

**Abstract of the Honor Council**  
**Case 52, Spring 2012**  
**August 29, 2012**

**Members Present:**

Trey Burns (presiding), Isabelle Lelogeais (clerk), Hurst Williamson, Hannah Bosley, Sam Kwiatkowski, Aaroh Parikh, Mitchell Massey, Jessi Litman, Jessica Mintz (observing)

**Ombuds:** Sarah Fraser

**Letter of Accusation:**

The Honor Council received a letter accusing Student A of plagiarism in an upper level PSYC course.

**Evidence Submitted:**

- Letter of Accusation
- Student A's written statement
- Course Syllabus
- Student A's Paper
- Sources of Alleged Plagiarism
- APA Guidelines on Citation
- Professor Deposition
- Email Conversation Between Student A and Professor
- Witness Deposition

**Plea:**

Student A pled "Not in Violation."

**Testimony:**

Student A began by stating that she completed this paper to the best of her ability, and tried in every instance to adhere to the regulations put forth by APA format and the Rice Honor System. She felt that she never tried to claim any of her sources as her own. Student A continued to point out that in each instance where she directly refers to one of her sources she notes the author's name and the page number of the text. She maintains that she was not aware of the necessity to use quotation marks to designate a direct citation, and instead used her own rhetorical transitions to indicate that the words were not her own. Furthermore, Student A pointed out that her interpretation of her sources was entirely original. She emphasized that she put a lot of time and effort into this paper, and that she never intended to misrepresent any of the authors' work as her own.

Members of the Council asked why Student A did not designate words that were not her own with quotation marks. Student A referenced the APA requires the author's name and date, which she provided. She also continued to say that she did not believe that she had used any quotations, because she did not directly quote any interpretation or explanation. She clarified that technical information, findings that are not interpretive, do

not qualify as quotations, and therefore do not need to be included in quotation marks. Student A also stated that this is the first research paper she has written that required outside citation, and she was not familiar with the convention. In her closing statement Student A affirmed that she honestly believed she was following the Honor Code laid out in the syllabus and the guidelines of the APA.

**Verdict Deliberations:**

Council members believed that a preponderance of the evidence supported that a violation occurred because the student included direct wording from outside sources without indicating them with quotation marks. Student A's definition of a quotation as pertaining only to interpretive or non-technical wording is not the definition of the professor or academic convention, and ignorance cannot be considered. In addition, there are incidents in the paper where Student A fails to cite all together.

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

Yes: 9 +1 Observing

No: 0

Abstentions: 0

Straw Poll #2: Does a preponderance of the evidence support that Student A is "In Violation?"

Yes: 9 + 1 Observing

No: 0

Abstentions: 0

**Penalty Deliberations:**

Council members opened by discussing mitigating circumstances. Most Council members decided that they would not mitigate for the weight of the assignment or the amount of the assignment in violation, because the assignment was worth 20% of the course grade. Some Council members stated that they would mitigate for cooperation, while others said that her disclosure was not significant or substantial enough to warrant mitigation. It was agreed upon that many would mitigate for the fact that she made attempts to acknowledge her sources.

Most Council members said they believed a 1, 2, or 3 letter grade reduction would be appropriate for this violation. Members argued that they believed Student A was not attempting to take credit for work that was not her own.

Straw Poll #3: What is the appropriate penalty for Student A?

F in the course and 3 semesters of suspension: 0

F in the course and 2 semesters of suspension: 0

F in the course and 1 semester of suspension: 0

F in the course:	1
3 letter grade reduction:	0
2 letter grade reduction:	6
1 letter grade reduction:	2
Letter of Reprimand	0
Abstentions:	0

The Council member who voted for an F in the course said that because this was a final paper in an upper level course, and because there is an inconsistent pattern of citation and attribution, he thinks an F is warranted. The members who voted for a one letter grade reduction focused on the fact that Student A was truly confused.

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

F in the course and 3 semesters of suspension:	0
F in the course and 2 semesters of suspension:	0
F in the course and 1 semester of suspension:	0
F in the course:	0
3 letter grade reduction:	0
2 letter grade reduction:	9+ 1 Observing
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 she receive a 2 letter grade reduction. A Prior Violation Flag is also attached her record.

Time of testimony and deliberations: 1 hour

Respectfully submitted,  
Isabelle Lelogeais  
Clerk