Theory of Knowledge Course Outline 2008-2009

Information on academic goals, course content, assessment and expectations
The Theory of Knowledge (TOK) program is central to the educational philosophy of the International Baccalaureate. It challenges students and their teachers to reflect critically on diverse ways of knowing and areas of knowledge, and to consider the role which knowledge plays in a global society. It encourages students to become aware of themselves as thinkers, to become aware of the complexity of knowledge, and to recognize the need to act responsibly in an increasingly interconnected world. As a thoughtful and purposeful enquiry into different ways of knowing, and into different kinds of knowledge, the TOK program 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 difficulties that arise in addressing these questions are the broad areas known as ‘problems of knowledge. The program entails the application of this central question to many different, yet interrelated, topics.

As described by the IBO subject guide, the aims of this course are:

- “to engage students in reflection on, and in the questioning of, the bases of knowledge, so that they:
  - develop an understanding of why critically examining knowledge claims is important
  - develop a critical capacity to evaluate beliefs and knowledge claims
  - make interdisciplinary connections

- “to engage students in reflection on, and in the questioning of, the bases of knowledge, so that they:
  - become aware of the interpretative nature of knowledge including personal and ideological biases
  - consider that knowledge may place responsibilities on the knower

- “to engage students in reflection on, and in the questioning of, the bases of knowledge, so that they:
  - understand the strengths and limitations of individual and cultural perspectives
  - develop a concern for rigor in formulating knowledge claims, and intellectual honesty.”
Assessment

The course is run primarily as a seminar, and students are expected to contribute regularly to class discussions. Grades will be based on formal writing, informal writing, presentations, and class participation.

Theory of Knowledge for grade 12 students will be a one-semester course.

The assessment model in the Theory of Knowledge comprises of 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 presentation planning document and presentation marking form. The presentation is an integral part of the TOK course.

Points awarded for the externally assessed component, part 1, the essay on the 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:

A Work of an **excellent** standard

B Work of a **good** standard

C Work of a **satisfactory** standard

D Work of a **mediocre** standard

E Work of an **elementary** standard

TOK essay on the prescribed title is to be submitted by **December 12 2008**. All the students must deliver their in-class presentation by **December 5**. The date of each individual presentation will be decided upon by the teacher and the student.
Expectations

- Punctuality. You are expected to come to class on time.
- Participation. Students are expected to contribute in a positive manner.
- All assignments must be completed with sound effort.
- All work must be word-processed.
- Assignments are due in class unless otherwise specified.
- Please do not bring iPods to class.
- Do not bring food in the classroom.
- Be honest and responsible. Your work has to be your own. Don't forget to properly cite all the external sources.
- It is important that you remain OPEN to ideas and to RESPECT different points of view.

You can ask for assistance via e-mail. Feel free to contact me at: mkelly@isb.rs.

Check my website for resources, assignments and due dates. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to catch up on the work missed. My website is:

http://www.freewebs.com/majakelly