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Introduction
Foreword to students
Have you ever wondered, “Why don’t they ever agree?” or “Do they really know?” Have you ever thought, “I'm not sure what to believe” or “Aha! This is the answer!”? It’s likely that you have, and that your own thinking has prepared you for the theory of knowledge course. It’s an unusual course for most educational systems, in that it is about everything you and others have ever learned or will learn in the future: it’s about knowledge itself. In this course, you’ll be taking a giant step back from the knowledge you’ve gained personally through your family, community, or school to see it all more broadly – to gain the Big Picture of how knowledge is shared, and how it all fits together. You’ll take part in the process of asking and trying to answer questions that seem simple only on the surface – questions that emerge from the mother of them all, “How do we know?” You’ll heighten your awareness of some big ideas, your capacity to understand different perspectives, and your ability to evaluate knowledge critically and appreciatively. In all probability, you’ll really enjoy the discussions and reflection of the course and find they reinforce the habits of mind encouraged throughout the IB Diploma, toward a better future. Welcome to TOK!

Foreword to teachers:
How to use this book to support inquiry teaching
Using a course book has the potential to undermine the spirit of inquiry that we try to foster in theory of knowledge. As teachers, we want to awaken students more fully to the questions that give knowledge its impetus, its different directions, its methods of investigation, and its humanity. We do not want to hand them distilled answers that preempt their thought.

Why, then, do we offer this course book to support “inquiry teaching”? Simply because, if its different features are used as intended, it does not bypass thinking but stimulate it! Using this book well has the potential to encourage exploration of ideas, build student capacities for open mindedness and analytical evaluation, give broad support to the topics of the TOK course including the final assessment, and encourage students to take TOK awareness and critical thinking into their lives as global citizens.

1. Aims of this book
We have embraced the following major aims in writing this book, attempting to combine idealism and practicality:

- **To place TOK firmly in context of IB educational goals.**
  Taking on ideals of the learner profile, we encourage inquiry and reflection, emphasize the interdependence between being open minded and thinking critically, and contribute, we hope, to students becoming more effective thinkers and communicators. Throughout the book, we stress the need to respect and appreciate cultural, political, religious, theoretical, and other perspectives, but at the same time to evaluate their conclusions for the nature and quality of their justifications. We aim to develop international-mindedness and apply TOK thinking to issues of significance in the world, to build the understanding important for action.

- **To work within a pedagogy of exploration and discussion.**
  We have set up this course book to trigger student inquiry and discussion on central knowledge questions of each topic being examined. Through discussion prompted by activities, students investigate ideas to articulate and stretch their current understanding. Then they place their own inquiry within the broader realm of shared knowledge. The interchapters add to students’ own growing awareness: the Overview pages provide diagrams building concepts cumulatively, and the Thinking Critically pages prepare analytical skills for application to the world.

- **To give support to teachers and students for the whole of the current course, including assessment.**
  We have provided discussion activities, reflective questions, and topic background for all the central concepts and skills of the course. The final chapter gives students guidance toward successfully planning and fulfilling the assessment tasks of the presentation and the essay.

Our goal throughout has been to provide a rich resource for students and teachers, one that supports different paths through the ideas of the theory of knowledge course.
2. Using different parts of the course book

We have designed this book for ease of access to its different features and levels of navigation. The ongoing chapter text deals with the course ideas, but it is accompanied by complementary ways of developing them. These are formatted and colour-coded to be recognized at a glance.

Using discussion activities

Roughly a hundred discussion activities, presented in salmon-coloured boxes, offer a great variety of ideas for guided discussion. From them, select the ones that you find most interesting and relevant to your way of doing TOK – and lay aside the others with a practical awareness of the ticking clock.

Some of these are short, intended just to open or punctuate a class, while others set up a sequence of discussions that may structure more than one lesson. They include a considerable variety of focusing activities and, in every case, lead to discussion that furthers the ideas of the chapter and the course. Some of them also set up approaches to analysis that feed into the critical scaffolding of the course.

We recommend entering new topics through discussion, so that students connect with the ideas from their own backgrounds and have a chance to think about them. Only after they have taken the ideas as far as they can themselves do we suggest that teachers pull them along further with reading (such as the chapter text) or any of the other ways we teachers customarily use (e.g. speakers, films, articles).

Using reflections

Numerous blue boxes entitled “For reflection” offer questions for further thought. Usually they invite students to connect knowledge questions or shared knowledge with their own personal experiences. You may want to leave the reflections to students, to read and think about; students are likely to find that some of them provoke their own quiet thought. However, the questions for reflection can also be used toward student TOK journals or TOK blogs if you ask your students to write in such a way. Many of them also invite class conversational response, perhaps in a looser, more anecdotal way than the guided discussion activities.

Using the voices, interviews, and quotations

In this book, we include the voices of many people from around the world contributing to a discussion of knowledge. Some are scholars quoted for their insights. Some, though, are past TOK students whose comments are likely to stir current students to respond. Significantly, too, many of the personal “voices” and interviews feature IB Diploma graduates who are now professionals and experts in their fields. Their individual photos and personal commentary support one of the central contentions of the book: that knowledge is humanly constructed, from different perspectives, in different contexts, using different methods, toward different aims.

Using Thinking Critically interchapters

The interchapters on Thinking Critically are formatted to stand out from the chapters and are identified in the Table of Contents as separate from the main chapters. They compress into quick guides many skills that are associated with the topics of the chapters, and sometimes also offer activities to apply those thinking skills. We encourage teachers to use these interchapters as guides to analysis, and to have their students apply them to current issues in the world.

These interchapters are developed most substantially through the section on ways of knowing in order to help students engage critically with the everyday world – using those ways of knowing with care! Recognizing of the importance of critical thinking is likely to give them a fuller appreciation of the role of methodology in areas of knowledge.

Using the ongoing chapter text and overview interchapters

In each chapter, we provide background on central TOK ideas. The chapter text flows coherently around the inset activities, reflections, interviews, voices, quotations, photographs, and graphics. Addressed to students, it provides reading that extends the reach of class discussion and enables students to integrate their own exchange of ideas into major ideas of TOK. This is the “textbook” aspect of our course book.

The ongoing text provides background knowledge on topics, analysis, examples, and stories. With a light style, it makes the more abstract course ideas accessible to students. Or so we hope!
Part 1 establishes key concepts, core vocabulary, and basic analytical approaches.

Part 2 presents the eight ways of knowing of the TOK course; disentangling them to consider their characteristic features, but also treating their dynamic interconnections.

Part 3 deals with the eight areas of knowledge of the TOK course. It uses the TOK knowledge framework to structure exploration and comparison.

Part 4 guides students to preparing good presentations and essays for assessment.

The “overview” pages give a graphic form to ideas presented in the text.

3. Planning your route

We have designed this book to support different routes through the TOK course. For one thing, we treat all the ways of knowing and areas of knowledge, though the course does not require that they all be considered in class. (The subject guide suggests that it would be appropriate to study in depth four of the eight ways of knowing and six of the eight areas of knowledge.) For another thing, we use considerable cross-reference to help students build on their previous ideas – and to fill in ideas missed in taking shortcuts through chapters.

It is extremely useful, however, no matter what route you take, to get a sense of the territory through which you will be moving. You’ll gain a quick impression by doing the following:

- read the Table of Contents
- have a look at the Interchapters, from first to last
- check out the main chapters of transition: chapter 4 introduces ways of knowing, chapter 13 bridges from ways of knowing to areas of knowledge, and chapter 14 introduces areas of knowledge and the knowledge framework
- glance at the refreshment to core concepts that opens Part 4 on assessment.

If you are familiar with the general direction of the book and where it pauses for summary and transition, you’ll find it easier to ignore some of the trails, but still gain from the cumulative exploration of ideas.

That cumulative exploration is what the TOK course is all about. Knowledge is complex – multifaceted and interconnected. For the purposes of discussion, we disentangle to the extent we can the components of knowledge for reflection and examination, using the model of eight WOK and eight AOK. But these are never to be treated as though they exist in isolation from each other: the relationships of concepts, the connections between parts of the model, and the broad comparisons we draw across all knowledge are truly the essence of theory of knowledge.

You will find that we treat ways of knowing as interactive. You will also find that within areas of knowledge we refer back extensively to ways of knowing for the creation, communication, and evaluation of knowledge, including justifications of knowledge claims. Throughout, we keep in play central ideas from the beginning of the book – primarily that we construct our knowledge humanly, from different perspectives, and that for exchange of knowledge in any context we benefit from the interdependent combination of thinking critically and keeping an open mind.

Connecting the concepts of the course and the parts of the TOK model is essential to developing a sense of the holistic nature of knowledge. Indeed, the most recent curriculum review group has recommended teaching ways of knowing almost entirely within areas of knowledge in order to ensure that such interconnection is achieved.

4. Bon voyage!

We end with our very best wishes to you as you pick up our book to consider its role in your own teaching. Education is one undertaking that is never finished, that is always to be tackled afresh with each year’s group of students. It is oriented toward the future and, in TOK, toward inspiring goals. When we take our students along the road toward achieving them, we contribute something worthwhile to the world.

Eileen Dombrowski