

Abstract of the Honor Council**Case #20, Fall 2023****02/29/2024****Members Present:**

Rodolfo Gutierrez-Garcia (presiding), Dean Toumajian (clerk), Helena Song, Riya Yarlagadda, Pedro Ribeiro, Caroline Snider

Ombuds: Krish Patel**Letter of Accusation:**

The Honor Council received a letter accusing Student A of unauthorized aid, in the form of AI, on multiple exams and writing assignments for lower-level HUMA course. The Chair read the Letter of Accusation aloud in full.

Evidence Submitted:

- Letter of Accusation
- Student A's written statement
- Course Syllabus
- Evidence Relevant to Midterm Exam:
 - Midterm Exam Canvas page (with Student A's grade)
 - Midterm Exam Prompt
 - Student A's Midterm exam
- Evidence Relevant to Mid-Semester Creative Writing Assignment:
 - Student A's Mid-Semester Assignment
 - Mid-Semester Assignment Prompt
- Evidence Relevant to Final Exam:
 - Student A's Final Exam
 - Final Exam Prompt
- ChatGPT comparison:
 - ChatGPT Generated Essay Using an Assignment Prompt
 - Screenshot of ChatGPT conversation
- Assignments' Edit History
- Student A's Emails
- Student A's Google Drive
 - Student A's Google Drive Audit

Plea:

Student A pled "not in violation."

Testimony:

The crux of this accusation is a presence of sporadic writing styles, odd structuring and syntactical choices, language that does not seem reflective of normal writing, confusing inclusions of sources, and an *alleged* reliance of AI tools to complete

the student's assignments or, at least, supplement their writing. The student went point by point through the letter of accusation to defend themselves as adequately as they could. They start by explaining in reference to inconsistency in assignments was due to different degrees of recollection and knowledge of course material. One assignment specifically required the students to write about in-class presentations; the student explained that this essay was largely based on memory, and his hazy memory is what led to the idiosyncratic writing style.

Regarding the next claim made in the letter of accusation, the student claims that their own opinion will be written in such a way that is much more confident because they are much more assured in their own opinion. Because the accusation maintains that some arguments are made more "maturely" the student maintained that this is merely a reflection of confidence in their own opinions. The student notes that, as far as writing goes, they believe it is irrelevant to the case. They contend the accusation about variable style and tone is simply a critique on writing (something that should be reflected in the grade and is not grounds for a violation).

The student then discussed uses of sources that were considered suspicious in the letter of accusation. They highlight that their assignment is completely in line with the assignment requirements (*e.g.*, they use two outside sources and one class source as outlined by the prompt). The letter of accusation notes that the source that was from the course syllabus was only highlighted at the end of the essay, but the student contended that this is entirely in line with the prompt. At best they believe it should be considered poor writing practice. Similarly, any critique on broad or vague writing should be considered as a lower mark on the assignment as opposed to a violation.

The student then refers to email correspondence they had with the accuser about why their grade was low. The explanation from the low grade was (in the student's opinion) almost verbatim the same language used in the accusation. The student finds this perplexing as they argue a writing critique that effects a grade is not grounds for a violation accusation.

The student then discussed structure and syntax. They say that paragraph structures are odd because they are copied from another draft written on their phone. Because of this the specific indentation and syntax might look odd. Any accusation on the basis of changing writing style is based on the requirements and mode of communication. For instance, a creative writing assignment or email will be written more casually and lax whereas a graded analytical exam will be written in a much more formal manner.

The student further argues that being accused of discussing topics that are not discussed in class is because of their extensive research and care to use non-course related sources. Interestingly, the student also noted that in a class of ~over 100 students the only students accused of a violation were of the same minority special population. While they made no hard claims they did speculate on the presence of personal biases and prejudice.

Finally, the student then detailed their writing process. They first gather relevant sources and information. They then brainstorm ideas and arguments as an outline on their phone. They then proceed to flesh out their paper on their phone. Finally, they will migrate their writing assignment to Google Docs and do their best to format the assignment according to prompt guidelines.

Verdict Deliberations:

Council members believed that a preponderance of the evidence supported that a violation occurred because the student falsely cited evidence for all assignments.

The main point of discussion was whether or not the citation practice was in violation. One member maintained that there was no violation, rather the student just was very bad at citation practices. This was unconvincing to the rest of the panel. They found that when looking at the language of the Honor Code the student was in violation because of false citation.

Vote #1: Does a preponderance of the evidence support that a violation occurred?

Yes: 6
No: 0
Abstentions: 0

The Council then discussed whether or not Student A committed the violation.

The Council found that the student was in violation because they fabricated evidence.

Vote #2: Does a preponderance of the evidence support that Student A is “In Violation?” for assignment #1.

Yes: 6
No: 0
Abstentions: 0

Vote #3: Does a preponderance of the evidence support that Student A is “In Violation?” for assignment #2.

Yes: 6
No: 0
Abstentions: 0

Penalty Deliberations:

Council members opened by discussing mitigating circumstances.

The student deleted evidence which impeded the investigation. The council found this to be an aggravating factor. While there was mitigating factors, such as the nature of the violation being more technical than traditional violations, the aggravating factors outweighed the mitigating factors.

The CPS penalty for this case, based on the weight of the assignments, is an F in the course.

Vote #4: What is the appropriate penalty for Student A?

F in the course 6
3 letter grade reduction: 0

2 letter grade reduction:	0
1 letter grade reduction:	0
Letter of Reprimand	0
Abstentions:	0

The CPS severity starts at a baseline of severity level 2.

Vote #5: What is the appropriate severity level for Student A?

Expulsion:	0
Suspension:	2
Reprimand:	4
Warning:	0
Abstentions:	0

The Council discussed whether the obstruction of evidence was enough to move the severity to a suspension. However, the Council was not sure whether the deleting of evidence was done on purpose. Because of this the council moved to vote for a reprimand.

Decision:

The Honor Council thus finds Student A “In Violation” of the Honor Code and recommends that they receive an F in the course and a reprimand.

Time of testimony and deliberations: 03:05:00

Respectfully submitted,
Dean Toumajian
Clerk