Abstract discussions will be held at 6 p.m. on Thursday, April 7 and 1 p.m. on Friday, April 8 in Ryan Gym

Hey Arnold!
An Honor Council Academic Trial
Released Spring 2011

This abstract was completed in accordance with the timeline in the Constitution. The confronting and confronted parties were given the opportunity to review this abstract prior to its release. (The addition of this disclaimer began Fall 2010).

Summary

Arnold was a student in Professor Helga’s Stickball class. Professor Helga confronted him about suspected plagiarism on a paper and asked that he report himself to Honor Council. Council consented to a suspicion of violation and sent it to an academic trial.

Fact-Finding

While grading Arnold’s paper, Professor Helga noticed un-cited information that was not presented in class. She typed parts of the paper into Google and found that sections had been copied and pasted from Wikipedia entries. She met with Arnold to confront him about her suspicions that he had violated the Honor Code and to discuss his misunderstanding of the assignment itself, which was meant to be an analytical paper about assigned texts, not a research paper. Professor Helga told the jury that she was new to Haverford and realized now that she should have been clearer on her expectations for the paper and citations.

Arnold agreed with Professor Helga’s description of the situation. He said he had misunderstood the assignment and admitted to copying and pasting from Wikipedia. He had used Wikipedia to set up his argument; something he had done before without thinking it a problem or being confronted. He thought he didn’t have to cite Wikipedia because he thought it was fact. He asserted that he felt stupid in hindsight for not realizing that he must cite Wikipedia, and said he had not been trying to gain an unfair advantage over others. In light of this incident, he said he now makes a point of meeting with Professor Helga and his other professors to talk about their expectations.

One juror asked Arnold whether he had indicated anywhere in his paper that he took his information from Wikipedia. Arnold said that he cited information that Wikipedia cited, but not Wikipedia itself.

A juror asked Arnold whether he was concerned or uncomfortable that he was following Wikipedia too closely as he was writing or that so little of the paper was in his own words. He said that, though this was hard for him to believe now, he had not felt strange about it at the time. Arnold said he had searched Wikipedia for some more information on famous Stickball players.
he’d written about in his class notes, and once he started reading the articles he realized they fit well with his paper. When asked why he didn’t put those sections in quotations, Arnold said that he thought Wikipedia was fact and he didn’t have to put facts in quotation marks.

One of the jurors pointed out to Arnold that even if the information was purely factual, the phrasing and sentence structure was still others’ intellectual property, and needed to be quoted and cited. Arnold assured the jury that he knew this now, but had not thought of it at the time.

Professor Helga said she had not discussed proper citation when assigning this paper because it was intended to be an analysis of the texts they’d worked with in class. She thought she had said this in class, but wasn’t certain how clear her instructions were. She called it an analytical essay, which she thought made the nature of the assignment clear. Arnold confirmed that she had called it an analytical essay, but that he’d understood it to be a different kind of assignment than Professor Helga had intended.

A juror asked whether Professor Helga felt it was more problematic that Arnold had used outside sources for an analytical essay or that he didn’t cite them. The professor said it was a combination, but emphasized that it was really the copying and pasting that concerned her most. Even if he had cited the information, she would not have given him a good grade because he did not follow the assignment and so little of the paper was in his own words. Such a paper, however, would not have gone to an Honor Council proceeding.

A juror asked whether there was evidence of Arnold’s own analysis in the sections not copied and pasted from Wikipedia. Professor Helga said that yes, Arnold had based the paper on his own way of looking at Stickball strategy, expressing an approach that was his own. His lengthy summaries of the elements of the game, however, came from Wikipedia.

Arnold hadn’t written a paper like this before coming to Haverford. Prior to coming to Haverford, he went to school in the country of Antarctica, where assignment instructions were more narrow and explicit. He said he was very upset to have broken the Honor Code, and was now very careful, even paranoid, about avoiding another incident.

**Statement of Violation**

The jury discussed the need to make it clear in the statement of violation that they were only concerned with the plagiarism, not the deviation from Professor Helga’s assignment. They were concerned that too much of the fact-finding had focused on Arnold not following the assignment and using Wikipedia in general, not the fact that he had plagiarized from Wikipedia.

The jury consented to the following statement of violation with no jurors standing outside of consensus:

Arnold copied sections directly from an outside source into his paper without identifying them as quotations or citing the source, thereby representing another’s ideas as his own and committing an act of plagiarism (as defined by section 3.04 a of the Honor Code). As the Honor Code states that “An act of plagiarism constitutes a student’s withdrawal from the commitment to the academic honesty required by the Honor Code” (section 3.04 a), Arnold violated the Honor Code.

**Circumstantial Portion**

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Arnold said that he had felt no time pressure on this paper, and had actually finished and edited it a week before it was due. He said that at no point in the process did he think he was plagiarizing. Though the assignment was an analytical paper, he had understood this at the time to mean analyzing famous Stickball games, not critically analyzing the in-class texts as Professor Helga had intended. He said it seemed obvious to him now that what he did was wrong.

In his discussion with Professor Helga after the initial confrontation, he had been open and honest about his process and wanted to learn how he had plagiarized. He had apologized several times to her for his mistake, and told the jury he understood why she had been upset. He explained that breaking the Honor Code had been a very traumatizing experience for him, and that he now understood that you could plagiarize whether you intended to or not. Though he couldn’t say it had been a good experience, he had become more vigilant and was now careful to talk to professors about assignments. Arnold felt he and Professor Helga had a good relationship both before and after the incident.

When asked about his academic background, Arnold explained that in high school assignments had been very explicit, that an analytical paper would mean he was given a specific text to analyze. Concerned that he was focusing on the wrong thing, one juror reminded Arnold that it wasn’t his misunderstanding of the assignment that was the problem, but rather the lack of citation in the paper. Arnold said that he’d never had to cite dates and facts, only scholars’ opinions and arguments.

Arnold also said that he had used Wikipedia before in college, usually copying and pasting a few sentences. He said that it had been about the same, maybe one paragraph or so less than the paper for Professor Helga’s class. He said that, in hindsight, this was also a Code violation. A juror asked if he’d spoken to those other professors about those papers. Arnold said he’d spoken to a professor who he was close to about using Wikipedia on a past paper, and that they had had a productive conversation.

When asked about his freshman writing seminar, Arnold said that it had not focused on citation styles nor on the definition of plagiarism. He said that in high school in Antarctica he was never taught to put citations for things that weren’t direct quotes. A juror who had also had some schooling in Antarctica agreed that the system is very different.

**Proposed Resolutions**

Arnold proposed the following resolutions:

1. Receive a zero on the paper
2. Write a letter to the community reflecting on this experience

In his original statement to Honor Council, Arnold had proposed he rewrite the paper with a grade cap, but changed his mind after going through the trial process. He said that regardless of intent, he had plagiarized, and it wasn’t fair to the rest of the class to have a chance to rewrite it, particularly since he thought he would get a better grade on the paper now that he understood the assignment. He didn’t believe a zero on the paper would put him in danger of failing the course.

Professor Helga agreed via email that Arnold should receive a zero for the assignment.
Jury Deliberations Part One

The jury was concerned that, though he was remorseful, Arnold still didn’t understand exactly what constituted plagiarism. Several jurors noted that he seemed to still be intertwining plagiarizing and failing to follow the assignment, focusing on how he had misinterpreted the meaning of an analytical paper rather than how had he copied and pasted sections from Wikipedia into his paper.

The jury discussed different ways to best help Arnold understand plagiarism and citation. One juror suggested that Arnold re-write the paper for no credit so he could learn the correct way to write a paper and cite information. Another proposed that he write a paper about plagiarism that could discuss when you do and don’t need to cite. Since Arnold continued to focus on Wikipedia as the problem rather than plagiarizing from Wikipedia, a juror suggested that he write the paper using Wikipedia as a properly cited source. This might help show that it wasn’t Wikipedia itself that was the violation of the Honor Code. Another juror brought up Professor Maud McInerney’s essay on plagiarism as a helpful document. Arnold could also, perhaps, meet continuously with a non-student writing center tutor.

One juror suggested that instead of an essay, Arnold could make a document for freshmen on plagiarism and citation. Many jurors liked this idea. The jury decided that the document should include three things: 1) a definition of plagiarism, 2) when you do and don’t need to cite, and 3) how to cite. The document should be one that would have been helpful to Arnold as an incoming freshman.

The jurors discussed whether separation was appropriate in this case and agreed that they did not feel it was, as Arnold had not acted deliberately or maliciously. They mentioned how willing Arnold was to engage with the jury and to understand and address the situation. Most jurors thought that separation should be used only when it seemed that the breach could not be restored and that in this case Arnold was trying to understand and uphold community values.

The jury then discussed whether it needed to address the potential past violations that Arnold mentioned in the Circumstantial Portion. A juror said it was hard to believe that Arnold didn’t know that copying and pasting large portions from Wikipedia was plagiarism, but had to agree when another juror replied, “It seems, oddly, that that is actually the case.” Though Arnold said he’d talked with past professors, some jurors suspected that the professors probably didn’t understand that when Arnold admitted to “using Wikipedia” he was referring to copying and pasting. Though the jury felt the need to address these past incidents of plagiarism, many were concerned about causing a “huge academic fall-out.” One juror suggested that the restoration from this trial could be sufficient to resolve the past incidents since it addressed the underlying issue. Another juror replied that, while he understood the desire to forgive Arnold’s past actions, the jury had an obligation as members of the community to confront Arnold for his potential past Honor Code violations.

A number of jurors felt these issues needed to be addressed, but some were less sure, and one juror in particular was concerned that the jury would “step into full punishment mode” if it were to bring past papers into the scope of the trial.

The jury discussed whether it was appropriate for this jury to handle this situation. It seemed like the potential past violations were part of the same problem, and needed to be considered together with the current violation in order to understand the situation fully and
achieve full restoration. The jury decided that it did not have enough information about the potential past violations and needed to talk with Arnold again.

The jury consented to the following statement with no jurors standing outside of consensus:

> In light of new information that came up during the circumstantial portion that potentially greatly extends the scope of the trial, after extensive discussion during deliberations, the jury consents to break in order to allow the trial chair to consult with the other chair of Honor Council and other appropriate parties, and to give jurors an opportunity to reflect on appropriate courses of action. The jury will meet again tomorrow to figure out the best way to proceed.

The jury also consented to the following, with no one standing outside:

> The jury consents, if deemed appropriate by the Co-Chairs of Honor Council after consultation, to request that Arnold return for a continuation of the Circumstantial.

**Jury Deliberations Part Two**

The Chair began by saying that Arnold’s case did not need to go back to Honor Council, but that if the jury was suspicious of additional violations they could call for another fact-finding. The jury decided it needed Arnold to clarify what these potential past violations were before they could know whether another fact-finding would be necessary.

The jury decided that it would ask for a written statement from Arnold and consented to the following statement with no one standing outside:

> The jury consents to bring Arnold back to understand the situation better (but this will not be a Fact-Finding). Arnold will leave and the jury will decide whether suspicious of further violation. If suspicious, the jury will consent on a way to proceed and at least several representatives from the jury will talk to Arnold to determine the classes/professors involved and ask for official written statements.

**Circumstantial Portion Continued**

When asked to clarify his past use of Wikipedia, Arnold explained that he had referenced Wikipedia other times and that in one class with Professor Phoebe he had copy and pasted similarly to what he had done in Professor Helga’s class. Arnold said that after Professor Helga confronted him he’d realized he needed to speak to Professor Phoebe as well. He met and told her that he’d “copy-pasted two paragraphs” from Wikipedia into a paper for her class, and that after he admitted this to her she decided it was, in Arnold’s words, water under the bridge.

A juror asked him whether he saw the first paper as a violation of the Honor Code. Arnold said that he hadn’t at the time, but that looking back he now saw that it was.

**Jury Deliberations Part Three**
Though many felt that accountability, education and restoration could be addressed in this trial without going further into the violation in Professor Phoebe’s class, they expressed concern that the incident had not been reported to Honor Council, as suspected academic violations always should be. Several jurors noted that, although faculty are not bound by the Constitution and Honor Code in the same way as students, the faculty handbook requires professors to hold students to the values of the Honor Code and respect the system of using Honor Council.

Though Arnold said he’d used the words “copying and pasting” with Professor Phoebe, the jury remained concerned that Arnold may have intended to be honest with Professor Phoebe but failed to convey the truth of his actions. Throughout the trial, Arnold had said he’d “used Wikipedia” when describing plagiarizing from Wikipedia, phrasing that had confused the jury and may have confused Professor Phoebe. A juror said she found it hard to believe that the professor wouldn’t have brought the case to Honor Council if Arnold had really used the words “copy-paste,” but other jurors commented that Professor Phoebe may have elected to drop the matter since the violation had occurred a while ago and Arnold was upfront about it once he realized the problem.

The jury ultimately consented to the spirit of the following statement with one juror standing outside of consensus:

“We consent that we do not need to request further statements from Arnold or the professor or further investigate the details of that first paper in the scope of this trial because we feel that accountability and restoration have largely been achieved and that education will be covered by the resolutions for this trial.”

Tentative Resolutions

The jury then felt comfortable proceeding with tentative resolutions. Most jurors agreed that Arnold should get a zero on the paper. They agreed that he should write a letter to the community reflecting on the experience and what he had learned. They were also generally in favor of him reading Maud McInerney’s essay on plagiarism.

The jury also wanted to address the concern that first-year students are not always educated well about plagiarism and proper citations. The jury decided that a representative from Honor Council should talk with the coordinator of the freshmen writing seminars about standardizing education about plagiarism and proper citation across writing seminars.

Members of the jury also wanted to speak with Professor Phoebe about the importance of reporting potential academic violations to Honor Council so that similar cases didn’t go unresolved in the future. There were, however, several concerns. The first was Arnold’s confidentiality; the jury struggled with how to have the necessary conversation with Professor Phoebe without telling her the details of Arnold’s trial. There was also concern that after the discussion Professor Phoebe might then ask Arnold to bring himself to Honor Council even though the jury felt this particular violation did not need to be addressed further. The jury decided that the wording of the resolution and the subsequent discussion with the professor should make sure to focus on the issue of bringing students to Honor Council in the future and express that the case with Arnold had already been addressed.

The jury consented to the following tentative resolutions:
1. Arnold should receive a 0.0 on the paper for Professor Helga’s class. (No jurors stood outside)

2. Arnold will work with a mentor (to be determined) over the course of the first quarter of the following semester to write a document about plagiarism and proper citation that would have been helpful to him as an incoming student and may have prevented such an Honor Code violation. The document should incorporate a number of outside sources about plagiarism and citation, such as those found through the writing center website, and should include the following three points:
   a) A definition of plagiarism, including the various forms it can take (lifting text without quotations, paraphrasing or summarizing ideas without crediting a source).
   b) When it is and is not necessary to include a citation (citing facts, in-text citations when summarizing).
   c) A basic overview of how to properly employ the main citation styles (at least three).

3. If appropriate, this document may be used to help incoming freshmen. (No jurors stood outside)

4. Arnold will write a letter to the community to be released with the abstract reflecting on his experience and what he has learned. (No jurors stood outside)

5. The trial chair and one community juror will speak to Professor Phoebe about the importance of bringing potential academic violations of the Honor Code to Honor Council. It will be made clear that this discussion is coming out of an academic trial with Arnold regarding another class, and that in this case we feel that education, accountability, and restoration have been achieved, and that in the opinion of the jury no further action is necessary. It should also be made clear that this conversation is about her future responsibility to ask students to bring themselves to Honor Council, not about Arnold’s case in particular. (1 juror stood outside)

6. At least one current Honor Council representative will meet with the writing seminar coordinator to discuss standardizing education on plagiarism and proper citation across freshmen writing seminars (no jurors stood outside).

Finalizing Resolutions

Arnold was comfortable with and even enthusiastic about the first three resolutions, but had concerns about the fourth. He was nervous about Professor Phoebe learning of the trial, as it might affect her opinion of him if he were to take classes with her in the future. He said that having his confidentiality broken in this way felt like a punishment.

The jury explained that Professor Phoebe’s attitude that a case like this could be resolved without contacting Honor Council was problematic, and that they intended to address that in their conversation. A juror explained the worry that if they did not specifically mention that Arnold's case was, in the opinion of the jury, being resolved, Professor Phoebe might determine she needed to re-confront Arnold after the conversation.

Arnold said he felt reassured by the jury’s explanation of the focus of the conversation and understood the need to contextualize it, but said that the less was said about his particular case, the better.
Professor Helga approved of the resolutions via email and said that she did not feel that there had been a breach of trust between herself and Arnold, and that in her opinion the situation was “completely resolved and repaired.”

After Arnold left, the jury discussed the fourth resolution in light of Arnold’s expressed concerns. One juror commented that though Arnold had initially told them it felt like a punishment, Arnold was okay with the resolution after hearing their explanation, but another juror wondered if Arnold might have felt uncomfortable expressing his lingering discomfort to the jury. There was still serious concern about breaking Arnold’s confidentiality; Honor Council juries do not normally do this and the jury was particularly mindful that Arnold wanted to continue to work with Professor Phoebe in the future. It was suggested that Arnold’s name and the specific mention of a trial be omitted from the conversation and only alluded to. The jury recognized that Professor Phoebe would probably know who and what they were talking about, but there wouldn’t be an explicit breach of Arnold’s confidentiality, and it would still be emphasized that neither the student nor the jury wanted the particular incident talked about further. One juror stood outside of consensus on this resolution because he did not feel that the language of the Faculty Handbook clearly stated that a professor needed to report suspected violations to Honor Council, and also felt there just wasn’t a good way to have the conversation.

With the exception of the one juror, the jury felt that the conversation needed to happen, and supported using Arnold’s name and the reference to the trial only if absolutely necessary. They amended the fourth resolution to reflect this and consented to the following set of final resolutions:

Final Resolutions

1. **Arnold should receive a 0.0 on the paper for Professor Helga’s class.** (No jurors stood outside)

2. **Arnold will work with a mentor (to be determined) over the course of the first quarter of the following semester to write a document about plagiarism and proper citation that would have been helpful to him as an incoming student and may have prevented such an Honor Code violation.** The document should reference a number of outside sources about plagiarism and citation, such as those found through the Writing Center website, and should include the following three points:
   a. A definition of plagiarism, including the various forms it can take (lifting text without quotations, paraphrasing or summarizing ideas without crediting a source).
   b. When it is and is not necessary to include a citation (citing facts, in-text citations when summarizing).
   c. A basic overview of how to properly employ the main citation styles (at least three).

3. **This document should be given to Honor Council mid-semester. If appropriate, this document may be used to help incoming freshmen.** (No jurors stood outside)

4. **Arnold will write a letter to the community to be released with the abstract reflecting on his experience and what he has learned.** (No jurors stood outside)

5. **The trial chair and one other juror will speak to Professor Phoebe about the importance of bringing potential academic violations of the Honor Code to Honor Council. While they will clarify that they know a particular student came to her with a potential violation, they will, to the greatest extent possible, avoid specific mention of his name or
the fact of the trial, while still conveying that with respect to that specific situation, education, accountability and restoration have been achieved, and that no further action is necessary. It should also be made clear that this conversation is about her future responsibility to ask students to bring themselves to Honor Council. (1 juror stood outside)

6. At least one Honor Council representative will meet with the coordinator of the first year writing seminars to discuss standardizing education on plagiarism and proper citation across writing seminars. (No jurors stood outside)

Discussion Questions

1. How much should the jury take into account a student’s educational background?
2. To what extent is a jury obligated to pursue potential past violations that come to light during a trial? Was it right for the jury to speak with Professor Phoebe?
3. How should Wikipedia be used in an academic context?
4. To what extent should the jury consider the statement that plagiarism was accidental?
Arnold's Letter to the Community

Dear Haverford Community,

I never thought I would be in position that I would break the honor code and violate one of the things that makes our school and community so unique. However, due to my failure to communicate with my teacher and not following the guidelines of an assignment carefully I ended breaking the honor code. I felt isolated from the community and the whole experience leading up to the trial was one of the most traumatic of my life. However, the willingness of my teacher and jurors to not only help me understand why what I did was a violation of the code, but also trying to ensure I would not do it again made the whole trial much less stressful.

When doing my assignment I did not intend to get an unfair advantage over my peers. I was convinced even when my teacher confronted me about the situation that I had not plagiarized. However, after talking to my teacher I realized that I had in fact been guilty of plagiarism and citing someone else’s work as my own and should go see honor council. This was a shocking feeling. I was scared, nervous and felt isolated from the community. I began questioning every form of academic work I had done and whether I had committed plagiarism. I had used a source which should not have been used whether I cited it or not, but by not citing it meant I was taking credit for someone else’s work as my own.

I thought what I doing was fine, but clearly, I was wrong. I should have asked my teacher about using any source that was not used in class before using it in my assignment. To make matters worse, I had tried to do a research-based paper instead of the analytical one that was assigned. Regardless of the failure to cite my work correctly, I would have done poorly regardless. That was a bitter pill to swallow. My failure to ask my teacher how to do the assignment caused me to approach it the wrong way. I did not communicate and paid the consequences.

The trial itself was much less stressful then I had thought it would be. I thought the jurors would be wielding the axe, but they were rather trying to help me understand what I did was wrong and how to prevent there from being a reoccurrence of the problem. I became much more comfortable with the trial and the jurors were extremely helpful, which was the main reason why I did not have any problems with the resolutions. I believed that they knew the situation the best and were able to make the most appropriate plan for me to rebuild my trust with the community.

I committed plagiarism. It does not matter whether I meant to or not, but that I did. My failure to communicate with my professor and not reading the assignment more meticulously made me break the honor code. I felt after the trial concluded I knew how to cite sources correctly and to ask my teacher if I have any problems or questions with the assignment. I know now that I have to cite anything that is not exactly my own words and if I have any questions about what sources to use then I should ask my teacher. I realized after talking to my teacher that it would have been fine if I had asked whether it was ok to use a source or not.

My advice to everyone is to communicate with your professors as much as possible about any queries you have with your assignments. If you use any form of academic source in an assignment you should cite the source and put it in a bibliography. There is nothing wrong with asking your teachers for guidance on assignments and what sources you should use or not. I hope people reading this will be able to learn from my mistake, as I have, and listen to my advice so you cannot make the same mistake I did.

Sincerely, Arnold