

# Theory of Knowledge (TOK) at Harrison Trimble High School

**Teacher:** Jeremy DeVito

**Course Duration:** September 2025 – January 2027



## Welcome to TOK

Theory of Knowledge (TOK) is a unique course at the heart of the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme. It challenges students to reflect on the nature of knowledge and how we know what we claim to know. TOK encourages critical thinking, self-reflection, and exploration of knowledge in various contexts.

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## Course Overview

### Core Theme: Knowledge and the Knower

We begin by examining ourselves as "knowers." This theme encourages students to explore their beliefs, experiences, and interactions within knowledge communities. Key questions include:

- How do personal experiences shape our understanding of knowledge?
- What role do culture, authority, and tradition play in forming what we "know"?

### Areas of Knowledge (AOKs)

Students explore six AOKs, each providing a unique lens to examine knowledge. These include:

1. **History:** How do historians create narratives? Is there such a thing as objective history?
  2. **The Human Sciences:** What makes these sciences "soft"? How reliable is data on human behavior?
  3. **The Natural Sciences:** How do evidence and ethics shape scientific discovery and public policy?
  4. **The Arts:** Can art convey truth? What is the role of interpretation in understanding art?
  5. **Mathematics:** Is math discovered or invented? How can it be used to inform or mislead?
  6. **Optional Themes:** Topics like politics and language provide further exploration into specialized areas of interest.
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## Key Methodologies

- **Scope:** Identifying the boundaries and purpose of knowledge in each AOK.
- **Perspectives:** Understanding how different viewpoints influence our interpretation of knowledge.
- **Methods and Tools:** Exploring techniques used to produce and validate knowledge.

- **Ethics:** Analyzing the responsibilities and implications of knowledge production and use.
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## Course Activities

Students engage in a variety of activities to deepen their understanding, including:

- **Investigations and Case Studies:** Analyzing real-world examples to connect theoretical ideas with practical knowledge.
  - **Discussions and Debates:** Collaborating with peers to explore diverse perspectives on complex issues.
  - **Presentations:** Applying TOK concepts to specific topics, fostering critical thinking and communication skills.
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## Assessments

### TOK Exhibition

- **Purpose:** Demonstrate how TOK concepts manifest in the real world through the analysis of three objects connected to an IB-prescribed prompt.
- **Timeline:** Introduced in May of Year 1; Exhibition held in June.
- **Components:** A written commentary and visual presentation.

### TOK Essay

- **Purpose:** Explore a prescribed title in depth, analyzing it through TOK frameworks.
- **Timeline:** Introduced in September of Year 2; Final submission in December.
- **Word Limit:** 1600 words.

### Formative Assessments

Throughout the course, students will complete smaller assignments such as:

- Quick writes and demand responses to develop critical thinking and writing skills.
  - Group projects and presentations tied to AOK themes and real-world case studies.
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## Learning Materials

- Textbook: *How to Interpret Literature: Critical Theory for Literary and Cultural Studies*
- Articles and case studies (e.g., “Representations of the Holocaust” and “Tobacco Industry Manipulation of Research”).

- Videos, such as TED Talks and educational YouTube content on statistical biases, AI in healthcare, and more.
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## **Skill Development**

TOK fosters the development of:

- **Critical Thinking:** Evaluating knowledge claims and constructing logical arguments.
  - **Research Skills:** Gathering, analyzing, and synthesizing diverse sources of information.
  - **Communication Skills:** Articulating complex ideas through discussions, essays, and presentations.
  - **Ethical Reflection:** Considering the moral implications of knowledge.
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## **Global Perspectives**

TOK emphasizes international mindedness by exploring knowledge through diverse cultural lenses. For example:

- Investigating oral traditions like Mi'kmaw creation stories alongside Western literary traditions.
  - Comparing global educational systems to examine human sciences.
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## **Why TOK Matters**

TOK helps students make connections between their studies, the real world, and themselves. It equips them with the tools to critically evaluate information, appreciate diverse perspectives, and navigate complex ethical questions.

Embark on this journey to become a more reflective, open-minded, and critical thinker!