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

Prairie Home Companion:
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:
Class: Radio Broadcasting 350 (Senior Seminar in Radio Broadcasting)
Confronted Party: Guy Noir
Confronting Party: Professor Dusty, one of several professors co-teaching the senior seminar
Type of Assignment in question: Podcast

Summary/Pre-Trial:
Professor [Dusty] contacted Honor Council regarding an issue with a [podcast] assignment that [Guy Noir] had turned in for [Radio Broadcasting 350], which was co-taught by Professor Dusty and other professors. Upon reviewing the assignment, Professor Dusty found that several of the sentences in Guy’s assignment were copied verbatim from his sources.

Upon reviewing statements, Honor Council sent the case to an academic trial. The jury agreed that Guy’s violation was unintentional but that he had committed plagiarism as a result of failing to understand the expectations for citation. The set of resolutions focused mostly on education for Guy.

Fact Finding:
Professor Dusty was co-teaching the fall Senior Seminar for [Radio Broadcasting] majors with several other professors. While grading Guy’s podcast assignment, she realized that the first page and a half of material was in the expected format, but was followed by a few pages of author names with bullet points underneath. These bullet points were taken verbatim from the sources and lacked quotation marks. Professor Dusty contacted Guy to try and arrange a meeting time, but he was unresponsive at first. When she was finally able to schedule a meeting he
showed up 30 minutes early while she was still busy with another student, so he instead met with two of the other professors co-teaching the seminar. Guy explained to them that this section was meant to be his notes and that he never intended to pass it off as his own work. The professors reported this back to Professor Dusty. However, Professor Dusty had subsequently noticed that many sentences from the page and a half that Guy had intended to be his podcast were also taken verbatim from their sources.

Professor Dusty then asked Guy to report himself to Honor Council because she believed his paper included plagiarised material (although likely unintentional) and also arranged to meet with him to discuss the issue. Professor Dusty ended by saying that her advising meetings with Guy since the incident had been productive and that he now had a greater understanding of the expectations for the podcast.

Guy began by telling the jury that he had changed his major from [Acting] to Radio Broadcasting in the middle of his junior year, and as a result he was simultaneously taking the Junior and Senior seminars. He said that he had not understood what was expected for the podcast, in part because this type of assignment was practiced during the Junior Seminar. He had found the assignment especially difficult since he did not yet have a specific thesis question while doing the assignment, only a general area of interest (this was acceptable at that stage). In completing the assignment, he had copied sentences verbatim from his sources into the “notes” section. He had done so for himself to refer to later as well as to give his professors insight into his thought process at that point surrounding a thesis topic; he had not been trying to take credit for their words.

Referring to the difficulty in finding a time to meet with Professor Dusty, he said that he had been busy at the time, but admitted that he should have made this a higher priority. Guy told the jury that he wished he had been given more of an opportunity to fix his mistakes before the issue was brought to Honor Council. He added that Professor Dusty had helped him with his podcast, and also mentioned that he had fixed these issues for his second draft.

Professor Dusty added that the notes section would have been fine if Guy had labelled it more clearly, but that she was still concerned about several sentences in his podcast that were taken verbatim without quotation marks. She later clarified that she thought the verbatim sentences were not just improperly cited, but constituted plagiarism because they lacked quotation marks and were not Guy’s words.

Guy explained that he thought he had made it obvious that the words were not his own, following each sentence with a citation and sometimes even writing “source ___ says”. He admitted he had not fully understood the sources, which led to difficulty in summarizing and paraphrasing their research methodology.

Guy said that at the time he thought the purpose of the assignment was solely to match students with thesis advisors. He had not been aware that this submission would be graded (it was in fact worth about 10% of the course grade). The parties said that Professor Dusty would most likely be Guy’s thesis advisor, and that they did not think this issue would cause problems
in their relationship going forward. Professor Dusty said that she had been surprised at the lack of plagiarism education that this incident had shown, since this was her first semester at Haverford and she had heard so much about the Honor Code coming here. She hoped the abstract would refer to this sentiment so that this issue could be addressed. Professor Dusty felt that education for Guy and restoration between the two of them were well on the way to being achieved.

**Jury Deliberations/Statement of Violation:**

The jury quickly agreed that Guy had violated the Honor Code on the podcast, but heavily discussed how exactly he had done so. The jury discussed the responsibility that Guy had to educate himself about the expectations of the assignment. The jury recognized that first-year Writing Seminars often did not provide in-depth plagiarism education, but felt that the need to use quotation marks around direct quotations should be common sense to a Haverford senior.

There was also much discussion on whether or not Guy’s work represented plagiarism or improper citation. Some thought that since Guy had made an attempt to attribute his work to the proper authors by including the source after each section, it was simply improper citation. Others pointed out that plagiarism can occur unintentionally, including by failing to understand expectations surrounding citation. Most agreed that it was Guy’s responsibility to understand the difference between paraphrasing and direct quotation.

One juror had to leave before the wording of and consensus on the statement, but was present for most of the preceding discussion and agreed to the sentiment of the statement. The jury spent a significant amount of time and care in crafting the statement to ensure that it conveyed the nuances of the situation.

> [Guy] violated the Honor Code by turning in an assignment with unintentional plagiarism. This resulted from a failure to understand and seek clarification about how to properly attribute words to their authors. (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia).

**Circumstantial Portion:**

Guy began by telling the jury that he had not taken many classes requiring paper writing during his past three years at Haverford. He emphasized that he had put a lot of effort into the assignment, and that he puts hard work into everything that he does. Throughout the meeting, Guy emphasized that the manner in which his professors had handled this incident upset him and made him feel as though his integrity was being challenged. Specifically, he had felt accused in his meeting with two of the other professors co-teaching the seminar and felt that he hadn’t had a chance to explain himself.

He said that it was helpful for him that the statement of violation acknowledged that the plagiarism was unintentional, but also felt that the unintentional nature of the plagiarism should
mean that the matter could have been resolved between him and the professor. He reiterated that it was clear from the context of the assignment that he had not been trying to take credit for others’ work.

When asked about his relationships with the involved professors, Guy reiterated that he had just recently switched into the major so he hadn’t known many of them for long. He said that Professor Dusty had been very helpful in helping him figure out how to write a podcast, and that he had been trying to prove his integrity to her.

When asked whether he had written papers for previous Radio Broadcasting courses, he said that he had not. He added that he had written some papers for humanities classes but that these were different than a podcast. When asked whether it had occurred to him that he had been using other people’s words at the time of writing the podcast, he said that it had not since he was copying jargon and it was clearly not his own work. When asked what he wished he could have done differently, he said that he would have been more proactive about checking in with professors to make sure he was on the right track. He added that he had tried to be better about this since.

The trial chair asked Guy about his lack of cooperation with Professor Dusty’s attempts to meet, as well as his seeming lack of knowledge about how to use quotation marks. To the former, he admitted that he had not made scheduling that meeting a priority, especially since he did not know that there was an issue of potential plagiarism. He added that he had been dealing with the passing of his aunt around that time, and that had tried to be more communicative with Professor Dusty since then.

When asked about proposed resolutions, he suggested that he could go to the OAR to work through how to cite going into his actual thesis. He also suggested that he could write letters to or have meetings with the other Professors involved to explain what he had learned. When asked about the idea of a grade change, he said that he didn’t want to take a zero on the paper since he had worked hard, especially since the plagiarism was unintentional.

**Jury Deliberations and Tentative Resolutions:**

The jury began its deliberations by reading Professor Dusty’s circumstantial statement. In her statement, she had stressed the need for accountability, emphasizing that Guy’s plagiarism, while unintentional, had been a preventable act of negligence, the implications of which should not be underestimated. She also expressed her frustration about how difficult it had been to get in touch with Guy early in the process. Finally, she said she felt the statement of violation to be overly lenient.

The jury was somewhat split about whether to be worried about Guy’s impression that the issue could have been resolved outside of Honor Council or agree with it. They acknowledged that another professor may not have brought the issue to Honor Council and might have seen it as a misunderstanding of instructions instead. Some jurors agreed with Professor Dusty that Guy’s violation represented an issue of negligence, while others questioned what Guy
should have done differently given that he wasn’t aware that his understanding of the assignment was flawed.

The jury discussed the idea of requiring meetings between Guy and the involved professors, but decided that this was not necessary, since he and Professor Dusty seemed to have a good relationship already and the other professors had not felt a need to meet. Thus they decided to require that Guy write a letter to the professors as well as recommend any meetings that Guy or any of the Professors would find helpful.

The jury also crafted several resolutions aimed at educating Guy about proper citation and its significance. Finally, the jury discussed how best to hold Guy accountable, focusing specifically on what degree of grade change he should receive on the paper. Jurors felt that accountability was important to the professor and that the plagiarism invalidated Guy’s assignment to some degree. Jurors also acknowledged that the plagiarism had been unintentional, and some felt that Guy would be held sufficiently accountable by having to complete the other resolutions and the trial process itself. While they considered leaving the degree of grade change up to the professor, they ultimately decided to recommend that Guy receive a 0.0 on the first draft. The jury felt that the professor might assign a harsher grade change, but hoped she would take the jury’s input into consideration. The parties had communicated to the jury that the first and second drafts of the podcast combined were worth 10% of the course grade. The jury quickly agreed that the proceeding should not be considered disciplinary for the purpose of reporting to other institutions of higher learning and crafted a statement to that effect.

**Tentative Resolutions**

1. *The jury recommends that [Guy] receive a grade of 0.0 on the initial draft. (All 10 Jurors consent)*
2. *[Guy] will meet with the [Radio Broadcasting] librarian to discuss standards of citation and paraphrasing in the field. This meeting will take place by [date]. (All 10 Jurors consent)*
3. *The jury recommends that [Guy] utilize the Writing Center for future writing assignments. (All 10 Jurors consent)*
4. *Before the start of the [date] semester, [Guy] will retake the Academic Integrity tutorial. (All 10 Jurors consent)*
5. *Before the start of the [date] semester, [Guy] will write a letter to the [professors] teaching the Senior Seminar reflecting on this trial process and his violation. (All 10 Jurors consent)*
6. *The jury recommends that [Guy] meet with any of the seminar professors if anyone involved feels this would be helpful. (All 10 Jurors consent)*

*Resolutions as a Whole: (All 10 Jurors consent)*
Statement on reporting: *Due to the unintentional nature of the violation and the scale of the assignment, the jury feels that this would not result in a disciplinary proceeding at another institution. Therefore the jury recommends that it not be reported as such.*

**Finalizing Resolutions:**

Guy was generally satisfied with the resolutions. He asked about the jury’s rationale behind the grade change, which they explained to him. He told the jury that the first draft itself constituted 10% of the seminar grade, as opposed to the podcast as a whole constituting 10% of the grade (as the jury had thought when forming tentative resolutions). Guy was not particularly supportive of the grade change, but accepted it. He added that he felt it was beneficial for his relationship with Professor Dusty for the jury to be the body to recommend the grade change rather than putting her in the position to have to do so. Guy shared that the process had been a positive one. He said that he had learned a lot and was glad that the issue had arisen at this point rather than on his thesis itself.

After Guy left the jury discussed whether they still felt comfortable recommending that Guy receive no credit on his podcast given the new information that that assignment was worth a larger portion of his grade than the jury had previously thought. Most of the jury agreed that the grade change was still relatively minor and was important both for holding Guy accountable as well as for Guy’s restoration with Professor Dusty. One juror believed that the grade change was too large and thus punitive, and stood outside of consensus on the grade change resolution. The jury consented on a set of final resolutions and statement on reporting that were unchanged from their tentative counterparts.

**Final Resolutions**

1. *The jury recommends that [Guy] receive a grade of 0.0 on the initial draft.* (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside)
2. *[Guy] will meet with the [Radio Broadcasting] librarian to discuss standards of citation and paraphrasing in the field. This meeting will take place by [date].* (All 10 Jurors consent)
3. *The jury recommends that [Guy] utilize the Writing Center for future writing assignments.* (All 10 Jurors consent)
4. *Before the start of the [date] semester, [Guy] will retake the Academic Integrity tutorial.* (All 10 Jurors consent)
5. *Before the start of the [date] semester, [Guy] will write a letter to the [professors] teaching the Senior Seminar reflecting on this trial process and his violation.* (All 10 Jurors consent)
6. *The jury recommends that [Guy] meet with any of the seminar professors if anyone involved feels this would be helpful.* (All 10 Jurors consent)
Resolutions as a Whole: (All 10 Jurors consent)

Statement on reporting: *Due to the unintentional nature of the violation and the scale of the assignment, the jury feels that this would not result in a disciplinary proceeding at another institution. Therefore the jury recommends that it not be reported as such.*

Post-Trial:
The resolutions were not appealed.

Discussion Questions:
1. Where do you draw the line between improper citation and plagiarism?
2. How much would you consider the weight of a grade in recommending a grade change?
3. Currently, failing to seek clarification about expectations on an assignment is considered a violation of the Honor Code. What would you consider a “good effort” by a student seeking clarification? How would you act in a situation where you did not realize you were doing the assignment wrong in the first place?