

Introduction to Theory of Knowledge 11/12 Honors

Desired Student Outcomes and Performance Goals:

By the end of Introduction to Theory of Knowledge, Students will:

- Develop an understanding of why critically examining knowledge claims is important
- Develop a critical capacity to evaluate beliefs and knowledge claims
- Make interdisciplinary connections
- Become aware of the interpretative nature of knowledge including personal and ideological biases.
- Consider that knowledge may place responsibilities on the knower
- Understand the strengths and limitations of individual and cultural perspectives
- Develop a concern for rigor in formulating knowledge claims, and intellectual honesty.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the strengths and limitations of the various Ways of Knowing and of the methods used in the different Areas of Knowledge
- Make connections between and across Ways of Knowing and Areas of Knowledge
- Demonstrate a capacity to reason critically
- Make connections between personal experience and different Ways of Knowing and Areas of Knowledge
- Demonstrate an understanding of knowledge at work in the world
- Identify values underlying judgments and knowledge claims pertinent to local and global issues.
- Demonstrate an understanding that personal views, judgments and beliefs may influence their own knowledge claims and those of others.
- Use oral and written language to formulate and communicate ideas clearly.

Course Content:

Summer Reading: Illusions by Richard Bach, The Demon Haunted World by Carl Sagan.

Course Text: Ways of Knowing by Michael Woolman.
The instructor may also assign various supplemental texts.

Part 1: Ways of Knowing

Students will explore the following four ways of knowing: Emotion, Reason, Perception, and Language. They will become familiar with Plato's Theory of

Justified True Belief. They will examine the benefits and limitations of each way of knowing, and they will also explore the idea of Faith as a way of knowing.

Assessments:

Students will write a minimum of 4 essays for each part ranging from 250-500 words in length. The essays will be informal in nature, using the first person voice, and will address topics and issues raised in class. Quality of thought, conciseness, and clarity will be critical to student writing. All essays must be typed, double-spaced, in Arial font. Word counts must be included for every essay. Class discussion will form the backbone of this course, and some short reading quizzes may also be employed. There will be no large tests.

Part 2: Ethics and Human Sciences as Areas of Knowledge

Students will explore Ethics and Human Sciences as Areas of Knowledge -- as well as contemporary world issues that connect related to these Areas of Knowledge. Students will develop an understanding of how the different Ways of Knowing are applied to these Areas of Knowledge.

Assessments:

Students will write a minimum of 4 essays for each part ranging from 250-500 words in length. The essays will be informal in nature, using the first person voice, and will address topics and issues raised in class. Quality of thought, conciseness, and clarity will be critical to student writing. All essays must be typed, double-spaced, in Arial font. Word counts must be included for every essay. Class discussion will form the backbone of this course, and some short reading quizzes may also be employed. There will be no large tests.

Part 3: Natural Science and Math as Areas of Knowledge

Students will explore the Natural Sciences and Math as Areas of Knowledge -- as well as contemporary world issues that connect related to these Areas of Knowledge. Students will develop an understanding of how the different Ways of Knowing are applied to these Areas of Knowledge.

Assessments:

Students will write a minimum of 4 essays for each part ranging from 250-500 words in length. The essays will be informal in nature, using the first person voice, and will address topics and issues raised in class. Quality of thought, conciseness, and clarity will be critical to student writing. All essays must be typed, double-spaced, in Arial font. Word counts must be included for every essay. Class discussion will form the backbone of this course, and some short reading quizzes may also be employed. There will be no large tests.

Part 4 : History and the Arts as Areas of Knowledge

Students will explore History and The Arts (Art, Music, and Literature) as Areas of Knowledge -- as well as contemporary world issues that connect related to these Areas of Knowledge. Students will develop an understanding of how the different Ways of Knowing are applied to these Areas of Knowledge.

Assessments:

Students will write a minimum of 4 essays for each part ranging from 250-500 words in length. The essays will be informal in nature, using the first person voice, and will address topics and issues raised in class. Quality of thought, conciseness, and clarity will be critical to student writing. All essays must be typed, double-spaced, in Arial font. Word counts must be included for every essay. Class discussion will form the backbone of this course, and some short reading quizzes may also be employed. There will be no large tests.

Final Exam: Students will select one of the current examination questions and write a 1200-1600 word essay addressing the question prior to the examination date. The essays must be turned in the day of the exam. Students additionally will present to the class on exam day what they have learned from the course.

Curriculum Overview Theory of Knowledge Senior Seminar

Desired Student Outcomes and Performance Goals:

By the end of Theory of Knowledge, Senior Seminar, Students will:

- Develop an understanding of why critically examining knowledge claims is important
- Develop a critical capacity to evaluate beliefs and knowledge claims
- Make interdisciplinary connections
- Become aware of the interpretative nature of knowledge including personal and ideological biases.
- Consider that knowledge may place responsibilities on the knower
- Understand the strengths and limitations of individual and cultural perspectives
- Develop a concern for rigor in formulating knowledge claims, and intellectual honesty.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the strengths and limitations of the various Ways of Knowing and of the methods used in the different Areas of Knowledge
- Make connections between and across Ways of Knowing and Areas of Knowledge
- Demonstrate a capacity to reason critically
- Make connections between personal experience and different Ways of Knowing and Areas of Knowledge
- Demonstrate an understanding of knowledge at work in the world
- Identify values underlying judgments and knowledge claims pertinent to local and global issues.
- Demonstrate an understanding that personal views, judgments and beliefs may influence their own knowledge claims and those of others.
- Use oral and written language to formulate and communicate ideas clearly.
- Produce an internally assessed 1200-1600 word essay on an IBO topic.
- Produce a 4000-word extended essay on one of the subjects studied in the IB program.

Course Content and Materials

Summer Reading: Sophie's World, The Simpsons and Philosophy, Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance

Course Texts: World Philosophies by Ninian Smart, The Screwtape Letters, by C.S. Lewis, The Little Prince, by Antoine de St. Exuperey, Flatlands by Edward Abbot, Bellwether by Connie Willis, Notes to Myself by Hugh Prather, Tuesdays with Morrie, by Mitch Albom, The Coming Plague by Laurie Garrett.

Extended Essay: Students will have structured blocks of time set aside for writing and revising their extended essays. All students are required to complete an extended essay, regardless of intent to sit for the full diploma. This extended essay counts for the midterm examination grade and is due on the day of the examination. Students will attend the examination period, pass in their work, and view a film during the examination period.

Course Structure and Assessments

Theory of Knowledge, Senior Seminar is structured around ten guiding questions. These guiding questions are obtained from the released IBO Theory of Knowledge essay titles for that group's given year.

Marking Period 1: Questions about Knowledge

Texts for Marking Period 1: Notes to Myself, The Little Prince, excerpts from World Philosophies.

Guiding Questions for discussion:

- Can we know something that has not yet been proven to be true?
- If facts by themselves never prove or disprove anything, what else is involved in the proof of a statement?
- Discuss and evaluate the ways in which the beliefs of researchers might count as evidence for or against their results.

Assessment:

Students will keep a personal journal in which they make connections between class discussion topics, assigned readings, and their own changing perceptions and thoughts. Students will be required to turn in their journals every two weeks. A complete two-week journal assignment is 5 full pages, typed, double-spaced, with 1-inch margins.

Class discussion will make up the remainder of the assessment, along with scheduled check-points for the extended essay. There will be no tests or quizzes.

Marking Period 2: Questions about Values and Perception

Texts for Marking Period 2: The Screwtape Letters, Tuesdays with Morrie, Bellwether, excerpts from World Philosophies. The Matrix, A Beautiful Mind.

Guiding Questions:

- "Different cultures have different truths." "A truth is that which can be accepted universally." What are the implications for knowledge of agreeing with these opposing statements?
- "In order to find out how things really are, one must understand the filters through which one perceives the world." Discuss and evaluate this claim.
- "Our technologies establish the truth of many of our scientific laws." Is there any comparable means of establishing moral rules and norms?
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Assessment:

Students will keep a personal journal in which they make connections between class discussion topics, assigned readings, and their own changing perceptions and thoughts. Students will be required to turn in their journals every two weeks. A complete two-week journal assignment is 5 full pages, typed, double-spaced, with 1-inch margins.

Class discussion will make up the remainder of the assessment, along with scheduled check-points for the extended essay. There will be no tests or quizzes.

Mid-term Exam: Students will produce a final-draft of their extended essay to be submitted to IBO. During the actual examination period, students will view a film.

Marking Period 3: Student Selected Presentations

Marking Period 4: Questions about Areas of Knowledge

Texts for Marking Period 3: The Coming Plague, Flatlands, excerpts pertaining to Art, Music, and Literature.

Guiding Questions:

"Words are more treacherous and powerful than we think." Evaluate the extent to which the characteristics Sartre claims for words affect – negatively – or positively – different Areas of Knowledge."

"This rubber tree won't yield latex – the biologist blames the sapling, the geologist blames the soil, the contractor blames the unskilled labourer and owner says it is fighting back at being controlled." If different Ways of Knowing or Areas of Knowledge yield contradictory statements about the world, on what basis do we choose among them?

"The arts deal in the particular, the individual and the personal while the science deal in the general, the universal and the collective." To what extent does this statement obscure the nature of both Areas of Knowledge?

If someone says, "I know this music," how can the claim be evaluated? Compare your answer with the evaluation of claims in Areas of Knowledge other than the Arts.