The Theory of Knowledge

Course Overview & Fundamentals

Ceci n'est pas une pipe.
Theory of Knowledge: Course Overview

Theory of Knowledge (TOK) is a two year course requirement central to the educational philosophy of the IB Diploma Programme.

It offers students and their teachers the opportunity to:

1. Engage in “epistemology”, discovering the roots, sources & origins of knowledge;
2. Expose & reflect analytically & critically on diverse “ways of knowing” & in “areas of knowledge”;
3. Consider the role & nature of knowledge in their own culture, in the cultures of others & in the wider world;
4. Transition from being mere holders of opinions to becoming informed “knowers” with the ability to develop & share their “knowers’ perspective”;
5. Recognize the complexity of knowledge in the world & the role played by experts in the collection of evidence, the establishment of proof & the rendering of judgments;
6. Reflect on the need to act responsibly in an increasingly interconnected but uncertain world & be open to changes in perspectives & “paradigm shifts”;
7. Evaluate the opinions, perspectives & certainties of others & ourselves in order to properly identify & respectfully challenge “fallacies” & evaluate “knowledge claims”;
8. Breakdown contemporary & past “real life situations” into their component parts, ingredients, overarching themes, “knowledge issues” & “knowledge questions”;
9. Grow more mature by discussing, reflecting, researching & writing about the past, present & future role of knowledge in the world around us;
10. Prepare for the summative TOK assessments.

As a thoughtful and purposeful inquiry into different ways of knowing, and into different kinds of knowledge, TOK is composed of questions & discussions.

Crucial to begin this process are the questions of “How do we know?”, “To what extent can we know?”, “To what extent can we be certain?”. 

It is a stated aim of TOK that students should become aware of the interpretative nature of knowledge, including personal ideological biases, regardless of whether, ultimately, these biases are retained, revised or rejected.
TOK also has an important role to play in providing coherence for the student as it transcends and links academic subject areas, thus demonstrating the ways in which they can apply their knowledge with greater awareness and credibility.

Strong TOK courses challenge participants to be aware of the source & application of knowledge of the world they live in with challenging readings, source viewings, discussions & activities.

Weak ones are taught as unfocused & unstructured discussion sessions.

The IB has assigned TOK with the following two major assessments:

1. A 10 point 1600 word essay on a topic selected & assessed by the IB;
2. A 10 point TOK presentation internally assessed & externally moderated.

In TOK, we focus on the “knower” and the different ways in which it is possible to know something (or believe to know about something). We call these the “ways of knowing”.

The IB initially identified four (4) fundamental ways of knowing:

1. Emotion;
2. Reason;
3. Sense Perception;
4. Language.

To these we will add:

5. Imagination;
6. Memory;
7. Instinct;
8. Intuition;

We apply these ways of knowing to the fundamental subject areas or professional fields that generate, produce or create knowledge. These are called “areas of knowledge”.

The IB initially identified five (5) areas of knowledge:

1. Mathematics;
2. Natural Sciences;
3. Human or Social Sciences;
4. The Arts;
5. History.
To these we will add:

6. Ethics;
7. Religious Knowledge System;

Within the context of TOK, we will be discussing the different ways of knowing and how they impact and are generated from the different areas of knowledge.

We will also look at the role of experts in the creation and evaluation of knowledge as well as the relationship between shared & personal knowledge in each of the areas of knowledge.

Our investigation into the roles that ways of knowing influence, enhance or obstruct the production of knowledge in the different areas of knowledge includes an evaluation of the methods or means of justification that are used to verify or prove what we know or think we know, such as evidence, belief, utility, consensus & authority.

We will treat each area of knowledge as a “knowledge framework”, focusing on the following elements within each area of knowledge:

1. The language, terms & definitions used;
2. The core concepts, ideas & assumptions the support the production of knowledge;
3. Historical development of the area of knowledge;
4. The role of experts towards the production of knowledge;
5. The methodology by which knowledge is produced;
6. The network of primary, secondary & tertiary ways of knowing used towards the production of knowledge;
7. The scope & application of the knowledge produced;
8. The limitations of application of knowledge produced;
9. The links between shared knowledge & personal knowledge.

Ultimately we will be looking at the role that we play as “knowers” in the creation & evaluation of knowledge towards the development of our "knowers' perspective". We will challenge our own certainties, knowledge claims & fallacies.

In other words, we are going to become better informed about what we think we know & how we came to know it.

This includes the evaluation & assessment of "knowledge claims", "knowledge issues" & “knowledge questions”.
Knowledge Claims are those moments where we as knowers believe to know something & make a statement or claim about what we believe we know. Knowledge claims are also found all around us in discussions we have, in articles we read, films we watch, in conclusions to experiments & studies and in the opinions we share with others and are shared with us.

Knowledge Issues are like the "Zeitgeist" or "overarching theme" of an issue. Knowledge Issues are the fundamental questions that are raised by an event or action that we must ask in order to understand the essence of the event or action.

Knowledge Questions are those fundamental general questions about knowledge that are generally contested & get to the root of how we know what we know.

There are two (2) fundamental types of knowledge questions we work with:

Primary/First Order/Tier: Important questions generally regarding the production of knowledge in a specific an area of knowledge usually leading to a discussion about specific data, information & facts in that area of knowledge;

Secondary/Second Order/Tier: Gets to the root of how & why we know what we know & can be applied to multiple areas of knowledge. These can be investigated from multiple perspectives & should lead to a discussion involving the role of experts, networks of ways of knowing & methods of justification, ethics, bias & culture.

In TOK we are primarily concerned with the secondary or second order/tier knowledge questions but we need primary ones & a solid knowledge base in order to get there.

Each of the WoKs & AoKs, when combined, raises a number of interesting & fascinating Knowledge Issues. Our goal in TOK is to identify, address & discuss these Knowledge Issues.

How do we know when we fundamentally understand what TOK is about? That is a great question which raises some interesting Knowledge Issues...

As part of our process, we are preparing for a major group or individual presentation & an externally assessed essay. All the while we will be encouraging each other to make important connections between the different areas of knowledge, ways of knowing, Knowledge Issues in the world around us & in our own lives.
The TOK-IB Nexus

As TOK is an essential and integral part of your two (2) year Diploma Programme (DP) of the International Baccalaureate (IB), it is important to see where and how TOK fits into the IBDP landscape.

Your IBDP Diploma is made up of 45 points. The lowest possible passing grade is a 24. 42 of those points come from the six (6) academic subject areas worth a maximum of seven (7) points. In addition to sitting exams at the end of the DP in each subject area, you are required to complete a number of “Internal Assessments” in each subject area.

Full Diploma candidates must take a minimum of three (3) of these as "Higher Level" (HL) courses. The other courses are taken at the “Standard Level” (SL). HL students generally have a special interest or aptitude in the subjects they choose, are expected to explore these areas in more depth and must sit an additional exam at the end of the DP.

Three (3) of the 45 points are earned from a combination of the student's Extended Essay grade with their Theory of Knowledge grade.

The Extended Essay or EE is an original 4000 word research paper with a very specific research question that you design and carry out on your own with minimal supervision. Students pick a supervisor and have about a year to find a topic, research it and do the work.

It is a very independent project that is as much about how you manage the process as it is about the final essay you submit. The EE is worth a maximum 36 points.

The EE should be a “labour of love” as it allows you to explore an area in which you have a genuine interest. Many EEs become the foundation of later master's and doctoral theses.

Students must pass TOK & the EE to receive their IB diploma.

The IB’s Learner Profile expects its students to be active inquirers, knowledgeable, thinkers, communicators, principled, open-minded, caring, risk takers, balanced & reflective.
Another important component of your overall IB experience is Creativity, Action & Service (CAS). According to the IB, the CAS requirement is a fundamental part of the programme and takes seriously the importance of life outside the world of scholarship, providing a refreshing counterbalance to academic studies. **Creativity** is interpreted broadly to include a wide range of arts activities as well as the creativity students demonstrate in designing and implementing service projects. **Action** can include not only participation in individual and team sports but also taking part in expeditions and in local or international projects. **Service** encompasses a host of community and social service activities. Some examples include helping children with special needs, visiting hospitals and working with refugees or homeless people.

It is important that you keep this landscape in mind as you being down the TOK path.

TOK can & should be used as a platform to meet the expectations of the Extended Essay & CAS.

**A Learning Environment for Professional Learners**

The creation of an environment where students can communicate and express ideas freely is of utmost importance. Throughout this course, emphasis will be on helping students to develop critical thinking and analytical skills within the context of the world around us & the nature of knowledge.

You will continue in subsequent years to build on the skills and knowledge gained in this course.

Students must be prepared to create & build a positive learning environment each and every day. Students who are disruptive will be referred to the Principal and school counsellor immediately.

Students who miss any assignments will sit during lunch periods and afterschool if necessary to complete their missed work. Being unprepared slows the entire class down and disenfranchises other students.

**The TOK Journal**

Each participant will keep a reflective TOK Journal. Journal prompts are designed to help develop empathy & reflection skills, to improve critical thinking & writing, reinforce key concepts & improve handwriting.

**The TOK-AoK Interview Process**

Each participant will interview an “expert” in a given AoK in order to practice & develop the use of TOK concepts & methodology & to gather relevant Real Life Situations that can be used towards the TOK Presentation & Essay. This meaningful process will continue throughout Year I.
TOK Journal Guidelines & Assessment Rubric

Your ability to thoughtfully consider, reflect, synthesize & analyse information and knowledge you receive is a critical life skill. Research consistently points to the link between academic success, improvement of memory and stronger critical and analytical skills by those people who regularly write by hand. Legible handwriting is a professional life skill worth mastering.

Your TOK assessments, the TOK Presentation & TOK Essay, require you to integrate a varied number of situations, sources, experiences, thoughts, ideas & concepts. Both require a high level of reflection, contemplation, knowledge & understanding. Your TOK Journal helps to support your preparation for both.

In addition, the 15 mock and 15 major final IB exams are all hand written. If you do not regularly practice handwriting, you will not have the training, stamina, strength and perhaps nor the penmanship to be able to focus and successfully complete these exams.

You will be keeping a comprehensive TOK Journal. You will be assessed on both the content and context of your Journal.

Journal prompts may be given with line, paragraph and page writing requirements. Converting assignments to account for different Journal sizes is inefficient and unfair. Therefore, it is important that you have the college ruled Journal of approximately 100 pages as indicated in your TOK supplies list.

Journal prompts will be given in writing, verbally, by email, edline/teacherplus/managebac and/or FB. Where possible, you should include the prompt in your Journal by either pasting or copying the prompt with that Journal entry.

Please keep the first full page (both sides) free and blank. This will be used for the introduction and overview that you will complete at a later date.

On the second full page, please write “Table of Contents” on the top of the page. Number the Journal prompt sets immediately as they are received in the left hand margin. Put the page numbers of each prompt set in the right hand margin. Put the name of the prompt set or a description of the prompt set on the line between the prompt number and page number. Points will be deducted for incomplete or incorrect ToCs.

Be sure to include the title or overview of each Journal prompt at the top of the respective page. Number the pages in either the upper right hand or lower right hand corners. Number each page on the back & front.

Handwriting counts. Your Journal should reflect at least 100 hours of writing. In some cases you may type specific Journal entries and paste them into your Journal on a prompt by prompt basis.

You will be adding images to specific Journal prompts as well as to the cover of your Journal. These must be professionally completed, high quality, color where appropriate and they must be maintained in professional condition when your Journal is handed in.

Exceptional Journals will be collected at the end of TOK Year II so please do your best to treat each Journal prompt and your Journal with respect.

Please include this TOK Journal overview on the inside cover of your Journal. Please refer to it if you have any questions about the expectations.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>A=6/7</th>
<th>B=5</th>
<th>C=3/4</th>
<th>F=1/2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Deadlines &amp; Thoroughness</td>
<td>Drafts/final handed in on time or early; All prompts complete</td>
<td>Handed before COB on due date; All prompts complete</td>
<td>Handed before COB on due date; All prompts complete</td>
<td>Delayed past COB of due date &amp;/or missing or incomplete prompts</td>
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<td>2. Accuracy of Information &amp; Use of Proper Terminology &amp; Concepts</td>
<td>Completely accurate information; Substantial additional details provided; Independent research evident; Exceptional use of core TOK terminology &amp; concepts</td>
<td>Accurate information; Some additional details provided; Proper use of TOK terminology &amp; concepts</td>
<td>Largely accurate with some minor inaccuracies; Generally proper use of TOK terminology &amp; concepts</td>
<td>Mostly inaccurate or irrelevant information &amp;/or little to no use of relevant TOK terminology &amp; concepts &amp;/or incorrect terminology &amp;/or Reflects last minute attempt</td>
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<td>3. Depth of Reflection &amp; Analysis</td>
<td>Prompts show thoughtful, deep reflection &amp; analysis; Understanding clearly demonstrated through relevant connections; Unique perspective provided; Additional research undertaken; Work is thoroughly referenced &amp; cited when necessary</td>
<td>Prompts show thoughtful reflection &amp; analysis; Understanding clearly demonstrated; Work is referenced &amp; cited properly when necessary</td>
<td>Prompts show reflection &amp; analysis; understanding demonstrated; Work is referenced &amp; cited properly when necessary</td>
<td>Little to no reflection or analysis &amp;/or limited understanding &amp;/or work is not referenced or incorrectly referenced &amp; cited &amp;/or reflects last minute attempt</td>
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<td>4. Professionalism, Presentation &amp; Quality</td>
<td>Legible, well organized, aesthetic, original, attractive &amp; creative; Extra attention to details; Use of color images &amp;/or original art; Without plagiarism</td>
<td>Legible, well organized, aesthetic, attractive &amp; creative; Without plagiarism</td>
<td>Legible &amp; generally well organized; Without plagiarism</td>
<td>Sloppily or poorly organized &amp;/or difficult to read or understand &amp;/or reflects last minute attempt &amp;/or plagiarism detected</td>
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**TOK Professional Participation Guidelines & Assessment Rubric**

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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Always prepared with high quality required work, projects, presentations</td>
<td>Actively &amp; enthusiastically participates in activities; Consistently volunteers</td>
<td>Exceptionally supportive of colleagues &amp; teacher; Always uses polite, respectful</td>
<td>Always on time to class &amp; ready to begin; Assignments always ready; Always ready</td>
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<tr>
<td>6/7</td>
<td>discussions; Always prepared with necessary materials for class; No reminders</td>
<td>to lead activities; Participation shows consistent inclusion of additional work &amp; research; Actively includes others; Shows a high level of interest in subject by regularly providing thoughtful, reflective, on-topic interventions &amp; comments; Consistently asks appropriate, enriching questions</td>
<td>tones &amp; language, especially in disagreements; Treats sensitive &amp; mature issues, subjects &amp; questions with respect; Never distracted; Non-distracting in-class behavior &amp; body language; Sits in front; No reminders needed</td>
<td>to participate in discussions at start; Never packs up before lesson is finished; No unexcused absences; No reminders needed</td>
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<td>B</td>
<td>Always prepared with required work, projects, presentations discussions;</td>
<td>Actively &amp; enthusiastically participates in activities; Volunteers to lead activities; Participation generally shows inclusion of additional work &amp; research; Actively includes others; Shows a high level of interest in subject by providing thoughtful, reflective, on-topic interventions, comments &amp; questions</td>
<td>Supportive of colleagues &amp; teacher; General use of polite, respectful tones &amp; language, especially in disagreements; Treats sensitive &amp; mature issues with respect; Generally not distracted; Non-distracting in-class behavior &amp; body language; No reminders needed</td>
<td>Generally on time to class; Assignments ready; Ready to participate in discussions; Never packs up before lesson is finished; No reminders needed</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Always prepared with necessary materials for class; No reminders needed</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Generally prepared with required work, projects, presentations discussion &amp;</td>
<td>Generally participates in activities; Includes others; Shows interest regularly commenting &amp; asking questions</td>
<td>Supportive of colleagues &amp; teacher; General use of polite, respectful tones &amp; language, especially in disagreements; Treats sensitive &amp; mature issues with respect; Rarely distracted &amp;/or distracting in-class behavior &amp; body language; Some reminders needed</td>
<td>Occasional lateness &amp;/or slow in starting &amp;/or rare reminders needed</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/4</td>
<td>necessary materials for class; Rarely needs reminders</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Frequently unprepared &amp;/or without necessary materials; Constant reminders</td>
<td>Frequently reminded to participate &amp;/or distracted/distracting; Little/no leadership; Comments/questions off topic</td>
<td>Unhelpful &amp;/or impolite &amp;/or struggles with sensitive/mature subject matter &amp;/or disrespectful &amp;/or frequently distracted &amp;/or distracting</td>
<td>Frequently late &amp;/or absent &amp;/or reminders needed</td>
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TOK Overview

Year I Semester I
Knower’s Perspective, Knowledge Issues, Paradigms & Paradigm Shifts & Ways of Knowing

Year I Semester II
Knowledge Questions, Experts, Evidence, Proof & Judgements

Areas of Knowledge

Year II Semester I
Remaining Areas of Knowledge & TOK Assessments (Essay & Presentation)

Year II Semester II
TOK Assessments & Viva Voce

What you need: Supplies Checklist
1. One ringed binder filled with paper for notes (with cover sleeve);
2. One college ruled notebook (approx. 100 sheets) for use as a journal & writing portfolio;
3. Index cards/note cards for note taking & presentations;
4. General school supplies (pens, pencils, scissors, glue, highlighters, A4 paper, colored pencils, etc.);
5. On-line subscription to aeon: https://aeon.co/ (it is free);
6. On-line subscription to Nautilus: http://nautil.us/ (it is free);
7. On-line subscription to Skeptic: http://www.skeptic.com/ (it is free);
8. On-line subscription to Quanta: https://www.quantamagazine.org/ (it is free);
9. On-line subscription to Quartz: https://qz.com/ (it is free);
10. A lap top – ipad (you will know in advance when you need to bring it in);
11. Access to the TOK FB platform;
12. A good, positive, learning-focussed attitude everyday;
13. Always bring your UNIS SCHOOL ID CARD to class each day for school related printing.

What we expect from you:
Students are expected to be in class, actively participate, respect others and complete assignments on time. Your behaviour and your work reflect who you are. Students are expected to either get assignments in advance of an absence or to consult with the teacher upon return about missed work and tests.

You are expected to actively participate in all individual and group activities, projects, discussions & reflections. You are expected to regularly lead such activities.

You are expected to complete all reflective prompts to the specifications & requirements.

You must check Haiku/Managbac, the TOK FB platform & your email daily.

You must respond to emails, prompts & assignments promptly & professionally.
You must be familiar with the various rubrics & meet expectations.

Students are expected to do their own work. Academic honesty and effort are of utmost importance!

**How will you be evaluated?**

Student performance and skill development are evaluated in continuous assessment. Specific skills are developed and assessed in particular blocks of work. Coursework is based upon a **total number of possible points** roughly reflecting these categories:

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<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>TOK Interview Process</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOK Journal, Reflection &amp; Paradigm Development</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOK WoK/MoJ/AoK Development</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class Participation including Time Management</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<td>Kant Quiz</td>
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**Approaches to Learning (ATLs) in TOK:**

In TOK, through your Knowledge Seminars, group discussion, KQ development, Cinema TOK & other activities, you will develop & be assessed on your report card on the following ATLs towards your development as an Independent Lincoln Learner, critical thinker & knower:

**Communication** (Skill Cluster 1): In TOK, this means developing professional research, note-taking & writing skills processes including the effective use & critical analysis of resources in Fact Sheets, essays & Journal prompts; this also includes being an active participant; giving & receiving detailed, professional & constructive feedback.

**Information Literacy** (SC6): In TOK, this means developing professional research skills processes including the collection, recording, verification & analysis of data from primary, secondary & tertiary sources such as Aeon, Quanta, Skeptic, Lagemaat, Abel; effective implementation of MLA writing expectations including references, in-text citations, footnotes/endnotes & bibliography.

**Media Literacy** (SC7): In TOK, this means locating, organizing, analysing, evaluating, synthesizing & ethically using information from a variety of sources & media; demonstrating an awareness of media interpretations & sources of bias relating to individuals, events, concepts & ideas;

**Critical Thinking** (SC8): In TOK, this means practicing & mastering the critical thinking concepts found in the TOK “Command Terms” including problem solving;

For each of the ATLs, you will receive an N, L, P or E to indicate which of the following levels you have achieved in order to identify how you can move to the next level:

**Novice/beginner/observer:** You are at this level if you are generally dependent on the teacher for support & you have difficulty learning & applying **new** skills even after
practicing these skills. You may also be at this level if you are unable to understand these ATL achievement levels or accurately self-assess against these levels.

**Learner/developer/emulator:** You are at this level if you are able to follow directions, copy others who use the skill & use the skill with scaffolding & teacher or peer guidance but you are not yet independent & able to apply the skill without teacher/peer support. You may also be at this level if you need support in accurately self- Assessing against these levels.

**Practitioner/user/demonstrator:** You are at this level if you can use & demonstrate the skill confidently & effectively with little support & are able to independently acquire new skills with minimal support. You may also be at this level if you are able to accurately self-assess.

**Expert/sharer/self-regulator:** You are at this level if you can use the skill independently with no support, acquire new skills independently with no support & show others how to use the skill. You are at this level if you can create learning tools for others & demonstrating the skill outside of class expectations. You may also be at this level if are able to accurately assess how effectively the skill is used by others.

**Note on academic honesty & sourcing:**

Basically, academic honesty means doing your own work. It means having knowledge you claim to have. It is not honest to copy or reword phrases or sentences from a book or magazine and pass it off as your own work.

When in doubt, you must indicate your source; if you don't, you are guilty of plagiarism. If you share your work, cut & paste text, do work for someone else, have someone do your work for you or are aware of this happening, you are guilty of or helping to enable plagiarism. You must be familiar with and follow the academic honesty and plagiarism guidelines & penalties.

All instances of plagiarism & malpractice will be forwarded to the HS Principal.

Wikipedia is not a valid source. According to Harvard University “when you're doing academic research, you should be extremely cautious about using Wikipedia. As its own disclaimer states, information on Wikipedia is contributed by anyone who wants to post material, and the expertise of the posters is not taken into consideration. Users may be reading information that is outdated or that has been posted by someone who is not an expert in the field or by someone who wishes to provide misinformation.” They do not use it & neither will you.

You can reach me under: sanagnost@unishanoi.org

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<tr>
<th>Student Signature</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>By signing I acknowledge that I have read &amp; am agreeing with the expectations of this course as well as the overall expectations as laid out in the Student Handbook &amp; similar policies.</td>
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