

Abstract of the Honor Council
Case 27, Spring 2013
April 10, 2013

Members Present:

Trey Burns (presiding), David French (clerk), Seth Lauer, Clinton Wilbanks, John Cavallo, Brooke Evans, Scott Giley, Isabelle Lelogeais, Shep Patterson, Observing: Erin Rieger, Julia Liu

Ombuds: Sarah Frazier

Letter of Accusation:

The Honor Council received a letter accusing Student A of plagiarism on a take-home exam for a lower level Social Sciences course.

Evidence Submitted:

- Letter of Accusation
- Student A's Written Statement
- Course Syllabus
- Student A's Exam
- Student A's Essay Response (from exam)
- Alleged Source of Plagiarism

Plea:

Student A pled "In Violation."

Testimony:

Student A acknowledged that he used Wikipedia on the essay portion of his take-home exam but asserted that he did not violate the Honor Code on any other part of the test.

Student A said he used Wikipedia to help him write between 20-30% of the essay. Some of the sentences in question were copied verbatim from the webpage, and other parts of the essay were paraphrased from information he gleaned from reading the Wikipedia article during the exam. He reaffirmed that he did not use outside resources on other sections of the test.

Verdict Deliberations:

Council members believed that a preponderance of the evidence supported that a violation occurred because of Student A's testimony and because of the high degree of similarity in wording between the Wikipedia article and portions of Student A's essay on his exam.

Vote: Does a preponderance of the evidence support that a violation occurred?

Yes: 9

No: 0

Abstentions: 0

The Council then discussed whether or not Student A committed the violation. No one saw any reason why Student A should not be found in violation.

Vote: Does a preponderance of the evidence support that Student A is “In Violation?”

Yes: 9

No: 0

Abstentions: 0

Penalty Deliberations:

Council members opened by discussing mitigating circumstances. Some Council members said they would mitigate for cooperation and amount of the assignment in violation. Other Council members saw no reason to mitigate.

No Council members saw any relevant or appropriate aggravating circumstances.

In the discussion for appropriate penalties, some Council members said they believed suspension might be warranted in a case like this, but most members agreed that suspension would be too harsh. After further discussion, Council members agreed that an F in the course would serve as an appropriate penalty in this case.

Vote: What is the appropriate penalty for Student A?

F in the course: 9

3 letter grade reduction: 0

2 letter grade reduction: 0

1 letter grade reduction: 0

Letter of Reprimand 0

Abstentions: 0

Decision:

The Honor Council thus finds Student A “In Violation” of the Honor Code and recommends that he receive an F in the course. A Prior Violation Flag is also attached to his record.

Time of testimony and deliberations: 30 minutes

Respectfully submitted,

David French
Clerk