding a party in
violation. What are your [Jacob’s] thoughts on that?
Jacob - I always hate reading cases like this, there was another from this year where you get to a
point where everyone is saying what they’re saying and there’s no agreement. Ultimately it is
problematic to think about “If everyone is under the system, and buying into this, then that’s not
a possible situation” someone has to either say “I’m not being honest” or “Okay, I’ll believe
you” Given the fact that the jury was still uncomfortable at the end, it’s difficult to accept the
statement of non-violation. Someone probably wasn’t being completely honest. It’s problematic,
I don’t disagree with it but I don’t like that that was the decision that had to be made.
[Noah arrives]
Emily - One of the confronted parties brought an abstract that was similar to the case at hand.
The jury considered it but it didn’t become a huge part of the conversation. How much weight
should be placed on old abstract?
Noah - If i remember correctly, it seems weird in this case because the person bringing it was
trying to make the point that it was okay for the jury to come to a statement of non-violation. The
way the person used it seemed a little odd to me. It makes sense that you would bring an abstract
to back up your interpretation of Honor Code, but in this abstract they were just showing the
abstract as an example of what they wanted to the jury to do.
Rushmore - I think you’re right that it’s two very different things. You could bring a social
violation abstract but this other jury said it’s not a violation of the social honor code. You’re
right, this is a very different way of bringing it in. They’re basically saying it doesn’t matter
because there’s no proof...
Jacob - It seems a bit leading. Almost as if they think their argument is going to be that they can’t be proven of having done anything. They’re saying look, that happens sometimes, and you guys can say we didn’t violate the honor code.
Rushmore - [Gives ridiculous example]
Ian - Or it’s a vigorous defense of oneself.
Steven - But I don’t think it should play into the jury’s decision making. Right off the back they shouldn’t use that.
Emily - What if the jury is seeking out something in history to use?
Emily - We’re at about seven... anything else to bring up regarding this abstract? Questions? Points?
Jacob - Was there anything that came up... clearly the prof continued to believe they violated the Code. There wasn’t a formally restoration of trust. Was there anything done to address the situation between the students and prof?
Emily - That’s a good question to consider in abstract about whether something like that should be done. I don’t know that we can... That’s a valid concern. There was no violation but there was still a breach. The jury did come up with recommended resolutions, and one was that the jury would meet with the prof and that Mars and Jupiter work independently. Should the jury have recommended a conversation between profs/students?
Jacob - I don’t know that anything could have come out of a mediation, but unspoken tension makes coming to class next week
Rushmore - Profs still have control over grade...
Steven - Students would have made big deal about prof failing them
Anna - Grades in nat-sci classes tend to be more quantitative versus when you’re taking a humanities class and the prof’s dislike of a student might be more reflected in the grade
Rushmore - The prof could still say you cheated on a portion of your exam, there’s still a quantitative impact that the prof can have control over
Anna - What I’m saying is that in the humanities a student couldn’t change that, in nat-sci the student could
Moment of Silence!