

## **Theory of Knowledge (ToK)**

**Dr. Spanos**

**Trailer #3**

**703/228-6234 (Social Studies Department)**

**[george\\_spanos@apsva.us](mailto:george_spanos@apsva.us) (school e-mail)**

### **Course Description (from the IBO 2006 “Theory of Knowledge Guide”)**

The ToK course, a flagship element in the Diploma Programme, encourages critical thinking about knowledge itself, to try to help young people make sense of what they encounter. Its core content is questions like these: What counts as knowledge? How does it grow? What are its limits. Who owns knowledge? What is the value of knowledge? What are the implications of having, or not having, knowledge?

### **Assessment for Diploma Candidates (IBO Requirement)**

- Essay on a Prescribed Title (1200-1600 words) (40 points) (assessed externally) (to be completed by early March)
- Oral Presentation (20 points) (assessed internally/moderated externally) (to be completed by early April)
  - One 10-minute presentation
  - One presentation planning document
  - One presentation marking form
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- The IBO will report marks in late-June or early-July of the senior year.

### *Local Assessment and Activities*

During the first week of class, students will be tested on their understanding of the topics and terms in the summer reading assignment, Reuben Abel’s **MAN IS THE MEASURE**. The grade on this test will be counted as 20% of the first quarter grade. If students are placed into the class too late to read the summer assignment, then they will be expected to complete an equivalent assignment prior to the end of the first quarter.

The first two quarters will be spent covering the core ToK curriculum as outlined in the ToK guide. Work during these quarters will prepare students to write a prescribed essay and to make a 10-minute oral presentation during the third quarter.

Grades during quarters 1-2 will be based upon an accumulation of points from tests, quizzes, student journals, presentations, and other work in the form of homework exercises, classroom exercises, and group participation.

During the third quarter, all students, both diploma and certificate candidates, will be expected to write a prescribed essay and make an oral presentation based on the IBO assessment guidelines. The third quarter local grade will be based primarily upon the instructor’s assessment of the essay and the oral presentation.

During Quarter 4, students will be engaged in a variety of activities to be determined by the instructor in consultation with students, the Washington-Lee administration, and the IB Department. **There will also be a local final exam except for students qualifying for an exemption.**

**(SEE BACK PAGE)**

Students will receive quarterly grades, a semester grade, and a final grade. Points will be awarded for student work, and will be converted into letter grades as follows:

**(90-100% = A) (80-89% = B) (70-79% = C) (60-69% = D) (Below 60% = E)**

### **Texts/Readings**

Students are responsible for a summer reading assignment, Reuben Abel's **Man Is the Measure (Chapters 1-10)**. The primary text is Nicholas Alchin's **Theory of Knowledge**. This text contains extensive references to other resources, including **Ways of Knowing: An Introduction to Theory of Knowledge** and **Man Is the Measure**, which will be used as supplementary texts. Other readings will be assigned by the instructor or selected by students to help meet the course requirements.

### **Journals**

Students will be responsible for keeping a journal of their reflections on questions in the textbook, ToK Guide, supplemental readings, and other resources. The journal should be a 3-ring binder with 8 dividers. The journal will be collected at the end of the first and second quarters and will serve as evidence that the student has kept up with the reading and reflection necessary in a course of this nature. The journal will be worth approximately 20% of the quarterly grade.

### **Participation**

Given the seminar nature of this course, daily participation is very important for student success. Students need to attend class regularly and on time, and pay attention to the instructor and the contributions of their fellow students. The use of cell phones, iPods, and other electronic devices, will be taken as a sign of non-participation, as will the practice of using class time to work on the requirements of other classes. Points will be deducted if the instructor sees evidence of such non-participatory activities. Non-participation will also be reflected in the comments section of the report card. It will also be a factor in decisions regarding exemption from the final exam.

## Attendance Policy

*80% of success is showing up. (Woody Allen)*

*20% of success is showing up. (Dr. Spanos)*

The Arlington County attendance policy will be in effect. According to this policy:

**Students forfeit daily class grades for all unexcused absences. Students entering class after the bell has rung will be marked tardy and will lose credit for any warm-up activity already in progress or homework collected.**

Unexcused absences and tardies will be factored into each quarter grade, the semester grade, and the final grade. (Three unexcused tardies equal one unexcused absence.) This will be part of the participation grade, which will be 20% of the total grade.

If a student is reported absent, the school will automatically contact the parent/guardian by phone. The parent/guardian must then notify the school in writing or by phone no later than two (2) days after the student returns to school. If the parent or student believes that a mistake has been made, they must bring it to the attention of the attendance office or teacher within two days so the absence can be investigated.

### Group Participation/Homework/Extra Credit

Homework assignments that are submitted one-day late will receive a maximum of half credit. No homework assignment that is more than one-day late will receive credit, although it might be considered for extra credit (see below). Consideration will be given to students who have excused absences for the entire day that the assignment is due. In such cases, the assignment will be due upon return to class. Absent students are responsible for contacting their classmates or instructor to learn what homework assignments or class work they missed.

Students who wish to make up lost points will be given the opportunity to make up 5% of the total points for each quarter by doing extra work approved by the instructor and submitted by specific deadlines set by the instructor.

In special instances, such as extended illness or out-of-town trips, the instructor will accept assignments by e-mail. The following conditions apply

- E-mail assignments must be in my inbox by midnight in order to be counted for a particular day.
- The assignment should be appended as an attachment and sent to the instructor's school email address: **george\_spanos@apsva.us**
- Students must check to be certain that the message is actually delivered and that the instructor is able to open the attachment.
- Students must bring hard copy to the instructor when they return to class or have someone deliver it for them. The instructor will read only the hard copy submitted by the student except in rare instances such as printer malfunction.