Abstract discussion will be held on Thursday 11/12 at 7pm in the MCC (Stokes 106).

**Beauty and the Beast:**

**An Honor Council Academic Trial**

Released Fall 2015

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 consented to the release of the abstract.

**Key:**
Confronted Party: Belle
Confronting Party: Professor Cogsworth
Class: Ball Dancing 300

**Summary/Pre-Trial:**

Professor [Cogsworth] noticed that a portion of an answer on [Belle]’s take-home exam had been copied verbatim from the textbook. While the exam was open notes, it specifically asked that each answer be in the student’s own words. It came to light that Belle, a Bryn Mawr student, had completed most of the exam in her own words but was simply unable to answer one section of a question and thus she decided to copy the answer from the textbook. Throughout the process, she was extremely apologetic, and the jury ultimately focused on restoration to the community.

**Fact Finding:**

Belle began her statement to the jury by explaining that this was the first open note take home exam she had ever taken and that she had not fully processed the expectations of the test or the time frame. The class was given 72 hours to complete the exam once they began it, but she did not start it until 24 hours before it was due. She then found herself rushing through the last two questions, and did not significantly change the textbook phrasing. She realized this mistake while she was in class the next day and tried to explain this to Professor Cogsworth while handing in her exam.

Professor Cogsworth explained the expectations for the exam to the jury. It was a limited open note take home exam (students could use class notes and the course textbook). Belle’s test
had included a block of text copied directly from the textbook. Professor Cogsworth added that he did not feel that this was a malicious act.

The jury then began to ask questions. Professor Cogsworth stated that he had gone over in class what materials were allowed, but may not have said specifically that answers had to be in the student’s own words. Belle added that it was assumed that students would use their own words, and that whether or not Professor Cogsworth had said it in class, it was clearly written in the instructions on the test booklet.

Belle said that she had just left the relevant text from the book as her answer, and Professor Cogsworth added that the answer had looked unfinished. He also stated that this was the only question that contained plagiarized material. About one-third of the question was plagiarized and the question was one of five equally weighted questions on the test. Professor Cogsworth remembered that Belle spoke to him when she handed in the exam, but hadn’t understood her at the time, thinking she meant only that one of her questions was rough or incomplete.

**Jury Deliberations/Statement of Violation:**

When the jury began to deliberate on a statement of violation, they quickly agreed that a violation of exam instructions had occurred. There was then some discussion on whether the passage being copied word for word constituted plagiarism, and whether or not an exam was different from a paper in that sense. The jury briefly discussed whether they needed to see the test itself, but decided that that would be more helpful when discussing resolutions.

When crafting the wording of the statement, the jury wanted to make clear that the plagiarism, and not the use of the textbook, was a violation of the exam instructions. The jury consented to the following statement of violation:

* [Belle] violated the Honor Code by plagiarizing directly from the textbook. This plagiarism was a violation of exam instructions. (10 jurors consent, 0 stand outside, BiCo Liaison Approves)*

**Circumstantial Portion:**

Belle stated that there were no significant circumstances surrounding the violation, except that she was rushing through the test. The jury then began to ask questions as well as look at the test itself.

The parties reported that the midterm was worth 20% of the course grade. Professor Cogsworth then told the jury about the confrontations. He said that his first discussion with Belle - when she had first approached him to try and explain that there was an issue with her exam - was neutral and not very productive, especially as there were other students around at the time. He said that their later conversation went well as it seemed very clear what had happened. Throughout this meeting, Belle was agreeable and forthcoming. They both seemed to have a good understanding of what happened.
When asked for proposed resolutions, Professor Cogsworth thought that a zero on the test would be appropriate, as would Belle writing a letter of reflection on what could have gone differently. Belle supported this second suggestion, stating that more reflection would be helpful. She added that the problem had come from not having experience with open-note tests. She recalled that the format was new and she had not understood it.

**Jury Deliberations and Tentative Resolutions:**

The jury first discussed a grade change. The jury felt that a zero on the exam was too harsh, but a zero on the question was too lenient. They considered the intentionality and extent of the violation when determining how best to hold Belle accountable. Further, they considered the fact that she tried to tell Professor Cogsworth what she had done, and some jurors pointed out that this was as close to doing the right thing she could have done after the violation occurred.

The jury also considered whether it was fair for Belle to receive the same score she would have if she had left the question blank. A juror pointed out that they should keep in mind the fact that the Professor thought the test deserved a 0.0, and that, for one, the jury has no final control over grading decisions, and for another, any credit the jury suggests she receives would be more than she would get otherwise.

One juror suggested that Belle be asked to rewrite the test for no credit as an alternative method of achieving accountability. Some jurors felt that this was bordering more on punitive. Therefore, the jury felt that somewhere between a zero on the question and a zero on the test was the most appropriate.

The jury also discussed resolutions aimed at education. The main issues seemed to be about exam expectations, questions for clarification, and time management. They considered ways that test expectations could be clarified, such as explicit instructions on Moodle. The jury considered having Belle write guidelines, but realized that there is too much variability between take-home tests in different classes to make a single guide generally applicable. The jury decided instead to have her come up with questions students needed to know the answers to before taking tests, which would then be edited by members of the jury and Honor Council and then made available through the HCO program and on Moodle.

Belle seemed to understand plagiarism in general, but there was some concern that she might not understand how it applies in this specific discipline, and that her interdisciplinary major made figuring this out difficult. To this end, the jury discussed having her meet with her professors to discuss her independent major and the challenges it poses.

Finally, turning to restoration, the jury discussed having Belle write a letter to the community, and what it should cover. Various suggestions included the subjects of what she could have done differently or her thoughts on the trial process. In the end, the jury decided to give some guidance as to what the topic should be, but also wanted to leave it open for Belle to discuss other aspects of the trial and/or violation. There was also discussion on whether or not this letter should go to Bryn Mawr as well as Haverford, but decided that the specifics of this
case were not of particular interest to the Bryn Mawr community.

The jury consented to the following tentative resolutions:

1. The jury recommends that [Belle] receive no credit for the answer containing plagiarism. Further, we recommend that she receive credit for 80% of the remaining points earned. (10 jurors consent, 0 stand outside, BiCo Liaison Approves)

2. [Belle] will write a letter to the community reflecting on what she could have done differently. She can also discuss any other aspects of the violation or trial process in this letter. [Belle] will write this by the start of the [date] semester. (10 jurors consent, 0 stand outside, BiCo Liaison Approves)

3. [Belle] will compose a list of 5-10 questions concerning exam format and expectations. These questions will be submitted to Honor Council by [date]. These questions will be used to form a resource written by Honor Council in consultation with members of the faculty and community that will be made available to all Bryn Mawr and Haverford students. (10 jurors consent, 0 stand outside, BiCo Liaison Approves)

4. [Belle] will meet with the Bryn Mawr Academic Support and Learning Resources specialist at least once before [date]. (10 jurors consent, 0 stand outside, BiCo Liaison Approves)

5. The jury recommends that this process not be considered a disciplinary proceeding for the purposes of reporting to institutions of higher learning. (10 jurors consent, 0 stand outside, BiCo Liaison Approves)

(10 jurors consent, 0 stand outside, BiCo Liaison Approves)

**Finalizing Resolutions:**

Both parties were comfortable with the resolutions in general. Professor Cogsworth stated that he understood and saw merit in giving Belle some credit for the exam.

He also expressed a concern about how much time is required to run a trial, and suggested Honor Council consider developing simplified procedures for when the sequence of events seems clear and the Professor and student are in agreement about what happened.

When the parties left, the jury began to discuss the resolutions. While no one had any changes they thought were necessary, they did want to make sure Belle understood the purpose of the questions, but the decided that this could be clarified via email.

The jury consented to the following final resolutions, which are unchanged from the tentative resolutions:

1. The jury recommends that [Belle] receive no credit for the answer containing plagiarism. Further, we recommend that she receive credit for 80% of the remaining points earned.
2. [Belle] will write a letter to the community reflecting on what she could have done differently. She can also discuss any other aspects of the violation or trial process in this letter. [Belle] will write this by the start of the [date] semester. (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia, BiCo Liaison Approves)

3. [Belle] will compose a list of 5-10 questions concerning exam format and expectations. These questions will be submitted to Honor Council by [date]. These questions will be used to form a resource written by Honor Council in consultation with members of the faculty and community that will be made available to all Bryn Mawr and Haverford students. (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia, BiCo Liaison Approves)

4. [Belle] will meet with the Bryn Mawr Academic Support and Learning Resources specialist at least once before [date]. (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia, BiCo Liaison Approves)

5. The jury recommends that this process not be considered a disciplinary proceeding for the purposes of reporting to institutions of higher learning. (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia, BiCo Liaison Approves)

Post-Trial:

The resolutions were not appealed.

Belle’s Letter to the Community:

To the Haverford College community,

I found my experience with the Honor Council surrounding my violation of the Honor Code to be a very educative and, overall, positive experience. Instead of feeling ashamed and embarrassed for what had occurred, I was able to take time to process it and have strong communication with both the professor for the course the violation occurred in and those who were part of the Honor Council that fostered the conversations with the professor and I. The process itself led me to recognize that, to avoid such a violation of the Honor Code, I could have communicated better with my professor prior to taking the exam. I had sat down to take the exam quite confused, as I had never taken an open note exam in a college course before, and went ahead with what I thought was the correct way to proceed with such an exam. This was incorrect, which a simple email or conversation with the professor would have informed me. I am grateful for this experience as it allowed me to recognize how to better nurture relationships with professors as well as what to do in the midst of confusion over an important course material that can greatly affect my grade.

Sincerely,

[Belle]
Discussion Questions:

1. To what extent should a student be held accountable for failing to adhere to exam instructions?
2. In what ways can a professor be more clear on exam expectations?
3. How can a student avoid issues regarding clarification on an exam?
4. Should there be an alternate process for academic cases where the professor and the student are in agreement and already close to restoration?