Abstract discussion will be held TBD.
Community Forum will be held TBD.

Stranger Things:
An Honor Council Academic Trial
Released Spring 2018

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 did not consent to the release of the abstract.

Key:
Confronted Party: Mike Wheeler
Confronting Party: Professor Scott Clarke
Course: Science of the Upside Down 311

Summary/Pre-trial
Mike Wheeler contacted Honor Council in response to Professor Scott Clarke’s concerns about plagiarism within an assignment for Science of the Upside Down 311. Mike said in his statement that he had not meant to plagiarize, but realized that it had happened once his professor brought certain parts of his assignment to his attention. Honor Council consented to send this case to an academic trial.

Fact Finding
9 out of the 10 jurors were present for this meeting. Mike and Professor Clarke both offered their perspective on the situation. Mike noted being particularly stressed around the time the summary was due as he had several other assignments due the same week. He noted that he had taken his professors’ workshops on plagiarism seriously and found it very helpful. He did not realize he was turning in a plagiarized paper, believing that he had probably internalized some of the paper’s phrasing after reading it so many times and not made the connection while writing that he was taking words from the article’s author. When Professor Clarke pointed out the sentences to him, he had realized that it was in fact plagiarism.

Professor Clarke described having a good relationship with Mike after teaching him this semester in another course, [Dungeons and Dragons 300]. He described the plagiarism education he and his fellow professors had done at the start of the course and noted that the nature of Mike’s plagiarism was about four sentences taken directly from the original article without quotation marks. Professor Clarke remarked that save for a couple of changed words, the
sentences were identical. He made clear upon being asked that he does not believe that “unintentional” plagiarism exists and that students are responsible for the work they turn in and must be especially diligent in times of stress. He noted that he appreciated Mike’s recognition of his fault and willingness to come to Honor Council, an experience he has not had with all of the students who he’s found to have violated the Honor Code.

The parties left, and the jury began to discuss a statement. They all felt it was clear that a violation had occurred and began drafting a statement of violation. A few jurors thought it would be helpful to note the specific nature of Mike’s plagiarism since plagiarism can mean a variety of different things. They consented to the following statement of violation.

**Statement of Violation**

Mike violated the Honor Code by plagiarizing in the form of using others’ words as his own (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia).

**Circumstantial**

9 out of 10 jurors were present for this meeting. Mike noted that his plagiarism was likely due to time management issues as he had many assignments due that week and did not take the time he should have on making sure his summary did not have any issues like this. He said that since this incident, he has been much more diligent and careful about the work he submits. In response to questions from jurors, Mike said that he had been doing well in the class thus far and that this assignment was 1 of 3 which totaled 10% of the overall grade. He described having a lot of respect for Professor Clarke and completely understood his decision to bring this case to Honor Council. In response to a juror who asked about the implications of failing this course or being separated, Mike said that both decisions would have pretty negative impacts on him, as he would not be able to complete the major or begin the job that he had lined up for the summer.

Mike left and the jury began discussing resolutions to address the three goals of education, accountability, and, restoration. They decided that it would be helpful for Mike to redo the assignment and to receive some sort of grade change. (Around a 5% deduction on the final grade was floated as an option.) As for restoration, the jury felt that Mike and Professor Clarke’s relationship seemed strong and that much restoration was likely not needed in that area. They decided that it might be useful for them to have a meeting that would address some educational goals, and if there were outstanding issues between them, they would have the option to address them in that meeting. Other jurors suggested that it might be nice for Mike to write a letter to Professor Clarke after completing his other resolutions to reflect on the process as a whole. Since Professor Clarke was clearly frustrated by the violations he had encountered in his classes, the jury believed it might be helpful to have something concrete from a student he respected. It would also help Mike to reflect on the way a violation affects others. The jury discussed whether a letter to the community was necessary. While some jurors felt that it was not something the community needed, the idea that Mike needed to reflect more on what it means to be a part of an academic community before going forward in his Bi-Co career (and future
careers) felt important, so the jury decided to include it. As another educational measure, the jury considered working with the OAR in time management in some way. While many saw some potential benefits, the jury ultimately felt that a time management workshop would not have a big impact on Mike going forward, but that addressing some of these issues in a [Science]-specific manner with Professor Clarke would likely be more useful. To further that education, the jury decided to add a resolution to reflect on the plagiarism education he had received in the course as a way of assessing his own understanding of plagiarism. The gaps he found in his knowledge could then be discussed with Professor Clarke.

The jury turned to the issue of a grade change. Most jurors felt somewhere in the realm of a 5% deduction on the final grade in addition to a 0 on the assignment seemed appropriate, since the assignment was worth about 3% of the final grade. One juror felt strongly that Mike receive a 10% deduction (the weight of all three summary assignments) as a symbolic statement, i.e. Mike should not receive credit for any summary since he plagiarized one of them. The jury debated the technicalities of how several similar grade changes would affect his final course grade. One juror expressed deep discomfort with any grade change that would allow him to earn a 4.0 in the course. After discussing the issue for a while, almost all members of the jury felt that a 0 on the assignment and an additional deduction of 0.3 made the most sense. The juror who was initially in favor of a 10% deduction felt somewhat uncomfortable with this, feeling like the grade deduction should be either 10% or 0.7, but since several jurors felt that was not something they could consent to, the jury decided to proceed with the 0 and 0.3 deduction, with one juror standing outside. They consented to the following tentative resolutions:

**Tentative Resolutions**

1. *The jury recommends that Mike receive a 0 on the assignment and an additional grade deduction of a 0.3 (e.g. from 4.0 to 3.7).* (8 jurors consent, 1 juror stands outside, 1 stands outside in absentia)
2. *Mike will re-do his summary assignment by [redacted date] and reflect on what he did wrong while working on the assignment the first time and what to do differently in the future.* (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)
3. *By [redacted date], Mike will reflect on the plagiarism workshop given at the start of the course, making note of what he learned from those sessions and where he found there to be gaps in his understanding.* (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)
4. *Within the first 2 weeks of the semester, Mike will meet with Professor Clarke, if Professor Clarke is willing, to discuss the reflections he completed in resolutions (2) and (3), with the intention of fully understanding how to avoid plagiarizing [science] material in the future.* (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)
5. *Within 2 weeks of meeting, Mike will write a letter to Professor Clarke informed by the completion of his other resolutions and their meeting.* (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)
6. Mike will write a letter to the community, reflecting on the impact of plagiarism on the Bi-Co community and what it means to be a member of the academic community before [redacted date]. (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)

Resolutions as a whole (8 jurors consent, 1 juror stands outside, 1 stands outside in absentia)

Due to time constraints, the jury ended their meeting and met the following morning to craft a statement on reporting. 8 out of 10 jurors were present at that meeting. They unanimously agreed that this incident did not seem as though it needed to be reported, and consented to the following statement.

**Statement on Reporting**
The jury recommends that this incident not be reported to other institutions of higher learning (8 jurors consent, 2 stand outside in absentia).

**Finalizing**
Professor Clarke wrote to the jury to express comfort with all of the resolutions. Mike asked some clarifying questions but otherwise had no concerns with the resolutions. After Mike left, the juror who stood outside on the grade change and resolutions as a whole on the tentative resolutions expressed still feeling as if some education and accountability was lacking. Since it did not seem like there was a different grade change that the jury could consent to, they discussed possible alternatives. Some ideas were discussing specific abstracts with the Honor Council Librarian or reading a case about a plagiarism in [Science] in the larger academic community. One juror feared it would just be treated as busy work, so the jury decided to have his read about an outside case and relate it back to his own experience to make it more personal. They consented to the following set of final resolutions.

**Final Resolutions**
1. The jury recommends that Mike receive a 0 on the assignment and an additional grade deduction of a 0.3 (e.g. from 4.0 to 3.7). (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)
2. Mike will re-do his summary assignment by [redacted date] and reflect on what he did wrong while working on the assignment the first time and what to do differently in the future. (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)
3. By [redacted date], Mike will reflect on the plagiarism workshop given at the start of the course, making note of what he learned from those sessions and where he found there to be gaps in his understanding. (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)
4. Mike will choose a case from [www.upsidedownscienceplagiarism.com] and write a brief reflection on how this case relates to his own by [redacted date].
5. Within the first 2 weeks of the semester, Mike will meet with Professor Clarke, if Professor Clarke is willing, to discuss the reflections he completed in resolutions (2)
and (3) and (4), with the intention of fully understanding how to avoid plagiarizing [science] material in the future. (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)

6. Within 2 weeks of meeting, Mike will write a letter to Professor Clarke informed by the completion of his other resolutions and their meeting. (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)

7. Mike will write a letter to the community, reflecting on the impact of plagiarism on the Bi-Co community and what it means to be a member of the academic community before [redacted date]. (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)

Resolutions as a whole (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)

Statement on Reporting
The jury recommends that this incident not be reported to other institutions of higher learning (9 jurors consent, 1 juror stands outside in absentia).

Post-Trial:
The resolutions were not appealed.

Discussion Questions:
1. How (if at all) can “unintentional” plagiarism occur?
2. When thinking about accountability, how can juries consider various grade change recommendations? (e.g. a reduction in the percentage for a specific assignment, a reduction of the final course grade, etc.) What might be other ways to address accountability?
3. In what ways do party’s relationships influence resolutions? In what ways can a positive relationship between party be used in helping to meet the trial goals?

Mike’s Letter to the Community

Dear Student Body,

This letter is concerning an instance of plagiarism in one of the assignments I submitted for the [department redacted] seminar and is now being shared with the Bi-Co as part of a restoration process to ensure that I remain a trustworthy member of the community and continue to uphold the Honor Code. Through this letter I intend to share with you the circumstances under which I committed plagiarism and the steps I have taken to better understand the importance of academic integrity as a member of the Bi-Co.

Before going into more detail about the various strategies I have implemented to prevent myself from plagiarizing again, I would like to provide some context as to how I was approached by my
professor. A few days after submitting my assignment, my professor emailed me asking if we could find a time to meet in order to discuss the said assignment in more detail. It was while we were discussing the assignment that my professor brought the plagiarism to my attention. He had highlighted the multiple sentences that had been copied from another scholar’s work. These sentences were not included in quotation marks even though I had provided in-text citations and credited the authors under the Works Cited section. My initial reaction was that of astonishment because this was the first time in my academic career that I had been confronted with an issue related to plagiarism. Moreover, I take my coursework very seriously and always try my best to produce work that I am proud to call my own. In the meeting I let my professor know that I had no intention of directly copying any of the author’s original ideas; I should have been more careful and double-checked my work before submitting it for grading. Upon my professor’s recommendation I contacted the Haverford Honor Council, stating in my email that there was plagiarism in my assignment.

The Honor Council arranged for multiple meetings - one with regard to fact finding (where my professor was also present) and another one to discuss potential resolutions. Through these meetings I realized the severity of the plagiarism I had committed. Moreover, the Honor Council formulated a series of resolutions for me to complete over [redacted period of time] to ensure my restoration as a member of the Bi-Co community. These resolutions were formed with the intention to address the Honor Council’s goals of education, accountability and restoration.

Over break I not only reflected on the plagiarism lecture my professors gave to the class at the beginning of the [redacted] semester, but I also redid the assignment that had been called into question. Repeating the process allowed me to exercise more caution when writing. Moreover, I spent time thinking about the circumstances which made me susceptible to committing plagiarism in the first place. During the time this assignment was due I had multiple other deadlines to look after. I had also not planned or organized my schedule in advance which is why I was stressed. In the hurry to meet the assignment deadline, I ended up compromising my academic integrity. I have now started writing out all deadlines and important dates on a calendar in order to plan in advance and start assignments ahead of time. I have found this strategy effective as so far I have been able to remain on top of my work this semester. Moreover, I have felt a decrease in the amount of academic stress.

By dedicating time to reviewing the situation and discussing matters with the Honor Council and my professor, I have been able to develop a better understanding of the various scenarios under which students should be careful about committing plagiarism and the methods students should adopt to avoid plagiarism altogether. Although this entire process was mentally challenging, I have now become a better informed person on instances of plagiarism and hope that my experience will continue to aid me in my academic career at both Bryn Mawr and Haverford College.
Sincerely,

A member of the Bi-Co