

IB Diploma Programme course outlines: Theory of Knowledge

Course description:

The Theory of Knowledge programme at Codrington is of particular importance, since it will encourage our students on this small island to see themselves as wider world citizens by means of critical thinking and thoughtful reflection on what they know, how they know it and how to use this knowing responsibly. By studying global issues which have relevance to society on a smaller or larger scale, they will be encouraged to look towards playing their part in the wider community through gaining ownership of their knowledge by understanding the precise nature of it. By applying a deeper understanding of inter-related concepts to an increasingly inter-connected world, we aim to encourage them to become responsible, thoughtful, sensitive and confident participants in their world.

By centralizing the issue of ‘What is truth?’ and ‘How do I know what I know?’ we expect students to review their own cultural and ideological perceptions and be aware of the needs and perspective of others; to become more engaged and reliable, open-minded international citizens.

A study of the knowledge issues and claims cutting across all the subject areas of the hexagon will encourage a deeper understanding of their SL and HL choices. The TOK course at Codrington will have as its general aims:

A desire to acquire knowledge, coupled in an appreciation of human ingenuity, and the empowering nature of knowledge acquired with integrity

An awareness of how knowledge is constructed, both by individuals and by societies, and how individual and communal ideologies are developed

An understanding of the mechanics of learning

The ability to see the value of the nature of inter-disciplinary study

An appreciation of the diversity of values, ideologies, cultures and knowledge bases inherent in differing identities

An acknowledgement of the difference between objectivity and subjectivity

A consideration of the responsibilities which knowledge entails and how to practice this in their local and wider community

An awareness of the impact of new technologies on what we know and how we acquire information

The ability to use critical thinking techniques to examine and question individual and group assumptions: conjecture, evaluation, hypotheses, questions and solutions, drawing links, interpretation, comparing and contrasting, and summarizing

A sense of ease with giving personal opinion which is logical, well-researched and supported, reflective, clearly-expressed, sensitive and well-balanced

An understanding of the nature of language and communication and how to apply skills for the expression of ideas

The application of honesty and integrity to both the research and presentation of ideas

A desire to become self-aware and responsible both as a student and a citizen

Beginning with the IB mission statement and the learner profile, students will engage in the practical exploration of higher-level thinking skills by means of research projects, individual presentations, group discussion, debate, persuasive speaking and writing, essays, and reflection on CAS projects and school/ community/ national and international issues. They will research from contemporary writings and classical literature, case studies, scientific papers and data, the media, historical documents and material originally in languages other than their own.

The linking questions running through both knowledge issues and the ways of knowing will form a basis of reference and reflection throughout the two years. The TOK course is seen as an integral part of the DP, the intellectual powerhouse fuelling the programme, and indeed the school as a whole. It is

expected that the work done in TOK, both academic and practical in the form of the presentations, will be shared by the school community as a means of enriching the way all our students, from PYP through MYP begin to understand the concept of knowledge and consider the nature of their own methods of learning and understanding. The TOK course will, where appropriate, impact positively upon the student's approach to the Extended Essay.

Our aim is to foster active and engaged learners who relish the wealth of information and ideas around them. We hope they will look to the wider community by means of the internet and personal travel in order to maintain a vibrant international approach to their study of the nature of knowledge and their quest to understand how we acquire it.

Topics:

Year one

Term one September – December

Introduction to the concept of knowledge

What is the nature of knowledge?

What is the purpose of knowledge?

Aspects of knowledge; beliefs and truths

Who are the knowers?

What are the responsibilities which being a knower brings?

The role of truth and the absolute

Group presentation exhibiting the nature of knowledge and the issues arising

Term two Jan – March

The four different ways of knowing:

Language

What is language?

Cultural differences

Other forms of communication

Metaphor versus reality

Sense perception

How can we trust our senses?

How can we trust the perceptions of others?

Reason, rationality and logic

How does reason reinforce our knowledge?

What are the strengths and limitations of logic?

Emotion

The conflict of reason and emotion

Should emotion play a role in our decision making?

Students identify and explore an area of personal concern affected by these problems of knowing

Internal, formally-assessed essay and oral presentation with question/answer session

Term three April – June

Areas of knowledge:

Natural sciences, Human sciences, History

Ways of collecting data and information

How can we be sure of the data we collect?

Certainty and evidence

The role of intuition, explanation and interpretation

The responsibilities implied by research

Personal values

The impact of technology on collecting information

The interface of technology and humanity

Substantial essay/thesis over summer break on a prescribed topic; internal formal assessment and oral presentation in September

Year two

Term one September – December

Mathematics

Methods of knowing and knowledge claims

Mathematics and its links to reality and the world

Mathematical truth and proof

Mathematics: created or discovered?

Scope and use

Ethics

The nature of ethics

Knowledge perspectives

Politics

Personal and global values

The impact of technology

The interface of technology and humanity

The Arts

What is art?

Role and responsibilities in the community

Values and personal perspectives

End of first half term: internal, formally-assessed essay and oral presentation.

After half-term break: begin planning and work on 1200-1600 word essay to be submitted to IB early-March.

Practice in drafting and presenting essay topics

Draft preparation of one of ten generic titles for external assessment

Term two January – March

Start of term: supervision of work on final essay to be submitted to IB early-March

Drafting of self-evaluation report

Submission of final essay papers

Finalise choice of oral presentations

Early- March:

Submission of TOK externally assessed essays to IB

April:

Submit TOK predicted grades and marks for oral presentations

Assessment:

The TOK course contributes, with the Extended Essay, to the IB DP a maximum 3 points, by means of an essay (externally assessed) and a presentation (assessed internally and marks sent to IB for moderation)

IB grade descriptors and related rubrics will be introduced to the students from the start during a TOK/Extended Essay/CAS day retreat, and an understanding of the workings of such descriptors, and their use for all marking by teachers of any substantial pieces of work, will for an integral aspect of internal assessment.

External assessment 40 points

Essay on a prescribed title (1200-1600 words)

The title is chosen from a list of ten titles prescribed by the IB for each exam session.

Questions are generic, and of a trans-disciplinary nature.

Assessment is external, and is based on the four criteria in the TOK guide:

- Understanding knowledge issues
- Knower's perspective
- Quality of analysis of knowledge issues
- Organization of ideas

The title chosen must be exactly as stated in the question list, and not altered in any way.

Whilst there should be evidence of some research in both the essay and presentation assessments, the aim here is to show the student's understanding of the link between areas of knowledge and ways of knowing them, by means of sustained reflection and analysis.

Final essays will be drafted in the second half of the first term and the first half of the second term of the second DP year, the period running from November to February for final submission to the IB in early-March.

Internal assessment/ externally moderated 20 points

One presentation to the class approx 10 minutes per student

This presentation can be either individual or in a small group, which must be no more than five students. The intention is that a 'real world' situation, of particular interest to the student, will form the basis for an exploration of the relevant knowledge issues.

Assessment is done by the TOK teacher, according to the four criteria in the TOK guide:

- Identification of knowledge issue(s)
- Treatment of knowledge issue(s)
- Knower's perspective
- Connections

Students/groups will prepare and submit a presentation planning document, and all students individually will complete and submit a self-evaluation report using the form in the vade mecum.

Individual presentations will last for approximately ten minutes; where a group presentation is selected, there will still be sufficient time given for individual marks to be allocated and for the

allocation of all the assessment criteria to be used for each student. Presentations will be recorded and some may be required to be sent to the IB for moderation.

Ongoing and terminal internal assessment

All internal marking and assessment is intended to practise, mirror, prepare for, and feed into the types of assessment marked externally, or submitted for external moderation. It is also intended to produce students for whom learning skills are paramount, in order to create effective and reflective life-long learners. With this aim, there will be ongoing practice essays set as part of regular homework and end of term/year assessment, individual and group presentation practices, and self-evaluation exercises. There will be experience in peer editing, group evaluation and assessment against rubrics. Written exercises will be set which develop critical thinking, analysis and communication skills. TOK assessment criteria and grade descriptors will be used for evaluating longer written pieces and oral presentations. There will be formal assessments marked along these lines at points during the course as described in the 'topics' section of this document.

Students will experience individual and group presentations throughout the two year course with the aim of having good sources from which to choose one piece which is assessed internally and held within the school until the close of session. The teacher and student will select the best one of these for assessment. These may utilize some of the following approaches: interviews, dialogues, debates, role-plays, PowerPoint and video displays, dramatized skits, and may involve visual aids, props and written material as a stimulus. Where group presentations are submitted, marks will still be allocated on an individual basis.