Abstract discussion TBA.

Tomorrowland:
An Honor Council Academic Trial
Released Fall 2017

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Key:
Confronted Party: Alesso
Confronting Party: Professor Guetta
Author of one of the plagiarized documents: Zedd
Assignments plagiarized: Song tracks
Course: DJing H300

Summary/Pre-Trial:
The case involved a student, Alesso, who was confronted by his professor, Professor Guetta, about plagiarizing two tracks. During the trial, the jury’s discussion focused on how to appropriately handle accountability for assignments whose grades combined account for less than 1% of Alesso’s final grade; how to deal with the fact that Professor Guetta seemed suspicious of plagiarism on past assignments, despite only having confronted for Tracks D and E, and to what degree a confronted party’s attitude should be taken into account when coming up with resolutions for a trial. Particularly, the jury discussed Alesso's private frustration and lack of respect for Professor Guetta. During finalizing, the jury felt frustrated that neither party seemed to understand the trial goals very well, given their negative feedback on resolutions which the jury felt were important.

Fact Finding:
During fact-finding, the jury talked to both of the parties who both agreed that plagiarism occurred in Tracks D & E. However, when the jury spoke to each party separately, it became clear that there was a more substantial breach of trust than would have been guessed from the statements.

Alesso expressed that he knew he had messed up and made a mistake by plagiarizing, particularly on Track E, which he thought to be the more egregious instance of plagiarism. Track
E (a 30 minute track) contained a full minute of previous DJs’ work. He explained that he had been surprised to hear that he had plagiarized on Track D, given that he had put a lot of time and work into that track, whereas Track E he had done in a very rushed manner. He disputed one or two of the instances of plagiarism that Professor Guetta had pointed out; specifically there were some lyrics that he thought were acceptable to use without quotation as he felt they were technical terms commonly used by musicians. Alesso felt that if Professor Guetta’s research aligned more closely with the subjects of the tracks, that the professor would also think the paraphrasing was acceptable.

When Professor Guetta spoke to the jury alone, he brought up that in a written assignment that Alesso had done about plagiarism, he had said that he didn’t think there was such thing as unintentional plagiarism; all plagiarism was intentional. In his assignment, Alesso also mentioned that the Haverford community was “hyper-aware” of plagiarism, and that he didn’t think that this assignment on plagiarism was wholly necessary.

When speaking to Alesso alone, he expressed a lot of frustration with the course. Specifically, the class had not been given information on what the timeline would be for assignments throughout the course. The track assignments took him about eight hours to do each, and the professors would assign the tracks without more than a week of warning. It took him especially long to complete the tracks because of his dyslexia. He felt that he did not get along well with Professor Guetta, and was frustrated that he had not heard helpful feedback from him on his tracks. Alesso also expressed frustration with the fact that Professor Guetta had mentioned to the trial chair, in an email he was cc’d on, that an online plagiarism checker found 13% plagiarism on his Track C, despite Professor Guetta not having confronted him about that track before.

**Jury Deliberations/Statement of Violation:**

The jury felt unanimously that a violation had occurred. They confined the statement of violation to Tracks D & E, since whether or not plagiarism had occurred on Track C seemed unclear and was not the original matter that Professor Guetta had confronted Alesso for. The jury came to the following statement of violation:

*Alesso violated the Honor Code by lifting sentences from source material without proper citation and by improperly paraphrasing others’ ideas in Tracks D and E. (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia).*

**Circumstantial Portion:**

Alesso acknowledged that he had shared a lot of circumstantial information, such as his frustration with the course, with the jury during fact finding. He explained that this semester had been incredibly stressful and that he expected the course to be substantially less work. He mentioned that he had started meeting with the OAR to help organize his time better and that
Professor Guetta’s feedback on his tracks was frustratingly limited, and mainly confined to grammar errors.

Alesso suggested that he should meet with the OAR, which is something he had already been doing. He also suggested having a plagiarism checker that he could use, as he had tried to run a track through one but that you have to pay extra to see the portions plagiarized. He also suggested that some sort of resolution be made to ensure that the course was not run like this again.

Professor Guetta gave some similar suggested resolutions such as: Alesso should meet with someone at OAR and/or writing center to learn better strategies for taking notes and knowing how to properly paraphrase. Professor Guetta also suggested that before Alesso submits his album, he should have it looked over by the writing center for guidance on overall writing and on paraphrasing.

**Jury Deliberations and Tentative Resolutions:**

Deliberations focused on how great of a grade change there should be: specifically, if there should be a grade change of more than a 0.0 on each assignment. Some jurors wanted more accountability because the minute grade of giving a zero on just the tracks in question would likely not impact his final grade. Professor Guetta had also mentioned that some students had simply not turned in Tracks, which also resulted in a zero for the Track, and many jurors felt like it would be unfair for Alesso to receive the same grade as if he had just not turned in the Tracks. On the other hand, many jurors were resistant to a further grade change because it seemed arbitrary and punitive. Additionally, Professor Guetta had mentioned that Alesso's grade was on the lower side, and jurors were concerned that an additional grade change could cause him to fail the course, which have further implications since the course was a requirement for his major. Other jurors felt that his current grade shouldn’t be taken into account. It was also noted that there was some concern regarding Alesso’s dyslexia and if it should be taken into account, since it could have potentially complicated note-taking and paraphrasing.

There was a discussion of a concern that any reflection assigned to Alesso would be viewed as “busy-work” and prove ineffective, just as the plagiarism assignment had seemed to be. One juror brought up the possibility of having Alesso write a letter to the DJs of the work plagiarized, in the hope that this would be more likely to encourage him to reflect, given that someone (whom he probably respected) would actually be reading his letters. The jury liked the idea, and with the addition of this method of accountability, the jurors who had wanted a more substantial grade change felt able to get behind confining the grade change to just zeroes on the tracks, even though that was not their ideal.

The jury felt that asking Alesso to create a plagiarism assignment would be more helpful than having him rewrite his original plagiarism assignment, given that it could involve more critical thinking about how to prevent plagiarism for the future.

This discussion led to the following tentative resolutions:
Tentative Resolutions:

1. **Alesso will write letters to the authors whose work he plagiarized and send Zedd [the living author] his letter by the start of the [semester].** (10 jurors consent)

2. **The jury recommends that Alesso receive a 0.0 on Tracks D and E.** (10 jurors consent)

3. **Alesso will design his own assignment about proper paraphrasing and avoiding plagiarism, tailored to DJing H300, by [date]. The Honor Council Staff Support Person will share the assignment with the professors of the [semester] DJing H300 and the Department Head of [redacted].** (10 jurors consent)

4. **Alesso will meet with someone from the OAR (Office of Academic Resources) or Writing Center to discuss and practice proper paraphrasing by [date].** (10 jurors consent)

5. **Alesso will meet with someone from the OAR or ADS (Access & Disability Services) to discuss note-taking strategies by [date].** (10 jurors consent)

6. **Alesso & Professor Guetta will meet, if Professor Guetta is willing, to come to an understanding on which sections of his tracks were plagiarized and on the nature of the plagiarism. A member of the jury is available to mediate this meeting if the parties so choose. This meeting will occur after the completion of Resolution D, but before [semester]’s finals week(s).** (10 jurors consent)

7. **Alesso will have the option to write a letter to the community, to be appended to the abstract.** (10 jurors consent)

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

Statement on Reporting to Other Institutions of Higher Learning:
While the jury feels this was a case of academic dishonesty, due to the minor nature of the assignment we are unsure if the violation would result in a disciplinary procedure at other institutions of higher learning. We leave this decision up to the discretion of the Dean of the College. (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside)

Finalizing Resolutions:
Alesso had several conflicting views on the resolutions. He mentioned that he felt the breach of trust was with Professor Guetta and not with the other DJs from whom he plagiarized, and that he wasn’t sure what he would say in a letter to them. Alesso also expressed that he didn’t see the value in meeting with Professor Guetta, as he is already comfortable meeting with him. A juror explained that discussing which sections were plagiarized could include discussion of Track C, since the jury saw a breach of trust in the fact that Professor Guetta had mentioned that without an official confrontation for the track.

The jury then discussed how they felt about the resolutions as a whole. A juror voiced that they felt frustrated at Alesso’s reaction to the resolutions and felt unsure if the resolutions would be able to effectively hold him accountable, given his reaction and seeming lack of
understanding of the trial goals. A juror voiced that, although they didn’t think separation was necessarily warranted here, they thought it should be considered more strongly, since separation can offer an opportunity for parties who struggle to understand the trial goals to reflect. The jury adjourned to give everyone a chance to think.

The jury reconvened and started by discussing accountability. Two jurors voiced that they felt strongly that more of a grade change was necessary, and these jurors ultimately stood outside on resolutions as a whole due to this opinion. The jury discussed a further grade change extensively. However, some jurors brought up that given that this discussion was occurring after their meeting with Alesso, it seemed as if the desire for a further grade change was more about Alesso's attitude than about the violation itself. There was a discussion of whether or not a confronted party’s attitude should play into the jury’s resolutions. One of the jurors who wanted more of a grade change expressed that he had felt this even before speaking to Alesso today, but other jurors felt that the interactions with Alesso had inextricably impacted the jury’s thoughts. A few members of the jury felt very strongly that a further grade change should not be implemented, and a weight of the jury felt comfortable with keeping the grade change as it was.

The two students who stood outside on the statement on reporting did so out of a feeling that the plagiarism would not have resulted in a disciplinary procedure at other institutions.

**Final Resolutions:**

1. Alesso will write and send a letter to the professors of DJing H300 by [date]. (10 jurors consent)
2. Alesso will write letters to the authors whose work he plagiarized and send Zedd his letter by the start of the [semester]. (10 jurors consent)
3. The jury recommends that Alesso receive a 0.0 on Tracks D and E. (10 jurors consent)
4. Alesso will design his own assignment about proper paraphrasing and avoiding plagiarism, tailored to DJing H300, by [date]. The Honor Council Staff Support Person will share the assignment with the professors of the [next] DJing H300 and the Department Head of DJ. (10 jurors consent)
5. Alesso will meet with someone from the OAR (Office of Academic Resources) or Writing Center to discuss and practice proper paraphrasing by [date]. (10 jurors consent)
6. Alesso will meet with someone from the OAR or ADS (Access & Disability Services) to discuss note-taking strategies by [date]. (10 jurors consent)
7. The jury strongly recommends that Alesso and Professor Guetta meet, with a member of the jury there to mediate, to come to an understanding on which sections of his tracks were plagiarized and on the nature of the plagiarism. (10 jurors consent)
8. The jury will write a letter to Alesso about the trial goals by [date]. (10 jurors consent)
9. Alesso will have the option to write a letter to the community, to be appended to the abstract. (10 jurors consent)

Resolutions as a whole: (8 jurors consent, 2 stand outside)
Statement on Reporting to Other Institutions of Higher Learning:
While the jury feels this was a case of academic dishonesty, due to the minor nature of the assignment we are unsure if the violation would result in a disciplinary procedure at other institutions of higher learning. We leave this decision up to the discretion of the Dean of the College. (8 jurors consent, 2 stand outside)

Post-Trial:
The resolutions of this trial were not appealed.

Professor Guetta’s Letter (original emphasis included)
Dear Haverford Community,

I would like to express a few thoughts about this trial and about the Honor Code more broadly. Upon reading the abstract, I learned about several things that my student said when I was not present that I would like to call to attention. If I had known about these things in advance, I would have advocated for more resolutions to address his education and our restoration.

In particular: "Alesso felt that if Professor Guetta's research aligned more closely with the subjects of the tracks, that the professor would also think the paraphrasing was acceptable." First, my own research experience in a subject area has nothing to do with my ability to detect plagiarism. If he doesn't understand that, then he doesn't understand plagiarism. Second, I successfully completed a PhD in this field, which included classes and exams on the subfield he was writing about, and understand the content very well. It is my job to know this material, and I feel disrespected that he would suggest otherwise, especially since I am a minority in my field and relatively young. I have the feeling he would never have said this if I were older and fit the typical profile in my field. Unfortunately, this is the kind of attitude that permeates my profession and is a major stumbling block to efforts to increase diversity in the field. I am not sure if the jury realized this or not, or whether they think that any of the resolutions might address it. The complaints about my lack of feedback on assignments were also frustrating--the reason I focused so much on providing extensive feedback on his grammar was because the grammatical problems impeded his ability to get his point across, so that was the most pressing thing to work on with him. I always prioritize helping students improve their writing and grammar even ahead of subject matter knowledge because I believe that the ability to communicate coherently will serve all students well after graduation, regardless of career choice.

Even more important than the ability to communicate coherently is a well-developed sense of honor and integrity. The prevalence of Honor Code violations that I have witnessed at Haverford, including uncaught violations (as reported from a recent survey of students) is extremely
disappointing. From the abstracts that I have read, juries seem much too willing to let "stress" be an "excuse" for dishonorable behavior. I can certainly sympathize with the wide varieties of stress that arise especially in college. However, times of high stress— even family difficulties and health issues— call for even greater attention to maintaining personal and community integrity. Grades are not your ultimate priority in life. If you feel too rushed to complete an assignment that you can be totally sure you completed with integrity, it is better to take a zero or a late penalty than to exchange your own honor and the trust of your community for the hope of a higher grade. Somehow, too many people are losing sight of this, which makes me very sad.

Sincerely,
Professor Guetta

Discussion Questions:
1. Do you feel that there is a breach of trust between confronted parties and authors whose work they plagiarized? Do juries have jurisdiction over breaches of trust outside of the community?
2. Should a confronted party’s attitude be taken into account throughout the trial process?
3. Should previous assignments not stated in the confronting party’s statement be considered when creating a statement of violation?
4. How should academic dishonesty on assignments that make up a very small total grade percentage be treated?
5. How might the identity of parties play into the trial process, as discussed in Professor Guetta’s letter?
6. Do you agree with Professor Guetta’s assessment of how juries consider circumstances? How much, if at all, should juries consider stress?
7. What do you think of Professor Guetta’s discussion of integrity at Haverford?