Abstract discussions will be held Wednesday, March 14 and Thursday, March 15 at 7:00 PM in Ryan Gym

Dorothy and Professor Glinda
An Honor Council Academic Trial
Released Fall 2011

This abstract was completed in accordance with the timeline in the Constitution, but released late in order to include the confronted party’s letter to the community.
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).

Introduction

Dorothy was a Bryn Mawr student in Professor Glinda’s “Ruby Slippers: Uses and Strategies” class. Glinda contacted Honor Council to report a possible time violation on a timed, take-home exam in her class. Dorothy had turned in a timed, take-home exam to Professor Glinda. She wrote her starting and ending times for the exam on the front sheet, but these times indicated that she had taken more time on the exam than was allowed. When Professor Glinda asked Dorothy about the possible violation, Dorothy explained that she had either accidentally taken more time on the exam, or mistakenly wrote the wrong times. Dorothy did not know whether she had taken more time, or just written that she had. Professor Glinda emphasized that Dorothy was very forthcoming, wrote that she did not know whether this was a violation of the Honor Code and asked for Council’s help to resolve the situation.

Honor Council Discussion

Honor Council had a very difficult time deciding how best to handle this issue. Much confusion arose over whether this was a violation of the Honor Code. Some members of Honor Council weren’t sure if they were suspicious of a violation, given that Dorothy did not intend to violate the Honor Code and may not have even taken extra time, while other Council members pointed out that she could have taken more time, which would be a violation of the exam instructions. Council consented on a suspicion of violation.

Because of the uncertainty in both the professor’s and the student’s statements, Council debated at length whether a mediation or an academic trial would be a better way to proceed. Some members felt that in a mediation the student and the professor could discuss the situation and come to a mutually agreeable way to move forward, without needing to determine whether a violation had actually occurred. Other Council members felt that an academic trial was necessary to even attempt to determine what had actually occurred, which they felt should be done if at all possible. They cited the professor’s desire to have Honor Council resolve the case, and reiterated that it seemed like the professor wanted Council’s help. These members felt that sending this issue to a mediation would be absolving Council of responsibility in the very instance when a professor wanted Council’s insight. Other members voiced their concerns against the academic trial by saying that it would unnecessarily stress out the student who had been going through some trying family circumstances at the time of the violation. After much further discussion where Council considered the possible outcomes of each avenue, Council ultimately consented to the send this case to an
academic trial.

Fact-Finding

Professor Glinda’s Statement:
Professor Glinda was teaching a Ruby Slippers: Uses and Strategies class where the midterm was a timed, take-home exam. The test included a cover sheet, which clearly stated the allotted time and provided a place for students to note their starting and ending times. Glinda said she always checked these times when grading exams to see if she had given enough time for the test. The starting and ending times on Dorothy’s exam indicated that she had taken an extra twenty-five minutes to finish the exam. After making this discovery, Glinda emailed Dorothy to ask about this, as some students had accommodations for receiving extra time on exams. She said that when Dorothy wrote back, she was upset about the possibility that she had taken additional time, but was very honest. Dorothy had said that she was unsure whether she had simply written the times incorrectly instead of taking more time but felt that the time she wrote down was probably the time displayed on the clock.

Dorothy’s Statement:
Dorothy said that the starting time on her test was definitely the correct starting time, but she didn’t know whether her written end time was correctly or not. She said that the most likely scenario was that she had taken more time than allowed on the exam. Dorothy said that it had been a stressful week for her: she had other midterms, and there was a big family issue that she was dealing with at the same time.

Questions from the Jury

The jurors asked Dorothy about the timeline of the test. The students had a week to turn in the exam, and Dorothy said she took the exam the night before it was due. When asked if Dorothy remembered running out of time on the test, she responded that because there was no time left over she didn’t feel like she took extra time. She said she just checked the times on her cell phone, but could have initially added the time incorrectly and thought she had an extra thirty minutes for the exam. Dorothy had gone through the test in order but did not know how much she had completed when time ran out. She said she felt pressured for time throughout the exam, but had time to look over it at the end.

A juror asked if Dorothy felt she would have answered the questions similarly if she had had thirty fewer minutes for the exam. Dorothy said that she probably would have done very similar work. Glinda voiced a similar sentiment by suggesting that Dorothy had taken “a more leisurely pace” on the exam, and with less time she could have done the same quality of work. Glinda said she felt it was an honest mistake. Dorothy added that she had read the instructions on the test.

Deliberations

At this point in the trial, the jurors were torn as to whether or not a violation had occurred. A juror asked what more they could do, given that there didn’t appear to be a breach of trust between the student and the professor. Another juror noted, however, that she felt a violation had occurred, and there was a breach of trust between Dorothy and the rest of the class.

Some jurors expressed discomfort at reaching a statement of non-violation. A juror said that Dorothy had signed the honor pledge, yet the time indicated was either a time violation or a
violation of exam instructions. Another juror said that she didn’t think it would be fair for Dorothy to be graded on the same scale as her peers when they did not receive extra time. Other jurors felt uncomfortable saying that Dorothy had violated the code. One juror pointed out that even if Dorothy had taken extra time she hadn’t benefited from it and there was no malintent.

After much discussion, the jury then consented to the following statement of violation, with one juror standing outside:

*Dorothy violated the Honor Code by not following his/her professor’s instructions regarding the time limit on a take-home exam.*

Circumstantial Portion

Professor Glinda said that she didn’t have much to add to what she said in the fact-finding, and reiterated that she felt this was a minor violation. Dorothy said that the week before she took the exam, she had had a serious family emergency and had been “pushed to the end”. She said that she let the stress take over, and had been worn out when she was taking the exam.

A juror asked Dorothy to clarify how much time she had had to look over her exam: in the fact-finding portion she said she had time, but in her initial statement she had said she had been unable to check over her answers as she had run out of time. Dorothy said that her statement was not her “most polished work”. She clarified that she had enough time to go back and quickly look over her work, but no enough time to really check her answers.

Proposed Resolutions

Professor Glinda felt that no grade reduction was necessary because this was a minor violation. She felt that Dorothy should only have to reflect upon the situation and write a letter.

Dorothy said that she needed to avoid these problems in the future by being more vigilant and talking to a professor, dean, or counselor instead of internalizing stress. Dorothy was so upset by the fact that she was being brought to trial that she had initially asked Professor Glinda to just fail the test instead of having to go through the process. She also said that since the decision to go trial was made, she had been even more careful with time limits on exams.

When asked about Dorothy’s accountability to the class, Professor Glinda said that since the class as a whole had not struggled to complete the assignment in the allotted time limit, she did not feel Dorothy had gained any advantage on the test.

A juror asked Dorothy if she could have gained an advantage using extra time on the exam. Dorothy said she could have gained an advantage on the short-answer portion of the exam. Another juror then asked Dorothy to put herself in the position of her classmates. He asked her if she would be upset had she found out someone had taken extra time on the exam. Dorothy responded that it would depend on how well she did. If she did poorly she would be upset, and if she did well, she wouldn’t really care.

Dorothy’s dean, who was present as a support person because Dorothy was a Bryn Mawr student, said he felt this decision should be left to the professor, saying, “I wish sometimes people will just say, ‘Who gives a shit about grades?’”

Ultimately, Professor Glinda suggested that Dorothy write a letter to the community, or an anonymous letter to the class emphasizing what she had learned.

Tentative Resolutions
After hearing Professor Glinda’s arguments, one juror said he would still be upset if he were another student in the class. Another juror felt that Dorothy hadn’t benefited from the extra time, and that the stresses of the trial process were enough of a sanction, considering it would be very difficult to assess a fair grade penalty. Another juror agreed with that sentiment, but felt that the jury had a duty to make amends with the class.

The jury was divided on the issue of a grade reduction. Those who were in favor of a grade reduction were unable to consent on a fair penalty. Some felt that a nominal grade penalty should be assessed. A juror suggested that a portion of the total points should be subtracted from the grade. Another suggestion was to knock Dorothy’s exam grade down one tier (i.e. from a 3.7 to a 3.3). Still, many were simply uncomfortable with the recommendation of a grade penalty because it was arbitrary.

A few jurors agreed that a letter to the community without a grade penalty was not a good idea. One said a letter without a penalty wouldn’t carry any weight and the Honor Code’s importance to the academic community necessitated more consequences than just a letter. One juror reminded the group that Professor Glinda had come to the jury to determine the consequences. One juror asserted that the trial was designed to determine if a violation had occurred, and that sitting through a trial couldn’t be considered punishment, as it was a responsibility under the Honor Code.

The jury agreed upon a tentative resolution stating that Dorothy’s grade would be lowered but wanted to consult Dorothy, Professor Glinda, and the syllabus. It was also agreed that Dorothy should write a letter to the community. One juror felt that this decision should be left to the professor.

The jury consented to the following tentative resolutions:

1. The jury recommends that Dorothy's grade on the exam in question will be lowered by one of the following three methods: 1) by a tier (e.g. 3.7 to 3.3); 2) by a set number of points, to be determined by the jury; or 3) by an amount to be determined in discussion between Dorothy and Professor Glinda, within a range given by the jury. (One juror stood outside of consensus)

2. Dorothy will write a letter to the community, reflecting on her experiences and what she has learned, to be released with the abstract. (No jurors stood outside of consensus)

Between Meetings

The Chair emailed the resolutions to Dorothy and Professor Glinda, and asked for their thoughts and a syllabus. Professor Glinda responded by confirming the test was worth 100 points, or just under one third of the total points accumulated through the semester. The cumulative points would be used to determine the final grade. Additionally, Professor Glinda gave the jurors her late work policy of 10% off per day late. However, she told them that that percentage of points off was excessive in her view. She said that to no grade penalty was justified as long as Honor Council wanted to be consistent. Professor Glinda added that the ‘least objectionable’ method of lowering Dorothy’s grade was through a discussion between herself and Dorothy.

Finalizing Resolutions

Professor Glinda and Dorothy’s Dean could not attend the next meeting. Dorothy echoed Professor Glinda’s thoughts on the best method of lowering the grade, but she was okay with any of the methods. One juror felt that, in light of Professor Glinda’s grading policy, a reduction in the
grade by a tier wouldn’t be appropriate. Another asked Dorothy how many points she thought
would be fair to have taken off her grade. She said 10 points but would be fine with more. As the
meeting came to a close, Dorothy told the jury that she felt that she had received an unfair
advantage and unintentionally broken the Honor Code. She said she favored the option of the
penalty being decided between herself and Professor Glinda but she was open to any penalty.

Dorothy left the room, and the jury began discussing among themselves what grade penalty
would be the most prudent. They considered having Glinda and Dorothy decide themselves through
discussion. One juror pointed out that the jury wasn’t supposed to cater to Professor Glinda’s
wishes, but rather try to heal a breach of trust with the community.

The Chair summarized the feelings of the group, noting only a few were in support of this
collaboration, but all felt it could be problematic or unproductive. As such, the Chair decided that
the jury move towards lowering Dorothy’s grade.

One juror suggested Dorothy should be allowed to lower her own grade saying that it
allowed Dorothy to take responsibility. A juror responded by stating that while responsibility was
important, the fact that this was an academic situation required input from a jury and the professor.
Additionally, it would be extremely difficult for Dorothy to make an objective decision. The juror
who suggested Dorothy make her own decision for her grade reduction then questioned why the
jury should be lowering Dorothy’s grade at all. Jurors said that it held her accountable and that the
jury was the body best equipped to make the decision.

After some deliberation, the jury settled on a five point grade reduction. The jury also
included a resolution for a juror to meet with Professor Glinda to explain the decision and that
precedent is not used in Honor Council decisions.

The jury consented on the following final resolutions. The jurors first consented on the
resolutions individually, then as a whole. One juror stood outside of consensus on the resolutions as
a whole.

Final Resolutions

1. The jury strongly suggests that Dorothy's grade on the exam should be lowered by 5 points.
   (Two jurors stood outside of consensus)
2. A member of the jury will meet with Professor Glinda to explain why the jury feels that
   Dorothy's grade on the exam should be lowered, in light of Professor Glinda's concerns.
   (No jurors stood outside of consensus)
3. Dorothy will write a letter to the community, reflecting on her experiences and what she has
   learned, to be released with the abstract. (No jurors stood outside of consensus)

Post-Trial

Neither party appealed the resolutions. When attempting to contact Dorothy for her letter to the
community, the chair was unable to reach her. By the time the chair was able to get in touch with
Dorothy and had received the letter, the abstract was late. Although failure to complete resolutions
on time is a violation of the Honor Code, Honor Council consented that Dorothy should receive no
penalty, as her lateness was caused by situations largely outside her control.

Dorothy’s Letter to the Community

Dear Haverford and Tri-Co community,
Last spring semester, I went before the Honor Council for taking extra time on a test. The situation was as follows: I was in Ruby Slippers: Uses and Strategies with Professor Glinda. In the lead up to Midterms, I was frazzled and stressed. However, this stress was compounded a week before Professor Glinda’s test when there was an incident within my family which resulted in a hospitalization. After that I shut down. I didn’t eat or sleep, and kind of floated through classes and responsibilities not really paying attention. When I took Professor Glinda’s test, I inadvertently took about 30 minutes more time than was allotted for the test. I didn’t even realize my mistake until Professor Glinda contacted to me see if I was given extra time by my college. I replied that I had not, and Professor Glinda in turn said that she felt this matter would be best resolved by the Honor Council. In the deliberation of my case, they decided that although the mistake had been inadvertent, the trust of the community had been breached. I would like to formally apologize for this incident. What we have at Haverford, Bryn Mawr, and Swarthmore is such freedom. Professors trust us, but what’s more, we trust each other. Classes here are challenging, but we all take them with the same resources and responsibility, and preserve together. I am heartbroken to have broken that trust. I would apologize specifically to the students within the class, but also the greater community. This is one of my favorite things about classes here, that when we say we missed class because we were sick, the Professors believe us. We don’t need to get a doctor’s note, or explain in detail. We are treated as adults and it is a venerated identity that we occupy.

Honor and integrity to me have always meant doing the right thing, even if no one is there to see it. And I have to admit, in the lead up to the trial, I didn’t act very honorably. I went to Professor Glinda and begged her to simply fail me on the test, believing that my ultimate fate would be expulsion or suspension. I felt angry and unfairly persecuted. It was only later that I realized how irrational I was being. There had been an incident which merited investigation—that was undeniable. And as soon as I went to the first session, I realized something. The trial wasn’t about blame or blaming me for everything I did wrong. It was about forgiveness and healing. Because our trust here is so implicit that when someone breaks it, whether intentionally or not, it can be very damaging to the spirit of our community. What needed to happen was reconciliation, between the community and I. These were concepts I had always heard but never really had any sort of real understanding of. The Honor Council seemed distant and frightening, a place where you went only if you had done something unforgivable. But, it was very different in real life. Everyone was nice and friendly, and I was asked questions, not just about the event, but on my own opinions. They didn’t judge me or hate me for what I’d done. The vast majority of the time, they seemed instead to debate what should be done rather than what I had done. Even though it was stressful and at times frightening, I really learned a lot from this experience.

One of the most important things I learned was to reach out for help before something like this happens. I could have saved everyone a lot of unneeded stress and pain if I had simply gone to a counselor or my Dean and said, “I need help.” If I had talked to my professors, and asked for extensions. If I had asked for help at all. Here in our community it’s hard to slip through the cracks. If you reach out, and let others know you’re struggling or hurting, I guarantee there are many who will support you. I’ve learned if I’m struggling, rather than attempt to fix it on my own, I should instead ask for help. A second equally important thing I’ve learned is not to ‘fear the reaper’. As I
said before, I went to Professor Glinda’s office, basically crying and begged her to fail me on the test rather than risk what I thought was expulsion. Professor Glinda sat with me, and explained the whole process. She was an absolute godsend, supporting me even through our statements and the progression of the trial. She was always on my side, and in the end, even came out in support of me receiving no penalty. At the same time, my Dean took me personally to every session, vouched for my personality and simply supported me when I felt weak. Without the two of them, I would have no doubt had some kind of breakdown, or psyched myself out for everything. And so, if you’re unfortunate enough to end up in my position, I would advocate reaching out to your professor and talking with your Dean. We have so many amazing resources here at Haverford, Bryn Mawr and Swarthmore, and they are there to help you. The biggest thing I realized was that Professor Glinda and I weren’t on separate sides, nor was the Honor Council and I. Rather, there were no sides all along; we all wanted the same thing. So while this experience was one of the most stressful times of my life I also learned a lot from it, and grew from it. And I have to say, I’ve never loved the community here more.

Thank you for your time, I hope you can learn from my example. I also humbly beseech your forgiveness and hope you can find it in your hearts to allow it.

Sincerely,
Dorothy

Questions for Discussion

1. Was a grade change appropriate in this case? To what extent should the jury take a professor’s input into account when deciding about a grade change?

2. If a student violates the academic Honor Code accidentally, should it go to Honor Council at all? If not, does that apply to all accidental violations, or is there a level of severity at which accidental violations should be seen by a jury anyway? If yes, should the accidental nature of the violation affect the severity of the resolutions? And does the same logic apply to accidental social violations?

3. In her letter, Dorothy encourages students to contact their professors or Dean for help if they find themselves in a similar situation. Do you think students are aware of that option? Do you think it is effective? That students could or do use it?

4. Should there have been further resolutions to address Dorothy’s lateness? How do you think Honor Council should address unfulfilled or late resolutions?