

Abstracts UW31-UW34

Professor Elliot and Student Missy in Economics UW31

A senior in a 300 level Economics course, Missy, handed in her literature review as the final paper for her class. In the process of grading the paper, Professor Elliot noticed that sections of the literature review seemed beyond the expected level for an undergraduate student and that several of the sources that Missy cited were sources to which an undergraduate student would not likely have access. Because of her suspicions, Professor Elliot did a Google search on Missy's topic and found an article. As Missy's paper and said article appeared to be very similar, Professor Elliot asked that Missy contact the Honor Board.

In her presentation to the Honor Board, Missy stated that she had never before written a literature review and that she had misunderstood the assignment. Missy stated that she believed that the assignment was to find and summarize a literature review written by an expert in the field, which she did. She also stated that her previous grades in the class, which were very good, showed that she took the class seriously, that the entire situation was simply a misunderstanding, and that she wished to re-write the literature review and prove that she could earn the grade. However, Missy's paper did not appear to display a simple case of misinterpreting the assignment and summarizing the article in question. Rather, Missy's paper showed extensive word-for-word plagiarism and, on top of that, the article in question is not cited at all. The Honor Board believed it to be a case of deliberate plagiarism. *The Honor Board resolved* that Missy would receive a 0.0 for the course, be limited to four courses her next semester, and that she would have to take an independent study with a supervisor in which she would produce a literature review, the quality of which should merit no less than a 3.0.

Professor Smith and Student Harry in Economics UW32

A Haverford senior in a 300-level Economics course, Harry, handed in his literature review as the final paper for his class. In the process of grading the paper, Professor Smith noticed that, in certain sections, the quality of the paper seemed to be above that which Professor Smith would normally expect an undergraduate to produce.

Professor Smith Googled Harry's paper topic and immediately found two sources from which entire sections appeared to have been taken word-for-word and placed into Harry's paper.

Professor Smith asked Harry to contact the Head of the Honor Board, after which Harry presented to the Professor two new documents—one being the paper Harry says he meant to turn in and the other being images that Harry says prove the file's date of creation and last modification.

In his presentation to the Honor Board, Harry stated that he had created two separate files—one which contained a compilation of his notes for the paper and the other of which was actually his paper. In his haste to turn in his paper, Harry said, he had printed and turned in the wrong file. He also stated that the images he provided—screen captures from his computer showing the file creation and last modification dates for the actual paper—proved that the paper had been completed on time. However, even in the second paper presented, there was an extensive lack of citation. In addition, besides the fact that file creation and last modification dates are easily faked, the file creation date for the second paper actually showed its creation after the first paper was handed in, making it unlikely that Harry mistakenly turned in the wrong paper. Because of this evidence, *the Honor Board resolved* that Harry would receive a 0.0 on both the paper and the course, and that he would need to review the importance and relevance of proper citation.

Professor Jane and Students Jekyll and Hyde in Mathematics UW33

Two juniors, Jekyll and Hyde, took their final for a 300-level math class together in a designated exam room. While grading their exams, Professor Jane noticed that many of the errors that the two students had made on their exams were striking in their similarity and unlikely to have occurred without collaboration. Professor Jane therefore asked Jekyll and Hyde to contact the Honor Board. In their statements to the Honor Board, both students maintained that they had not cheated on their exams but that they had studied together, which could have been the source of the similarities on their exams. They also stated that they were very close and did everything together, and as a result they tended to think in very similar fashions. Professor Jane, however, did not believe that, even with two such close individuals, such unusual mistakes could have been made without collaboration on the exam itself.

The Honor Board reviewed the evidence that Professor Jane presented and found it compelling but insufficient. The students were instructed to take their final exams in separate rooms in the future and told that they were responsible for seeing to it that they did not take any more exams in situations that could be considered suspect. The students were also advised to study separately

more often, as their study sessions would seem to have compounded their errors instead of correcting them.

Professor Kevin and Students Sally and Jessica in Psychology UW34

Two Bryn Mawr students—a senior, Sally, and a freshman, Jessica—turned in their final papers for a 200-level psychology course. These papers were based upon a class project, and two of the four parts of the paper were to be written in collaboration. The other two sections of the paper were to be written individually. However, Professor Kevin noticed that Sally and Jessica's papers shared a paragraph nearly word-for-word in one of the sections, which was to be completed individually. Concerned, Professor Kevin confronted the students and asked them to contact the Honor Board. In their statements to the Honor Board, both Sally and Jessica denied having written the individual sections of the paper in collaboration. While they admitted that they had discussed the results of the class project in regards to the sections that were supposed to be completed individually, they denied that they had done so intentionally and repeated that they had not actually written their papers together. They claimed that they had both, individually, found the same secondary source to use in their papers and that they had both been working off the same notes of group discussion, which would explain the similarities in their papers. Having admitted that they had discussed the sections of the paper, which were to be completed individually, Sally and Jessica were already guilty of some degree of collaboration. The Honor Board also found it unlikely that they would have achieved such similarity on their papers without some additional collaboration, but had no concrete evidence of how much collaboration might have occurred.

Because the section in question was only a portion of the whole assignment, the Honor Board did not feel it would be appropriate to fail the students on the entire paper. Rather, *the Honor Board resolved* that Sally and Jessica would both have an equal number of points deducted from their overall grades on their papers and that Professor Kevin would be the appropriate person to decide exactly how many points would be deducted.