Abstract discussion will be held on DATE at TIME in LOCATION. Community Forum will be held on DATE at TIME in LOCATION.

Transformers:  
An Honor Council Academic Trial  
Released Fall 2016

This abstract WAS 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: Bumblebee  
Confronting party: Optimus Prime  
Class: Autobots 101

Summary/Pre-Trial:  
Optimus Prime was the student proctor working for the registrar’s office handing out self-scheduled exams during a semester. Optimus Prime noticed Bumblebee returning his exam several minutes late, and interrupted him seemingly about to write something on his exam after the exam period was over. Optimus Prime asked him what he was doing in the moment, but was not satisfied with his answer that he’d just wanted to correct a small thing on his exam. Concerned that Bumblebee was taking extra time with the exam, Optimus Prime reached out to Honor Council, who suggested that Optimus Prime confront Bumblebee via email since the semester was over. Optimus Prime also got in touch with the registrar and with the professor of Bumblebee’s course, Professor Ironhide, and both suggested that Optimus Prime confront Bumblebee if he were concerned. After emailing with Bumblebee, Optimus Prime was still suspicious of a violation, so he asked Bumblebee to bring himself to Honor Council.

Fact Finding:  
Bumblebee started by explaining that the incident had taken place when he was taking his Autobots 101 final, a closed-book exam. He had been 5-7 minutes late to pick up and start the exam, and had decided to take it in Zubrow commons, since he liked the larger tables there. He estimated that it had taken 3-4 minutes for him to walk to Zubrow, so he started the exam around or after 7:10 PM. Toward the end of the exam, Bumblebee realized that had to copy over...
his answers from the test to an exam booklet, and had worked furiously toward the end of the period to finish copying over his answers. He decided to risk turning it in late, and hadn’t started to pack up his things until around 10:01 PM. He had walked back to Chase and turned in his exam several minutes after that. When he arrived in the registrar’s office in Chase with his exam, he noticed a few words on the exam that he felt were unclear, and felt “an impulse” to add or change a few words. It was never exactly clear to the jury exactly what kind of change he wanted to make, but Bumblebee stated that he had thought he might lose a few points because of an unclear or incomplete answer, and had sought to correct that. He thought it wouldn’t be an issue to do this, and tried to make this change to his exam until Optimus Prime noticed what he was about to do and asked him not to. Finally, Bumblebee mentioned that he had seen other students entering Chase with their exams as he was leaving, which led him to be relatively unconcerned about being late.

Optimus Prime started off by explaining that he remembered Bumblebee coming into the registrar’s office at 10:13 PM. The rules that he was asked to enforce states that students must return by 10:05 PM, giving them 5 minutes to return to Chase after finishing their exams. As Bumblebee had explained that he hadn’t taken more than 3 hours to take the exam, Optimus Prime didn’t feel concerned about that potential issue. However, he was unsure how it could have taken Bumblebee so long to return that he hadn’t arrived until 10:13 PM. He also couldn’t remember anyone coming in after him except for perhaps students from a class where the professor had asked him to give an extra ten minutes so that they could print their exams. Optimus Prime was also concerned that Bumblebee seemed to have worked on the exam outside of the specific block of time from 7-10 PM, and that he took the exam in Zubrow, a location that was not allowed for self-scheduled exams. Optimus Prime also explained that he didn’t feel that it was appropriate that Bumblebee had seemed to want to write more on his exam in the registrar’s office at 10:13 PM, even though he had prevented him from doing so.

A juror asked Bumblebee whether he knew he wasn’t supposed to be in Zubrow. He said that he had checked the registrar’s website, and saw that Stokes Auditorium was off-limits. He had then asked Optimus Prime whether he could take the exam in the library, and Optimus Prime said no, but Bumblebee had figured that Zubrow might be okay. Optimus Prime mentioned that he thought he would have shown him the list of possible testing rooms, but didn’t remember this happening. He had only ever taken self-scheduled exams in Chase before. Bumblebee also mentioned that he hadn’t spoken to his professor (Professor Ironhide) about the issue, thinking that it was up to Honor Council. Optimus Prime had informed Professor Ironhide of the issue, and he had given Bumblebee a grade in the course anyway, indicating that he might not be particularly concerned about the issue.

Jury Deliberations/Statement of Violation:

The jury started off by agreeing that there was a lot of grey area involved in the issues they were considering. While Bumblebee’s and Optimus Prime’s narratives hadn’t been exactly
the same, they had given enough information that the jury was comfortable concluding that Bumblebee hadn’t taken more than three hours with his exam. The jury listed potential violations of the Code that they saw in the narratives with the aim of examining each one to see whether any jurors considered it a violation. These were: taking the exam outside of the 7-10 PM period, taking the exam in an inappropriate location (Zubrow), and intending to write something on his exam once he returned to the registrar’s office. For each of these, at least some jurors felt that it constituted part of a violation. Taking an exam outside of the 7-10 period, even if it had been picked up late, constitutes an advantage over a student who picked up their exam late and still turned it in on time. Taking an exam in the wrong room might not have gained Bumblebee an advantage, and it was possible that he hadn’t known that Zubrow wasn’t allowed because he didn’t remember asking specifically about it. However, it seemed that Optimus Prime had told him which rooms were appropriate and it was still a violation of rules despite possible lack of intention. The inverse of this was true with what had happened when he returned to the registrar’s room - there had been a clear intention to do something that would have gained him at least a small advantage, but he had been preventing from doing so by Optimus Prime. The jury was also unclear as to what Bumblebee had actually tried to change, whether it had been to clarify his handwriting or add something more substantive, and whether this would have affected his grade.

The jury discussed their feelings about the difference between violating the substance and the letter of these exam instructions. Primarily, they considered whether small violations of the rules around exam instructions violated the community’s standards for how exams are taken, using themselves as a representative sample of the community to decide what the community’s standards were. While they agreed that he had not done anything that most professors would confront him for, the majority of the jury felt that Bumblebee had violated their personal standards for how to take exams. Some jurors felt that the rules existed the way they do for a reason, and they felt that minor violations of the rules still needed to be met with consequences. Several jurors felt that this was not a violation of their personal standards, because they didn’t feel that the important substance of the rules had been breached. Some jurors who felt this way expressed that they would consent to a statement of violation since Bumblebee’s actions had violated the personal standards of several members of the jury, and they felt that this represented a violation of community standards. With the understanding that they did not intend to make very stringent resolutions holding Bumblebee accountable, the jury consented to the following statement of violation, with two jurors who felt more strongly that it was not a breach of their standards standing outside:

Statement of violation: Bumblebee violated the Honor Code by not following exam instructions.
(8 jurors consent, 2 stand outside of consensus)
Circumstantial Portion:

Bumblebee didn’t have any circumstantial information that he felt he needed to share with the jury. Optimus Prime asked him why he had tried to write on the exam after the test was over, and he said it might have been an impulse. Since Bumblebee seemed uncomfortable giving the jury more information, the trial chair reassured him that the circumstantial information would not increase how severe they felt the violation was. A juror asked why Bumblebee took the exam in Zubrow, and he explained that he had seen people taking exams in Zubrow and other disallowed locations in the past and liked the large tables. He said he hadn’t thought he was breaking the rules doing that. Optimus Prime asked the jury what had made them come to a statement of violation, and a juror explained that the jury was divided on the issue, and that different parts of the violation seemed more significant to different jurors.

Bumblebee explained that he had turned exams in late before and asked the proctor whether it was okay, and they had always said yes. Since no one had any other circumstantial information to offer, the trial chair asked for suggested resolutions. Bumblebee thought that a letter to the community would be good, and didn’t think that he would be comfortable with a grade change. Optimus Prime wondered whether Bumblebee might wanted to talk to Professor Ironhide, and Bumblebee said he would be fine with that.

Jury Deliberations and Tentative Resolutions:

The jury discussed whether there was a way to make the rules for self-scheduled exams more clear in the future. They suggested having Bumblebee create a guide to exam rules and a map of allowed testing rooms to be displayed when exams were handed out. They also discussed their frustration with self-scheduled exams in general - several jurors felt that it was often difficult to find rooms with tables that they liked, and that the rooms were often very crowded. They decided to include a resolution suggesting that the registrar’s look into changes to these guidelines. The jury agreed with Bumblebee’s suggestion that he write a letter to the community, feeling that it would give him a good opportunity to have a voice in the abstract. Some jurors suggested making the letter optional, but they ultimately decided it would be best to require it. They felt that a meeting with Professor Ironhide wasn’t completely necessary, but decided to suggest it. Finally, the jury agreed that a grade change wouldn’t be necessary to hold Bumblebee accountable.

1. If either Bumblebee or Professor Ironhide thinks it would be productive, the jury supports the opening of a dialogue. If they like, they can request that a member of the jury be present for this conversation as a mediator. (10 jurors consent)
2. Bumblebee will write a letter to the community before the finals period of [semester]. (10 jurors consent)
3. Bumblebee will create a guide outlining the available testing rooms and the rules for self-scheduled exams. This will be posted at the pick-up location for exams and emailed to the student body. Bumblebee will create this guide by [date]. (10 jurors consent)

4. The jury recommends that the registrar’s office consider adding more testing rooms for self-scheduled finals. (10 jurors consent)

**Resolutions as a whole: (10 jurors consent)**

After a very brief discussion, the jury consented to the following statement about reporting to other institutions of higher learning:

*Because of the small scale of the violation, the jury recommends that this not be considered a disciplinary hearing.* (10 jurors consent)

**Finalizing Resolutions:**

The meeting began with Bumblebee asking about the guide from Resolution 3 and about how the resolution directed at the registrar’s office would be implemented. A juror explained that the guide would have the floorplan of Stokes and Gest, visually indicating which rooms were available and what kind of furniture was in those rooms. The jury asked that he also include the rules on the poster, such as when to drop off the exams. Optimus Prime noted that it seemed like this would be redundant with what the registrar already has, but a juror explained that Bumblebee’s version would be more visual, which would be helpful for people who weren’t familiar with Stokes. The jury also explained that the letter would be included in the abstract and suggested that Bumblebee read past letters to the community to see what kinds of things people wrote about, such as reflecting on the trial process and what they learned from it or on the violation and how they felt about it. Finally, Optimus Prime asked about the resolution directed at the registrar’s office, and a juror explained that people find it stressful when the rooms are full or don’t have the right seating options, and the jury thought it might be easy for the registrar to add some more rooms. The jury and Bumblebee thanked each other, and Bumblebee and Optimus Prime left.

The trial chair had reached out to the registrar for comment, and she read his emails to the jury. He had explained numerically the ratio of students taking exams to rooms available in each exam period, and was skeptical that more rooms were needed. The jury discussed how they felt that their experiences were indicative of a problem, and the way that the registrar was getting his numbers seemed potentially flawed. He had also suggested having Bumblebee help the registrar’s office look into adding rooms, but the jury didn’t feel that this would be helpful. The jury decided to mention in the chair’s response email that one of their significant concerns was with the variety of desks and tables available. In the end, the jury didn’t make any substantive changes to the resolutions.
Final Resolutions:
1. If either Bumblebee or Professor Ironhide thinks it would be productive, the jury supports the opening of a dialogue. If they like, they can request that a member of the jury be present for this conversation as a mediator. (10 jurors consent)
2. Bumblebee will write a letter to the community before the finals period of [semester]. This letter will be appended to the abstract. (10 jurors consent)
3. Bumblebee will create a guide outlining the available testing rooms and the rules for self-scheduled exams. This will be posted at the pick-up location for exams and emailed to the student body. Bumblebee will create this guide by [date]. (10 jurors consent)
4. The jury recommends that the registrar’s office consider adding more testing rooms for self-scheduled finals. (10 jurors consent)

Because of the small scale of the violation, the jury recommends that this not be considered a disciplinary hearing. (10 jurors consent)

Post-Trial:
The registrar was happy to consider the resolution, but was not convinced that a problem existed and did not decide to change the configuration of rooms available.

Discussion Questions:
1. The jury for this trial largely agreed that the violation was minor, and acknowledged there was a lot of grey area involved. Do you feel that this issue, and other violations similar in magnitude, should be brought to Honor Council? Do you believe there should have been any alternative methods used to handle this issue?
2. To what extent do you think the layout of self-scheduled exams, specifically regarding the rooms available and the clarity of testing instructions, led to this violation?
3. How might an academic trial be affected when the confronting party is a student and not a professor? Should it be affected?
Bumblebee’s letter:
To the honorable Honor Council and the entire Haverford student body,

It is very fortunate that my proctor, [Optimus Prime], reminded me of my several infractions during my [Autobots 101] final exam on [date]. He did not hesitate in pointing out that I handed in my exam 15 minutes late, and that I attempted to write on my exam booklet after I gave it to him. Clearly, any of these actions can justify the registrar to nullify my exam. However, his verdict was not exactly the case, and I am especially grateful that he and the Honor council can accept my narrative and make allowances for me.

I would like to break up the additional 15 minutes to explain the whole event more clearly. I appeared at the registrar’s office at 7:05 pm to pick up my exam sheet in the 7:00 pm time slot. Most of the specified exam venues had only chairs with tablet arms, but I preferred desks or tables to spread the material all over. With that in mind, I chose to work on my exam in Zubrow Commons after [Optimus Prime] told me that Magill Library was off limits to test takers. This meant a minimum of 5 minutes’ walk between the registrar’s office and Sharpless Hall and back again. Also, [Optimus Prime] seemed to have noted the time only after I had left his office, as it was a few minutes before 10:10 pm when I showed up at his office. I do apologize for being late on such a serious business, but I never spent more than 3 hours writing, just as the exam protocols asked me to.

Even then, I was caught red-handed trying to add something after I officially handed in the exam, and definitely out of the three hours that I was given. To [Optimus Prime] the witness, this can prove my intent to breach the rules, and it brings my credibility at doubt. I had noticed a typo on my response when I gave him the paper, and felt an overwhelming impulse to correct it while his attention was away. Thankfully, he was able to stop me before I could do so, or I would have much more explaining to do later on. [Optimus Prime] also confirmed that I was not able to change even a jot on the paper, which worked in my favor on the Honor Council trial. He still suspected that this constituted a breach of the Honor Code, so he made me aware of the consequences of not obeying the exam rules, and convinced me to stand trial before the Honor Council.

Despite having his thesis to worry about, [Optimus Prime] was very concerned about the upkeep of the Code, and appeared on all trials throughout. When the jury asked for his opinion on their decision, he was quite lenient on my behalf. All the jurors elected on the first round appeared as well, and seemed both investigative and understanding to me. I feel sorry for occupying their time, even though it was put into good use.

This is why I feel that we should cover further grounds with this trial. The juries agreed that the current set of official testing venues is not large enough, and there are no reasons for not allowing more, since this does not involve a big investment. I feel honored to be assigned the task of finding new testing sites, and I will certainly welcome your contribution. More importantly, I hope for less infractions of the honor code, and less incursions into the moral gray zone as well. While it may constructively improve the honor code, it can also place an unnecessary burden on everyone that can be hard to justify.