Abstract discussion will be held on Wednesday, October 28 at 7 PM in the MCC (Stokes 106).

The Avengers:
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 parties consented to the release of the abstract. One of the confronted parties consented to the release of the abstract; the other confronted party did not respond to the request for consent.

Key:
Confronted Party: Steve Rogers
Confronted Party: Tony Stark
Confronting Party: Professor Nick Fury
Confronting Party: Professor Maria Hill
Class: S.H.I.E.L.D. Training 101

Summary/Pre-Trial:

After the end of the semester, [Steve Rogers] and [Tony Stark] were confronted by their professors [Nick Fury] and [Maria Hill] in [S.H.I.E.L.D. Training 101] after the professors noticed unusual similarities in some of their work for the class. The professors suspected inappropriate collaboration on the course’s final exam, as well as on one of the weekly [combat exercises] assigned for the course.

Following the initial confrontation, Rogers and Stark admitted to the professors that they had indeed collaborated and contacted Honor Council. In the trial that followed, both Rogers and Stark were eager to restore the breach of trust with their professors and the community, while also hoping to educate the community through their learning experience. The final resolutions consisted entirely of suggestions from Rogers and Stark, the only exception being the jury’s recommendation that that proceeding be considered disciplinary for the purpose of reporting to other institutions of higher learning.

Fact Finding:

Fact-finding portion began with Stark and Rogers recounting what had happened. They explained they both had taken S.H.I.E.L.D. Training 101, co-taught by Professor Hill and
Professor Fury, pass/fail during the previous semester. As they each did not know any other students in the class, they would often work together and collaborate, within the guidelines. However, when the combat exercise in question came up, they explained they were both very pressed for time. Rogers said he had a thesis meeting the night before the combat exercise was due and explained that the two of them were talking over the combat exercise as they often did and that there was very little time left to complete it. He said that they were working on the combat exercise side by side, and at the time did not realize just how similar their maneuvers were in the end.

Regarding the final, which was a timed take-home exam, Stark explained that they took it separately from each other and under the guidelines. They had finished, and were talking about the exam the morning it was due; they ended up talking about one question which was especially tricky for both of them, and discussed a new way of doing it. Following this discussion, they both went back and separately changed their answers to that question, then turned in their exams. Both students then left campus for the break. Stark explained that they were contacted by Professor Fury and Professor Hill during break. Once they both returned to Haverford, they met with the professors to discuss the potential violations. While they both denied it at first, they said they felt bad immediately after the meeting and returned to explain honestly what had happened. On that same day, they contacted Honor Council.

Professor Hill and Professor Fury reiterated much of what Stark and Rogers had said. Professor Hill said she first noticed the similarities on the combat exercise, and asked Professor Fury about it. At this same time, Professor Fury had noticed the similarities on a question on the final exam. Given it was the same two students’ work, they found it particularly unusual and decided to confront Rogers and Stark.

The jury then moved on to ask clarifying questions. Jurors asked questions to clarify the timeline and whether Rogers and Stark had thought they were cheating at the time. Stark and Roger clarified that their collaboration had started as general, casual conversations about questions that stumped them that turned into more specific discussions. They then explained that at the time they did not think they had been cheating on the problem sets, although looking back they agreed there may have been inappropriate collaboration. Stark and Roger also clarified that although they knew they had collaborated on the final and felt guilty, they had still turned in the exam with revised answers because of time pressure. A juror asked the professors just how similar the final exams were. Professor Hill answered that the one particular question was extremely similar, but it was only one question, just as the students had said.

The meeting ended with Professor Hill offering some reflections on Haverford’s Honor system. She said that she felt like the students had gained an unfair advantage since the other students in the course, many of whom had come to class more than Rogers and Stark and all of whom had taken the exam honestly, could have scored better on the exam by violating the instructions, but refrained from doing so. She explained that the Haverford Honor Code made Haverford very different than other places she had worked, and that she had initially been wary
of the idea of take-home exams. She commented that at many other schools, work is automatically electronically checked for plagiarism, while at Haverford, students are given the benefit of the doubt until there is reason for suspicion. She also feared that at many other schools, the jury would say that they didn’t know enough about the field of [hand-to-hand combat], and thus wouldn’t say there was a violation beyond a reasonable doubt. She said that often if she were to bring this up at other schools, she’d get hurt on teaching evaluations. However, she felt that at Haverford bringing this forward was the right thing to do.

Finally, Rogers and Stark said that every day since this had happened and they’d been confronted, they had been questioning how they came to do this in the first place. They said they couldn’t be more sorry and more ready to cooperate with this process, and really hoped it could be an educational experience.

Jury Deliberations/Statement of Violation:

The jury then began to deliberate on a statement of violation. They all agreed that multiple violations had occurred. Many jurors felt there were three violations; firstly inappropriately collaborating on the combat exercise, secondly going back to an already finished exam, and thirdly changing their answer in that exam as a result of inappropriate collaboration via conversation. One juror also felt a fourth violation was simply discussing the form, content, and degree of difficulty of the final exam. However, most of the jury felt that such discussion once they had both completed the exam was only an issue because they went back and changed their answers, which is where the central violation was. In the end, the jury came to the following statement of violation:

[Tony Stark] and [Steve Rogers] violated the Honor Code in the following ways:

- By inappropriately collaborating on [one combat exercise]
- By collaborating on the final exam, on which collaboration was prohibited, as a result of discussing its content and;
- By returning to work on the final exam after the time had elapsed and the exam had been closed. (All jurors consent)

Circumstantial Portion:

One juror was absent for this meeting. The professors elected not to attend. The meeting began with Rogers and Stark offering some context surrounding the violation. On the combat exercise, Rogers said that there was a lot of time pressure, he had put the combat exercise off until the night it was due and he had arrived back from his thesis meeting late. Rogers also said he completed the final exam the day before finals period ended. He said his motivation for discussing the question in detail and later changing the answer was the desire to get a better grade. They both said they had taken this class because it was interesting, and that they took it pass/fail because of the difficulty. They said that later in the semester they stopped going to as
many classes because of thesis pressure, and their [shared extracurricular commitment]. They both added they weren’t focusing on the right things when these violations occurred and that they wanted to be held accountable. They said it was foolish of them to even think about violating the Code because they were taking the class pass/fail, and would have passed without collaborating on the final. They were extremely apologetic about what happened.

The trial chair asked if Rogers and Stark had any proposed resolutions. They said that they tried to keep in mind the trial goals and that they felt that receiving zeroes on the combat exercise and final exam were appropriate. They said they wanted to write letters individually, one to each professor, and to the community. They added that since they were seniors, they wanted to make an educational tool, specifically a video, for Customs or HCO sessions. Stark added that they love Customs, and they felt a video discussing what happens when you are pressed for time, or what is appropriate collaboration would be a great addition. The trial chair then added that the professors did not have any recommended resolutions and were happy with the trial thus far. With that, the jury asked some clarifying questions about the proposed resolution regarding the parties making a video, and circumstantial portion ended.

**Jury Deliberations and Tentative Resolutions:**

The jury then began deliberating on tentative resolutions with the same juror absent as before. The jury was extremely happy with how circumstantial went and with the students’ suggested resolutions. The jury unanimously agreed with the grade changes that Rogers and Stark had suggested: a 0.0 on the combat exercise and the final exam. The jury also agreed with the idea of written letters to the professors, but felt a meeting following these letters could be of even greater restorative value.

The jury moved to discussing the educational tool resolution that Rogers and Stark suggested. They were very much in favor of a video, as they felt that would draw more attention to the project. The jury then discussed who the audience for the video should be. They felt showing it at both Customs and to seniors would give it a greater effect and reach more people, particularly since this case specifically dealt with time pressure because of thesis. The jury wanted to offer Rogers and Stark some support with this resolution, and felt that working with Honor Council’s Community Education & Outreach Committee would achieve this. In the end, the jury came to the following tentative resolutions:

1. The jury recommends that [Steve Rogers] and [Tony Stark] each receive a 0.0 on both [the combat exercise in question] and the final exam. (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)

2. [Steve Rogers] and [Tony Stark] will each write individual letters to [Professor Maria Hill] and [Professor Nick Fury] in order to begin to restore any breaches of trust. These letters will be written by [date]. (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)

3. The jury recommends that after writing these letters, [Steve Rogers] and [Tony Stark]
meet with [Professor Maria Hill] and [Professor Nick Fury] to reflect on the violations and the trial process. This meeting will take place before the end of the [date]. (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)

4. [Steve Rogers] and [Tony Stark] will write a letter to the community, either jointly or separately, reflecting on the violations and their experiences since. This letter, or letters, will be written near the end of [semester]. (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)

5. [Steve Rogers] and [Tony Stark] will collaborate with Honor Council’s Education and Outreach committee to produce a community education video intended for Freshmen customs groups and senior thesis seminars. This collaboration will take place during [semester]. (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)

6. The jury recommends that this process be considered a disciplinary proceeding for the purpose of reporting to other institutions of higher learning. (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)

Resolutions as a whole: (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)

Finalizing Resolutions:

Finalizing began with Rogers and Stark offering their feedback on the tentative resolutions. They both expressed they were comfortable with the resolutions and were very happy that their suggestions were incorporated, but were wondering what Resolution #6 meant. The trial chair explained that because Honor Council trials are not always considered a disciplinary action, the Dean of the College asks juries to make a recommendation on each specific case. Haverford wants to ensure it has open and honest relationships with graduate schools, and accurately reporting disciplinary matters is an essential part of this. The trial chair added that this resolution is often very difficult to come to, and that, in their personal opinion, it by nature doesn’t fit within the goals of a trial. However, the chair explained that all juries must come to a recommendation on this issue at the request of the Dean of the College.

Rogers and Stark expressed great concern with this resolution, as they wanted to restore any breaches of trust, but felt that such a resolution could end up being a black mark on their academic lives. The jury expressed they would certainly take this under consideration, but that their choice in this resolution was limited by the aforementioned guidelines. Before the students left, the trial chair read an email from the professors stating that they agreed with all resolutions.

The jury then began their deliberations. The juror who was absent the previous meeting expressed discomfort himself with Resolution #6. He said that when he read abstracts, he always felt this resolution was overly punitive. Another juror explained that it is always a very tough decision, and for students to have to make this recommendation makes it tougher, but it was something they were obligated to do with every trial. They also noted that it was only a recommendation and the Dean would make the final decision. A juror said that graduate schools would likely see the effects of the 0.0 anyways, which would raise questions. The jury felt comfortable consenting to all resolutions, including Resolution #6.
One juror then expressed the concern that because Stark and Rogers were taking the class pass/fail, there was a chance they could still pass the class. The jury was concerned that their violation might have no effect on their standing in the class, but felt the professors could change the final grades appropriately with the recommendation in mind. With that, the jury consented to the following final resolutions, identical to their tentative ones:

1. The jury recommends that [Steve Rogers] and [Tony Stark] each receive a 0.0 on both [the combat exercise in question] and the final exam. (All 10 jurors consent)
2. [Steve Rogers] and [Tony Stark] will each write individual letters to [Professor Maria Hill] and [Professor Nick Fury] in order to begin to restore any breaches of trust. These letters will be written by [date]. (All 10 jurors consent)
3. The jury recommends that after writing these letters, [Steve Rogers] and [Tony Stark] meet with [Professor Maria Hill] and [Professor Nick Fury] to reflect on the violations and the trial process. This meeting will take place before the [date]. (All 10 jurors consent)
4. [Steve Rogers] and [Tony Stark] will write a letter to the community, either jointly or separately, reflecting on the violations and their experiences since. This letter, or letters, will be written near the end of [semester]. (All 10 jurors consent)
5. [Steve Rogers] and [Tony Stark] will collaborate with Honor Council’s Education and Outreach committee to produce a community education video intended for Freshmen customs groups and Senior thesis seminars. This collaboration will take place during [semester]. (All 10 jurors consent)
6. The jury recommends that this process be considered a disciplinary proceeding for the purpose of reporting to other institutions of higher learning. (All 10 jurors consent)

Resolutions as a whole: (All 10 jurors consent)

Post-Trial:

The trial resolutions, specifically the recommendation that the violation would be considered a disciplinary proceeding for the purpose of reporting to other institutions of higher learning, were appealed to the President of the College. In their appeal, Stark and Rogers not only argued that the jury had made an unfair recommendation in their specific case, but also made the larger case that juries should not be charged with making this recommendation at all. Stark and Rogers felt that a jury of students did not have the appropriate knowledge of the implications of such a resolution needed to make an informed decision, that the resolution had been applied inconsistently in cases involving similar violations, and that the resolution was inconsistent with the trial goals of education, restoration, and accountability. After holding meetings with both students as well as with the trial chair and a representative from the jury, as well as consulting with the Dean of the College regarding their reasons for asking that juries make such a recommendation, the President denied the appeal, upholding both the specific
resolution and the broader practice of juries making such a recommendation.

Letter from Tony Stark and Steve Rogers:

Dear Community,

This past fall semester we inappropriately collaborated on a homework assignment and the final exam. We are both incredibly ashamed of our judgment and behavior, and we hold ourselves fully accountable for our actions in [S.H.I.E.L.D. Training 101]. While our inappropriate behavior was never meant to be malicious nor was it premeditated in any way, they were flagrant and unfair to our professors and the rest of our classmates.

On the [combat exercise], we did not manage our time well, and with the deadline quickly approaching, we felt pressured and hastily did the [combat exercise] side by side, which resulted in us having very similar answers for an aspect of the assignment. Since our work was done so hastily, I don’t think we even realized how similar our answers were but that still does not excuse the behavior. We should have managed our time better and completed the assignment following the guidelines. For the final, we initially took the exam separately and followed all rules and procedures (the time limit, closed notes, and closed book requirements). After each of us completed the exam but before either of us submitted it, we discussed the test as we both found it to be very challenging. One question in particular came up in our discussion, as we were not exactly sure how to answer it, as we both missed the class the concept was discussed. After discussing it briefly, we had a momentary lapse in judgment and went back and changed our answers for that one [question], since we thought we had determined the answer. While we never meant to take an unfair advantage over our classmates and deceive our professors, our actions did not represent this sentiment, and our behavior did not represent one of honor and integrity.

We believe our inappropriate behavior stemmed from us being too preoccupied with the letter grade, rather than the actual process of learning the material. We both lost sight of what was most important and pushed the envelope in a very inappropriate way. The beauty of Haverford is the environment it creates that places its stress on the pursuit of knowledge and the process of learning instead of on the end result. While our judgment was clearly clouded and our behavior lapsed significantly, we look at this experience as a formative one. As seniors looking to graduate within the next couple of months, we will only be faced with more temptations in both our work and social life, and while our actions this semester were far from honorable, we truly believe this experience will be a significant influence and guide for us moving forward as we strive to abide by a stricter set of standards.

While our actions were not intentional, we feel absolutely awful for taking advantage of our professors’ trust. Haverford really does foster an environment of trust, concern, and respect. We were completely unsure of how this trial would go and how our professors would react when we told them the truth. We were worried we would be met with scolding and punishment and
that was not the case. Our professors graciously accepted our apologies, and overall, we were incredibly pleased with the speedy and fair proceedings of the trial as we felt both the chair and the jury considered the facts and circumstances of the case non-judgmentally and impartially. In particular, we appreciated the jury’s willingness to work with us as collaborative partners in developing resolutions, and at the conclusion of the trial, the jury adopted every single one of our proposed resolutions. We did not act with honesty and integrity at times during the fall semester, and when we finally looked ourselves in the mirror, we realized we needed to face the consequences of our actions. While we did disagree with the final resolution of the trial, overall, we were pleased with the process, and everyone involved was completely fair and understanding from our professors to each member of the jury.

We would like to just reiterate again how sorry we are for our actions. We fully admit they were inappropriate and unfair to our professors and the rest of our classmates. We hold ourselves fully accountable and sincerely apologize for our behavior, and while an apology does not take back our wrongdoing, we do hope this letter serves as a step in mending this breach of trust with the community and our professors.

Sincerely,

[Steve Rogers] and [Tony Stark]

Discussion Questions:
1. Should juries be obligated to make a recommendation on whether to report a violation to graduate schools?
2. How can students be held accountable when a violation occurs in a course they are taking pass/fail?
3. How do we keep students thinking about the Honor Code after their Customs experience, especially when under the stress of writing a thesis?
4. When is it appropriate to discuss the details of an exam with a classmate who has also already completed the exam in question? Should students avoid conversations that might give others a greater opportunity or temptation to cheat?