Community forum on Wednesday at 2/26/14 at 7:00 pm in the DC Sunken Lounge.
Abstract discussion on Thursday 2/27/14 at 7:30 pm in Ryan Gym.

Hunger Games: An Honor Council
Academic Trial
Released Spring 2014

This abstract was not released in accordance to the timeline specified by the Students’ Association Constitution. The confronting party consented to the release of the abstract. The confronted party was not available to consent to the release of the abstract. (The addition of this disclaimer began in Spring 2010).

Key:
Peeta Mellark - Confronted student
Haymitch Abernathy - Confronting professor
Disguises in the Wild - Class in question
A painful condition - see Footnote 1

Summary:

[Peeta Mellark] was found in violation of the Honor Code for plagiarizing material for a [Disguises in the Wild] assignment. [Peeta] told the jury that he suffered chronically from [a painful health condition]¹, and that this condition played a large role in influencing his actions. Throughout the trial [Peeta] was honest and willing to pursue the trial goals of restoration, accountability and education.

Pre-Trial:

[Peeta Mellark] was a student in [Professor Haymitch Abernathy’s] course [Disguises in the Wild]. [Professor Abernathy] noticed that significant portions of one of [Peeta’s] assignments appeared to be plagiarized. He emailed one of the Honor Council Co-Chairs about how to proceed. The Co-Chair told him to bring the issue to Honor Council. Both parties consented to delaying the start of

¹ Abstract Writers’ Note: We realize that it is frustrating to not be given specific information about [Peeta's] physical condition, but we felt that more details would pose a risk for confidentiality. We urge readers to pay special attention to the discussions around [Peeta's] health in order to appreciate both the severity of his condition and its relevance for the trial.
the trial until the next semester.

**Fact-Finding:**

Both parties were present for the fact-finding portion of the trial, with [Peeta] commuting onto campus since he had decided to take time off from Haverford.

**[Haymitch Abernathy’s] Statement:**

[Professor Abernathy] explained the information he had sent in his initial statement. In [Disguises in the Wild] he had assigned an essay that consisted of reviewing an article he had given the students about a topic discussed in class. The goal was to understand and analyze the article, not just to regurgitate the material.

When [Peeta] turned in his essay, [Professor Abernathy] felt something wasn’t right. He then searched for some of the phrases on Google. He found that much of the assignment was copied directly from Wikipedia and other class related sites. In addition, many passages were copied directly from the article that was supposed to be reviewed, with little or no change and no quotations. At this point he stopped grading the assignment and contacted [Peeta], telling him that they needed to talk about a possible violation.

**[Peeta Mellark’s] Statement:**

[Peeta] began by saying that what [Professor Abernathy] had said was entirely accurate. He explained that in the semester before he took [Disguises in the Wild], a year prior to the trial, he had begun to suffer from a debilitating [condition]². It continued and got worse as the year went on, and during the semester in which he took [Professor Abernathy’s] class he was only able to finish one out of four finals as a result of the pain. He admitted that he deliberately plagiarized the essay because he simply could not do the work under the pain. The only way he knew he could turn it in was if he copied material. He stated that if he did indeed plagiarize, which he felt he did, then “I deserve this, and here I am.”

**Jury Questions and Discussion:**

A juror asked [Professor Abernathy] if it would have made a difference if [Peeta] had cited the parts he copied. He responded that it would have bothered him, but not in the same way. It wouldn’t have been plagiarism or an Honor Code violation per se but would have impeded the ability to evaluate Peeta’s understanding. This would have negatively affected his grade, but in his opinion it would not constitute a violation of the Honor Code.

Another juror asked [Professor Abernathy] if students were even allowed to consult outside sources for the assignment. He responded that they could do so, to get a clearer understanding of points in the article being reviewed. However, any such material needed to be properly cited.

² Please see Footnote 1.
When asked about his writing process, [Peeta] explained that he wrote the paper the night before it was due. [Peeta] stated that he couldn’t really understand the assigned article and tried to read it as he wrote the paper.

A juror then asked [Professor Abernathy] what made him suspect that [Peeta] had plagiarized. [Professor Abernathy] responded that the wording of the paper sounded like a definition someone would get from a Google search. He stated that if he ever felt any passages were suspicious, he checked with Google.

A juror then asked [Peeta] if this was the first class he had taken in the department. [Peeta] responded that he had taken other [Disguise] courses, but not with such a heavy [Wilderness] background.

When asked about the time between when [Peeta] handed in the paper and the confrontation, [Peeta] said that he did not reach out to [Professor Abernathy] in any way to correct what he had done. A juror asked [Professor Abernathy] what would have happened if [Peeta] had come to him before he realized that the paper was plagiarized. [Professor Abernathy] responded that if a student felt they had plagiarized then they should not have turned in the assignment. While the assignment would have been docked some points for lateness, it would be nothing compared to plagiarizing an essay. He said he was fine with people emailing him if they have a change of heart, but once he had the assignment he would have to report the incident to Honor Council.

**Deliberations:**

After both parties had left, the jury discussed whether or not there was a violation. With little discussion, all jurors consented to the following statement:

[Peeta Mellark] violated the Honor Code by “representing another person’s ideas and scholarship as his own” by failing to use citation. (3.04.1) He further violated the Honor Code by failing to report himself to Honor Council upon realizing a breach had occurred. (Honor Code Section 3.05)

(All jurors consented.)

**Circumstantial:**

Due to scheduling conflicts, [Professor Abernathy] could not attend the circumstantial portion, so the jury met with [Peeta] alone for this part of the trial.

The trial chair asked [Peeta] to respond to the statement of violation, and [Peeta] said that he was ready to accept whatever resolutions to which the jury consented. After some discussion of his previous experience with plagiarism education (which had consisted of a few days a year in high school), [Peeta] concluded that plagiarism is stealing other people’s work and is “just wrong.”

The discussion returned several times to the issue of [Peeta’s] health around the time of the
violation. When asked more about his [condition], [Peeta] stated that it was both severe and chronic. He described it as a never-ending, [painful condition]\(^3\) that got worse with anxiety, and that medical help had not proven useful; nothing could be done to treat the pain other than to give it time. In spite of this, taking time away from school had not been as helpful as he had hoped.

The jury asked [Peeta] whether he had known he needed to cite the definitions he found online. [Peeta] said that he had not been thinking clearly, and that he could have avoided plagiarism if he had not been experiencing such intense pain. Further stress, [Peeta] continued, came from a feeling that he was constantly being judged, and from the difficulties of transitioning from 100- to 200-level courses. [Peeta] told the jury that he was seeing a psychologist who cared a lot about him, but he felt that other medical professionals could do little to help his [physical condition].

The conversation moved toward possible resolutions. A juror asked [Peeta] if he thought a year would be a long enough time away from school, and [Peeta] said yes, since he felt he needed something better to do than sit around at home. When asked how returning to Haverford might affect him, [Peeta] said that he thought it would be positive as long as he were physically up to it. He maintained that Haverford’s role was important for his goal of achieving a certain GPA and attending [Disguise] school in the future. Jurors asked if [Peeta’s] feelings were specific to Haverford, or if they applied to any school that could help him in his future plans. [Peeta] responded that Haverford was more than just a stepping stone and that the Haverford community could help him in particular.

Since he had already failed the class, [Peeta] couldn’t think of any resolutions regarding his grade, but he expressed a desire to write something about his experience with the trial and what he has learned about plagiarism. [Peeta] strongly wished that his [condition] would go away; when a juror asked what he would do if it did not, he said he just had to hope it would.

**Deliberations and Tentative Resolutions:**

The jury first discussed separation. Jurors felt that due to the nature of Peeta’s violation, the Honor Code heavily suggests separation, but he was currently separate from the community because he had taken time off. Ultimately, the jury decided that [Peeta]’s separation could occur concurrently with his self-initiated time off. The jury decided to recommend a grade change in order to remain consistent with community standards, even though their resolution would not affect his overall grade in the course.

The jury then discussed possible educational resolutions that would help prevent [Peeta] from plagiarizing in the future. Many jurors felt he should read Maud McInerney’s essay concerning plagiarism. The Chair suggested that [Peeta] write two letters, one addressing definitions and paraphrasing in academic work, and another about his experience with the violation and the trial process. Many jurors felt he should meet with a dean on a regular basis. Others also felt that regular meetings with the Writing Center would help make sure he addressed any areas that were not covered in his essay.

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\(^3\) See Footnote 1.
The jury consented to the following tentative resolutions:

1. [Peeta] should receive a 0.0 on the paper.
2. [Peeta] will be separated from Haverford for the remainder of the semester and next semester.
3. While [Peeta] is separated, and before coming back, he must:
   a. Write a letter to the community about his experiences with plagiarism and the effect on his relationship with the community
   b. [Peeta] will read Maud McInerney’s essay on plagiarism and write a response.
4. For the first year of his return, [Peeta] must
   a. Have a writing partner from the writing center that he meets with regularly
   b. Meet with his dean once every two weeks and keep a journal of his visits, to be submitted to the Honor Council Co-Chairs at the end of each semester.
5. The jury highly encourages [Peeta] to attend counseling.

Resolutions as a whole: All jurors consented, no juror stood outside.

Finalizing Resolutions:

After a period of reflection, the jury met to finalize the resolutions. Since [Peeta] did not live on campus, he participated via telephone in order to adhere to the trial timeline.

The Chair asked [Peeta] to respond to the resolutions. [Peeta] said that he felt that the resolutions were fair. [Peeta] asked whether he was allowed to discuss the situation leading up to his violation in his letter to the community, which the Chair said was appropriate since the prompt was open-ended. The Chair also said that [Professor Abernathy] was fine with the resolutions as long as they were upheld in good faith.

The jury consented to the following final resolutions:

1. [Peeta] should receive a 0.0 on the paper. (none stood outside)
2. [Peeta] will be separated from Haverford for the remainder of the semester and next semester. (none stood outside)
3. While [Peeta] is separated, and before coming back, he must:
   a. Write a letter to the community about his experiences with plagiarism and the effect on his relationship with the community
   b. Read Maud McInerney’s essay on plagiarism and write a response. (none stood outside)
4. For the first year of his return, [Peeta] must
   a. Have a writing partner from the writing center that he meets with regularly
b. Meet with his dean once every two weeks and keep a journal of his visits, to be submitted to the Honor Council Co-Chairs at the end of each semester. (none stood outside)

5. The jury highly encourages [Peeta] to attend counseling. (none stood outside)

Resolutions as a whole: All jurors consented.

[Peeta Mellark’s] Letter to the Community (as per Resolution 3A):

Dear Haverford Community,

I am writing to you to discuss my experiences with plagiarism at Haverford College. In the second semester of my sophomore year at Haverford I was experiencing a number of physical and psychological problems that made me extremely unproductive and caused me to not take my schoolwork very seriously. I had this extreme [health condition]⁴ that followed me everywhere I went. I could not identify the cause of this [condition], but it was very physically debilitating and made it extremely difficult to focus in class. I could not take in anything that was being discussed and I was essentially a zombie in each of my classes. I also had a history of severe anxiety, especially about my schoolwork and future. I was simply not in a state where I could be a student, but I was doing so anyways.

My [Disguises in the Wild] class was the absolute hardest for me. It required more attention and preparation than any of my other classes and I was hardly able to put forth any effort at all. The students were assigned an essay on a journal article that was selected by the professor. Just like all of my other assignments, I put the work off until the night before it was due. That was a tremendous mistake. There was nowhere near enough time to complete the assignment which involved reading the lengthy and challenging journal article and then writing a summary. I didn’t consciously recognize that I had plagiarized until right after I turned the assignment in, but I had taken a fair number of sentences from the journal article and reworded them slightly, along with two definitions from Wikipedia. This was the only way I felt I could complete the assignment before it was due.

As soon as I realized what I had done, I should have immediately contacted the professor and explained to him my situation and that I believed I plagiarized the assignment. I however did not do this, and simply waited until he graded the assignments to find out that I did in fact plagiarize. At first, I did not fully recognize the severity of my actions, until the professor reported the paper as plagiarized to the Honor Council. It was a lengthy process, but once I finally met with the Honor Council, they helped me realize just how serious plagiarism is and that I had a lot more to consider about who I am as a person and where my morals lie. I began to feel absolutely terrible about what I had done and I realized that people can get kicked out of school for plagiarism. I explained my [condition]⁵ and psychological issues

⁴ See Footnote 1.
⁵ See Footnote 1.
to the Honor Council and although they certainly sympathized, they helped me realize that my health condition absolutely did not justify my actions. I should have contacted the professor immediately and explained to him what I had done.

As a result of my actions, the Honor Council decided that I should be separated from the Haverford Community for the remainder of the semester and the next semester. I found this to be very reasonable and I did not believe I was worthy of being a part of the Haverford Community for an extended period of time. There are a tremendous amount of students at Haverford who take their work very seriously and would never plagiarize an assignment. What I did was unfair to all of these students who constantly demonstrate academic integrity. I would like to apologize to everyone in the Haverford Community who my actions may have offended and would like to let the community know that I have learned from my mistake and would never plagiarize a paper again. If I am presented with similar circumstances as before regarding my physical and mental health, I will absolutely handle the situation differently. It is much better to never submit a plagiarized paper in the first place than to disobey the Honor Code. The Honor Code is something I value very strongly and if and when I get back to Haverford I will make sure to follow every facet of the Honor Code in absolutely every situation from here on out.

[Peeta Mellark’s] Letter in Response to his Plagiarism Education (as per Resolution 3B):

After reading Maud McInerney’s essay on plagiarism, I have learned a number of things. One thing I had learned is how to avoid plagiarism by citing properly. It is important to cite absolutely every bit of information that is taken from someone else’s work. If it is not your words, then it needs to be cited. Even every single paraphrase must be cited as well. It is imperative that you do not mix the author’s words with your own because even if you do not directly copy a passage, it is still not your own idea. You must also cite the source that you use to formulate your ideas using the proper format.

I particularly enjoyed the example Maud McInerney used regarding the 20-dollar bill to better detail plagiarism. It is not okay to take somebody else’s 20-dollar bill the same way it is unacceptable to plagiarize. There is no way to properly take the money, but if you leave a note, then you have accepted responsibility for your action. This is similar to properly citing someone else’s words if you plan to include them in what you are writing.

Maud McInerney’s essay on plagiarism also helped me realize that there is no difference between accidental plagiarism and intentional plagiarism. Regardless of the circumstances, it is nevertheless still plagiarism because the ideas are not your own. One must proofread his or her work to make sure there are no errors in citing and that no citations are forgotten. This will prevent accidental plagiarism from occurring.

Discussion Questions:

1. How should juries address physical and psychological conditions as part of the circumstances of an Honor Code violation?
2. If Peeta had reached out to his professor or a dean for support when his pain was overwhelming, he may have avoided the stressful situation in which he chose to plagiarize. Should the community make an effort to increase awareness about the many factors that contribute to stress and the options for reaching out for support? What might be effective measures to make students aware of when and how to reach out?