



Mr. Cunningham  
 IB Theory of Knowledge  
 Douglas County High School  
 2016-2017



**I. Purpose and objectives**

The Theory of Knowledge (TOK) class stands along with the Extended Essay (EE) and the Creativity, Action, and Service (CAS), as the core of the IB curriculum.

Theory of Knowledge is about asking questions. There will be few answers in this class, but there will be a lot of questions. We will explore these questions together. Students will learn how to attack a question from multiple angles, each of which provides new questions. This seemingly-never-ending exploration is what TOK is all about. That is why there are few answers but many questions in this class. A good TOK student will be able to ask questions, recognize their own perspectives, assumptions, biases, etc... and begin to explore the “rabbit hole.”



TOK assessments for the IB program are about presenting, through both a spoken presentation and a written essay, the students ability to show how they can take a question in one academic subject, explore the ways in which we know something in that subject, begin to ask questions about those ways of knowing, and comparing that framework to another, completely different academic subject.

This course can be very challenging for students, not because of the workload of the TOK course, but because of the requirement to begin to think differently about the world. This does not mean that students’ worldview is wrong or in need of change. This class simply asks us to think about the nature of how our worldview is formed. Thus, we are exploring the very nature of what it means to know something. We are exploring how the different academic subjects (areas of knowledge) rely on different parts of our brain to develop knowledge (ways of knowing).

Simply put, the overall question of the TOK course is not “How do you know that what you believe is true?” or as I like to sometimes say “How do you know that you really know what you know?” These purposefully antagonizing questions are fun philosophical debates, but they imply that this class provides the “right” answers. So, our question is not “What do we know?” **our TOK guiding question is “How do we know?”** And we will simply explore how scientists, philosophers, historians, artists, theologians, mathematicians, and perhaps others would answer this question in their subject (area of knowledge) and explore the comparison between them. This exploration is the heart and soul of the TOK class and why the TOK class is at the core of the IB curriculum. It is both what makes TOK relevant to every other class and what makes it a challenge.

*Student initials*

*Parent initials*

## II. Grading:

Grades will be comprised of Tests, Quizzes, Projects, and participation grades including homework. In the senior year, there will also be IB Papers 1, 2, and 3 (Paper 3 for HL students only), and an internal assessment (IA).

**Grading will be based on county-decided percentages.**

<u>Assessments</u>	<u>Points for each assignment*</u>
<u>Formative assessments</u> (quizzes, Homework, classwork, etc...)	30%
<u>Summative assessments</u> (exams, major presentations, major projects, etc...)	50 %
<u>Final Exam</u>	20%
<u>TOK Essay</u>	Will be included in one or more of the other categories
<u>TOK Presentation</u>	Will be included in one or more of the other categories

\*Some assignments may be weighted differently for various reasons, but these are the overall guidelines.

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## III. Course Content

We will explore several areas of knowledge and the ways of knowing in each of those areas of knowledge.

<b>Areas of Knowledge</b> (must study 6 in-depth)	<b>Ways of Knowing</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Natural Sciences</li><li>2. Human Sciences</li><li>3. History</li><li>4. The Arts</li><li>5. Ethics</li><li>6. Mathematics</li><li>7. Religious knowledge Systems</li><li>8. Indigenous Knowledge Systems</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Language</li><li>2. Imagination</li><li>3. Faith</li><li>4. Emotion</li><li>5. Reason</li><li>6. Intuition</li><li>7. Memory</li><li>8. Sense perception</li></ol>

## III. TOK Score and it's place within the IB Program

In order to receive an IB Diploma, you must receive a passing score for TOK. Like your other courses, this is different from the grade that appears in Infinite Campus. Your TOK score is based on two assessments, the essay and the presentation. The essay is your External Assessment and counts 67%; the presentation is the Internal Assessment and counts 33%. We will discuss these assessments at length this year; look for more information forthcoming.

The TOK score (IB grade discussed above) will be combined with the Extended Essay (EE) score to determine if any additional points are awarded to a student's (IB Diploma Candidate's)

overall IB score when determining whether or not a student receives a diploma from the International Baccalaureate Organization. The formula for additional points is as follows:

		Theory of knowledge					
		Excellent <b>A</b>	Good <b>B</b>	Satisfactory <b>C</b>	Mediocre <b>D</b>	Elementary <b>E</b>	Not submitted
Extended essay	Excellent <b>A</b>	3	3	2	2	1 + Failing condition*	N
	Good <b>B</b>	3	2	1	1	Failing condition*	N
	Satisfactory <b>C</b>	2	1	1	0	Failing condition*	N
	Mediocre <b>D</b>	2	1	0	0	Failing condition*	N
	Elementary <b>E</b>	1 + Failing condition*	Failing condition*	Failing condition*	Failing condition*	Failing condition*	N
	Not submitted	N	N	N	N	N	N

Therefore, please note that a student with an “A” in TOK and an “A” on their Extended Essay would receive three (3) additional points added to their overall IB score and would therefore only need a total of twenty-one (21) points to receive the diploma.\*\*

Each year, we the faculty, unfortunately, see students who are one or two points from the diploma. Just a little more effort on their EE or TOK assessments would have resulted in the diploma. Therefore, we continue to push students to work hard on both of these components.

\*\* There are additional required regarding HL vs. SL points that may keep a student with twenty-four (24) points from receiving the IB diploma.

Because the EE component is combined with the TOK grade, we will spend some class time dealing with EE components. Therefore, there will be some grades, checkpoints, and other helpful resources for the EE in the TOK class. The EE, however, does not have its own class and students should not expect that they will be able to complete their EE within the TOK class. The EE is a student driven project. I will help guide the students through resources and checkpoints, but ultimately, the EE is a crucial yet independent project.

<i>Student initials</i>	<i>Parent initials</i>
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#### IV. Academic Honesty

In accordance with county policy and IB policy, students are expected to complete their own work. Plagiarism will not be tolerated, nor will any form of academic dishonesty. Violation of this policy will result in a grade of zero being assessed for that work, as well as an administrative disciplinary referral, and a referral to the IB office.

Any form of academic dishonesty as defined in the Douglas County School Handbook and/or IB policies will be enforced. Any dishonesty, including but not limited to plagiarism, collusion, outside sources during assessments, etc., will be given a grade of a Zero (0). The Zero will remain and no extra credit will add any points or remove the Zero. This zero will also be exempt from any “drop the lowest” decision. (i.e. If you get a zero for cheating, its there for the rest of the year.)

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#### V. Policies

##### Textbook

*IB Course Companion* can be checkout of the library and must be returned at the end of the year.

##### Lost Book Policy

Board Policy Descriptive Code: IFAD

The student will be charged full replacement cost for any textbook lost, regardless of condition. The amount to be charged for a textbook damaged by a student will be determined by the principal.

##### Make-Up Work

It is the responsibility of each student to complete all work missed due to an absence from class. **Make up work for excused absence** - One (1) day for each day absent. If the assignment was assigned before the absence, then the student will be responsible to email any assignment that can be emailed on, or before the due date by the end of the school day. Other assignments will be expected to be turned in on the day of return. Make-up quizzes and tests will be scheduled following the absence. (Note- students may be expected to take an assessment during the return class period, or may be expected to schedule a time). After this make-up time, any missing assignment will be given a grade of Zero (0). Additional time may be given if communication is made from the student to the teacher. At the end of a progress period (9 weeks) all missing work will be given a grade of a Zero (0), and the work will not be allowed to be made up. **Make-up work for unexcused absence** - may not be allowed to be made up and a grade of a zero (0) will stand.

There will be no make-up for presentations that are not completed on a scheduled time (unless in a dire emergency as determined by me).

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## Late Work

Assignments are expected to be completed and turned in on time, (before class begins on the due date of an assignment). Work turned in late will suffer a 10% penalty to the final grade for that assignment, with additional 10% for each day late. No work will be accepted if more than five (5) days late unless accompanied by an excused absence form, and only if the assignment was not one that could be emailed. All assignments are to be completely ready to be turned in before class begins. Any assignment that is late, whether it is due to it not being printed, stapled, student tardiness to class, etc..., is late and will be penalized. Assignments turned in during the same day or even the same class period after being collected will be considered late.

An Assignment that was supposed to be typed and was turned in hand-written will also receive a 10% penalty because it is assumed that the student could type the assignment and turn it in late. Computer/Technology problems are not an excuse for late work. If it is important make back-ups.

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## VI. Misc.

### Required Materials

- Pen, blue or black ink only - for things turned in.
- Three highlighters of different colors.
- Paper.
- Journal - Something you can write reflections, questions, and general thoughts that are not part of your personal notes. It will need to be something which could be turned in to me at any time
- A flash drive will probably come in handy.

### Classroom Rules

1. Tardiness: Will not be tolerated. Chronic tardiness will result in an administrative referral. Be seated and prepared to begin class when the bell rings.
2. Class Disruption: Zero level tolerance. There will be plenty of opportunity for each student to participate fully, to ask questions, engage in discussion and debate during the course of this class. However, all such activity will be done in an orderly and respectful manner and as directed by the instructor.
3. Be Prepared to Work: Bring all required materials to class each day and be ready to discuss assigned readings and to otherwise participate fully in class.
4. No Electronic devices: You may not use or have out a cell phone, mp3 player/recorder, etc...
5. Food and Drink: Drinks, no food.
6. ...

This course differs from all other high school courses that you have taken in that instead of focusing on gaining new knowledge, our purpose is to reconsider and reevaluate what you think you already know and think in new ways. This purpose will be fulfilled through a process of critical reflection within yourself and critical discourse with others. In order to succeed at this, there are certain ideals that we need to consider and pursue as a class (these fit right into the IB learner profile!):

**Open-mindedness:** Many of the topics raised in class are inherently controversial and thus open to question and debate. You will find yourself at times disagreeing, perhaps strongly, with the teacher and your peers. Such disagreements should not be suppressed but encouraged in an atmosphere of trust. This requires that we be open and honest without being hostile. When you hear an idea or perspective that bothers you, please maintain a level of civility: disagreements must be handled with maturity and open-mindedness. This does mean you should be silent and accept everything people say passively, though. You are responsible for expressing (and justifying!) your point of view. However, make sure you seek to understand others first before seeking to be understood.

**Caring and Mutual Respect:** Disagreements lead to arguments, which are not a bad thing if we remember the purpose of having an argument: to advance ideas and beliefs, not to exalt yourself and put down your opponent. We need to show empathy, compassion, and respect toward others, especially when we are opposed to their ideas.

**Reflective:** Through the process of critical reflection, you may find yourself changing positions/beliefs as new information, new perspectives, or new ways of thinking are introduced. This is often difficult to do and is not a weakness of character, but it leads to expanded understanding and deeper wisdom.

**Inquiry:** Your natural curiosity should be expressed and developed in this class. This class will help you learn to ask better questions and give you confidence in finding answers.

**Effective communication:** Communication is two-way street requiring both good speaking and good listening. While the class will tend to form two groups - those who do most of the talking and those who don't - everyone is expected to both listen and talk. We want you to become more confident in expressing ideas and defending positions.

**Taking risks:** Admitting you are confused or don't understand something can be scary at times. Similarly, having flaws in your thinking exposed and critiqued can be intimidating and uncomfortable. Throughout this class, new and sometimes unusual ideas will be offered for consideration. You need to be willing to grapple with those ideas that you do not understand, which means it is your responsibility to ask questions (of the teacher and classmates). You also need to be willing to take risks in putting your own ideas out there and defending them (giving reasons to support them). We want you to be an independent thinker who has the courage to explore new ideas and also be brave in defending your own beliefs.

***In this class I will expect students to interact with a level of “formal informality.” In this I mean that I want students to feel free to express concerns, opinions, beliefs, ideas, and take positions; however, I will require students to be able to control their desire to simply speak when an idea pops into their head. Students must learn to be able to hold a thought or idea develop a succinct way to express that idea, speak with confidence, but to also be willing to listen to others, to wait for the appropriate time, and to be willing to change their mind.***

Remember what Aristotle said:

**“It is the mark of an educated mind to entertain a thought without accepting it.”**

This means that we, as educated individuals, must learn to be able to listen to other's opinions, consider them, consider their ramifications, consider that their position may be the correct position, consider our own position, and consider the ramifications of our position. Only then can we say that we can “entertain a thought.”

***\*Can one truly “entertain a thought” without being prepared to possibly (and legitimately) accept it?\****

## VII. Resources

There are some excellent TOK resources online. Students would do well to look at the TOK subject guide which includes assessment rubrics as well as other details to the nature of the TOK course. While I will begin compiling my own website of resources to be used, Mr. St. John, who teaches the senior TOK class this year, has a fantastic website with many resources already compiled that you are free to use.

**The website is:** [sites.google.com/site/theoryofknowledgestjohn/](https://sites.google.com/site/theoryofknowledgestjohn/)

## VIII. Tutoring

Tutoring is by appointment only.

## IX. Communication

I can be reached at [John.Cunningham@douglas.k12.ga.us](mailto:John.Cunningham@douglas.k12.ga.us)

The phone to the office is 770-651-6500.

I can be reached at **657-4History**. This number will ring to my cell phone (but may, when needed be turned off) and can also receive a text. Please include your name in any text.

*Please scan, photograph, or make a copy of this syllabus for your reference.*

**Syllabus and/or outline is subject to change**



# IT'S IN THE SYLLABUS

This message brought to you by every instructor that ever lived.

**Student Signature** \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent Signature** \_\_\_\_\_

*Signature acknowledges receipt and understudying of the syllabus, acknowledgement that it may be changed, and that a photograph, scan, or copy has been made for reference.*