The abstract discussion for this abstract will be held on Friday, September 30 at 7 p.m. in the MCC (Stokes 106).

Inside Out:
An Honor Council Academic Trial
Released Fall 2016

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: Joy
Confronting party: Professor Riley
Class: Consciousness 300

Summary/Pre-Trial:
This case involves [Joy], a student in Professor [Riley]’s [Consciousness 300] course, who copied verbatim from an online solution set on a homework assignment for which help from online resources was prohibited. The TA for the class, who was aware of the existence of solutions, flagged the assignment, and Joy admitted her use of the prohibited materials.

A lot of the discussion in the trial centered around whether or not juries should mandate how a student would mend a breach of trust with their professor. Additionally the jury discussed whether or not plagiarism had occurred in this case and whether plagiarism even could occur in certain classes.

Fact Finding:
Joy was present for this meeting, while Professor Riley Skyped in. Joy explained her process for approaching the [brain teasers], a weekly assignment for [Consciousness 300], explaining that she usually started them two days in advance of the due date. In the case of the teaser in question, however, Joy had a group presentation in another class due the same day as the weekly teaser. The night before the teaser was due, Joy returned home late after staying up late to rehearse for her presentation. Tired and not wanting to turn in work that was incomplete, she decided to look up the answer to the brain teasers online. She copied one answer almost
verbatim, and left the last question blank, though she knew she could have found the answers for the last question. She wrote vague answers for the rest of the questions. Joy emphasized that she thought turning in two questions blank would be unacceptable, while leaving one would not be as bad, thus her reasoning for not copying both. Joy added that since the confrontation she had started going to office hours consistently and starting the teasers earlier than she had before the violation.

Professor Riley confirmed that the brain teasers were from a textbook she particularly liked. She assigned weekly teasers from the book. At the beginning of the semester, she was alarmed to find the answers to these online. While reluctant, she continued to use the teasers, emphasizing to students any online help was prohibited. Joy’s teasers contained unusual methodology that was not taught in class, but rather was mentioned on the online resources and were flagged by graders of the teasers. After seeing the copied answer, Professor Riley confronted Joy. Since the violation, Professor Riley had to create her own teasers, which she admitted were not as good as those from the textbook. In addition, creating them took up a lot of time for Professor Riley. She also felt that Joy’s attendance at office hours was not as frequent as Joy said.

Jury Deliberations/Statement of Violation:

Following the meeting, the jury debated whether or not a violation had occurred. Jurors had differing views on whether it was possible to plagiarize a “right answer” in a subject such as [Consciousness 300], as opposed to a more abstract discipline, and whether this would have been a violation if Joy had put her answer in quotes and cited her source. Some jurors also felt that there could be more than one correct answer in this discipline. In the end, many jurors seemed to feel that what Joy had done might technically constitute plagiarism, but that using that word in a statement of violation might give people reading the abstract the wrong idea about what had occurred. As a compromise, the jury decided to convey the idea of plagiarism (representing work that you did not do as your own) without using that term. They then consented to the following statement of violation:

Joy violated the Honor Code by both using a disallowed source on a brain teaser and by representing another’s work as her own. (10 jurors consent)

Circumstantial Portion:

Professor Riley elected not to attend this meeting, but sent her thoughts via email. The jury wanted to discuss what Joy’s thoughts were on the night she copied the answers onto her brain teasers. Most of the jury’s questions concerned the fact that Joy had left one of the brain teasers blank, seeming to show that she knew it was wrong to copy the answers, but thought it was okay to do so on one of them. Joy’s response was that she felt that handing in a brain teaser with two questions blank was absolutely unacceptable as far as the standard she held herself to
with her academic work. Joy explained further that she never turned in incomplete homework assignment before and had concerns about Professor Riley’s image of her if she turned a brain teaser in with two questions incomplete.

The jury also asked Joy what she thought about going to Professor Riley’s office hours. Joy explained that she had been going because she was required to go because of a scheduling conflict with the lab portion of the class, but that she didn’t get much out of the office hours and preferred the TA sessions. Joy did think that she would get more out of the office hours if she prepared questions ahead of time.

Finally, the jury began to discuss suggested resolutions. Joy and Professor Riley both agreed that Joy should receive a 0 on the brain teaser. The jury discussed whether this should be reported to grad schools. Joy was particularly concerned about this aspect but seemed less so when the trial chair explained that the Dean rarely ends up needing to make such reports. The jury also discussed how Joy’s actions had hurt her classmates and professor - because of the violation, Professor Riley had to write her own brain teasers. Joy discussed suggested resolutions with the jury, including writing a letter of apology to Professor Riley and talking to her more, especially going to her with questions. When asked about how the violation may have also caused a breach of trust with the TAs, Joy said that he could also apologize to them.

**Jury Deliberations and Tentative Resolutions:**

The jury took three meetings to deliberate. At the first meeting, the jury briefly discussed ideas for resolutions. The jury agreed with Joy’s idea of writing to Professor Riley and the TAs, in addition to the Haverford community, and receiving a 0.0 on the brain teaser. One juror suggested that Joy work with Professor Riley to create new questions for brain teasers, since she could no longer use the ones in the textbook. Some jurors felt this could be too time-consuming, or that the two of them working together could be awkward for both of them. Yet another juror suggested instead that Joy meet weekly with Professor Riley, but that these meetings should be only recommended, not required. Others felt that at least one meeting should be required, to ensure that the breach of trust could begin to be repaired. Jurors also brought up the trial goal of education, but the jury strongly felt that Joy had learned a lot from the trial already.

At the second meeting, the jury discussed their feeling that a breach of trust still existed between Joy and Professor Riley, evidenced by Joy’s discomfort about asking Professor Riley questions in office hours. Beyond repairing the breach of trust, some jurors also felt that a meeting or several meetings could teach Joy that asking questions of professors does not make them think badly of her. This seemed important as Joy’s fear of Professor Riley thinking poorly of her for handing in the exam with two questions blank was a significant factor in the violation itself. A number of jurors, however, had concerns about such a meeting. Some concerns were related to the meeting being required. Some jurors felt that Professor Riley might find the meeting less meaningful in restoring the breach of trust if she felt that Joy had to be there. Other jurors also felt that it was not a jury’s place to tell a student how to go about their learning, and
that students should be able to decide for themselves what would be most helpful to them. A number of jurors therefore felt that the resolution should exist but should be phrased as a recommendation.

Part of the jury felt that Joy had already shown that she was engaged with the course through TA sessions and attending office hours, and that she had said she would ask for an extension or hand in blank homework if a similar situation arose. The jurors who felt that requiring meetings would not be at all useful seemed largely comfortable with phrasing it as a recommendation, but not as a binding resolution. By the end of this discussion, the jury felt that they could not agree on either the number (1 or 2) or the phrasing (binding or recommended) of this resolution, so they moved to discuss other topics and returned to this resolution in their following meeting.

The other extensive discussion was around the idea of Joy creating problems to help Professor Riley save time, since she now had to write problems herself for the class rather than using the textbook. Jurors intended for this resolution to be helpful to Professor Riley and could help improve their working relationship if they worked on this project together. Furthermore, it could help Joy reflect on how her violation had hurt her classmates, and could contribute to holding Joy accountable. However, jurors also felt that this would likely take too much time, and that Joy’s status as a student meant that she would be unable to create problems complex enough for Professor Riley to ever actually use in the class.

Since there were a number of unknowns relating to this idea, the jury decided to end their meeting and have the trial chair email Professor Riley, asking her to estimate how long it would take for Joy to create either one problem or an entire brain teaser, whether it would be helpful to her or not, and if not, if she had any other suggestions for things Joy could help her with. They felt that this information could help them make a decision about this resolution.

At the start of the third meeting, Professor Riley had not yet responded to the trial chair’s email, and therefore the jury was in the same place as the previous meeting. After further attempts at compromising, the jury decided to write wording for the other resolutions and discuss reporting to grad schools, and then come back to the resolution about the meetings. In terms of reporting, jurors raised a number of points. These included that the assignment was small and therefore would likely not have made its way to a disciplinary body at another school, and that jurors did not want this violation to impact Joy’s life in the future. However, jurors also felt that Joy’s violation was in essence plagiarism, which is a serious violation and often considered disciplinary, and also that the violation, while on a small assignment, had had a large impact on the class. Furthermore, the violation had been intentional, though not malicious. The jury decided to include the size of the assignment and the consideration of intentionality in their statement, as these seemed to them to be the most important factors.

The jury then consented to the following set of tentative resolutions, and a statement about reporting to grad schools. One juror stood outside on the fourth resolution, feeling that she did not see how this would be helpful at all:
1. The jury recommends that [Joy] receive a 0.0 on the [brain teaser]. (10 jurors consent)
2. [Joy] will write a letter to [Professor Riley] and any involved TAs. (10 jurors consent)
3. [Joy] will meet with [Professor Riley], if she is willing, to discuss questions on course material, unless she believes that there is a better way to repair her working relationship with her, in which case she will do the latter. (10 jurors consent)
4. The jury suggests that [Joy] work with [Professor Riley], if she is willing, to help make up for the time she has lost as a result of her violation. (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside)
5. [Joy] will write a letter to the community, with the goal of repairing the breach of trust with her classmates and the community at large. (10 jurors consent)

Resolutions as a whole: 10 jurors consent

The jury feels that due to the scale of the assignment, this violation would not have been considered disciplinary at other institutions. However, the jury feels that the intentionality of the violation should also be considered. (10 jurors consent)

Finalizing Resolutions:

In the time between tentative and finalizing, Professor Riley emailed the trial chair to say that she did not feel resolution 4 would be helpful. She also said that while she was happy to meet with any student in the class who had questions, she did not feel that this meeting would be helpful to her in any way, and that it should not be mandated. She was unable to attend the finalizing meeting in person. Some members of the jury were particularly upset by this, seeing as it was very important to mend the breach of trust and they believed that Joy still felt uncomfortable and intimidated by Riley.

Joy began this meeting by saying that she was more or less comfortable with the resolutions how they were. The trial chair then read Professor Riley’s thoughts. Joy largely seemed to agree that a meeting was not necessary. She felt she already had the tools to succeed in the course (talking to TAs, going to office hours, starting the brain teasers early). She also said that at the most recent office hours, she had prepared a question ahead of time and asked it, which had been a positive experience.

The jury then deliberated on final resolutions. After hearing from both Professor Riley and Joy, they removed resolutions 3 and 4, as these would not serve their intended purposes. Jurors still wanted to add a resolution supporting Joy in continuing to prepare questions ahead of office hours. At this point, many jurors felt comfortable with moving forward with resolutions 1, 2, and 5, and adding a new resolution about supporting Joy’s question preparation. The jury looked for new ways to address education. To ensure that Joy did continue to attend office hours, the jury decided to phrase this resolution as binding rather than simply supporting it.

One suggestion was to have Joy meet with her dean. Jurors felt that as long as she did not
have to break her confidentiality to the dean, this would not be a problem. In order to ensure that Joy would have something to discuss in the meeting, and also to address the time management issue, it was suggested that Joy could use this meeting to discuss planning ahead, or ‘blueprinting’ the following semester.

As one juror had had a negative experience with their dean, the jury decided to extend this resolution to cover three possible resources for Joy: her dean, faculty advisor, or the OAR. They felt that Joy would be best placed to choose which resource(s) would be most helpful to her.

With these new ideas in mind, the jury worded and consented to the following set of final resolutions, with one juror standing outside on the resolutions as a whole, as she felt there was still an overall lack of education:

1. The jury recommends that [Joy] receive a 0.0 on the [brain teaser]. (10 jurors consent)
2. [Joy] will write a letter to [Professor Riley] and any involved TAs, by the end of the [semester]. (10 jurors consent)
3. [Joy] will continue to attend office hours for the remainder of the [semester]. Furthermore, the jury supports [Joy] in her continued engagement with the coursework, through starting early on the [brain teasers] and preparing questions for office hours. (10 jurors consent)
4. [Joy] will meet with one or more of the following resources: her dean, her faculty advisor, and/or the OAR. This meeting will be to blueprint the [following] semester, and will take place by the end of shopping week for [that semester]. (10 jurors consent)
5. [Joy] will write a letter to the community, with the goal of repairing the breach of trust with her classmates and the community at large, by the end of the [current] semester. (10 jurors consent)

Resolutions as a whole: 9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside

The jury also consented to an unchanged statement about reporting to grad schools:

The jury feels that due to the scale of the assignment, this violation would not have been considered disciplinary at other institutions. However, the jury feels that the intentionality of the violation should also be considered. (10 jurors consent)

Post-Trial:
The resolutions were not appealed.

Discussion Questions:
1. Should juries have the power to mandate resolutions regarding student relationships with their professors and how they learn?
2. Is there ever only “one correct answer”? Can plagiarism occur in any discipline?

[Joy]’s Letter to the Community:

Dear Haverford Community,

At first, I sincerely apologize for my mistake. I was in a considerably stressful situation last semester. The high workload did cause me a really frustrating physical and mental state. As a result, I did something irresponsible to not only myself, to my professor, but also to Haverford community.

This violation became an important lesson to me. From this lesson, I learnt that you have to be clear about the level of your abilities and make a precise self-evaluation and the workload before choosing what to do. So that you will not push yourself into an extreme situation or a dead end. The unexpected huge workload and high difficulties of the classes that I chose last semester did give me a hard time. But I was optimistic at the beginning and once believed that I could handle most of the work. However, while the classes went on, the workload did become heavier and I could not guarantee my productivity nor my rest. My study efficiency became extremely low, my life was in a vicious cycle and I almost lost all confidence after the violation happened. But just because of the trial, I had a chance to reevaluate and reflect myself. It had been long since the last time I had a long discussion with a group of people. Though the trial took a pretty amount of time, I felt glad that I could actually communicate with several people at the same time. Both the people in the Honor Council and my professor were very cooperative and supportive during the trial discussion. I’m very grateful for that.

I hope that I will never push myself into a really hard situation like this again, and if it does happen again, I will definitely not do the silly thing for another time. This trial should be a fresh new start for me, and I hope that I can be accepted by Haverford Community again after my self-reflection and adjustment.

Yours sincerely,

[Joy]