H2O: Just Add Water:
An Honor Council Academic Trial
Released Fall 2023

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: Cleo Sertori and Rikki Chadwick
Confronting Party: Professor Taylor
Course: HYDROKINESIS 101

Summary/Pre-Trial:
This trial involved improper collaboration by Cleo and Rikki on exams two and three of Professor Taylor’s Hydrokinesis 101 course. The case was originally brought to Honor Council at the end of the spring semester, but was not considered until the fall due to summer break. This case is the first implementation of the abbreviated trial model ratified at Spring 2021 Plenary. Honor Council made the unanimous recommendation to the involved parties that this model should be used because, based on the parties’ statements, they seemed to be on the same page about what happened. The parties agreed with the recommendation and thus, the preliminary meeting was partially conducted using an informative video, with the fact finding and circumstantial meetings being combined.

Fact Finding:
The jury spoke to the confronted and confronting parties separately due to scheduling issues. The jury first met with Cleo and Rikki. The trial chair began by outlining the purpose of the meeting and how this had changed due to the combined model: they were aiming to answer both the questions of what happened and what circumstance surrounded the incident in a singular meeting. Then, everyone introduced themselves and Cleo and Rikki were given the chance to explain what happened in their own words.

Cleo spoke first. She explained that the violation occurred last Spring in Professor
Taylor’s Hydrokinesis 101 class. She and Rikki were living together and did a lot of their work together. The class was partially asynchronous; some material was taught asynchronously while the other material was discussed and employed in online classroom settings. Most of the class’s coursework, including 3 exams, was due at a single final due date with the exams being posted as the semester progressed along with earlier target due dates. Cleo and Rikki had taken the first exam a while back in the semester, but the deadline for exams two and three was quickly approaching. Cleo explained that she has ADHD, which in conjunction with COVID had led her to slack off during the semester and leave a lot of work for the end. This combined with the work of her other courses meant that she was extremely stressed. She and Rikki were living together and discussed the sheer amount of work they still needed to complete. She then finished by explaining that they took exams two and three in a single sitting and collaborated completely on both.

Rikki spoke next, reiterating what Cleo said and adding that collaboration was encouraged in the class and that they had completed their past work together, which was allowed, and this earlier collaboration led them to collaborate on the exams in a moment of panic.

Then, the Chair opened the floor for questions from the jury, beginning by asking about the confrontation process and their relationships with Prof. Taylor. Rikki said that they had never met Prof. Taylor in person because the class was conducted on Zoom. Prof. Taylor had reached out over email to Rikki and Cleo saying that their answers were very similar and that she believed they had collaborated on the exam. Rikki said that she and Cleo had told Prof. Taylor that they had violated the Honor Code by collaborating, and told the jury that they did not violate the Code in any other way (by using outside resources, talking to anyone else, etc.). The jury then began asking questions, inquiring whether Cleo and Rikki understood the exam guidelines, to which they nodded. Another jury member then asked Cleo if she had any accommodations, to which Cleo replied no. Cleo stated that she used to take medication in high school, but it negatively affected her and that she had found other ways to manage her symptoms. Although, with the structure of classes during COVID, these mechanisms no longer worked because all class time and work was conducted online. She added that she was doing much better this semester since some classes had resumed in-person instruction.

A jury member then asked whether they thought taking the exams together was helpful, to which Cleo replied that it was kind of helpful, but the decision was just super impulsive and rash. Another jury member then asked about their initial dishonesty about their violation to Prof. Taylor (this is information that was discussed in the parties’ initial statements) and Cleo said that while the dishonest email came from her, she and Rikki had collaborated on the reply. Cleo said that that decision was rash and caused by extreme stress, but that they were quick to open up afterwards. Another juror then asked Rikki about how she reacted to the asynchronous nature of the class, to which she responded that it was also very difficult for her and that the class’s lax
work deadlines made it super hard to hold herself accountable for turning in assignments. She also said that she was doing better this semester.

The Chair then recommended that they move onto the circumstantial portion of the trial, since the jury’s questions had already moved in this direction. One of the jurors asked about the assignments for the course. Cleo and Rikki explained that there were problem sets and online assignments. The next juror who spoke did not have any questions, but said that they empathized with Cleo’s struggle with asynchronous learning; she, too, had ADHD and found the format very difficult. Another juror asked more specifically about the asynchronous portion of the class, to which the confronted parties explained that during the week, they were to watch lecture videos on their own and then check in with the professor during class time. Rikki and Cleo noted that the class felt more like a research methods class than a hydrokinesis class.

Another juror asked about the content of the exams and the confronted parties explained that they mostly concerned hydrokinesis with a few questions about research methods. The same juror followed up, asking if they had access to the hydrokinesis lecture videos during the exam, to which Rikki and Cleo explained they did, but the volume of videos made it difficult to use them during the exam. The next juror asked about when the exams were issued and Cleo said that exam two was issued in the middle of the semester and exam three was issued around three quarters of the way through, but she wasn’t super sure. Another juror asked if there was a schedule for completing these assignments and Rikki said that there were rough dates, but not a schedule. Rikki then explained how the class was graded – there was a binary scale where if you got over a certain grade (they remembered it being 80%), you got full credit, but otherwise, you got a 0, so there was no partial credit. At this point, Rikki and Cleo clarified that they were Cryokinesis majors (a related department) and that Hydrokinesis 101 was a required class for their major. A juror asked if they would be comfortable taking a class with Prof. Taylor again and they both said that they would rather not, not just due to this incident, but because the structure of the course did not work for their learning styles. Another juror asked when exam corrections were due and Rikki explained they were due at the beginning of finals week. The juror followed up, asking how many points corrections would allow and Cleo replied that it was usually 1 because of the specific grading scale, but she wasn’t sure. A juror asked how long they had to take the exam to which Cleo replied that there was not a set time and Rikki explained that they took a couple hours to complete the two exams. Their main time constraint was the finals deadline.

The juror next spoke to Prof. Taylor. She said that the original statement sums things up better than she could currently due to the passage of time between the incident and the trial, but that she would do her best to re-explain. Due to the pandemic, professors were asked to be flexible with deadlines, and therefore, Prof. Taylor was loose with deadlines on the exams. Because Cleo’s and Rikki’s exams came in after she had graded the rest of the exams, she graded
their four exams back to back and it was super easy to see the similarities. Exam 2 was a complete cut and paste job with the same typos, grammar mistakes, everything, and exam three was similar on about 4 out of 6 questions. Prof. Taylor then emailed Cleo and Rikki noting the similarities and Cleo emailed back saying that they studied together and that this would likely account for the similarities. Prof. Taylor wrote back that she did not think that this was a plausible explanation given the extent of the similarities and later that day, Rikki admitted that they had worked together. Prof. Taylor noted that she had made it clear on the cover sheet of the exams that it was not meant to be taken together and this was also verbally clarified in class. A question that Prof. Taylor had for the jury was whether she should fail them for the exams or the entire class.

A juror asked Prof. Taylor to further explain the way that she graded exams and other coursework and she explained that the entire class decided on the grading rubric. She originally suggested a weighted computation for the course (the usual way for grading) but with an alternative threshold grading method. So, as long as students got an 80% on the exam, they got full credit. The exam was also open book, open note, open videos, open every resource other than collaborating with classmates. Students would also have the opportunity to retake the exams and get to that 80% threshold. Every student had the opportunity to get completely full credit on their exam. A juror asked a follow up question: when Prof Taylor said “revised the exam,” is it the same exam? The answer was yes; Prof. Taylor would mark the question the student got wrong and they could correct their answer for full credit. A couple of students took a few revisions to get to the full points, but most got it on the first try. Another juror asked whether or not most exams came in towards the end of the semester and Prof Taylor said that for the second exam, most were submitted towards the target date suggested, but there may have been one or two more that came in later. Another juror asked how much time Rikki and Cleo would have had to complete revisions if they had not collaborated. Prof Taylor said that she typically returns graded exams in about three days. If they had hit the exam target dates, they would have left themselves time for several revisions on exam two and maybe one revision on exam three as revisions were due the first day of finals. In their case, the third exam came in a week after the target date. No one was penalized for turning in an exam past the target date.

Another juror asked whether most students reached the threshold of 80%, to which Prof. Taylor said that around 60% did the first time and that almost everyone did after revisions. Another juror asked about partial credit and Prof Taylor then explained that due to the different grading rubric, exams were not based on percentages. Students would get a 1 out of 2 or a 2 out of 3 but they only needed 20 total points to get a 4.0 in the class, so they could get a 1 on the exam and still easily get a 4.0 in the course. A juror then asked how Rikki and Cleo were generally doing in the class and Prof. Taylor explained that because they weren’t submitting exams, she didn’t really have much indication of how they were doing. They were doing their problem sets, coming to class, engaging in class activities, so she felt like they were doing
Alright. A juror then asked her to touch on the asynchronous nature of the course. Prof Taylor explained that given the nature of the course, she felt like zoom lectures were ineffective so she did pre-recorded lectures – about 5 short videos of 10-12 minutes a week that would add up to 50-70 minutes. During class time, they would then talk about questions and do in class activities regarding research methods. Another juror asked whether everyone weighed in on the grading system for the course and Prof Taylor said that they did. She came in with a weighted average idea, but students overwhelmingly wanted the specification grading threshold and therefore, she wrote up a proposal.

At the conclusion of the trial, the Chair asked whether Prof. Taylor would be comfortable having them in class again. She explained that it depended on how much remorse they felt for their actions. She also said that she felt like they were throwing the structure of the course under the bus. Another juror then asked whether Cleo and Rikki would still be able to major in cryokinesis, to which Prof. Taylor said that she was not sure and told the jury to check with the registrar. Next semester there would be a different professor teaching the course and Mako Island University’s (MIU) Hydrokinesis 109 also counts for the requirement. She noted an additional aspect for the jury to consider: if Cleo and Rikki both receive 0’s on the exams, they would end up with an overall grade of 1.0 in the course. With a 1.0 they wouldn’t get credit for the course towards their major and wouldn’t be able to retake it. However, if they failed, then they would be allowed to retake the course. She did not know if someone is allowed to retake the course at MIU if they took the equivalent course at Haverford. Prof. Taylor was then asked whether she had made a decision about grading, to which she replied that she was waiting to hear the jury’s recommendation. A juror then asked if she had office hours for the course, to which she explained that students could easily schedule meetings on her calendar and that she did not recall either of the confronted parties ever doing so. The Chair closed by asking Prof. Taylor if there were any specific resolutions she would like the jury to consider. She said that she didn’t see anything other than a 1.0 or failure in the course as possible.

**Statement of Violation:**

_Cleo and Rikki violated the academic honor code by inappropriately collaborating on exams two and three of Professor Taylor’s Hydrokinesis 101 course. (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)._  

**Jury Deliberations:**

In constructing tentative resolutions, the jury discussed the following. One juror said that he felt the situation was framed in a different light for him after talking to Prof. Taylor. Another juror noted that it did not say on the cryokinesis major site whether you can fail a class and still major. The Chair reminded the jurors that grade recommendations are ultimately at the discretion
of the professor and that when the jury submitted a grade recommendation as part of the resolutions, she could choose whether to accept it. Another juror outlined that there were two questions being asked: Do we want to do what’s best for Cleo and Rikki? Do we want to take additional measures? The juror who posed these questions said that they personally wanted to do what’s best for Cleo and Rikki. A juror noted that they chose to take the exams and broke the Code when they could have not taken the exams and gotten a zero. Another juror brought up that they initially lied to Prof. Taylor, to which another juror said that they saw this as a panicked, spur-of-the-moment decision rather than a long term plan to cheat. Several other jurors agreed, viewing the incident as a lapse in judgment in a moment of panic.

The jury then moved into the specifics of writing resolutions, debating exact wording and content of individual resolutions. The jury ultimately consented to the following set of tentative resolutions.

**Tentative Resolutions:**

1. *Cleo and Rikki will meet with the OAR at least once by the end of the semester and three times total by the end of [this] academic year to work on time management and exam resources.* (10 jurors consent)

2. *Cleo and Rikki will meet with their deans at the beginning of the next two semesters with the goals of going over course planning and connecting Cleo and Rikki with academic resources.* (10 jurors consent)

3. *The jury recommends that Cleo connect with the ADS office concerning academic accommodations or other systems of support on campus.* (10 jurors consent)

4. *Cleo and Rikki will each write a letter of apology and restoration to Professor Taylor by the end of the semester.* (10 jurors consent)

5. *The jury recommends that Professor Taylor give Cleo and Rikki both zeros on exams two and three. Additionally, the jury recommends that Cleo and Rikki work with the cryokinesis department to find a way to take a similar or equivalent course to learn the material and receive credit in order to continue with the major.* (10 jurors consent)

(On consenting to resolutions as a whole: 10 jurors consent)

**Statement on Reporting:**

*The jury recommends that this incident not be reported to institutions of higher education.* (10 jurors consent)
Finalizing Resolutions:

For this meeting, Cleo and Rikki were present, but did not have any additional feedback. Neither did Prof. Taylor, as she indicated over email. Therefore, the jury consented to the following final resolutions.

Finalized Resolutions:

1. Cleo and Rikki will meet with the OAR at least once by the end of the semester and three times total by the end of [this] academic year to work on time management and exam resources. (8 jurors consent, 2 stand outside in absentia)

2. Cleo and Rikki will meet with their deans at the beginning of the next two semesters with the goals of going over course planning and connecting Cleo and Rikki with academic resources. (8 jurors consent, 2 stand outside in absentia)

3. The jury recommends that Cleo connect with the ADS office concerning academic accommodations or other systems of support on campus. (8 jurors consent, 2 stand outside in absentia)

4. Cleo and Rikki will each write a letter of apology and restoration to Professor Taylor by the end of the semester. (8 jurors consent, 2 stand outside in absentia)

5. The jury recommends that Professor Taylor give Cleo and Rikki both zeros on exams two and three. Additionally, the jury recommends that Cleo and Rikki work with the cryokinesis department to find a way to take a similar or equivalent course to learn the material and receive credit in order to continue with the major. (8 jurors consent, 2 stand outside in absentia)

On the resolutions as a whole: 8 jurors consent, 2 stand outside in absentia

Statement on Reporting:

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

Discussion Questions:

1. How should the college address the challenges students face in communicating openly with professors about academic struggles, especially in stressful situations?

2. Honor Council decided to use the new abbreviated trial model for this case. Was this appropriate? How did this model impact the trial?

3. How could the lack of in-person connection throughout the semester and during the trial have impacted this trial?