

**HONOR SYSTEM COUNCIL
WORKSHOP
“What Do You Do With John Law?”**

This workshop is one used by Stetson’s Honor System Council as a classroom presentation. The aim is to have workshop participants work through a “real live” issue in academic integrity. A secondary goal is to familiarize participants with the workings of the Council.

Some tips on using workshop materials:

- 1) Everyone gets a copy of the “Case Study” outline of background information, as well as ONE of the five “Discussion Questions” pages. We find it most efficient to have these on opposite sides of one sheet of paper, and to have these pages collated together. Then hand out pages to each participant, and you have your random groups put together.
- 2) The moderator should briefly introduce the purpose of the discussion, then quickly have the large group divide into their discussion groups. Discussion groups of four-ish to seven-ish work best.
- 3) Appoint someone to be a (nominal) group leader, at least to get the discussion going. Announcing “the group leader is the person in the group with the most recent birthday” (or “who got the most sleep last night” or similar) is a good way to break the ice and select a leader.
- 4) Very important: have group members introduce themselves.
- 5) Give the groups ample time to discuss their assigned questions. Have the moderator(s) circulate, simply to help folk stay on task. But the moderator generally does not need to get involved with any group’s discussions.
- 6) Very important: Have each group share their thoughts afterward, and have other groups interact. This debriefing is at least as important as the small group discussions.
- 7) At the end of the workshop, we have the workshop leaders, who are members of our Honor System Council, talk about the Honor System, and to answer student questions about it. (There typically are a *lot* of questions – the workshop has gotten the participants thinking.)

PS: This case is loosely based on a real incident here at Stetson.

A CASE STUDY

The following story is based upon an actual case. Names and details have been modified to protect the innocent (and perhaps the guilty).

Harding University is a small, selective Midwestern college. It enjoys a good reputation for academic excellence throughout the region, and is especially noted for the strengths of its engineering, business, and journalism programs.

All seniors at Harding University complete a “capstone course” in their major field of study. The course is taken spring semester of the senior year. It is intended to integrate the student’s overall academic experience. The university takes great pride in the academic rigor and educational value of this capstone experience.

Professor Mark Benson teaches the capstone course for business students. Five years ago, Prof. Benson took an early retirement from his position as CEO of a Fortune 1000 company, and joined the faculty at his alma mater. Prof. Benson disdains academic busy work and sterile textbook exercises. The business capstone class is Prof. Benson’s pride and joy – the greatest exemplar of his commitment both to high academic standards, and to relevance in the business curriculum.

The course has no exams. The entire grade for the course is based upon an extended, semester-long project. In this project, students are expected to interact with a variety of business owners and managers. They are to conduct interviews, learn about business operations and challenges, and apply concepts from the course to the business’ particular circumstances. The project contains eight units, each corresponding with a different course topic (personnel, inventory management, marketing, etc.), and requiring an interview and write-up from a different small business owner/manager.

John Law has submitted what appears to be an exemplary paper. Material is drawn from noteworthy companies in a variety of fields. In several cases there are multiple examples of a particular topic. The analysis is particularly insightful – in a couple of cases, even of sufficient quality to be worth publishing in a regional professional journal. Professor Benson decides to follow up on these examples – and finds that Law has completely fabricated them. In fact, the entire paper has been fabricated. No interviews or research has been done; the entire paper is the product of a very creative and fertile imagination.

What should be done with John Law?

CASE STUDY – DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Group #1

Put yourself in the shoes of the fellow students in the class.

This class has required a *lot* of work on your part. Over the course of the semester, you have contacted eight (or more) business owners/managers, conducting extensive interviews with them. You've done additional background research on each company. You've written a very long paper.

To be honest, some of you have worked harder than others. Some of you just contacted parents and a few family friends to conduct your interviews. Others, however, went to great lengths (working closely with the university placement and alumni offices) to identify good interview subjects; the project became a good networking tool as part of your job search. Some did extensive library research on course topics; others did a five-minute web search on Google.

- 1) Suppose you find out about John Law's paper. What do you think of him? Why?
- 2) Should anything be done to John Law? Why/why not? How do you feel, if something is done? If nothing is done?
- 3) In your opinion, should Harding University let John Law graduate with you? Why/why not?

CASE STUDY – DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Group #2

Put yourself in the shoes of John Law's prospective employer.

You are the partners of Anderson, Williams, and Foster, a regional accounting firm that specializes in corporate audits. Your firm has a high reputation for integrity; in an era of accounting scandals and financial fraud you have gone to great lengths to see that your company maintains a high standard for impeccable honesty.

Your company only hires top students, and normally completes its interviews and hiring decisions early in the school year. You hired John Law back in October. He is scheduled to start work June 1 – two weeks after graduation. The company is very short-handed at present, and you need someone to start work as soon as possible.

- 1) Do you want John Law working for you? Why/why not?
- 2) Would you want to know about the incident regarding John Law's business capstone paper? Why/why not? If so, how would you want to be informed?
- 3) Will you continue to hire students from Harding University? Why/why not?

CASE STUDY – DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Group #3

Put yourself in the shoes of Professor Benson, instructor for the course.

You left the business world in part because you were tired of the corporate rat-race. You went into teaching for a variety of reasons. You want to give back to your alma mater. You are committed to mentoring promising individuals. You saw too many new employees come to your company out of college with no real understanding of the realities of the business world, and want to change that, at least in some small measure. One of your chief complaints as a student is that too often classes weren't "real" – and you've worked hard to make sure that criticism isn't valid for your classes.

On the one hand, John Law's paper is extremely insightful. On the other hand, he has not done the thing that you regard to be the most important part of the assignment – he has not been in contact with real business practice.

- 1) What do you think of John Law, as a person?
- 2) What should be done with John Law's grade?
- 3) John is scheduled to graduate next week. He has a job lined up. Your class is required for graduation. Should you just go ahead and give him a passing grade? (Even a D-minus permits him to graduate.) If you fail him, what accommodations might reasonably be made to allow him to finish his degree? (Or should any such accommodations be made?)
- 4) What might you do differently in future classes, to try to prevent a recurrence of this problem? (To what extent is this problem John Law's responsibility, and to what extent is it your responsibility?)

CASE STUDY – DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Group #4

Put yourself in the shoes the student Honor System Council at Harding University.

You have been chosen to uphold the Harding University honor code. It is your responsibility to investigate cases of alleged academic dishonesty, to decide whether violations of academic integrity have occurred, and to recommend appropriate sanctions when necessary. Serving on the Honor System Council is considered one of the highest accolades a student can receive at Harding University.

- 1) Is John Law's paper for the business capstone course in violation of standards for academic integrity? Why/why not?
- 2) The Council considers that its role is more one of restorative than punitive justice. That is, your focus is on "let's make things right," not "let's make someone suffer." What action would you recommend be taken, to "make things right" in this case?

CASE STUDY – DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Group #5

Put yourself in the shoes of John Law.

On the one hand, you have put a *lot* of work into this assignment – more than many of your fellow students in the class. What's more, it has been *good* work – it is a very high quality paper, and both you and the professor know it.

On the other hand, you have NOT done the one thing that the professor regards as being of absolutely critical importance – you have not interacted with real-world business practice.

- 1) In your mind, are you guilty of academic misconduct? Why/why not?
- 2) Regardless of what you think, the professor does think that you did was unacceptable. Your case has been turned over to a panel of students, the Honor System Council at Harding University. What is your reaction to having this case heard (and decided) by a panel of fellow students?
- 3) What do you believe is a fair and equitable solutions to this problem – one that is fair to all stakeholders (you, your fellow students, the professor, your prospective employer, your parents, etc.)?