

# Theory of Knowledge Syllabus for Diploma Candidates 2012

## *Theory of Knowledge for Diploma Candidates/second semester, 2011-2012*

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*How did I come to know what I know about the world and myself? What ought I to know? What would I like to know that I don't know? If I want to know about this or that, where can I get the clearest, best and latest information? And where did these other people about me get their ideas, which are sometimes so different from mine?*

H.G Wells, to the Royal Institute Great Britain, November 20<sup>th</sup>, 1936.

**OVERVIEW:** Theory of Knowledge (TOK), a required course for all IB Diploma Candidates, is central to the educational philosophy of the IBO. It will challenge you and your teacher to reflect critically on diverse ways of knowing in the Areas of Knowledge (Science, Math, Art/Aesthetics, Human Sciences, History and Ethics) and to consider the role that knowledge plays in a global society. The course encourages participants to become aware of themselves as thinkers, to become aware of the complexity of knowledge and Ways of Knowing (Emotion, Language, Logic and Perception) and the need to act responsibly in an increasingly interconnected world.

As a thoughtful and purposeful inquiry into different Ways of Knowing (WofK) and the Areas of Knowledge (AofK), TOK is composed almost entirely of questions. The most central of these questions is: ***How do I know that a given assertion is true or a given judgment is well grounded?*** Assertions or judgments of this sort are termed knowledge claims, while the challenges that arise in addressing these questions are the broad areas known as knowledge issues. TOK provides the application of this central question to the Areas of Knowledge.

Questions, then, are the essence of TOK, both ageless questions on which thinkers have been reflecting for centuries, and new ones. Both kinds will often challenge widely accepted beliefs.

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the strengths and limitations of each Way of Knowing and Area of Knowledge;
2. Demonstrate a capacity to reason critically;
3. Make connections between and across the WoK and AoK;
4. Make connections between personal experience and each WoK and AoK;
5. Identify values underlying judgments and knowledge claims pertinent to local and global issues;
6. Demonstrate an understanding that personal views, judgments and beliefs may influence individual knowledge claims and those of others;
7. Use oral and written language to formulate and communicate ideas effectively.

### **A sampling of TOK READING and MATERIALS:**

*The Demon-Haunted World* (Carl Sagan)

*Why People Believe Weird Things* (Michael Shermer)

*Sex, Sleep, Eat, Drink, Dream: A Day in the Life of Your Body* (Jennifer Ackerman)

*A Problem from Hell: America in the Age of Genocide* (Samantha Power)

*Theory of Knowledge* (Sue Bastian, et. al.)

*Man is the Measure* (Reuben Abel)

*Does the Center Hold?* (Donald Palmer)

*Mans Search for Meaning* (Victor Frankl)

*The Lives of a Cell* (Lewis Thomas)

*Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* (Robert Pirsig)

*New York Times* (and other newspapers)

*Skeptic Magazine*

*A Peoples History of Science* (Clifford D. Conner)

*This is Your Brain on Music: The Science of a Human Obsession* (Daniel J. Levitin)

*Evil: An Investigation* (Lance Morrow)

*Doubt* (Jennifer Michael Hecht)

*The Skin that We Speak: Thoughts on Language and Culture in the Classroom* (Lisa Delpit, ed.)

Films: *My Dinner with Andre*, *Contact*, *Waking Life*, *Born into Brothels*, *The Fog of War*, *Le Bal*, *Coney Island*, *What the Bleep Do I Know?*, *The Great White Hope*.

Guest Speakers, presenters and YOU!

***It is the tragedy of the world that no one knows what he doesnt know and the less a man knows, the more sure he is that he knows everything.*** (Joyce Cary)

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:** Along with successfully completing daily readings and activities, students are required to:

1. Write one of two 1,600-word **TOK essays** on one of ten 2012 Prescribed Titles. The essay will be marked using established IBO Assessment Criteria. The essay will receive a course grade and be sent for external grading, as well.
2. Plan and present the **TOK Formal Presentation**. The presentation will be marked by Mr. Schwartz using established IBO Assessment Criteria. This is practice for the Formal Presentation done in the senior year.

3. Maintain the **Theory of Knowledge Anthology (TOKA)** of reading/discussion summaries, reflections, written assignments, etc. TOKAS will be read and assigned a mark based upon completeness and presentation.
4. Participate in small and large-group discussions and activities.
5. Attend class regularly.

**NOTE:** Your grade is based upon a percentage of the total number of points available for the semester, using the 90-80-70-60% system.

### **EXPECTATIONS for TOK CLASS:**

1. **Come to class on time, and bring appropriate materials for the day.**
2. **Complete the assigned reading, writing, thinking activities before coming to class.**
3. **If absent, it is YOUR responsibility to find out what occurred in class and what assignments were given. Refer to classmates and Mr. Schwartz web page.**
4. **COMMUNICATE TO Mr. SCHWARTZ IN ADVANCE IF YOU KNOW YOU WILL BE ABSENT FOR EXCUSED ACTIVITIES, ETC. (Tell him in person or via email.)**
5. **Be aware that Mr. Schwartz often will often communicate by email.**
6. **Maintain the highest degree of academic integrity.**
7. **Respect the right of all classmates and guests to express their opinions without interruption and to respond respectfully.**
8. **Refrain from doing homework from other classes without permission.**
9. **Submit work on time. Extensions may be granted if requested in advance.**
10. **Refrain from using electronic devices. Turn off your cell phones.**
11. **Keep the classroom tidy and clean. We share it with another teacher.**

***You are entitled to your own opinion but not your own facts.***