Theory of Knowledge Year 2: 2025-2026

Ms. Novak, room 113
The best way to communicate with me is through email: elizabeth.novak@mpls.k12.mn.us I often do not see comments in google classroom until it is too late.

About me: I have three kids- two in college and a junior at Southwest High School in Minneapolis. I am the proud mother of three rescue dogs who keep me on my toes. In my spare time, I like to hike and run with friends, and eat good food. This is my fourth year at Roosevelt, and my 26th year in the district. I love being a teacher, and I firmly believe that I teach the best kids in Minneapolis (besides my daughter).

Course Description
Just like last year, you will critically evaluate yourself as a "knower" and "thinker" within your community of "knowers," and will explore knowledge questions related to a range of themes. Last year we focused on the core theme "knowledge and the knower," two optional themes and the Area of Knowledge of History. You also completed some really cool exhibitions. This year we will focus on the remaining AOKs; Human Sciences, Natural Sciences, Mathematics and the Arts. You will make links between the areas of knowledge while evaluating the boundaries that confine them.

The major assessment this year will be the **TOK essay.** The essay will be graded by me for your class grade and outside assessors for your IB grade. This class is not needed to graduate from HS, but it is needed to obtain an IB diploma or medallion.

The TOK concepts will continue to weave throughout all elements of the class. They are: **evidence, certainty, truth, interpretation, power, justification, explanation, objectivity, perspective, culture, values and responsibility.**

Course Aims:

- To encourage students to reflect on the central question, "How do we know that?" and to recognize the value of asking that question
- To expose students to ambiguity, uncertainty and questions with multiple plausible answers
- To equip students to effectively navigate and make sense of the world, and help prepare them to encounter novel and complex situations
- To encourage students to be more aware of their own perspectives and to reflect critically on their own beliefs and assumptions
- To engage students with multiple perspectives, foster open-mindedness and develop intercultural understanding
- To encourage students to make connections between academic disciplines by exploring underlying concepts and by identifying similarities and differences in the methods of inquiry used in different areas of knowledge
- To prompt students to consider the importance of values, responsibilities and ethical concerns relating to the production, acquisition, application and communication of knowledge

Unit 1: Area of Knowledge: (AOK) Knowledge and Art:

The arts provide rich material for discussions of concepts such as interpretation. For example, students could consider how we ascribe meaning to works of art, or whether the intention of the artist is what determines meaning. During these discussions, students could be encouraged to draw on their experiences from their DP studies in language and literature classes, where they are required to understand and interpret a range of texts.

Some relevant Knowledge Questions (KQ).

- Are the arts best seen as a system of knowledge, a type of knowledge or a means of expressing knowledge?
- What are the justifications for, and implications of, claiming that there are absolute standards for "good art"?
- Can some knowledge in the arts only be gained through experience? How does the medium used change the way that knowledge is produced, shared or understood?
- Are moral and aesthetic judgments more a matter of taste than a matter of truth?

Unit 2: Area of Knowledge: (AOK) Knowledge and Mathematics:

Mathematics is sometimes seen to have a degree of certainty that is unmatched by other areas of knowledge or is seen to be founded on a set of more or less universally accepted definitions and basic assumptions. This makes mathematics an excellent source of material for TOK discussions.

Some relevant Knowledge Questions (KQ).

- Is absolute certainty attainable in mathematics?
- Is there a distinction between truth and certainty in mathematics?
- What is the role of the mathematical community in determining the validity of a mathematical proof?
- What does it mean to say that mathematics is an axiomatic system?
- Are mathematicians the people best placed to create codes of ethics for professional mathematicians?

Unit 3: Area of Knowledge: (AOK) Knowledge and Natural Sciences:

The natural sciences are often seen to rely on evidence, rationality and the quest for deeper understanding. Observation and experimentation play a key role, and terms such as "theory" have a special meaning in the natural sciences compared to how they are used in daily life and in other areas of knowledge.

Some relevant Knowledge Questions (KQ).

- How might developments in scientific knowledge trigger political controversies or controversies in other areas of knowledge?
- How can it be that scientific knowledge changes over time?
- How does the social context of scientific work affect the methods and findings of science?
- What is the role of inductive and deductive reasoning in scientific inquiry, prediction and explanation?
- Should scientific research be subject to ethical constraints or is the pursuit of all scientific knowledge intrinsically worthwhile?

Unit 4: Area of Knowledge: (AOK) Knowledge and Human Sciences:

The human sciences include a diverse range of disciplines, such as psychology, social and cultural anthropology, economics, political science, and geography. These disciplines share a common focus on the study of human existence and behaviour.

Some relevant Knowledge Questions (KQ).

- Is it possible to discover laws of human behaviour in the same way that the natural sciences discover laws of nature?
- Are predictions in the human sciences inevitably unreliable?
- If two competing paradigms give different explanations of a phenomenon, how can we decide which explanation to accept?
- What assumptions underlie the methods used in the human sciences?
- Is the role of the human scientist only to describe what the case is or also to make judgements about what should be the case?

Unit 5: Area of Knowledge: (AOK) Knowledge and History:

In addition to being heavily evidence-based, history is also an interpretive discipline that allows for multiple perspectives and opinions. Students could be encouraged to consider the role and importance of historians, particularly in terms of why their interpretations may differ or how we evaluate conflicting interpretations of past events.

Some relevant Knowledge Questions (KQ).

- Is truth the goal of all historical inquiry?
- What counts as a fact in history?
- If it is difficult to establish proof in history, does that mean that all versions are equally acceptable?
- Are we more prone to particular cognitive biases (such as hindsight bias) in some disciplines and areas of knowledge rather than others?
- Is it unfair to judge people and actions in the past by the standards of today?
- Do historians have an ethical obligation not to ignore contradictory evidence?

You can expect from me:

- Willingness to learn with you - Upholding classroom respect - Open- mindedness
- Creating lessons that teach the course goals - Open to feedback on lessons and content.

My expectations for you:

- Be here on time and every day.
- Engage in the class and the work.
- Speak your truth. Ask questions to understand. Listen with an open mind. Help create a safe and brave space for all.
- Ask for help when you need it.

Attendance:
Arrive to class before the final bell rings. When the 1 minute bell rings, it's time to find your seat! If you'll be absent, check Google Classroom for missed work and send me an email if you have any questions.

Course Materials:
Please bring your Chromebook to class. Students will also need their TOKA and a writing utensil.

Technology Use Guidelines & Procedures
Bring a charged Chromebook every day. You'll likely need to charge it every night, just like a cell phone. If your Chromebook is lost or damaged, see Ms. Hansen in the media center.

Phone Policy:
Due to the rigorous nature of the class, there will not be time for phones or earbuds during class. The expectation is to have your phones and earbuds put in the slot assigned to you at the beginning of class. The phone station is how I take attendance. If there is something going on in your life that requires you to check your phone, please let me know at the beginning of class.

Late Work Policy:
Assignment due dates will be communicated to you. No late work is accepted for points unless an extension is requested before the due date. Extension requests can be done through email, or you can fill out the Assessment Requestion form found in Google Classroom.

Students are encouraged and expected to ask for an extension if unable to meet the deadline. Assignments with teacher-granted extensions are not considered late work and will be graded for points. Teacher and student will work together to determine the new due date. All outstanding assignments are due the Monday before the last week of the quarter. Assignments turned in after the Monday before the last week of the quarter will not be graded. Students will submit a google form request via Google Classroom for each individual formative assessment extension request.

Grading Scale:
- **Summative Assessments** are 80% of your grade. In class we are using the MYP Criterion Rubrics in the areas of Knowing and understanding, Investigating, Communicating and Thinking Critically.
- **Formative Assessments** are 20% of your grade. graded on a 0-1-2 scale.
- Retakes will be permitted for summatives. You must talk with me if you are interested in doing a re-take and we'll discuss what you need to do. All re-takes must be done within two weeks of the original date. Refer to the RHS Assessment Policy for more details.

Extra Support & Inclusion
In this class you will be respected and honored by me and your peers. Please share with me, to the degree that you are comfortable, anything that is getting in the way of success in my class so I can make the appropriate accommodations. I am available before school if you need extra help. I can be available at other times too if we make a plan ahead of time.

Academic Integrity
Respecting and acknowledging the intellectual property of others, including other people's ideas, words, graphs, diagrams, charts and pictures, photographs, works of music, art or literature. Acknowledging all used sources. It is acceptable to include words, ideas, data, diagrams, tables, graphs, film clips and pictures from books and online sources in assignments. Students must always credit where they have got the information used, both in the body of the written work and on the Works Cited page at the end, using the correct referencing format. Refer to the RHS Academic Integrity Policy for more details.

Student's Responsibility :

- Read and understand the RHS Academic Integrity Policy.
- Read and understand the RHS Assessment Policy.
- Students genuinely attempt formative work, with the work or ideas of others fully and correctly acknowledged through correct use of citations, and understand that it is an opportunity to receive feedback on their learning and make plans for improvement.
- Ensure that summative assessment work is authentically their own, with the work or ideas of others fully and correctly acknowledged.
- Comply with all internal school deadlines.
- Understand the definitions of what is considered academic dishonesty.
- Take ownership of learning by asking for clarification of instructions when necessary and seeking help when needed.
- Talk to teachers when feeling overwhelmed to discuss assignments and time management strategies to reduce the stress.
- Report malpractice and help cultivate a culture of academic honesty at their school.

Violation Procedures: First infractions (violations) will be handled by your teacher, subsequent infractions of the policy will involve working with a dean and possibly a counselor or coordinator of a program.

Final word: Learning is a shared journey. Together, we will challenge ourselves, support one another, and grow.