



Stony Point High School
IB Diploma Programme
Course Syllabus
Theory of Knowledge
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- I. **Course Description:** The TOK course provides students with an opportunity to explore and reflect on the nature of knowledge and the process of knowing. In TOK, students reflect on the knowledge, beliefs and opinions that they have built up from their years of academic studies and their lives outside the classroom. The course is intended to be challenging and thought-provoking—as well as empowering—for students. **(TOK Course Guide, IBO. 2022)**
- II. **Prior Learning for Course:** Research Writing/Study Skills
- III. **Course Aims & Objectives:**
 - a. to encourage students to reflect on the central question, “How do we know what we claim to know is true?”, and to recognize the value of asking that question;
 - b. to expose students to ambiguity, uncertainty and questions with multiple plausible answers;
 - c. to equip students to effectively navigate and make sense of the world, and help prepare them to encounter novel and complex situations
 - d. to encourage students to be more aware of their own perspectives and to reflect critically on their own beliefs and assumptions
 - e. to engage students with multiple perspectives, foster open-mindedness and develop intercultural understanding
 - f. to encourage students to make connections between academic disciplines by exploring underlying concepts and by identifying similarities and differences in the methods of inquiry used in different areas of knowledge
 - g. to prompt students to consider the importance of values, responsibilities and ethical concerns relating to the production, acquisition, application and communication of knowledge.
- IV. **How the course will address CAS:** TOK students investigate the kinds of knowledge we can acquire through personal experiences like CAS, and how this kind of knowledge is different from their academic experiences. TOK students will also apply critical thinking processes we learn in TOK when reflecting upon the ethical responsibilities of their activities for CAS.
- V. **How the course will address Approaches to Learning skills:**
 - a. Thinking skills: Reflective journals, essays, debates, argumentation
 - b. Communication skills: essay, exhibition, discussion, peer feedback
 - c. Social skills: socratic seminars, collaborative projects, active listening, peer feedback
 - d. Self-management skills: goal setting, class preparation, meeting deadlines
 - e. Research skills: locating and analyzing relevant resources, integrating own ideas

VI. **The approach to teaching the course.**

IB expects that our teaching is:

1. based on **inquiry**: The entire course is inquiry based, starting with the core theme: “How do we know what we claim to know is true?” Questions about knowledge form the backbone of how the course is taught.
2. focused on **conceptual understanding**: Students apply broader knowledge concepts like culture, values, and perspective, to specific areas of their own lives.
3. developed in local and global **contexts**: Students are encouraged to seek out and understand alternate perspectives on a variety of important issues, both within their own communities as well as globally.
4. focused on effective teamwork and **collaboration**: A variety of collaborative summative activities throughout the year builds mutual understanding and a stronger overall IB cohort, and students have a desire to help one another.
5. **differentiated** to meet the needs of all learners. Students have choice and flexibility for demonstrating mastery of course content.
6. informed by **assessment** (formative and summative). Multiple scaffolded activities build knowledge and skills which prepare students for summative assessment, and inform the teacher about how that mastery is progressing.

VII. **How the course will address the Learner Profile.**

Inquirers

TOK students seek to find out how knowledge is constructed using various ways of knowing and by considering what constitutes knowledge in various areas of knowledge. It is a fundamental premise of TOK that personal knowledge should not result from simple acceptance of knowledge claims without sufficient inquiry and evidence.

Knowledgeable

TOK students strive to be knowledgeable about the nature of knowledge. This means becoming knowledgeable about the methods of inquiry of a variety of subject areas, from a number of perspectives. Students are encouraged to explore the processes by which individuals arrive at their own knowledge and understanding of the world and the presuppositions that underpin this understanding.

Thinkers

TOK students examine thinking in order to understand what constitutes good thinking and also to recognize potential flaws in thought processes. Students also think about what thinking is required in a variety of situations, as well as how thinking relates to emotional processing and intuition.

Communicators

TOK students are required by the TOK assessment tasks to communicate their understanding and perspective in both oral and written form. Students also study the language that is used to develop a body of knowledge, so they learn what gives language its power as well as what causes failures of communication.

Principled

TOK students scrutinize knowledge in a critical manner, leading to what could be called principled knowledge. Students are required to examine the relationship between possessing

knowledge and the moral obligations that this carries. Learning to see the world from a TOK perspective challenges students to think about acting in principled ways.

Open-minded

TOK students need to be open-minded about knowledge claims they encounter. They will learn not to simply accept claims at face value, but to consider the factual accuracy of any proposition and the potential emotional, social or cognitive bias of any person making a proposition. At the same time, they must learn to balance skepticism with belief, and recognize that in many situations there is a need to make decisions without possessing absolute certainty.

Caring

TOK students are asked to care about how they use their knowledge. This necessarily means thinking about how knowledge can be used in sympathetic, empathetic and compassionate ways.

Risk-takers

TOK students must be willing to risk questioning what they hold to be true. This means that they must be willing to risk being wrong. When we are willing to accept being wrong then we make progress towards correcting existing misconceptions and increasing our knowledge and understanding of the world. The word “judgment” is central in TOK, and students should be prepared to take the risks involved in making judgments in matters where the evidence does not definitively favor one view or another, while at the same time acknowledging the provisional nature of these judgments.

Balanced

TOK students are committed to viewing knowledge claims from different perspectives. They are also required to consider a range of areas of knowledge. TOK requires a balance of ability in speaking and writing, and a balance of ability in drawing general conclusions from specific examples and in drawing on specific examples to demonstrate general claims.

Reflective

TOK students learn to reflect on the degree to which their own and other people’s motivations, beliefs, thought processes and emotional reactions influence what they know and what they are capable of knowing.

- VIII. **Assessment details for Internal and External Requirements** There are two assessment tasks in the TOK course: an essay and an exhibition.

The **TOK exhibition (fall semester)** is internally assessed, and explores how TOK manifests in the world around us. Students are required to create an exhibition comprising three objects, or images of objects, and an accompanying written commentary on each object. Both the essay and the exhibition are assessed using global impression marking. For more information and the assessment rubric [click here](#).

The **TOK essay (spring semester)** is externally assessed by the IB, and must be on any one of the six prescribed titles issued by the IB for each examination session. The maximum word limit for the essay is 1,600 words. **For more information and the assessment rubric** [click here](#).

Excellent work on both assessments will be convincing, insightful, sophisticated, and accomplished. The essay contributes 67% of the final mark and the exhibition contributes 33% of the final mark.

- IX. **Grading Policy & Scale:** Student evaluations will be based upon a variety of learning opportunities, including but not limited to readings, reflections, journals, essays, discussion, individual and group projects, and exams. Students can expect at least one grade per week. Active participation is critical to success, and will be factored into all relevant evaluations.

Formative assessment (homework, classwork, etc.) will count for 60%.
Summative assessment (exams, essays, etc.) will count for 40%.

- X. **Course Sequence:**

First semester:

- Introduction to course and core theme: Knowledge and the knower (The core theme will be emphasized throughout the course)
- What does it mean to know something?
- Types of knowledge (propositional/procedural, rational/empirical, personal/shared, firsthand/secondhand)
 - [12 Core Concepts](#)
 - Introduce selected [IA prompts](#) (IA prompts will be introduced throughout the course)
- Introduce 5 Areas of Knowledge
 - Natural sciences
 - Human sciences
 - History
 - Mathematics
 - The arts
- Introduce the optional themes (students choose TWO from the list below):
 - Technology
 - Language
 - Religion
 - Indigenous Societies
 - Politics
- First Assessment: Exhibition

Second semester:

- Revisit areas of knowledge and optional themes in more depth
- Explore TOK concepts in the real world
- Revisit ethical considerations in more depth
- Assessment: Essay

- XI. **IA Checkpoint dates and final IA Deadlines:** Exhibition: End of semester 1 Essay: end of semester two
- XII. **Sample assessment questions** - What are the implications of having, or not having, knowledge? To what extent is certainty attainable? Are some types of knowledge less open to interpretation than others? What challenges are raised by the dissemination and/or communication of knowledge? Can new knowledge change established values or beliefs? Is bias inevitable in the production of knowledge? How can we know that current knowledge is an improvement upon past knowledge?
- XIII. **Stony Point Academic Honesty Policy:** All students are expected to abide by the SPHS Academic Honesty Policy. This policy is available on the SPHS IB website at www.stonypointib.com under Handbooks. The password is Tiger2024. Student cooperation is expected and encouraged; some assignments are done collaboratively and cooperatively, but IAs are expected to be done independently.
- XIV. **Classroom Policy & Procedure**
Late Policy: Assignments are subject to a late penalty if not turned in on the due date when requested. No assignments will be accepted after 10 calendar days past the due date. The late policy follows the SPHS late work guidelines.
Make Up Work Policy: Students get one extra day per absence. The make-up work policy is the same as the SPHS policy.