Theory of knowledge prescribed titles

November 2019 examination session

Instructions to candidates

Your theory of knowledge essay for examination must be submitted to your teacher for authentication. It must be written on one of the six titles (questions) provided overleaf. You may choose any title, but are recommended to consult with your teacher. Your essay will be marked according to the assessment instrument published in the theory of knowledge guide. The focus of your essay should be on knowledge questions. Where appropriate, refer to other parts of your IB programme and to your experiences as a knower. Always justify your statements and provide relevant examples to illustrate your arguments. Pay attention to the implications of your arguments, and remember to consider what can be said against them. If you use external sources, cite them according to a recognized convention.

Note that statements in quotations in these titles are not necessarily authentic: they present a real point of view but may not be direct quotes. It is appropriate to analyse them but it is unnecessary, even unwise, to spend time on researching a context for them.

Examiners mark essays against the title as set. Respond to the title exactly as given; do not alter it in any way.

Your essay must have a maximum of 1600 words.
1. “In the acquisition of knowledge, the responsibility for accuracy lies with the user not the producer.” Discuss this claim with reference to two areas of knowledge.

2. “Each human being is unique, unprecedented, unrepeatable” (René Dubos). Assuming this statement to be correct, what challenges does it create for knowledge production in two areas of knowledge?

3. Shared knowledge often changes over time. Does this fact undermine our confidence in current shared knowledge?

4. To produce knowledge just observe and then write down what you observe. Discuss the effectiveness of this strategy in two areas of knowledge.

5. Is there a trade-off between scepticism and successful production of knowledge?

6. “The pursuit of knowledge is not merely about finding truths; it is about finding significant truths” (adapted from PD Magnus). Discuss this statement.