Documentary Now!
An Honor Council Academic Trial
Released Spring 2018

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Key:
Confronted Party: Fred Armisen
Confronting Party: Dame Helen Mirren
Course: Sandy Passage 101

Summary/Pre-Trial:
Professor Mirren contacted Honor Council to report her student Fred Armisen for a potential Honor Code violation of using a disallowed resource on a take-home exam and taking extra time on the exam. Due to Honor Council’s caseload at the time, the trial was postponed to the following semester. Since Fred went on Dean’s Leave in the interim, the trial was not run until the next semester.

Fact Finding:
The jury met with Fred and Professor Mirren and heard their accounts of the events. Professor Mirren noted that she decided to allow her students to take an exam that was supposed to occur in class at home so that they could choose between a few different days of taking the exam. She wrote a note on the importance of integrity to all the students and emphasized that no one should take any longer than 85 minutes on the exam. Students were asked to record their start and end time on the exam. When she graded Fred’s test, she noticed that rather than writing a start and end time, he had written “Time taken: 1:30,” which was 5 minutes longer than the limit. She also noticed that for a question about the three main characteristics of [documentaries], Fred wrote “[editing, directing, and producing].” These terms had never been used in the course or textbook, and when Professor Mirren googled the question she found that these terms in the same order were the first result, though they were the first three terms of a larger list of six. She noted that when she confronted him, Fred said he had only taken 85 minutes on the exam and
that the terms had come from his mother, a [film] professor who he had discussed the material with prior to the test and that he then translated into English.

During fact-finding, Fred upheld that he only worked on the exam for 85 minutes and had written 1:30 because he wanted a round number and had not paid careful attention to the instruction sheet which asked him to note his start and end time. He also maintained that he had not googled the question, but had studied online materials before the exam and also had learned those three words in his high school [documentary] class. He did not mention the role of his mother until asked about it by Professor Mirren to which he said that he discussed the material with her before the test but did not imply that it was from her that he had gotten the specific vocabulary used. The jury asked Fred and Professor Mirren a variety of clarifying questions, including how he timed himself on the exam (by noting the time on his watch).

**Jury Deliberations I:**

Professor Mirren and Fred left, and the jury began deliberating on a statement. Most jurors felt conflicted. They felt that there were ways of explaining what occurred that did not involve violating the Honor Code, and that while Fred’s account of the events was somewhat convoluted, they could not prove that any of what he said lacked truth. Overall, the jury felt much more suspicion that Fred took extra time on the test, as the idea of writing a “round number” on the exam did not make sense to many jurors and there also seemed to be a great deal of carelessness in the way that he approached the instructions and timing. They decided to break for the night and return after some individual reflection.

**Jury Deliberations II:**

The jury began by discussing the issue of time. Since they felt they could not know for sure if Fred had actually taken more than 85 minutes they discussed whether they felt that failing to fill out the timing properly was a violation in itself in that it was a failure to follow the professor’s instructions. The jury was somewhat split on this issue. Ultimately, the jury felt that while they weren’t sure exactly how everything played out, there seemed to be a disrespect for Professor Mirren and the Honor Code in Fred’s disregard of the instructions. The jury still felt very split about whether they wanted to come to a statement of violation or non-violation. Most of the jury was very suspicious and felt that there was a breach of trust that needed repair, but did not feel beyond a reasonable doubt that Fred googled the exam question or took more than 85 minutes. They decided to draft both statements and see how each sat with them. Most of the jury felt that both statements reflected the truth and most people felt they could consent to either. They decided to combine the sentiments from both statements, but ultimately came to a statement of violation as the weight of the room seemed to lean in that direction:

**Statement of Violation:**

*While we cannot say beyond a reasonable doubt that Fred used inappropriate resources or took extra time on the exam, we feel that he violated the Honor Code by failing to uphold community*
standards and demonstrating a lack of regard for exam instructions (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia).

Circumstantial Portion/Jury Deliberation:

The jury met with Fred to discuss circumstances surrounding the violation. Fred did not have much to add, but in response to some questions noted that his negligence of the instruction sheet was in part due to his assumption that it was the same sheet that had been attached to previous exams. Fred left the meeting and the chair brought up the fact that Fred had been involved in another Honor Council trial previously. The jury took some time to review the abstract from that case. A few noted that this case showed a similar lack of regard for the Honor Code and resolutions should address that issue. Since Fred had dropped Professor Mirren’s class and a great deal of time had passed, the jury chose to focus their resolutions on things that would help him become more aware of the Honor Code, his actions under it, and their impact on the community in a more general sense. They discussed various ways of accomplishing this goal and ultimately landed on the set of tentative resolutions below. One idea the jury discussed a great deal but decided not to include were some sort of restrictions on Fred’s exam privileges. Given the logistical complications of such a resolution and other jurors concerns that restrictions would imply that we did not feel Fred was a fully restored member of the community, they decided not to write such a resolution. Many jurors also expressed a great deal of agreement with resolutions from the previous trial and wanted to ensure that Fred saw the importance of completing those, so they chose to write a resolution reemphasizing the value of completing those resolutions.

Tentative Resolutions:

1. Fred will meet with his dean before his first exam of the semester to create a plan for taking future exams. This meeting could include discussing community standards for self-proctored and take-home exams (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia).
2. Fred will meet with the Honor Council librarian to discuss a few abstracts selected by the librarian before [date] (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)
3. Fred will write a reflection on what it means to sign the honor code pledge on an exam and what it means to be a trusted member of the community by [date] (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia).
4. Fred will attend two honor council events by the end of the semester (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)
5. Fred will write a letter to Professor Mirren reflecting on this process and how this violation may have affected her and others by [date]. (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)
6. The jury reiterates the importance of completing outstanding resolutions from the previous trial. (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)
7. If Fred is ever a confronted party in another Honor Council trial, we recommend that the jury be made aware of this case and consider strong accountability measures. (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)

Resolutions as a whole: 8 jurors consent, 1 stands outside, 1 stands outside in absentia

Finalizing Resolutions:
Fred had no concerns with the resolutions, and after asking a few logistical questions, he left the meeting. The trial chair read an email from Professor Mirren expressing a desire to eliminate resolution 5. She noted that she felt it was best that she “stood outside” Fred’s restoration process and return to the community, noting that if Fred was lying to her about what happened she did not want a letter from him, but if he was telling the truth she did not feel she needed such a letter. Subsequently, the jury decided to get rid of that resolution. They discussed whether they had appropriately addressed accountability, and while some jurors had lingering concerns, they ultimately felt that they had crafted the best set of resolutions within the limitations they had and consented on the following set of final resolutions.

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Statement on Reporting
The lack of tangible evidence about whether Fred actually took extra time or used disallowed resources leads the jury to feel this should not be reported. (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia).
Post-Trial

The resolutions were not appealed.

Discussion Questions:

1. What are ways that a jury can consider accountability outside of a grade change?
2. How can a jury restore a professor’s trust in the self-scheduled exam system?
3. How should a jury proceed when there is information they cannot know? In this case, how much time Fred took on the exam or if he used outside resources.