



**SAINT GEORGE
SCHOOL**
FOUNDED 1965



Porfirio Herrera No. 6, Ensanche Piantini,
Santo Domingo, D. N. Rep. Dominicana

T. 809 562 5262 F. 809 562 5015
www.stgeorge.edu.do

Saint George School – History Department

Course: Theory of Knowledge (ToK)
Level: 12th Grade, 6th Form
Teacher: Andrew Wilson
Email: awilson@saintgeorge.do
Academic year: 2011-2012

“We must rise above the obsession with the quantity of information and speed of transmission, and recognize that the key issue for us is our ability to organize this information once it has been amassed – to assimilate it, find meaning in it.”

~ Vartan C. Gregorian, 1934 -

I. INTRODUCTION AND DESCRIPTION OF COURSE CONTENT:

Theory of Knowledge (ToK) is a beautiful and elegant two-year course of study that explores the way we Know What We Know, helps us to understand how to gain access to areas we Know We Don't Know, and enables us to push out the frontiers even further into the areas of what we Don't Know We Don't Know. ToK is present at the crossroads of all paths of information and understanding, in every discipline, and it is the common thread that connects it all. The International Baccalaureate approach to ToK is centered on the inquiry process, taking particular effort to define for the learner the four main areas of the ways we know our world: Language, Perception, Reason, and Emotion. By coming to a common understanding of the terms and definitions in these four “ways of knowing”, we can then continue to apply this framework to a whole set of “areas of knowledge.” Included in these “areas of knowledge” are the topical areas of: Mathematics, Natural Sciences, Human Sciences, History, the Arts, Ethics, and Religion. Finally, the course is surmised in a conclusion titled, “Truth and Wisdom” for which we hope the student of ToK can come to appreciate through the course of their work in the subject area. Combined, students will gain deeper knowledge and appreciation for the inquiry process, as well as inquiry tools and strategies they can take with them as serious life-long learners. Completion of this course will enable graduates to have better focus and insight on all forms of inquiry, regardless of the academic discipline and environment, which should give them tremendous confidence moving on to new areas of study at any college or university.

II. EXPECTED OUTCOMES THROUGH THIS COURSE OF STUDY:

There is a discipline to higher levels of more clearly defined and specific forms of inquiry. The student of ToK, through attention to detail and practice, will become a sharper thinker and clearer communicator. Greater self-awareness will be acquired to understand one's own tendencies and biases for information and knowledge acquisition, whereby the student of ToK can work at attaining more personal balance in these processes. Likewise, this ability to differentiate types and quality of information will give the ToK learner greater access to alternative viewpoints and perspectives, potentially not available to them previously. When

applied to improved forms of communication, the ToK learner can develop tremendous empathy and mutual understanding regarding what strategies and methodologies of communication can better reach and be heard by other audiences. As a discipline and practice, ToK is a tremendous tool of personal empowerment in any academic setting, in addition to all aspects of personal and professional life.

III. DESCRIPTION OF COURSE PROCESS AND PROCEDURE:

Students will use learning strategies to enhance critical thinking and analysis, learn how to work more effectively in high-performing teams, and practice how to achieve higher standards for written and oral communications and presentations. Students will learn to identify, appreciate and practice what are more effective active listening, reading, and participation skills. All constructive forms of inquiry, self-expression and creativity will be encouraged that help enhance the learning experience for all types of learners. Active learners will work on building and enhancing their own “ToK toolbox” that will enable higher forms of learning, particularly in the areas of inquiry. Specific learning tools, strategies, methodologies, and models will be introduced and practiced to achieve at least basic working knowledge and ability in these areas, that can be carried on to the next levels of education for life after the Saint George School.

IV. MAJOR UNITS TO BE COVERED

Unit 1: Introduction to the 2nd Year and Review August - September
Prologue and Chapters 1 & 2 and 3-6, “Ways of Knowing”
How comfortable are we with the propositions that Language, Perception, Reason, and Emotion can give us a foundation to the core nature of knowledge and our relationship to it? Have we developed the dexterity to talk about these concepts together, in a meaningful way? What is the difference between working knowledge and mastery of a subject area? Is mastery of ToK possible? Where are we as a group becoming better at inquiry as active life-long learners?

Unit 2: Propositions and Paradigms October
Appendices to Part 2
Separate from the ways of knowing and areas of knowledge, the book introduces the learner to differentiated categories and explanations of Propositions and, then, Paradigms. How we frame our perspective says a lot about the perspective itself. What propositions and paradigms are we willing to accept or want to challenge? Can we engage the debate about these differences intelligently?

Unit 3: Ethics as an Area of Knowledge Oct. – Nov.
Chapter 12
Important to us all in this day and age is a finer understanding and appreciation of ethics. How can we hold others to moral standards if we cannot find agreed definitions to describe and measure them? We will explore the nuances between moral reasoning, moral relativism, self-interest theory, and other theories of ethics, including duty ethics, utilitarianism and libertarianism. What standards do you choose to live by?

Unit 4: Religion as an Area of Knowledge Nov. – Dec.
Chapter 13



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Matters of faith are worthy of discussion. Each of us has highly personal connections to what we believe and even claim to know on the basis of religion. How do we express religion and religious views in terms that others can understand, digest and respect, whether or not they share the same belief system? We will discuss various topics related to belief, God and religion, to be able to wrap language around this deeply personal subject.

* Time will be set aside for review for Exams.

Unit 5: A Discussion of Truth and Wisdom

January

Chapter 14

This discussion ties the strands of ToK together and weaves them into a tapestry of higher level thinking and understanding. Having grasped the elemental ideas of ways of knowing and extended into topical subject areas, is it possible to seek unifying statements of conclusion or are we back where we began? We will discuss the possibility of unifying theories and any theories those in the classroom might have regarding this topic. Without having to come to a finite conclusion, we will gain insight and appreciation for the journey into inquiry as life-long learners as a path to greater insight and possibly wisdom.

Units 6 - 10: Topics in ToK and Connections to Current Events

February – June

The Textbook and additional resources – Internet, movie clips, music, arts and crafts, et cetera. Fortified with significant working knowledge of ToK, we will take advantage of using and refining our skill in consideration of topics of interest to the class or brought in by the teacher to prompt discussion and debate. Student participation in planning, with consent of the instructor, will be encouraged. Experiential learning, creativity, self-expression and forms reflection are all valid potential outlets for these final class periods.

*Time has also been reserved to review our course content which will prepare the students for their major evaluations.

V. TEXTBOOKS AND OTHER RESOURCES :

The core text for this course is the following:

Theory of Knowledge for the IB Diploma. Richard van de Lagemaat. Cambridge University Press (2005).

* This text does not make up the entirety of the printed resources to be used in the course. Other resources will include handouts library books, newspapers, et cetera.

*Students are expected to have the following material for class:

- 1 binder (with seven dividers) - 1 bound notebook - Colored pencils or pens

VI. TEACHING STRATEGIES:

Students will benefit from a wide range of teaching approaches and strategies, including but not limited to: individual, pair and group work; a variety of written (in-class and assigned), oral activities; question and answer; small group and whole class discussion; independent and group

research; debate. This course lends itself to use of experiential and applied learning and use of current events, which will be taken advantage of whenever an appropriate opportunity is available.

VII. EVALUATIONS :

The students should understand the rubric (grid that lists criteria and bands of achievement levels) explaining precisely how they will be evaluated for ALL assignments.

- Participation (20%) Appropriate preparation for class and attention/focus during class; active listening and interaction with peers; and, meaningful contribution to class discussions. ToK requires active participation.
- Quizzes (10%) Based on reading assignments (which may be augmented in percentage from tests/projects/essays, depending on the corte)
- Class Work and Teamwork (20%) i.e. In-class small group activities; completion of class work to be included in Class Notes; in-class writing activities
- Notebook (20%) Reading Notes and Class Notes Combined
- Tests/projects/essays (30%)

*LATE or INCOMPLETE WORK will lose 10% credit per day unresolved.

ToK only meets briefly every week, therefore it is of the utmost importance to complete reading assignments **prior** to the class when a topic is discussed. Quizzes and in-class writing will stem from reading and will reflect on all aspects of evaluation. It is incumbent on every student to make assigned reading before class a part of their regular study habits and learning process.

OTHER REMARKS REGARDING OUR CLASS :

Students should be **extremely vigilant** about following our classroom strategies. Understanding the learning process through appropriate preparation and organization will be a key to success. Parents and guardians are invited to review these policies with your student/s.

In order for student to succeed in this course, it is imperative that they keep up to date with reading, reading notes, class work, homework, as well as independent assignments.

It is the responsibility of the student to catch up on all missed work due to absence or other reasons immediately upon his/her return. In the case of a planned and/or extended absence, it is the obligation of the student to have a parent or guardian notify the school in writing *before* the stated absence, making any arrangements necessary for the completion of all missed work prior to such absence with all teachers. If additional time is required for the completion of an assignment, the student must meet with the teacher before the due date (not the day it is due) to request a plan for completion. Adjustments to articulated expectations will be made at the discretion of the teacher. Assignments handed in late without advance notice and written teacher permission will be subject to consequences, including a lower grade (See: "EVALUATIONS").

Should the student have concerns and/or feel the need for clarification and/or re-enforcement, the teacher can make arrangements with students to do so at the end of the school day, immediately



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following last regularly scheduled classes. Likewise, the teacher retains the prerogative to request the same for any student they feel could benefit from this kind of activity.

Each classroom is a community of individuals where mutual respect, honesty, integrity, and the highest academic standards will be expected of all participants. If we abide by this shared interest and common understanding, we will all have a very successful year!