



SEK BUDAPEST
INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL
HUNGARY

Theory of Knowledge Syllabus

Academic Year 2016/2017

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Course Aims

The overall aim of TOK is to encourage students to formulate answers to the question “how do you know?” in a variety of contexts, and to see the value of that question. This allows students to develop an enduring fascination with the richness of knowledge.

Specifically, the aims of the TOK course are for students to:

- make connections between a critical approach to the construction of knowledge, the academic disciplines and the wider world
- develop an awareness of how individuals and communities construct knowledge and how this is critically examined
- develop an interest in the diversity and richness of cultural perspectives and an awareness of personal and ideological assumptions
- critically reflect on their own beliefs and assumptions, leading to more thoughtful, responsible and purposeful lives
- understand that knowledge brings responsibility which leads to commitment and action.

Objectives

Having followed the TOK course, students should be able to:

1. analyze critically knowledge claims, their underlying assumptions and their implications
2. generate questions, explanations, conjectures, hypotheses, alternative ideas and possible solutions in response to knowledge issues concerning areas of knowledge, ways of knowing and students’ own experience as learners
3. demonstrate an understanding of different perspectives on knowledge issues
4. draw links and make effective comparisons between different approaches to knowledge issues that derive from areas of knowledge, ways of knowing, theoretical positions and cultural values
5. demonstrate an ability to give a personal, self-aware response to a knowledge issue
6. formulate and communicate ideas clearly with due regard for accuracy and academic honesty.

Theory of Knowledge Assessment

The assessment model in theory of knowledge (TOK) comprises two components.

Part 1 - External assessment (40 points)

Essay on a prescribed title (1,200–1,600 words)

One essay on a title chosen from a list of ten titles prescribed by the IBO for each examination session.

Part 2 - Internal assessment (20 points)

The presentation (approximately 10 minutes per student)

One presentation to the class. One written presentation planning document and presentation marking form, using the relevant form from the *Vade Mecum*, including:

- the knowledge issue that is the focus of the presentation
- a summary in note form of the knowledge issues to be treated during the presentation
- achievement levels for each of the four assessment criteria, briefly justified, from both student and teacher.

The presentation is an integral part of the TOK course.

TOK points

Points awarded for the externally assessed component, part 1, the essay on a prescribed title (40 points), and for the internally assessed component, part 2, the presentation (20 points), are combined to give a total out of 60. The grade boundaries are then applied, to determine the band (A to E) to which the student's performance in TOK belongs.

The band descriptors are:

1. Work of an **excellent** standard
2. Work of a **good** standard
3. Work of a **satisfactory** standard
4. Work of a **mediocre** standard
5. Work of an **elementary** standard

The band descriptor is used both to determine the contribution of TOK to the overall diploma score and to provide the basis for reporting to schools on each student's TOK performance.

TOK and the extended essay

The performance of a student in both Diploma Programme requirements, theory of knowledge and the extended essay, is determined according to the quality of the work, based on the application of the IB Diploma Programme assessment criteria. It is described by one of the band descriptors A–E. Using the two performance levels and the diploma points matrix, a maximum of three diploma points can be awarded for a student's combined performance.

A student who, for example, writes a satisfactory extended essay and whose performance in theory of knowledge is judged to be good will be awarded 1 point, while a student who writes a mediocre

extended essay and whose performance in theory of knowledge is judged to be excellent will be awarded 2 points.

A student who fails to submit a TOK essay, or who fails to make a presentation, will be awarded N for TOK, will score no points, and will not be awarded a diploma.

Performance in both theory of knowledge and the extended essay of an elementary standard is a failing condition for the award of the diploma.

Theory of Knowledge Grades

Class Participation 20% -This is primarily a seminar/discussion based class. Therefore, active student participation is necessary to create and maintain a stimulating and productive learning environment.

Test and Quizzes 20% –These will primarily consist of essay and short answer responses that are based on material from the readings and class discussions.

Extended Essay 20% – See EE student guidelines.

TOK Essay 20% –See TOK essay student guidelines.

TOK Presentation 20% – See TOK presentation student guidelines.

Course Outline

I. Unit 1 – Knowledge Issues, Knowers, and Knowing (September 5-13, 2016)

- a. Course Introduction (September 5, 2016)
 - i. The traditional TOK diagram
 - ii. Nature of the course
 - iii. Aims and Objectives of the course
- b. The Knower, and Knowledge Communities (September 6-13, 2016) – Central Questions and Themes – taken from the IB Theory of Knowledge Guide
 - i. What does it mean to say you know something?
 - ii. Does knowledge come from inside or outside? Do we construct reality or do we recognize it?
 - iii. What role does personal experience play in the formation of knowledge claims?
 - iv. How is knowledge gained? What are the sources? To what extent might these vary according to age, education, or cultural background?
 - v. To what extent does personal or ideological bias influence our knowledge claims?
 - vi. “Whoever acquires knowledge and does not practice it resembles him who ploughs his land and leaves it unsown?” (Sa’di) Are there responsibilities that necessarily come with knowing something or
 - vii. Knowing how to do something? To whom might these responsibilities be owed?

- viii. In what sense, if any, can a machine be said to know something? How can anyone believe that a machine can think?
 - ix. When a machine gives an instruction to press a certain button to make it work, where is that knowledge or awareness located? Does technology allow some knowledge to reside outside the human knower? Is knowledge even a “thing” that resides somewhere?
 - x. In the TOK diagram, the center is represented as both an individual and a group. To what extent can we distinguish between knowing as an individual and knowing as a group or community enterprise?
 - xi. How much of one’s knowledge depends on interaction with other knowers?
 - xii. Are there types of knowledge that are specifically linked to particular communities of knowers?
 - xiii. To what extent can we act individually in creating new knowledge? What are the strengths of working in a knowledge community? What are the dangers?
 - xiv. Is common sense just what is taken for granted in the community? How can we decide when to question common sense?
 - xv. Presented with the belief system of a community of knowers, how can we decide what we personally believe? How can we decide which beliefs we ought to check further? In the end does it just amount to a question of trust? If so, how can we decide who to trust, and on which issues?
 - xvi. Do we need to grow up in a human community in order to develop ways of knowing (sense perception, language, reason and emotion)? Or are we born “hard wired” to be able to use them? Is community more important in some ways of knowing than others?
 - xvii. In what sense is a community of knowers like bees constructing the labyrinths of their hive or a group of builders constructing a building?
- c. Knowledge Questions (September 19-20, 2016) – Central Questions and Themes
- i. Knowledge questions are questions that directly refer to our understanding of the world, ourselves, and others, in connection with the acquisition, search for, production, shaping and acceptance of knowledge. These issues are intended to open to inquiry and exploration not only problems but also strengths of knowledge. Students sometimes overlook the positive value of different kinds of knowledge, and the discriminatory power of methods used to search for knowledge, to question it, and to establish its validity. Knowledge issues can reveal how knowledge can be a benefit, a gift, a pleasure, and a basis for further thought and action, just as they can uncover the possible uncertainties, biases in approach, or limitation relating to knowledge, ways of knowing, and the methods of verification and justification appropriate in different areas of knowledge.
 - ii. Two examples:
 - 1. Consider the question, “What is the value of distinguishing between what we know and what we don’t know?” In the context of problems of knowledge, the emphasis is likely to be on the good reasons we have for doubting whether the lines we draw between the two are as clear as we sometimes suppose them to be. In contrast, in the context of knowledge issues, the reasons we have to

maintain the legitimacy and usefulness of the distinction are likely to come to the fore.

2. Alternatively, consider the question, “Is there one way of knowing that is best for acquiring knowledge?” In the context of problems of knowledge, the emphasis is likely to be on why over-reliance on or confidence in each way of knowing would be unwise; in the context of knowledge issues, reasons for relying on or trusting ways of knowing should also be considered.

d. Knowing (September 26-27, 2016) – Central Questions and Themes

- i. What is knowledge?
- ii. In English there is one word “know,” while in French and Spanish, for example, each has two (savoir/connaître and saber/conocer). In what ways do various languages classify the concepts associated with “to know”?
- iii. In English, French, Spanish or Chinese, for example, what is the relationship between the different ways of expressing “know”: “they know of it,” “they know about it,” “they really know it,” “they know that person,” “they know that this is so,” “they know how to do it”? Are there other ways of using the verb “to know”?
- iv. How do “believing that” and “believing in” differ? How does belief differ from knowledge?
- v. What are the differences between the following: information, data, belief, faith, opinion, knowledge, and wisdom?
- vi. “If the frog tells you that the crocodile is dead, do not doubt it.” What might this Ghanaian proverb suggest about who it is that provides the justification for acknowledge claim? What is the difference between “I am certain” and “It is certain”? Is conviction sufficient for a knowledge claim to be validated? What are the implications of accepting passionate, personal belief as knowledge?
- vii. How are knowledge claims justified? Are the following types of justification all equally reliable: intuition, sense perception, evidence, reasoning, memory, authority, group consensus, and divine revelation?
- viii. Why should time be taken to assess critically the nature of knowledge claims?

e. Unit Wrap-Up (October 3-4, 2016)

Readings

Bastian, Kitching, Sims – Ch’s 1 & 3
 Supplementary Readings to Be Discussed (TBD)

II. Unit 2 – Ways of Knowing (October 10 – December 22, 2016)

- a. Introduction to Ways of Knowing (October 10, 2016)
- b. Language (October 11 – 18, 2016) – Central Questions and Themes
 - i. Language is so much a part of human activity that it is easily taken for granted. The issues related to language and knowledge call for conscious scrutiny in order to recognize its influence on thought and behavior.
 - ii. Language can be thought of as a symbol system, engaged in representing the world, capturing and communicating thought and experience. Language also can be seen as existing in itself, as something to be played with and transformed and shaped in its own right and something that can transform and shape thought and action.

Nature of language

1. What different functions does language perform? Which are most relevant in creating and communicating knowledge?
2. What did Aldous Huxley (1947) mean when he observed that “Words form the thread on which we string our experiences”? To what extent is it possible to separate our experience of the world from the narratives we construct of them?
3. In what ways does written language differ from spoken language in its relationship to knowledge?
4. Is it reasonable to argue for the preservation of established forms of language, for example, as concerns grammar, spelling, syntax, and meaning of use? Is one language common to the whole world a defensible project?
5. What is the role of language in sustaining relationships of authority? Do people speak the same to inferiors and superiors in a hierarchy? Does the professional authority speak in the same way as the person seeking opinion or advice? Can control of written language create or reinforce power?
6. How does technological change affect the way language is used and the way communication takes place? How might innovations in language, such as Internet chat or text messaging, be assessed: as contributions to or assaults against how language and communication “should be”?
7. What may have been meant by the comment “How strangely do we diminish a thing as soon as we try to express it in words” (Maurice Maeterlinck)?

Language and culture

1. If people speak more than one language, is what they know different in each language? Does each language provide a different framework for reality?

2. How is the meaning of what is said affected by silences and omissions, pace, tone of voice and bodily movement? How might these factors be influenced in turn by the social or cultural context?
3. What is lost in translation from one language to another? Why?
4. To what degree might different languages shape in their speakers different concepts of themselves and the world? What are the implications of such differences for knowledge?

Language and thought

1. How have spoken sounds acquired meaning? What is the connection between the sounds and what they are taken to represent? Given that a word such as “tree” groups together a lot of different individual objects, what is lost in using language to describe the world? What are the advantages?
2. Is it possible to think without language? How does language facilitate, extend, direct or limit thinking?
3. To what extent does language generalize individual experience, classifying it within the experience of a linguistic group? On the other hand, to what extent do some kinds of personal experience elude expression in language?
4. Can language be compared with other human forms of symbolic representation, such as conventionalized gestures, sign language for the deaf, dance, painting, music, or mathematics? What might language share with these other forms in the communication of what we know? In what ways might it be considered distinct?
5. How do “formal languages”, such as computer-programming languages or mathematics, compare with the conventional written and spoken languages of everyday discourse?

Language and knowledge

1. How does the capacity to communicate personal experiences and thoughts through language affect knowledge? To what extent does knowledge actually depend on language: on the transmission of concepts from one person or generation to another, and on exposure of concepts or claims to public scrutiny?
2. How does language come to be known? Is the capacity to acquire language innate? In most of the statements heard, spoken, read, or written, facts are blended with values. How can an examination of language distinguish the subjective and ideological biases as well as values that statements may contain? Why might such an examination be desirable?

Linking questions

1. To what extent is it possible to overcome ambiguity and vagueness in language? In what contexts might ambiguity either impede knowledge or contribute to its acquisition? Does the balance between precision and ambiguity alter from one area of knowledge to another?
2. What do we gain, and what do we lose, when we name something? Do different areas of knowledge manage differently the balance between particularity and generality?

Language and areas of knowledge

1. How do the words we use to describe an idea affect our understanding of the world? For example, is “globalization” a synonym for “westernization”? What is the meaning of the term “anti-globalization”? Does it matter which words we use?
2. How does the language used to describe the past (for example, a massacre, an incident, a revolt) change history? Does something similar occur when different terms are used to describe natural phenomena (greenhouse effect, global warming, and sustainable development) or human behavior (refugee, asylum seeker)?
3. How important are technical terms in different areas of knowledge? Is their correct use of a necessary or sufficient indicator of understanding? The following illustrative examples relate to the Diploma Programme subject groups.
 - a. Group 1: metaphor, alliteration, onomatopoeia, synecdoche, genre, sonnet, haiku
 - b. Group 2: preposition, active/passive, pluperfect, genitive, creole, dialect
 - c. Group 3: cost-benefit analysis, price elasticity, evapotranspiration, neo-fascism, push-pull technology, ontology, cognitive dissonance, enculturation
 - d. Group 4: symbiosis, allotrope, ergonomics, trophic level, entropy
 - e. Group 5: irrational number, asymptote, dot product, isomorphism, minimum spanning tree
 - f. Group 6: dynamic content, L cut, sonata, dramaturgy, trompe l’oeil
2. To what degree might each area of knowledge be seen as having its own language? Its own culture?

- c. Perception (October 24 – November 8, 2016) – Central Questions and Themes

- i. We perceive the world through our five senses: sense perception is the active, selective and interpretative process of recording or becoming conscious of the external world. Because sensory perception is an important dimension of our understanding of the world, its function and scope should be examined and critically evaluated. The following questions may help students become aware of the nature and power of sense perception, and how it relates to knowledge acquisition, knowledge claims, and their justification.

Nature and sense perception

1. In what ways does the biological constitution of a living organism determine, influence or limit its sense perception? If humans are sensitive only to certain ranges of stimuli, what consequences or limitations might this have for the acquisition of knowledge? How does technology extend, modify, improve, or restrict the capabilities of the senses?
2. What possibilities for knowledge are opened to us by our sense as they are? What limitations?
3. Is the nature of sense perception such that, as Huxley suggests, sensations are essentially private and incommunicable?

“By its very nature every embodied spirit is doomed to suffer and enjoy in solitude. Sensations, feelings, insights, fancies – all these are private and, except through symbols and at second hand, incommunicable.”

Aldous Huxley (1954)

Importance and limitations of sense perception

1. To what extent do our senses give us knowledge of the world as it really is?
2. Does the predominance of visual perception constitute a natural characteristic of our human experience or is it one among several ways of being in the world?
3. What is the role of culture and language in the perceptual process? Given the partially subjective nature of sense perception, how can different knowers ever agree on what is perceived? Do people with different cultural or linguistic backgrounds live, in some sense, in different worlds?
4. How, and to what extent, might expectations, assumptions and beliefs affect sense perceptions? How, if at all, can factors that bias our views of the world be identified? Is all sense perception necessarily theory-laden? Do knowers have a moral duty to examine their own perceptual filters?

5. It is often claimed that information and communication technologies are blurring the traditional distinctions between simulation and reality. If this is so, what might be the consequences?

Linking questions

1. To what extent is visual perception in particular a justifiable model not only of all sensory perception but of human understanding as well (in English, “I see” often means “I understand”)?
2. What is the role of sense perception in the various areas of knowledge, for example, history or ethics? How does it differ across the disciplines? Is it more important in relation to some disciplines than others? Is there any knowledge that is completely independent of sense perception?
3. Does sense perception perform fundamentally distinct functions in the arts and the sciences? To what extent does the artist make an advantage out of the subjective nature of sense perception, while the scientist regards it as an obstacle to be overcome?
4. What can be meant by the *Panchatantra* saying, “Knowledge is the true organ of sight, not the eyes”? Is it necessary to have clear ideas to see?

Sense perception and areas of knowledge

1. What role does observation play in the methods used to pursue knowledge in different disciplines? For example, are the conditions, function and results of observation the same for biology and human science? If not, what accounts for the differences?
 2. What role does what we expect to see, or are used to seeing, play in what we observe? For example, after learning about the structure of cells from a textbook, how “neutral” might the observation of a slide under the microscope be? Can we learn how to see things properly?
- d. Reason (November 14 – 22, 2016) – Central Questions and Themes
- i. Reason is a way of know that involves different elements. In a very general sense, reasoning is a collective endeavor by which people construct meaning together by exchanging, modifying, and improving their ideas and opinions. When someone makes a claim to know, it is legitimate to ask for reasons and to expect that these will be coherent. Arguments require consistency. Reason is perhaps as present in everyday decision making and problem solving as it is in mathematics, sciences, and other areas of knowledge. The requirements of logical validity and rigour serve these various purposes.
 - ii. In different degrees and in different ways, it is arguable that reason has its place in many, if not all, areas of knowledge as well as in the everyday experience of individuals and the groups to which we belong. It may be

worth considering how reason is used in these different domains to discover and create, to articulate, to justify and assess knowledge claims. For when disputes arise, what is at issue is not only the substance or facts of the matter, but also the appropriateness of the reasons given for acceptance of the facts, and the validity of the logical procedures used in reaching the conclusion.

- iii. The questions in this section probe the nature, value, and limits of reason, and the logic that many suppose is a shared standard of evaluation.

Nature of reason

1. One of the roles traditionally attributed to reason is to find balance or equilibrium between two extremes. Is this idea still relevant as a description of the role that reason plays in the search for self-knowledge? What does it mean for someone to be reasonable?
2. What is the difference between reasoning about means and reasoning about ends? Is one more prevalent or more valuable than the other?
3. What is the role of reason in the creation and recognition of patterns in nature and in social life?
4. Is reason purely objective and universal, or does it vary across cultures? Is logic purely objective and universal?
5. Formal logic is the study of form in argument, irrespective of the subject matter. Is it really possible to study the logic of an issue independent of its content, and how beneficial is it to do so? Does the answer to this question depend upon the subject matter under consideration? Does it depend on the area of knowledge to which the subject matter belongs?
6. What is the relationship between reason as a way of knowing and logic in its different forms (inductive, deductive, intuitive, nature)? Is it possible and worthwhile to “translate” everyday arguments into formal logical structure, and what might be lost in the translation? How does the commonsense use of “it’s logical”, meaning “it makes sense to me”, differ from its technical meaning of “it has a valid argument form”?

Reason and knowledge

1. What possibilities for knowledge are created by reason? What are the advantages of being able to reason about something rather than, say, feeling something, dreaming about something, wishing something to be the case?
2. Does all knowledge require some kind of rational basis?

3. If knowledge claims cannot be rationally defended, should they be renounced? Is the answer to this question dependent on the area of knowledge of the claim?
4. Can reason on its own, independent of sense perception, emotion and language, ever give us knowledge? Or as reason and language inseparable in the quest for, construction and justification of knowledge?
5. What constitutes a good argument? What is the value of learning to distinguish between valid and invalid arguments?

Strengths and weaknesses of reason

1. What are the advantages of discriminating between valid and invalid arguments, good and bad reasons, more or less persuasive reasoning, both for the individual knower and for society?
2. Why are informal fallacies often plausible and convincing? When, where, and by whom are they formulated? Are there circumstances under which the use of informal fallacies can be justified, for example, in public advertising campaigns aimed at persuading us to donate money for good causes (for example, humanitarian relief, children's funds)?
3. How can beliefs affect our capacity to reason well and to recognize valid arguments? Can they affect a person's capacity to distinguish between fallacy, good argument, and rationalization? What is the difference between a rational argument and a rationalization?
4. What, if any, are the advantages of expressing arguments in symbolic terms? Are the ambiguity and vagueness of conventional language eliminated by this formulation?
5. Are there some parts of human life or experience where reason has no real function?

Linking questions

1. To what extent do you agree with André Gide's view that, "*L'illogisme irrite. Trop de logique ennueie. La vie échappe à la logique, et tout ce que la seule logique construit reste artificiel et contraint. Donc est un mot que doit ignorer le poète, et qui n'existe que dans l'esprit.*" (Lack of logic annoys. Too much logic is boring. Life escapes logic, and everything built on logic alone is artificial and limited. *Therefore* is a word that the poet must ignore, that exists only in the mind.)?
2. Susan Sontag said that, "Thinking is a form of feeling...feeling is a form of thinking." Are they related in this way?

3. How does the role of reason compare with the roles of the other ways of knowing? Why might some people think that reason is superior, and what consequences does holding this position have for the knowledge pursued and the methods considered appropriate in the pursuit?
4. Does the role of reason affect the degree of certainty in, or the social status of, the various areas of knowledge? What are the implications of the answer to this question when disputes arise among practitioners and between cultures?
5. Attempts have been made to identify universal, self-evident, and incontrovertible laws of logic, such as the law of identity (for example, “an apple is an apple”) or the law of non-contradiction (for example, “nothing can be an apple and also a non-apple”). Are these actually laws in the scientific sense of the term, or are they axioms? How do logical axioms compare with axioms in mathematics, and with the underlying beliefs we take for granted in other areas of knowledge? What is the role of reason in ethical principles and their justification? Is reason more important to acting morally than other ways of knowing?

e. Emotion (November 28 – December 20, 2016) – Central Questions and Themes

- i. Emotions play a powerful role in shaping thoughts, influencing behavior, and steering the pursuit of knowledge. While emotions may be a key to self-understanding and to understanding the world, the extent to which they contribute to both can be explored through a discussion of questions like those that follow, probing the nature, value, and limits of emotion as a way of knowing.

Nature of emotion

1. Can we ever know anything purely through emotions? How do emotions interact with reason, sense perception, and language?
2. To what degree is emotion biological or “hard-wired”, and hence universal to all human beings? To what extent is it shaped by culture and hence displayed differently in different societies?
3. What sorts of things count as emotions? Are emotions and feelings the same thing?
4. Can feelings have a rational basis? Is “emotional intelligence” an oxymoron? Robert Solomon says that emotions are “systems of judgements”, and that “virtually all of our experience is to some degree ‘affective’, and even our most dispassionate judgements...can be adequately understood only within some larger emotional

context". Is he correct in claiming that virtually all sense perception, and reasoning, must involve emotion?

5. Is it possible to experience an emotion, a feeling, an attitude or sensibility that cannot be expressed in language? Can an emotion, such as love or grief, have its origins in, or be shaped by, language?
6. Can emotions be trained? To what extent can we control our emotions, not in terms of how we act on them, but what we actually feel? Do cultures select emotions to foster and use?
7. Are concepts such as solidarity, patriotism, and racism examples of collective emotions?
8. Is faith an emotion, a feeling, or neither?

Emotion and knowledge

1. Does emotion reside in the realm of private knowledge in the sense that it cannot be verified by others? Can people be mistaken about their own emotions? Can others lead them to recognize previously unknown emotions?
2. Is there any kind of knowledge that can be attained solely through emotion? Is the answer to the question dependent on factors such as gender, age, culture, and/or socio-economic group?
3. Is emotion an essential ingredient of the pursuit or validation of scientific or artistic knowledge? Can there be creativity without emotion?
4. Why has emotion sometimes been seen as a less valuable way of knowing than, say, reason? Or does the value of emotion as a way of knowing depend on the kind of knowledge that is being pursued?
5. Susan Stebbing says, "I do not in the least wish to suggest that it is undesirable for us to be set on thinking by emotional consideration. On the contrary, nothing else will suffice to make us think to some purpose." David Hume claims that, "Reason is, and ought only to be, the slave of the passions." Is it true that emotions are an essential driver of any purposeful activity?

Linking questions

1. What part does emotion play in the acquisition of knowledge? Does the role of emotion vary across the different areas of knowledge?
2. Should emotion play a role in the evaluation of knowledge claims? Are there circumstances under which, in order to evaluate a knowledge claim, one should ignore or, alternatively, pay special attention to one's emotions?

3. Is an action morally justifiable if it feels right? What part do, or should, emotions play in the formation of moral judgments or political judgments?
4. Can emotions be classified as good or bad? Can there be correct, or appropriate, emotional responses? Is it correct to be horrified by accounts of torture?
5. Is faith purely emotional or is it possible to provide a rational justification for religious belief? Is emotion a source of spiritual knowledge?
6. Do people act their way into feeling or feel their way into action? What is the relationship between emotion and experience (for example, in CAS activities)?
7. How did your feelings or emotions affect (positively or negatively) your ability to perform, to make decisions or to reason in regard to particular CAS activities? How did you deal with such situations?

f. Unit Wrap-Up (December 20, 2016)

Readings

Bastian, Kitching, Sims – Ch. 2
 Supplementary Readings TBD

III. Unit 3 – Areas of Knowledge (January 3 – May 22, 2017)

- a. Introduction to the Areas of Knowledge (January 3, 2017)
- b. Ethics (January 4 – January 25, 2017) – Central Questions and Themes will be given as a separate handout for this section.
- c. The Natural Sciences (January 31 – March 1, 2017) – Central Questions and Themes will be given as a separate handout for this section.
- d. The Human Sciences (March 7 – March 15, 2017) – Central Questions and Themes will be given as a separate handout for this section.
- e. Math (March 21 – March 28, 2017) – Central Questions and Themes will be given as a separate handout for this section.
- f. The Arts (March 29 – April 25, 2017) – Central Questions and Themes will be given as a separate handout for this section.
- g. History (May 2 – May 16, 2017) – Central Questions and Themes will be given as a separate handout for this section.
- h. Unit Wrap-Up (May 22, 2017)

Readings

Bastian, Kitching, Sims – Ch’s 3 – 9

Supplementary Readings TBD

IV. Unit 4 – Year’s Conclusion (May 23 – June 13, 2017)

- a. TOK Presentations: May 23 – June 13
- b. TOK Connections and Linking Questions, and Truth and Wisdom
 - i. Connection between the elements of the TOK diagram can also be explored through further linking questions such as those offered below, which raise issues and concepts central to the course.

Belief

- i. What may be meant by Ugo Betti’s comment that “When you want to believe in something you also have to believe in everything that’s necessary for believing in it”?
- ii. How do beliefs about the world, and beliefs about what is valuable, influence the pursuit of knowledge?
- iii. To what extent can beliefs be justified on the basis of ways of knowing? To what extent should they be justified this way?
- iv. Does some degree of unjustified belief exist within each element of the TOK diagram?
- v. What may be meant by the following comment?

“First there is a time when we believe everything without reasons, then for a little while we believe with discrimination, then we believe nothing whatever, and then we believe everything again – and, moreover, give reasons why we believe everything.”

George Christoph Lichtenburg

Certainty

- i. What may be meant by Martin Luther King’s claim that “Nothing is more dangerous than sincere ignorance and conscientious stupidity”, or the following lines by W B Yeats?

“The best lack all conviction, while the worst
 Are full of passionate intensity.”

- ii. To what extent is certainty attainable within each of the ways of knowing or within each of the areas of knowledge?
- iii. In the absence of evidence, is certainty possible? Can there be certainty about a claim that is false?

Culture

- i. What beliefs or knowledge, if any, are independent of culture?
- ii. How do cultures differ with respect to the ways of knowing and areas of knowledge that they value above others? How would one justify valuing one way, or one area, more than another?

- iii. If one looks at most western compilations of quotations, it seems that most are attributed to dead, white, European males. Why might this be so? To what extent does the identity of the author of a quotation influence how its content is interpreted and how seriously its ideas are taken? What does the choice of quotations in this guide signify?

Evidence

“Tell a man there are 300 billion stars in the universe and he’ll believe you. Tell him a bench has wet paint on it and he’ll have to touch it to be sure.”

Anon

- i. What constitutes **good evidence** with the different ways of knowing and areas of knowledge?
- ii. Do sense perception, reason and emotion have the same weight in providing good evidence for claims within the different areas of knowledge? Must evidence always be expressed in words?
- iii. What could be meant by “A mind all logic is like a knife all blade. It makes the hand bleed that uses it” (Tagore)?
- iv. Which, if either, is the more definitive: facts from books, or facts from databases?
- v. Can a fact exist without a context?
- vi. What does Luigi Pirandello mean by his comment that “My opinion is a view I hold until – well – until I find out something that changes it”?

Experience

- i. What characteristics must an explanation possess to be considered good within the different ways of knowing and areas of knowledge?
- ii. Must all good explanations make predictions with the same degree of success?
- iii. Where would explanations about each area of knowledge rate, in a continuum from stories through models to reality? What is reality?
- iv. What are the difference between persuasive explanations, good explanations, and true explanations?
- v. What may be meant by Eugène Ionesco’s statement: “Explanation separates us from astonishment, which is the only gateway to the incomprehensible”?

Interpretation

- i. In attempting to understand what is commonly called “intuition”, is it best to think of it as a rapid cognitive process or perhaps, as some say, as an irrational or unmediated awareness of phenomena?
- ii. Germaine Greer once commented that “The frequently celebrated female intuition...is after all only a facility for observing tiny insignificant aspects of behavior and forming an empirical conclusion which cannot be syllogistically examined.” Does “feminine intuition” exist? Do men’s ways of knowing differ from those of women?
- iii. To what extent is intuition to be taken seriously in the different areas of knowledge?

Technology

“Before you become too entranced with gorgeous gadgets and mesmerizing video displays, let me remind you that information is not knowledge, knowledge is not wisdom, and wisdom is not foresight. Each grows out of the other and we need them all.”

Arthur C Clarke

Although technology is certainly not new, rapid and accelerating advances in the fields of information and communication technology are commonly recognized as having profound effects on what we do and can know. Technology offers a means of communication that, more than any other, crosses cultures.

- i. In what ways has technology expanded knowledge? In what ways has it affected how much we value the different ways of knowing and areas of knowledge? What fields of study have been founded on technological developments?
- ii. Does information technology, like deduction, simply allow the knower to arrange existing knowledge in a different way, without adding anything, or is this arrangement itself knowledge in some sense?
- iii. To what extent do information and communication technologies influence the way we think about the world? To what extent do these technologies determine what we regard as valuable or important? Could it be argued that the increasing global dominance of a particular form of information technology gives rise to an increasing uniformity of thinking?
- iv. Can it be said that every new technology affects the beliefs of individuals and societies, in both positive and negative ways? How can the impact of new technologies be predicted? How reliable are these predictions?
- v. What is the difference between data, information, knowledge, and wisdom? Are there technologies specifically designed to impart data, information, knowledge, and wisdom?
- vi. In what ways do information and communication technologies influence the accessibility of information, and the reasons for believing such information to be true? Who controls such technologies, and what are the effects of such control?
- vii. What did Sydney Harris mean when he said that “The real danger is not that computers will begin to think like men, but that men will begin to think like computers”?
- viii. What is meant by Aiko Morita’s claim that “You can be totally rational with a machine. But if you work with people, sometimes logic has to take a back seat to understanding”?

Truth

- i. How useful are the truth tests of coherence, correspondence, and pragmatism in arriving at knowledge?
- ii. Is there such a thing as **false knowledge**?
- iii. What is the difference between justified true belief and true belief?

iv. What is meant by the following statement?

“As the wise test gold by burning, cutting, and rubbing...so are you to accept my words after examining them and not merely out of regard for me.”

Buddha, *Compendium of All the Essences of Wisdom*

v. To what extent does the truth of a statement depend on the language used to express it?

Values

- i. How do values underlie the pursuit of truth in the different areas of knowledge? How, if at all, do they influence methodology?
- ii. To what extent do the different ways of knowing and areas of knowledge influence the values adopted by individuals and societies?
- iii. In what ways do values affect our representations of the world, for example, in language, maps, visual images, or statistics? When might a persuasive representation be praised as “effective”, or, in contrast, condemned as “manipulative”?

Readings

van de Lagemaat – Ch. 14

Supplementary Readings TBD

TOK Presentation Checkpoints and TOK Essay Checkpoints will be discussed throughout the year.

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