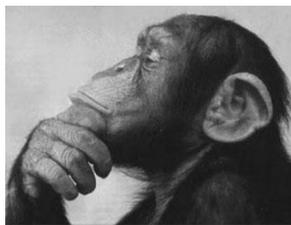


Theory of Knowledge



2013-2014
Syllabus

Mr. Andersen, room 604

Hmmmm....

Course Description:

The Theory of Knowledge (TOK) course is designed as a “flagship element” of the IB Diploma Program by providing students with an opportunity for critical reflection and insight. As such, the course is not designed to impart a lot of new information so much as it is set up to explore the origins and limitations of what you have already learned in other courses. From the TOK Guide:

*What makes TOK unique, and distinctively different from standard academic disciplines, is its process. At the center of the course is the student as **knower**. Students entering the Diploma Program typically have 16 years of life experience and more than 10 years of formal education behind them. They have accumulated a vast amount of knowledge, beliefs and opinions from academic disciplines and their lives outside the classroom. In TOK they have the opportunity to step back from this relentless acquisition of new knowledge, in order to consider knowledge issues. These include the questions already mentioned, viewed from the perspective of the student, but often begin from more basic ones, like: What do I claim to know [about X]? Am I justified in doing so [how?]? Such questions may initially seem abstract or theoretical, but TOK teachers bring them into closer focus by taking into account their students’ interests, circumstances and outlooks in planning the course.*

For a detailed list of TOK aims and objectives, as well as an overview of the major areas of study and the guiding questions of the class, see the TOK Guide found online at

http://xmltwo.ibo.org/publications/DP/General/dp_x_tokxx_guu_0603_1/xmltwo.ibo.org/dp2006-03/dp_x_tokxx_guu_0603_1_e/2.html.

Tentative Course Outline for Junior Semester:

- A. February- March:
- Introduce TOK course, Ways of Knowing, TOK Assessments
 - Justified True Belief and Gettier Problems
 - Understanding Philosophy* by Mel Thompson
 - Intro to Ways of Knowing + Ethics
 - Rationality + Validity, Soundness, Arguments and Premises
 - Intro to TOK Practice Oral
- B. April:
- TOK Practice Orals
 - “Faith as a Way of Knowing” Seminar
- C. May & June:
- TOK Practice Essays

Tentative Course Outline for Senior Semester:

- A. September:
- Review lessons from Practice TOK Essays
 - Review Knowledge Issues, Ways of Knowing, Areas of Knowledge
 - Mini-Current Events Seminars to help generate ideas for TOK Orals
 - A closer look at Logic Fallacies & Reasoning Strategies
 - Explore possible topics for TOK Orals; begin research & planning
- B. October:
- TOK Socratic Seminar #1: “Judging ‘Artist Merit’ in Potentially Offensive Art”
 - Review sample Oral Presentations, narrow topics, continue research & planning
 - Choose Formal TOK Essay topics, begin planning & drafting
 - Socratic Seminar #2: (“What Is Rationality? What Are Its Limits?”)
- C. November:
- Final TOK Oral Presentations (filmed for in-house quality control)
 - Socratic Seminar #3: *TBA*—possibly:
 - “The Politics of Emotion as a Way of Knowing” (Robert Solomon)
 - “John Stuart Mill & *On Liberty*” [Freedom and the Harm Principle]
 - “Should We Ever Tolerate ‘Enhanced Interrogation’ or Torture?”
 - “Judging Lying & Truth Telling in Ethical Situations”
 - “Real Science vs. Pseudo-Science”
 - “The Role of Prejudice in Public Decision-Making & Policy-Making”
 - “Deception with Statistics in Politics, Economics & Advertizing”
 - “The Role of Intuition in Capital Punishment”
 - “Knowledge vs. Wisdom—a Second Look”
 - “Notions of Civility In the Public Sphere and On the Internet”

- D. December:**
- Final TOK Essay Drafting
 - Intro Culminating TOK Project
 - Socratic Seminar #4: *TBA* (see possible topics above)

- E. January:**
- Formal Oral Presentations (cont.)
 - TOK Essay Final Draft completed by mid-January
 - (If time) Socratic Seminar #5: *TBA* (see possible topics above)
 - Culminating TOK Project

How Will This Course Be Useful to Me?

Many of my students write back to me from university to confess how much TOK is helping them in college—especially with the demanding critical thinking, formal reasoning, Socratic reflection, and interdisciplinary connections called for in most college curriculums. TOK excels at nurturing these Habits of Mind. Furthermore, in many ways TOK is ideally placed to foster internationalism, in close harmony with the aims of the IB Learner Profile (attached to this syllabus). The TOK aims and objectives embody many of the attributes needed by a citizen of the world: self-awareness; a reflective, critical approach; interest in other people’s points of view; and a sense of responsibility. Global controversies often rest on significant knowledge issues that can provide useful starting points for TOK explorations, depending on students’ interests and awareness. TOK activity, in turn, can contribute significantly to the understanding of these large questions.

Assessment:

The assessment model in theory of knowledge (TOK) comprises two components, both of which should be completed within the 100 hours designated for the course:

- A.** an externally-graded “Essay on a Prescribed Title” (1200-1600 words worth 40 points) and
B. an internally-graded “Oral Presentation”—which consists of the following requirements:

- One presentation to the class (10 minutes/individual worth 20 points).
- One written presentation planning document and presentation marking form, using the official form, 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 should be an integral part of the TOK course.

For details, please see the **IB TOK Guide: Assessment Outline:**

http://xmltwo.ibo.org/publications/DP/General/dp_x_tokxx_guu_0603_1/xmltwo.ibo.org/dp2006-03/dp_x_tokxx_guu_0603_1_e/12.html.

The diploma points matrix:

		Theory of knowledge					
		Excellent A	Good B	Satisfactory C	Mediocre D	Elementary E	Not submitted
Extended essay	Excellent A	3	3	2	2	1	N
	Good B	3	2	1	1	0	N
	Satisfactory C	2	1	1	0	0	N
	Mediocre D	2	1	0	0	0	N
	Elementary E	1	0	0	0	Failing condition	N
	Not submitted	N	N	N	N	N	N

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:

- Work of an excellent standard
- Work of a good standard
- Work of a satisfactory standard
- Work of a mediocre standard
- 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.

Grading:

Students who are grade-obsessed may be wise to select another course. Students who are grade-aware will want to know that final grades are based on your compilation of quality work produced or in process throughout each term. This will include in-class participation, practice exams, essays, projects, formal and informal Socratic seminars, and a final project (2nd semester only) demonstrating quality reflection and your best work. Feedback will take a variety of forms: letter grades, completion check-offs, written comments, individual conferences, peer evaluations, reading check quizzes, etc. Each of these will be assigned a letter grade based upon a 4.0 point value (see next section below). Grades will be entered into the VSD standard Student Information System (SIS), which will spit out, at appropriate times, a letter grade based on the variety of assignments identified above. Individual progress reports can also be distributed upon request (provided that you are reasonable and don't abuse the privilege).

Four-Point Scale:

In a nutshell, the 4.0 scale reinforces actual mastery of skills, knowledge, and performance on a clear scale (usually reflected in each assignment rubric) as reflected in the key terms in the box below on the right. Everything in this class will be graded on this 4.0 Grade Point scale, or a multiple of 4 for larger projects/exams (8 or 12 for major papers and projects). This might be different from previous teachers you've had. No worries. It's easy. Your final grade for any given term is an ongoing average of the letter grades you've received on assignments—which are all based on 4.0-based scores. The **breakdown of a 4.0 grade point scale** looks like this (box on left):

4.0 Grade Point Scale:

4.0 = A	3.1=C+
3.7=A-	3.0=C
3.5=B+	2.9=C-
3.4=B	2.8=D+
3.2=B-	2.5=D

4.0 Quality Scale in Terms of Mastery of knowledge & Skill:

4 – Outstanding: Performance at this level demonstrates an in-depth understanding of content and concepts. These students make connections amongst ideas that go well beyond the obvious, solve challenging problems with efficient and innovative strategies, communicate complex ideas insightfully, effectively, and creatively.

3 – Proficient: Students at this level demonstrate strong, solid achievement in grasping content and concepts. They display command of essential concepts, skills, and processes; they make important connections between central ideas.

2 – Developing: Performance at this level demonstrates partial command of essential concepts, skills, and processes. With some direction and guidance the student can obtain a complete command of the desired goals. The communication of what they understand is adequate but sometimes rudimentary or incomplete.

1- Emerging/Under Achievement: Students at this level are inconsistent in their skill abilities or they fail to apply basic skills and effort to their assignments.

0 = Not completed/No evidence of Learning

Cumulative % Grade Value:

Grade Mark	Grade Value High	Grade Value Low
A	100	93
A-	92.99	90
B+	89.99	87
B	86.99	83
B-	82.99	80
C+	79.99	77
C	76.99	73
C-	72.99	70
D+	69.99	67
D	66.99	60
F	59.99	0

Example of How to Keep Track of Your Cumulative Grade:

So, let's say you have 10 assignments turned in out of 11 possible so far (you missed one when sick and forgot to make it up). Nine of these assignments were worth 4-points, one worth 8 (a paper), and one worth 12 (a big project). You've listed out your assignment grades as follows, with the points possible and cumulate percentage tallied below each:

#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7	#8	#9	#10	#11	TOTALS
4	8	12	16	20	28	32	36	40	44	56	← Cum. Pts.
A	B+	A-	C	---	A+A	B	B	A	C+	A+A+A	B
4.0	3.5	3.7	3.0	0	8.0	3.4	3.4	4.0	3.1	12.0	48.1/56
100%	94%	93%	89%	71%	79%	80%	81%	83%	82%	86%	← Cum. %

Using the Cumulative % Grade Value Table to the left, you see that your current grade is a B.

Quarterly Participation Grade: This class is participation-intensive. Each quarter a "Participation" grade (usually worth 8 points). I take mental notes every day on each student's active desire to learn and to improve him-/herself. **WARNING:** In my 19 years of teaching high school students, I have become a shrewd judge of character. ☺ This grade represents the following:

- ✓ arriving to class on time, ready to learn
- ✓ asking quality questions on directions and during activities
- ✓ general active listening—(see the "Virtue of Unselfish Listening" posted in class and copied below)
- ✓ taking advantage of in-class work time
- ✓ paying attention to oral and written instructions
- ✓ keeping yourself organized so papers don't get lost and work gets turned in on time in the designated place
- ✓ professional, considerate behavior in class

- ✓ active, organized, helpful note-taking in your TOK composition book during seminars, lectures, films, etc.
- ✓ keeping an organized, neat Article Binder so future students can easily access the articles I provide for supplementary learning.

In general, lack of focus, wasting time, creating distractions, being unorganized—these bad habits will kill your Participation Grade.

Enrichment Credit (EC) will be provided at the instructor's discretion and has the following restrictions:

1. EC is a privilege only for those who have turned in all assigned work and make-up work for being absent.
2. EC is not available to anyone with an unexcused absence and/or with more than two tardies.
3. EC is usually not available within one week of a grading period (quarter or semester grade, progress report).
4. Your grade will be based on the main assignments for the class; therefore, Enrichment Credit may never exceed 5% of the overall total of points for a given quarter or semester, unless otherwise authorized by the instructor. Generally, EC will take the form of a written evaluation of a lecture, film, online dialogue, or equivalent philosophically-enriching event attended or heard. Specific forms for this will be provided. These are few in number and boost only that assignment's grade (and they are not subject to the above restrictions).

Attendance: My expectations are simple: come to class *prepared, ready to learn*, and *on time* every day. Be ready to learn when the bell rings. Small and large group discussions are based partially on attendance. That experience and, therefore, that assessment cannot be made up fully*, regardless of the reason for your absence. This is also true for occasional quizzes. (**Through requesting a Seminar Make-Up, students who have an excused absence can earn, say, a max of 3/4 points by thoroughly and thoughtfully responding to 1-3 central guiding questions from the seminar. Obtain these Qs plus good notes from a trusted colleague and turn in your Seminar Make-Up—labeled as such with the date(s) of your absence—no less than 1 day after your return.*) If you accrue as many as 10 absences in a term, your chances of success are diminished proportionately. Please do not compromise your integrity by asking a parent to excuse your absence for any reason other than illness or emergency. You should expect a call home if your attendance record becomes a problem; it would be best for you to take personal responsibility through your consistent promptness, attentive presence, and dependable honesty.

Late Work: Keep in mind that a great deal of thought is given to due dates and that the homework you do outside of class is essential to the work we do together during class time. I will try to provide you with a monthly calendar of assignments, available online. With teacher approval, some minor assignments may be turned in up to one week after the due date for half credit. Any late major assignment will not be accepted, barring emergencies. It is your responsibility to contact your instructor ASAP if something is amiss. Do not expect to receive much, if any, feedback on late assignments.

Academic Honesty: This course follows both the IB Honor Code and the guidelines for the school. Any assignment that plagiarizes the work and/or ideas of another will receive a zero and the matter will be referred to the administration and to your family. (When in doubt about citations, just ask, or cite it anyway just to be sure.) ALL MAJOR WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS MUST BE SUBMITTED to www.turnitin.com. I will provide you with a log in code.

Other Important Details:

- **Contacting me:** The quickest way to reach me—if I'm not in 604 teaching (per 4, 5 & 7) or in 606 for prep 6th period—is by email (Michael.Andersen@vansd.org). I will use email to send out regular assignment updates, as well as resources that may help you on your philosophy journey. My class web site, [Mr. A. Web](http://Mr.A.Web) (currently at www.michaelandersen.org but soon to be relocated on the CRHS Staff Page at www.river.vansd.org), will be an invaluable tool for helping you be successful in TOK.
- **Building trust in the classroom:** TOK is a seminar-based class, so team work and the open expression of ideas is crucial to success. To facilitate this, all students are expected to participate actively, yet always in a mature, sensible, and compassionate manner. I expect excellence, never mediocrity. However, I also want people to see the class as a “learning lab” where mistakes will happen. That is how you learn! (Striving for excellence does not mean being a perfectionist—a hard lesson for many people.) So, while your instructor works to avoid creating a highly-competitive, threatening atmosphere, each of you is expected to help out in reaching that goal. You are no doubt aware that you learn best when you feel comfortable, safe, and yet also challenged and stimulated with fresh ideas.
- Beyond the expectations mentioned above and on page 1, **please note two big DO NOTs:** Do not cheat and do not use your phones or electronic devices during class time (unless specifically authorized to do so).
 - Cheating: Students who cheat will receive no credit for an assignment that involved cheating, and disciplinary action will be taken in accordance with the IB Honor Code. Cheating ranges from copying another student's homework to turning in an assignment copied from an internet source or turning in work with quotes but no source citations. Cheating also includes helping others to do work that is supposed to be an individual effort and working on homework for another class during English work time.
 - As for electronic devices and phones, they are not to be on during class unless cleared by your teacher for an academic or emergency purpose. They should never be a distraction for your own or others' learning. Any student using a cell phone or an electronic device inappropriately will have it taken away, only to be retrieved by a parent from the office after school. Repeated problems will result in progressive discipline.

- **Save ALL your work, including drafts and in-class handouts.**
- **Please follow school policies!** Students are expected to know about all school rules detailed in your student handbook. Any violations of school policies or the IB Honor Code will result in parent notification and/or further discipline.
- **Kindly purchase a blank composition book ASAP.** You will use this daily, and you will turn it in periodically as your official *TOK Journal*. So, buy it and bring it!
- **Put yourself in the right frame of mind each day to practice this all year:**

The Virtue of Unselfish Listening

- ✓ I listen because I want to know the truth about the real world and people outside of myself.
- ✓ My listening is guided by the principle of “charitable interpretation” — I don’t worry about the minor details in someone’s expression of an idea; instead, I look for the insight behind their words.
- ✓ I listen graciously, without drawing attention to myself. (I get out of the way)
- ✓ I encourage others, if necessary, with my body language and my words. I never distract them.
- ✓ I share the discussion space. If needed, I invite others in who haven’t had equal time to share their views.