

IB-Theory of Knowledge (TOK)
Dr. Gleason
Summer 2021

Summer Assignment

1.) Introduction to the Course and Purpose of the Assignment

Welcome to Theory of Knowledge (TOK), a course that is at the heart of your IB experience! TOK is a very unique class, which is meant to get you to think not only about what you are learning in your other classes, but, more importantly, about why you learn the things that you do in those classes in the way that you do. It's an amazing opportunity to gain newer and deeper perspectives on your educational experience, and while it will be challenging, there is no doubt you will come out of this course changed in ways you would have never thought possible. I very much look forward to sharing in this journey with you over the next two years!

In light of the special nature of this class, we are going to ask you to do something a little different this summer. It is going to involve some readings that are going to push you outside your comfort zone, but it is also going to involve some fun activities involving music and movies. The whole point of this is to get you to start thinking in the way that TOK asks you to, and to begin to see that traditional distinctions between "reading" and other media, as well as those between disciplines like "English," "Math," "History," "Science," and "Art," are really just illusions. All of these things are interconnected, and so consider this summer assignment a first step towards appreciating that very exciting fact!

2.) Preliminary Information

Before getting to the full directions for the assignment, here is some important preliminary information:

-Contact: E-mail is the best way to get in touch with me with any questions over the summer: Dr. Sean Gleason '03 (sgleason@notredamehs.com)

-Google Classroom: You will find PDFs of all the readings, the "Think and Know Log" templates, and a copy of these instructions here. The access code is: **zs4sgn2**

3.) Directions

The assignment has three basic parts to it: readings, music, and movies. Each has a slightly different task associated with it.

-Part 1: Readings (PDFs of all can be found on Google Classroom)

a.) All students must read **both** of the following and complete a “Think and Know Log” for each (the template can be found on Google Classroom):

-Wilson, *Consilience*, Ch. 2 (“The Great Branches of Learning”), pgs. 8-14

-Sahakian, *Ideas of the Great Philosophers*, Part One (“Epistemology and Logic”), pgs. 3-28

b.) All students must also **choose 3** of the following to read and complete a “Think and Know Log” for each:

-Devlin, *The Math Instinct*, Ch. 2 (“Elvis: The Welsh Corgi who Knows Calculus”), pgs. 17-37 [good for those with an interest in mathematics]

-Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, Ch. 18 (“Hemispheres Colliding”), pgs. 354-375 [good for those with an interest in social science]

-Pinker, *The Language Instinct*, Ch. 3 (“Mentalese”), pgs. 55-82 [good for those with an interest in language]

-Baker, *The Atoms of Language*, Ch. 2 (“The Discovery of Atoms”), pgs. 19-50 [good for those with an interest in science]

-Shakespeare, “Sonnet 18,” and Cummings, “i carry your heart with me”
[Note: Both of these poems together count as just 1 of your 3 choices]
[good for those with an interest in literature]

-Part 2: Music (Links are given below)

- a.) All students must listen to **all** of the following, and for each song, write at least one paragraph in which you answer the question “Why does this count as music (i.e. is it because of the rhythm, the lyrics, the melody, the tone, etc.)?”:

[-Gregorian Chant "O filii et filiae"](#)

[-Beethoven: Ode to Joy](#)

[-Frank Sinatra "Moonlight in Vermont"](#)

[-Miles Davis "So what"](#)

[-Dark side of the Moon: On the Run](#)

- b.) All students must listen to one additional song **of their choice**, and discuss in a paragraph, “Which of the required songs is your chosen song most like, and why (i.e. with respect to rhythm, lyrics, tone, etc.)? Which of the required songs is it most dissimilar to, and why (i.e. with respect to rhythm, lyrics, tone, etc.)?”

-Part 3: Movies

- a.) All students are required to watch the following movie and answer this question in at least 2 paragraphs: “How does this movie connect with the Sahakian Reading on “Epistemology and Logic?” That is, what does this movie tell us about our knowledge? Does it complicate the assumption that we definitively know things? Why or why not?:

[-The Matrix](#) (1999) [Available to stream on Amazon Prime and HBO Max]

- b.) All students must watch **2 of the following movies** and answer the question(s) associated with each one in at least 2 paragraphs:

[-Contact](#) (1997) [Available to stream on Amazon Prime]--**Question:** What does this movie suggest about faith and science? That is, are the things we know easily divided into facts we uncover via science and truths we believe via faith?

[-Arrival](#) (2016) [Available to stream on Amazon Prime]--**Question:** How does this movie confirm and/or complicate the understanding of language discussed in Pinker’s *The Language Instinct*? That is, what can

we take for granted about communication? What can we not?

-[The DaVinci Code](#) (2006) [Available to stream on Hulu, Netflix, and Amazon Prime]--**Question**: What does this movie suggest about the role art can play in disseminating knowledge? That is, how is the art in the movie used to communicate information? Are you surprised by some of the interpretations?

-[Fermat's Enigma](#) (1996) [Follow the link to watch the documentary]--**Question**: What does this documentary tell you about mathematical knowledge? That is, how does it agree and/or disagree with what you read about Elvis in Devlin's *The Math Instinct*?

-[Saving Private Ryan](#) (1998) [Available to stream on Netflix and Amazon Prime] and [The Longest Day](#) (1962) [Available to stream on Netflix and Amazon Prime] [**Note**: both of these movies together count as just one choice]--**Question**: Although both of these movies are centered on the same historical event (the invasion of Normandy on D-Day), they depict them in very different ways. What are some of those differences? What does it suggest about the way we tell history? That is, are historical events fixed facts that can be related in only one way, or are they open to interpretation (and re-interpretation)?

4.) *Assessment*

-The "Think and Know Logs," the paragraphs on the music selections, and the answers to the questions about the movies are all due **on the first day of school** in August (**Monday, August 30th**). These will be given a 100 point grade.

-These logs and writings will form the basis for a presentation that each student will give on **Friday, September 3rd**. More details on the presentation will be provided on the first day of class in August. This will count as a 50 point grade.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions you have--otherwise, good luck, enjoy the summer, and I look forward to seeing you all in August!