

Theory of Knowledge 11 Course Outline

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The TOK course provides students with an opportunity to explore and reflect on the nature of knowledge and the process of knowing. In TOK, students reflect on the knowledge, beliefs and opinions that they have built up from their years of academic studies and their lives outside the classroom. The course is intended to be challenging and thought-provoking—as well as empowering—for you, the students.

The course centres on the exploration of knowledge questions, which are a key tool for both teachers and students. These are contestable questions about knowledge itself, such as: “What counts as good evidence for a claim?”, “Are some types of knowledge less open to interpretation than others?”, or “What constraints should there be on the pursuit of knowledge?”. While these questions may initially seem slightly intimidating, they become much more accessible when considered with reference to specific examples within the TOK course.



We all know that representation and reality are not the same thing, yet we often need reminding about this fact. Our world view is shaped by our language, our cultural background and years of education. Yet, the world does not exist in an absolute sense.
– An Gulinck

Do you agree???

The Aims of the TOK course are:

- 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.

The TOK curriculum is made up of three deeply interconnected parts.

1. The core theme—Knowledge and the knower: This theme encourages students to reflect on themselves as knowers and thinkers, and to consider the different communities of knowers to which we belong.
2. Optional themes: This element provides an opportunity to take a more in-depth look at two themes of particular interest to teachers and students: knowledge and technology and knowledge and indigenous societies.
3. Areas of knowledge: The areas of knowledge (AOK) are specific branches of knowledge, each of which can be seen to have a distinct nature and sometimes use different methods of gaining knowledge. In TOK, students explore five compulsory areas of knowledge: the arts; history; mathematics; the natural sciences; and the human sciences.

Assessment:

The TOK 11 course grade will be made up of:

1. Journals - these will be on-going reflection on your self-understandings and your thoughts on the ideas presented. 15%
2. Quizzes and Homework- comprehension questions to help stimulate thinking for your journals and classroom discussions 15%
3. Knowledge Question Inquiry Papers 20%
4. TOK Essay 20%
5. TOK Exhibition 30%

This is a rough breakdown of the weighting. The TOK class mark will be different than the report card mark as per the IB conversion chart guidelines.

There are two IB assessment tasks in the whole TOK course. The exhibition paper 33% The essay 67%

The TOK exhibition assesses the ability of the student to show how TOK manifests in the world around us. The exhibition is an internal assessment component; it is marked by the teacher and is externally moderated by the IB. It will be presented at the end of your Grade 11 course.

The TOK essay engages students in a more formal and sustained piece of writing in response to a title focused on the areas of knowledge. The essay is an external assessment component; it is marked by IB examiners. The essay must be a maximum of 1,600 words and must be on one of the six prescribed titles issued by the IB for each examination session. The essay is written in Grade 12.

The following 12 concepts have particular prominence within, and thread throughout, the TOK course: **evidence, certainty, truth, interpretation, power, justification, explanation, objectivity, perspective, culture, values and responsibility**. Exploration of the relationship between knowledge and these concepts can help students to deepen their understanding, as well as facilitating the transfer of their learning to new and different contexts.

Core theme: Knowledge and the knower

The core theme—knowledge and the knower—provides an opportunity for students to reflect on what shapes their perspective as a knower, where their values come from, and how they make sense of, and navigate, the world around them.

Importantly, this theme does not focus exclusively on the individual knower. It also considers aspects such as the impact of the different communities of knowers to which we belong, and how knowledge is constructed, critically examined, evaluated and renewed by communities and individuals. This includes reflection on how our interactions with others and with the material world shape our knowledge.

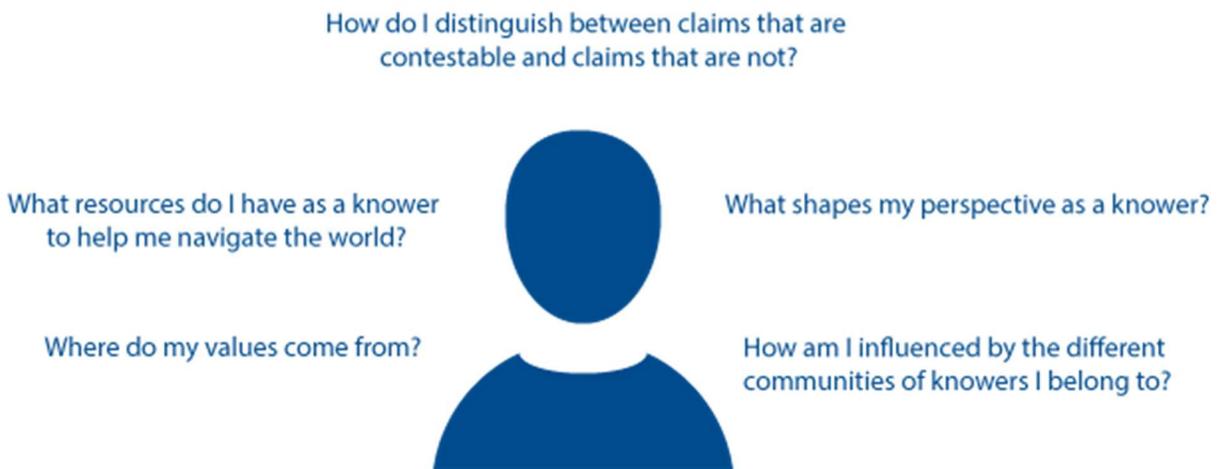


Figure 3 Me as a knower and a thinker

	Examples of knowledge questions
Scope	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What criteria can we use to distinguish between knowledge, belief and opinion? • How do we distinguish claims that are contestable from claims that are not? • Are there situations where “knowing how” is more important than “knowing that”? • Why should we care about acquiring knowledge? • Why are the criteria for what counts as knowledge not obvious?

	<p>Examples of knowledge questions</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can other people know us better than we know ourselves? • How do our interactions with the material world shape our knowledge?
<p>Perspectives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What shapes my perspective as a knower? • How much of our knowledge depends on our interactions with other knowers? • Is the truth what the majority of people accept? • How do empathy and imagination help us to understand other perspectives? • Presented with the belief system of a community of knowers, how can we decide what we personally believe? • How can we know that current knowledge is an improvement on past knowledge?
<p>Methods and tools</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do we acquire knowledge? • What constitutes a “good reason” for us to accept a claim? • Are intuition, evidence, reasoning, consensus and authority all equally convincing methods of justification? • Does knowledge always require some kind of rational basis? • How do our expectations and assumptions have an impact on how we perceive things? • What are the advantages and disadvantages of requiring that all knowledge is verified by a group?
<p>Ethics</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there responsibilities that necessarily come with knowing something or knowing how to do something? • As knowers, do we have a moral duty to examine our own assumptions and biases? • Under what circumstances, if any, do we have a moral duty to share what we know? • In what ways do ethical judgments differ from other kinds of judgments? • Is there knowledge that a person or society has a responsibility to acquire or not to acquire?

ATL in TOK (a sample)

Thinking skills

TOK is deeply committed to *thinking skills* ...this term refers to a cluster of a large number of related skills, and in the DP particular focus is placed on skills such as metacognition, reflection and critical thinking. Many categorizations of thinking skills also emphasize related behaviours such as “curiosity, flexibility, posing problems, decision making, being reasonable, creativity, risk taking, and other behaviours that support critical and creative thought” (Costa and Kallick 2009). In this way, while a crucial element of developing students’ thinking is helping them to build up a toolkit of skills, it is equally important to cultivate dispositions such as open-mindedness and curiosity.

Our Class will use of Visible Thinking Routines

Connect, extend, challenge

(Routine to help students make connections between old knowledge and new knowledge.)

Headlines

(Routine where students write a newspaper-style headline to capture the essence of an idea, event, topic, etc.)

Generate–sort–connect– elaborate

(Concept-mapping routine.)

Claim, support, question

(Routine for exploring claims. Students make a claim, identify support for that claim, then ask a question related to that claim.)

I used to think ... now I think ...

(Routine to help effective reflection on how and why their thinking has changed.)

Think, pair, share

(Routine where students think individually, then share/ compare their thinking with a partner.)

Communication Skills

The class discussions and exhibition will facilitate:

- The ability to formulate one’s arguments, in speaking or writing, in a convincing manner and take full account of other viewpoints, whether expressed in written or oral form.
- The skills needed to use aids (such as notes, schemes, maps) to produce, present or understand complex texts in written or oral form (speeches, conversations, instructions, interviews, debates).

Research skills

The essay provides a wonderful opportunity develop these research skills:

- Learning is constructed by a process that moves from real-world examples to concepts, ideas, theories and facts.
- Students are responsible for finding much of the information themselves, and processing it to draw the important conclusions