A Misadventure in Metrics:
An Honor Council Academic Trial
Released Fall 2018

This abstract was not released in accordance to the timeline specified by the Students’ Association Constitution. The confronting party did not consent to the release of the abstract. The confronted party did not consent to the release of the abstract.

Key:
Confronted Party: Klaus Baudelaire
Confronting Party: Mrs. Bass
Class: Metrics 205

Summary/Pre-Trial:
Klaus Baudelaire contacted Honor Council regarding a potential violation in Metrics 205 with Professor Bass. Both parties submitted statements, and Honor Council consented to send the case to an academic trial. The potential violation centered around plagiarism and improper citation of a line in a group project proposal.

Fact Finding:
Professor Bass opted not to participate in the trial process, but emphasized over email that she wanted the trial to focus on education and restoration. The jury met with Klaus, who was very open and honest about what had occurred. He explained that the assignment was to work in groups to propose three topics, one of which would be the focus of a semester-long project. He explained that, at the time of working on his section of one of the topics, it had already become clear that the group would not choose to focus the rest of their semester on his assigned topic. Klaus explained that this did not mean he didn’t take the work seriously, and did not excuse the plagiarism that occurred. The plagiarism was the almost word-for-word copying of a sentence from a website linked in the previous line of the paper, and Klaus acknowledged he should have either altered the wording or cited in quotations. He talked about his experience on Honor Council in high school and stressed the value he places on academic and social integrity in all aspects of his life. Klaus explained that he has been much more cautious about plagiarism since this assignment, and met regularly with Professor Bass before every subsequent assignment for the course. The jury asked a few clarifying questions relating to the timeline of the assignment submission; Klaus left and the jury began deliberating.
Jury Deliberations/Statement of Violation:

The jury unanimously felt that a violation had occurred, but felt torn about how to proceed. Some jurors were frustrated as they felt the trial goals of accountability, education, and restoration had already been met and expressed concern at Professor Bass’s refusal to participate in the process. The jury requested that the chair send an email to Professor Bass clarifying whether or not she intended to enforce her course policy on plagiarism (an automatic 0.0 in the course) in Klaus’s case. The jury spent a while discussing unintentional plagiarism versus intentional plagiarism, as they wanted the statement of violation to reflect that Klaus did not act maliciously, but agreed that no form of plagiarism is unintentional. The jury ultimately consented to a statement of violation that they felt address the plagiarism that occurred on the assignment, but acknowledged Klaus’s understanding of the situation.

Statement of Violation:

[Klaus] violated the Honor Code by committing an act of plagiarism. However, the jury believes that this was not malicious, and recognizes how forthcoming [Klaus] has been throughout this process (8 jurors consent, 2 jurors stand outside in absentia)

Circumstantial Portion:

Klaus did not have much to add concerning the circumstances surrounding the violation, he reiterated that it was an avoidable mistake and emphasized how much he has learned since the plagiarism occurred. The chair shared an email from Professor Bass stating that she did not intend to enforce the course policy of an automatic 0.0 in the course, and conversation shifted to resolutions Klaus might like to see. He stressed that he did not want his project group to be affected by his mistake, and expressed a passion for writing and a subsequent interest in writing a reflection on the trial process. The jury was struck by Klaus’s statement that he felt rather alone in the trial process, and wished he had someone to talk to in the interim period before the start of the trial and the beginning of the procedure. He felt what he needed most from the trial was closure, and felt he and Professor Bass had a relationship that was unaffected by this violation.

Klaus left, and the jury began deliberations. The jury unanimously wanted to include a resolution asking Klaus to write a reflection on the process per his request, and wrote another resolution asking Honor Council to clarify support person guidelines in the hope that it would help parties in the future to know who they can talk to throughout the trial process. One juror suggested having Klaus rewrite the citation as a form of education, but the weight of the room felt this was not necessary and wrote a resolution expressing comfort with Klaus’s commitment to avoiding plagiarism in the future. Another juror found in the description of the project that this portion appeared to be ungraded, leading to further confusion about the weight of the violation among some jurors. The jury remained frustrated with questions they were unable to get answers to from Professor Bass, particularly when conversation shifted to a grade change. They decided to write a resolution where they, the jury, would draft a letter expressing the importance of being
able to talk with professors in a trial setting and asked the chair to email Professor Bass with questions they wanted answered before consenting to a grade change or a set of tentative resolutions. The jury adjourned for the evening.

When the jury met to continue deliberations, the chair shared an email from Professor Bass expressing that she did not intend to impose any sort of grade change for Klaus. She also provided clarification on the grading structure of the group project, which led the weight of the jury to feel the most appropriate course of action was to draft a resolution supporting Professor Bass’s authority over Klaus’s grade while acknowledging the violation that occurred.

For the statement on reporting to graduate schools, the jury unanimously felt this incident should not be reported. Therefore, the jury came to the following set of tentative resolutions and statement on reporting.

Jury Deliberations and Tentative Resolutions:

1. The jury recognizes that any case of plagiarism is serious, and supports [Professor Bass’s] decision to change [Klaus’s] grade however she feels appropriate given the nature of the violation. (8 jurors consent, 2 stand outside in absentia)

2. [Klaus] will write a reflection on the trial process. This reflection will be private, and the jury hopes that [Klaus] will use this as a chance to achieve closure. (8 jurors consent, 2 stand outside in absentia)

3. The jury believes that the trial goal of education has already been met through the trial process and does not feel a need for [Klaus] to rewrite the citation. (8 jurors consent, 2 stand outside in absentia)

4. The jury will write a letter to be appended to this abstract that will reflect on the importance of professors’ involvement in the trial process. (8 jurors consent, 2 stand outside in absentia)

5. The jury encourages Honor Council to emphasize that members of the Haverford community can serve as support persons in many different capacities, in addition to people outside the Haverford community. (8 jurors consent, 2 stand outside in absentia)

Resolutions as a whole: 8 jurors consent, 2 stand outside in absentia

Statement on Reporting

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

Finalizing Resolutions:

Klaus was unable to attend the finalizing meeting due to a last-minute scheduling conflict, but emailed the chair expressing his support of the resolutions and gratitude for the time and efforts of the jury. He mentioned being comfortable with the resolutions, but was curious
about potentially addressing the tension between keeping confidentiality and being able to get support from community members in Resolution 5. The jury discussed changing the wording of this resolution to reflect this, but ultimately decided that the concern would be better addressed in the abstract and consented to a set of final resolutions identical to the tentative resolutions, with the exception of a grammatical change to Resolution 5 to clarify the intent of the role of support person or people.

1. The jury recognizes that any case of plagiarism is serious, and supports [Professor Bass’s] decision to change [Klaus’s] grade however she feels appropriate given the nature of the violation. (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)

2. [Klaus] will write a reflection on the trial process. This reflection will be private, and the jury hopes that [Klaus] will use this as a chance to achieve closure. (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)

3. The jury believes that the trial goal of education has already been met through the trial process and does not feel a need for [Klaus] to rewrite the citation. (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)

4. The jury will write a letter to be appended to this abstract that will reflect on the importance of professors’ involvement in the trial process. (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)

5. The jury encourages Honor Council to emphasize that members of the Haverford community, in addition to people outside the Haverford community, can serve as support persons in many different capacities. (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 violation not be reported to other institutions of higher learning. (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)

Post-Trial:
The resolutions were not appealed.

Jury Letter on Professor Engagement

Dear Haverford Community,

We, the jury, wanted to include a letter in this abstract emphasizing the importance of engagement from students and professors alike in the trial process. Haverford is such a unique place in part because of the value that is placed on community engagement and dialogue between students and professors, and we feel strongly that this should extend to and through an
Honor Council trial. While we are certainly grateful for the insights that we received from [Professor Bass] over email, we felt that it was at times difficult to weigh [Klaus’s] voice equally with the Professor’s. As it could seem that [Klaus] was putting more into the process than the confronting party. We recognize that the trial process can be onerous, time consuming, and even awkward for faculty. However, the entire system is designed so that both faculty and student voices can be heard. Some members of the jury felt that, by voluntarily deciding not to participate in the trial process, the gravity of the violation in the professor’s eyes seemed to decrease, and it became difficult to draft resolutions and discuss accountability, education, and restoration without much insight into the confronting party’s side of the story.

We want to stress that we are thankful that this case was brought to trial, regardless of scope of the violation or limited participation of the confronting party, because the integrity of the academic trial process relied on the enforcing of the Honor Code initially by [Professor Bass] in reporting the case to Honor Council. Ultimately, we want to highlight the following should a Professor wish to ‘stand outside’ of the trial process in a future case: we encourage the confronting party to consider the impact of their absence from the trial process on the jury’s ability to fully comprehend the case before them.

We extend our warmest thanks for the input and insight we did receive from [Klaus] throughout the process and from [Professor Bass] over email, and hope that our resolutions were helpful in restoring the breach of trust present in this academic violation.

Sincerely,
The Jury

Discussion Questions:

1. What is the role of the professor in a trial?
2. Do you agree with the jury’s letter? Why or why not?
3. How can we get faculty more engaged with Honor Council processes, both pre-violation and post-violation?
4. How serious does a violation of the code need to be to go to trial?
5. How can confronted parties be made aware of support systems during the trial process?