Portlandia: 
An Honor Council Academic Trial
Released SEMESTER

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Key:
Confronted Party: Fred
Confronting Party: Professor Carrie
Course: History of Portland 300

Summary/Pre-Trial:
Fred, a [history of Portland] major, contacted Council about a potential violation in his 300 seminar after being confronted by one of the professors teaching it, Professor Carrie. The jury felt that both parties definitely weren’t on the same page, and had a lot of questions to ask them. Most importantly, they wanted to see Fred’s assignment, to determine if plagiarism actually occurred. They agreed to ask the parties about how the confrontation went, as well as how both felt about a violation having occurred.

Fact Finding:
Professor Carrie explained how the assignment in question was the third in a series of summary assignments. She had not graded Fred’s first two assignments because she co-teaches the class, so it was the first time she was seeing his work. However, while reading it, she noticed some words that didn’t seem like Fred’s, and when she checked the papers he summarized, she found that in certain sections as many as multiple consecutive sentences were taken from the source verbatim. For her, the issue was that Fred’s work presented the author’s words as his own. She felt that plagiarism was something that should be covered in earlier classes and should not be an issue by this point, especially since it was covered in her other seminar, which Fred took the previous year. She felt strongly that Fred’s actions constituted a violation of the standards set forth in the class and the Honor Code. Professor Carrie felt that she had clearly expressed this sentiment during her initial confrontation with Fred. She expressed that since the confrontation, they had continued to meet and work together, as she was his advisor. She also expressed that she had graded his subsequent assignments without any problems.

Fred spoke about how he wasn’t present on the first day of class, which was when the
extensive plagiarism lesson had been conducted because he had job interviews, so he got notes about the plagiarism activity from a classmate. He acknowledged that they weren’t the most detailed notes but that he thought it would be ok. Additionally, he explained that the feedback he received on his first two assignments from a different professor in the class said to “be more precise” and to “use what the author said,” so he started using exact language in his third summary. He had thought that it was sufficient to cite the article at the top of his summary and not use in-text citations, since the only source anything could come from would have been the article. Fred explained how he was confused about why he was being brought to trial during the initial confrontation, as he felt that he’d made an honest mistake and that during a previous meeting he and Professor Carrie had talked about how to avoid a similar situation in the future. When asked about why he thought this had gone to trial, he said of Professor Carrie that, “She decided to move forward with the process anyway.” Since the confrontation, he said that things seem to be going okay, as he meets weekly with Professor Carrie.

The jury then spoke to each party separately. Professor Carrie explained how just because one cites an article at the beginning of an assignment does not mean one can use the author’s words without quotation. She referred to the part of the Honor Code that says students have an active responsibility to find out what the professor’s expectations are, and expressed that if Fred was unsure as to what his professors wanted him to do on his assignment, he needed to reach out to them for clarification. Additionally, she reiterated that they had been able to work together since the confrontation, but that the confrontation was uncomfortable because Fred tried to pressure her not to go to Honor Council. She expressed how stressful and hard it is for professors to confront students, and how bad it feels, especially when students try to convince professors not to. She expressed that she doesn’t think students realize that the Honor Council trial process is hard on professors too, and they lose a lot of sleep over it. When asked how the assignment would have looked if done correctly, Professor Carrie explained that Fred would have ideally read the articles and explained the parts he could have in his own words. Even if he had used the same words, but put all of the verbatim portions in quotes, it would not have been brought to Honor Council, even if then near 50% of his paper would be in quotes and would result in a low grade. Professor Carrie was ultimately concerned that what Fred was passing off as his own summary was not his own summary.

The jury then spoke to Fred alone. He explained that he wasn’t trying to get away with anything in the way that he had written his assignment, and admitted to using the author’s words verbatim. However, when asked if he thought he violated the Honor Code, Fred thought that he had not, because he was honest with his professor and the jury about the way that he thought to go about his summary, and hadn’t intended to plagiarize, even if his actions were not in accord with the class guidelines and his Professor’s expectations. He was confused when he learned that it that was frowned upon to use technical terms verbatim because he felt that accuracy and precision would be best achieved when saying exactly what the author says since they’re the expert. He expressed a desire to use the most efficient words in a concise assignment, like a
summary, even if those were the author’s words, so long as they were most efficient in his mind for getting a point across. When asked about his missing the first day of class and the extensive plagiarism exercise, Fred acknowledged that he did not reach out to the professors about that, and had only reached out to peers, but that he regretted not reaching out to his professors. However, he claimed that the plagiarism activity he missed was only about plagiarism on [a different type of assignment], not on article summaries. Additionally, he stated that while the professors had talked about plagiarism after the first class, it was always in reference to [a different type of assignment], not about article summaries, so he thought that this assignment would have a different bar for what qualifies as plagiarism. When asked about what he saw as the reason for the confrontation and what the issue was in this trial, Fred expressed that he felt that Professor Carrie saw this as a case of plagiarism and him trying to get away with something, which he disagreed with because he was forthcoming in the confrontation, and because he claimed to understand her point of view. He acknowledged that he should have cited and used quotations but that he didn’t know that at the time.

**Jury Deliberations/Statement of Violation:**

After the parties left, the jury had a chance to look at Fred’s assignment and see the portions taken verbatim. They also had a chance to reflect on what the parties had shared. The jury felt that the confrontation did not seem to have gone as well as was presented in the statements, as both parties seemed somewhat uncomfortable about the situation, and did not seem to be on the same page regarding the suspected violation. The jury was surprised that Fred had claimed that what he had done was not a violation of the Honor Code and didn’t fully understand his rationale for that claim. It stood out to the jury that Fred didn’t think plagiarism applied to minor assignments like article summaries. They also didn’t understand why he did not cite in this assignment, even though he knew this assignment would help him in his future ones.

The weight of the room was that Fred used author’s language for contextual information that could have been paraphrased in his own words or properly cited with quotations. It was also noted that there seemed to be a significant breach of trust between Professor Carrie and Fred, which the jury felt they needed to mend. At this point the jury agreed that they were all suspicious of a violation and moved towards crafting a statement of violation.

The jury specifically looked at portions of the academic Honor Code relevant to this resolution and decided whether or not to specifically include it in the statement. Some jurors specifically wanted to cite Section 3.04 of the Honor Code, which talks about academic violations, but decided to keep it general since the breach of trust expands beyond the statement in that section, and potentially affects the community as well. The jury also discussed whether to include in the statement of violation that they were concerned over Fred’s lack of quotations and in-text citations, but felt that this concern fit under the umbrella of plagiarism and what was already written.

The jury then consented to the following Statement of Violation:
Statement of Violation:
“[Fred] violated the Honor Code by representing another’s words and ideas as his own and excluding in-text citations. This act constitutes plagiarism as defined by the Honor Code.” (10 jurors consent)

Circumstantial Portion:
The jury met to hear from the parties about the circumstances surrounding the violation and any resolutions that either party wanted to see. Fred reiterated how he had been flying back and forth from job interviews for the first few months of the semester, and thus had gone to only three [History of Portland] classes in the first two months of the semester, which included missing the first day of class and the plagiarism exercise. He also explained how he’d offered to rewrite the summary assignment in question, and did so on his own immediately following his confrontation, but that Professor Carrie wanted to continue the trial process before seeing his resubmission. Additionally, he had continued to do assignments with her and felt that their relationship was fine and unchanged by the trial process. Fred viewed the issue in this case as stemming from feedback he’d received on his previous summary assignment from one of the other professors teaching the course, which said to be more specific and to use the author’s words. He felt that the confusion in this case was from his interpretation of these instructions as asking him to use the author’s exact words, rather than the process of citation. He then argued that the language he had plagiarized was only very technical language that couldn’t really be worded differently anyway, and that the authors did a better and more efficient job explaining such things than he could, so he just used their words for the sake of efficiency. Fred also claimed that he had always properly cited in the past, except for on “informal assignments” such as this one. Thus he stated that his mistake in this situation was his misinterpretation of the formality of the assignment. When asked about any recommended resolutions, Fred said that he found it hard to suggest any because he thought this was an isolated incident. He felt this way since he had not had any issues with plagiarism up until this violation, and had not had any further issues from his perspective since being confronted. He did suggest a resolution clarifying for him who he could contact if he was unclear about future assignments.

At this point, Professor Carrie’s resolution preferences were read, in which she asked for a 1.0 or 1.3 reduction in GPA for the course (e.g. from 4.0 down to 3.0 or 2.7). Fred reacted very strongly to this and told the jury he thought it was too severe and that it felt both aggressive and unjustified, given his reasoning and the lack of intent behind the violation. Additionally, he expressed a worry of failing the course due to such a grade change, which would force him to do extra semesters in order to obtain a degree, and a frustration that this was a minor violation and should not put him in such a situation. When asked what type of grade change he thought was appropriate, Fred said that a 0 on the plagiarized assignment would be enough accountability, and that anything more, including a grade change in the course, would be punitive because this
was just an unintended mistake. Additionally, Fred felt that this violation was more of an issue in the course than with him understanding the community standards. He felt that it was apparent that since multiple students had been taken to Honor Council over these assignments, there must be some issue on the professor’s part in terms of clarification of the standards for this assignment.

**Jury Deliberations and Tentative Resolutions Meeting 1:**

After Fred left, the jury deliberated on what he’d expressed and started the process of crafting resolutions. Some felt that Fred did not properly understand the articles he summarized and thus needed to understand them. Others wanted him to be held accountable for violating community standards, and felt that this case was less of an issue on the professor’s part for confronting him, and more of an issue of him not understanding that it was his responsibility to actively uphold the Honor Code’s standards. Jurors also wanted to make sure that the parties were on the same page by the end of the trial, as they had not been since the confrontation. While the jury felt that plagiarism is a serious violation, regardless of the intent behind it, many felt uncomfortable with failing Fred in the class because of this violation. Many jurors also felt concerned that Fred took the issue of plagiarism too lightly because he felt that since he didn’t intend to plagiarize the articles he was summarizing, he did not believe his assignment violated the Honor Code. The jurors wanted Fred to understand how serious it is to plagiarize, and that you can still plagiarize without intent. The jury was also disturbed by the fact that Fred felt that this assignment was informal, and thus did not need to be held to the standards of the Honor Code. The jury wanted Fred to understand that, as explained in the Honor Code, any written assignment a student puts their name on and turns in is expected to be a representation of their own work. The jury also discussed separation and felt that, while it was an appropriate form of accountability for plagiarism in some cases, it was not warranted in this case.

Next, the jury jumped into crafting resolutions. Most felt that Fred should write some sort of reflection on the case, to ensure he thought about and learned from the process. The jury liked the idea of strongly suggesting he meet with the Honor Council Librarian to discuss his reflection piece as well. They decided that Fred should write a letter to future History of Portland students that looks at the impact of plagiarism in the professional field of History of Portland. This resolution would help him to understand the severity of the violation, and how plagiarism can negatively affect many different parties, especially within the field that he planned to work professionally in soon. Additionally, most felt that the last of Fred’s reflections should be a letter to the community. This resolution would have Fred think about the case and explain his thoughts about the process and what he had learned in an attempt to mend the breach of trust with the community that this violation had caused. Jurors also worried that Professor Carrie felt uncomfortable confronting Fred because he had pressured her not to bring his case to Honor Council, so they wanted him to reflect on how confronting may be a difficult process for professors, and that it is a student’s duty not just to confront, but to be confronted properly and to
engage with the process of restorative justice when it is initiated, rather than try to pressure their way out of it. A minority of the jury shared this sentiment, but felt that Professor Carrie was not recognizing that she was in a position of power because of the nature of a professor to student relationship. Lastly, the jury thought that it might help Professor Carrie feel that Fred had been restored if she was kept aware and updated in Fred’s process of completing resolutions. The jury was mentally worn out at this point and adjourned for the night.

**Jury Deliberations and Tentative Resolutions Meeting II**

The most pressing issue before them was to figure out resolutions of accountability, which would likely involve a grade change based on the jury’s feelings. During this meeting the jury decided on appropriate dates of completion for all resolutions that required either a meeting or some sort of writing. They tried to space out the resolutions to give Fred enough time to put thought into each one individually.

Then, they moved to the issue of grade change. Most felt that the lower of Professor Carrie’s suggested grade changes, a 1.0 reduction in the course, was in line with what they thought was appropriate for this violation. Some jurors were worried that this grade change would be upsetting to Fred and potentially hurt his future in terms of GPA and employment, but they were also worried about the extent of the plagiarism in this case, especially considering that Fred was a senior and almost at the point where he would be receiving a degree from Haverford. Almost all agreed that a 1.0 seemed appropriate when considering the violation alone, but when circumstances factored in, many felt uncomfortable because they didn’t know if this change would result in Fred failing the course. Thus, after discussing, the jury put in a clause that would reduce the grade deduction in the course if it were to cause Fred to fail when enacted, so that he could receive a 2.0 and get major credit from the course and graduate on time given that he did his work well for the rest of the semester. At this point, all jury members had class, so they adjourned before being able to consent.

**Jury Deliberations and Tentative Resolutions Meeting III**

The jury met later that same day to finish constructing their Statement on Reporting and to consent on tentative resolutions. Some jurors felt that this incident wouldn’t result in a disciplinary hearing at other institutions, but merely a grade change or failure in a course. Other felt that it wouldn’t be caught at all, but that Haverford students hold themselves to higher standards than at many other institutions. In the end, most felt as though this shouldn't be reported as a disciplinary proceeding, and some felt as though it should be reported if Fred did not complete his resolutions. They consented to the following set of tentative resolutions:

1. **The jury recommends that [Fred] receive a 0 on the third article summary assignment and a 1.0 grade reduction in the course. However, in the case that this reduction would**
bring [Fred] below a 2.0 in the course, the jury suggests that he receive a 2.0 instead. (10 jurors consent)

2. [Fred] will reread and re-familiarize himself with the honor code and its standards, as well as the plagiarism essay by Maud McInerny. He will then meet with a member of Honor Council’s executive board to discuss the community standards of the Honor Code in relation to plagiarism by [date]. (10 jurors consent)

3. [Fred] will write 3 reflections:
   a. The first of his reflections will be on his experiences with the trial process. The jury encourages him to consider how honor code violations and confrontation may be difficult from a professor’s perspective. This reflection will be sent to the Honor Council Staff Support person for record keeping only, and is intended for his own thought. This reflection will be completed by [date].
   b. For his second reflection, [Fred] will research a case of plagiarism in the field of [History of Portland] and write a letter to future [History of Portland 300] students that looks at the impact of plagiarism in this field. The jury encourages him to consult [plagiarismisbad.co.uk/offenses] in finding this case. At the discretion of Professor [Carrie], a pseudonymized version of this letter will be shown to future iterations of this class, and the jury hopes that this letter will be used as an educational tool. This reflection will be completed by [date].
   c. The last of [Fred’s] reflections will be a letter to the wider Haverford community, again reflecting on his experiences in the trial process. The jury encourages [Fred] to consider the ramifications of plagiarism and how that goes against the community standards at Haverford. This letter will be completed by [date], and will be appended to the abstract when it is released. (10 jurors consent)

4. The jury suggests that [Fred] meet with Professor [Carrie], if she is willing, to speak about the breach of trust between them. They also encourage [Fred] to discuss concepts in the article summaries he wrote that may still be unclear to him. This meeting can be mediated by a member of Honor Council’s executive board, if the parties so choose. The jury recommends that this meeting take place within the first few weeks of the [redacted] semester. (10 jurors consent)

5. The jury encourages [Fred] to consult his professors in the future if he is unclear about criteria for his assignments. (10 jurors consent)
6. Professor [Carrie] will be updated on the status of [Fred’s] resolutions as they proceed, if she wishes. (10 jurors consent)

On Resolutions as a whole: 10 jurors consent

Statement on Reporting:
The jury recommends that this trial not be reported as a disciplinary proceeding to other institutions of higher learning. Some members of the jury feel that this non-reporting should be contingent on [Fred’s] completion of his resolutions. (10 jurors consent)

Finalizing Resolutions I:
The jury met with Fred to hear his feedback on resolutions, and to make any necessary changes. Fred did not object to most of the resolutions, but asked for clarification on many of them, so the jury went through each resolution and explained their thoughts behind them. However, Fred had strong objections to resolution 1, which involved a grade change, and expressed them to the jury.

Fred said that he was happy and grateful that the jury put in the clause making sure he didn’t fail the course as a result of this deduction alone, and that he agreed with receiving a 0 on the summary assignment, but didn’t think he should have any grade change in the course as a whole. He then made a lengthy and specific argument to the jury as to why he should not receive a grade deduction in the course. He stated that there was precedent for the 1.0 being too harsh, as a recently released abstract, Tomorrowland, had involved a case of plagiarism that resulted in no grade deduction from the course as a whole. He claimed that any grade change to the course can’t be quantified or truly validated because such a change is completely arbitrary, and that it would be more punitive than educational. He then compared the jury’s decision to the US prison system, in which there is sentencing without rehabilitation, and where sentences are purely punitive without actual basis. He described this case as, “it’s like you shoplifted, we would normally give you 6 months but you’re getting a year.” Overall, he felt that the grade change was being extrapolated from the assignment in question and hurting his future.

Fred also felt that there was no restoration needed between himself and Professor Carrie from his perspective, as he had continued to meet with her weekly and he did not feel uncomfortable. He was fine with the rest of the resolutions after the jury clarified what they meant and what he needed to do.

Before leaving, Fred reiterated that he felt that the issue in this violation stemmed from the feedback he received from his professor to use precise language and that it was being extrapolated to be punitive in a way that had no justification. In his mind, such a substantial deduction meant that he should have just stopped doing assignments after the violation occurred. He felt that if any reduction needed to be made, a less than 1.0 reduction could be acceptable, but
that if he handed the assignment in to either of the other professors teaching the course, it wouldn’t have been an issue. When the jury asked him about how he felt the violation related to the standards of the community, he felt that at other schools, this type of situation would result in either a 0 or a rewrite, and not get extrapolated like this. He felt that this resolution represented less accountability and more of a “lashing.”

After meeting with Fred, the jury deliberated. They discussed how Honor Council was not precedent based and that plagiarism cases have been decided in a plethora of ways. Some have involved no g.p.a. change in the course. Other have involved failing a course. Still others have involved separation. In this case, some jurors felt that party didn’t even understand what the violation was. An option to change the first resolution to suggest a range of grades to Professor Carrie that the jury was comfortable with was proposed. The jury felt like they needed time to process their conversation with Fred and could not come to a final set of resolutions that night. They decided to adjourn and take time to think.

Finalizing Resolutions II

The jury met again to finish finalizing resolutions and to consent. After a long discussion of the grade change resolution, resolution 1, most jurors were in favor of either giving a 1.0 reduction or giving a range. Eventually, they settled on suggesting a range of 0.7 to 1.0 since they felt it would address both Fred and Professor Carrie’s concerns about accountability, and would give Professor Carrie flexibility to choose the grade change she saw fit. The jury felt that the range rather than a firm grade change would make Fred more likely to engage in the process of education and learning from his other resolutions. The jury consented to the following final resolutions:

1. The jury recommends that [Fred] receive a 0 on the third article summary assignment and a grade reduction in the course between a 0.7 and a 1.0. However, in the case that this reduction would bring [Fred] below a 2.0 in the course, the jury suggests that he receive a 2.0 instead. (10 jurors consent)

2. [Fred] will re-read and re-familiarize himself with the honor code and its standards, as well as the plagiarism essay by Maud McInerny. He will then meet with a member of Honor Council’s executive board to discuss the community standards of the Honor Code in relation to plagiarism by the end of the [redacted] Semester. (10 jurors consent)

3. [Fred] will write 3 reflections:
   a. The first of his reflections will be on his experiences with the trial process. The jury encourages him to consider how honor code violations and confrontation
may be difficult from a professor’s perspective. This reflection will be sent to the Honor Council Staff Support person for record keeping only, and is intended for his own thought. This reflection will be completed by [date].

b. For his second reflection, [Fred] will research a case of plagiarism in [this field] and write a letter to future [History of Portland 300] students that looks at the impact of plagiarism in this field. The jury encourages him to consult [plagiarismisbad.co.uk/offenses] in finding this case. At the discretion of Professor [Carrie], a pseudonymized version of this letter will be shown to future iterations of this class, and the jury hopes that this letter will be used as an educational tool. This reflection will be completed by [date].

c. The last of [Fred’s] reflections will be a letter to the wider Haverford community, again reflecting on his experiences in the trial process. The jury encourages [Fred] to consider the ramifications of plagiarism and how that goes against the community standards at Haverford. This letter will be completed by [date], and will be appended to the abstract when it is released. (10 jurors consent)

4. The jury suggests that [Fred] and Professor [Carrie] meet to speak about the breach of trust between them, if Professor [Carrie] is willing. The jury also encourages [Fred] to discuss concepts in the article summaries he wrote that may still be unclear to him. This meeting can be mediated by a member of Honor Council’s executive board, if the parties so choose. The jury recommends that this meeting take place within [redacted time frame]. (10 jurors consent)

5. [Fred] will meet with a Writing Center tutor at least once per month for the remainder of his time at Haverford. (10 jurors consent)

6. The jury encourages [Fred] to consult his professors in the future if he is unclear about criteria for his assignments. (10 jurors consent)

7. Professor [Carrie] will be updated on the status of [Fred’s] resolutions as they proceed, if she wishes. (10 jurors consent)

On Resolutions as a whole: 10 Jurors Consent

Statement on Reporting:
The jury recommends that this trial not be reported as a disciplinary proceeding to other institutions of higher learning. Some members of the jury feel that this non-reporting should be
contingent on [Fred’s] completion of his resolutions. (10 jurors consent)

Post-Trial:
The confronted party appealed the first resolution, the grade change resolution, on substantive grounds. The appeal was denied by the President of the College.

Discussion Questions:
1. How do you think the process of confrontation affects professors? Regarding cases of academic dishonesty, should the burden be on professors to confront, on students to uphold the code, or both? How can students be made more mindful of the latter? How can professors be more mindful of the former?
2. Does an Honor Council jury need to come to a specific grade change recommendation, or is a range decisive enough?
3. Are all grade change resolutions made by a jury arbitrary? How should they be determined? How should accountability be met in academic trials?
4. If a student is confronted, do they have a duty to respond in a respectful way, even if they believe that the claims made against them are invalid?
Letter to the Community

Dear Haverford Community,

Plagiarism is an act that involves taking another’s work and perpetuating it as one’s own. It is a lazy act and done intentionally. It not only goes against what Haverford stands for, but what we strive for as global citizens. The perpetrator benefits from another’s diligence and work without proper credit to the originator. From the beginning, I have been well aware of my mistakes and have taken actions to fix them. The heavy [redacted] recruiting process truly put my time management skills to the test and forced me to fall short of my regular performance.

Unfortunately, this trial process supports many beliefs of the community that the trials are fractured. I would like to use this platform to advocate for the reviewing of past trials when providing judgement and taking into account the true context of the act. However, I view today as a sad day for the community at large as the Council’s judgement was swayed by the power of my Professor. Her recommendation of only retributive solutions and no rehabilitative processes did not align with prior rulings, and sheds light on how the Council is failing the community to truly weigh and not push against a Professor’s whims. Each community member should be weighed equally regardless of position as we are all active participants to the Haverford Society. We must work towards true equality and consistency amongst rulings. It should not change based merely on how aggressive the suggested resolutions are or even the jury at hand. For a society to be effective, the Honor Code must govern equitably and provide consistent justice to the defendants. I continue to enjoy my time at Haverford and I remain committed to the Honor Code and the values that the school aims to exhibit. I trust that over time the flawed system will be fixed for all community members to be treated fairly, students and Professors alike.