# Project: When Authorities Clash

What’s a Knower to Do?

## Objectives:

* Apply learning in first ¼ of the course to a real-life and highly significant issue.
* Experience the process of connecting a real life situation to knowledge claims to knowledge questions to a TOK analysis. 🡪 This is the process that will be utilized by you for your **TOK IA PRESENTATION** next semester!

## Knowledge Claims:

I know that authority figures are often believed to be sources of reputable knowledge. We rarely question doctors, teachers, scientists, etc.

Authorities may be, and sometimes are, wrong.

Authorities often differ in their claims.

## Knowledge Question:

What do we do if we encounter conflicting evidence from persons of authority?

## Initial Stimuli/Catalysts:

To start, we have two different neurobiologists who have very different positions on this matter:

[Dr. Jill Bolte Taylor’s “Stroke of Insight”](http://www.ted.com/talks/jill_bolte_taylor_s_powerful_stroke_of_insight.html)

Describes experience of having the left hemisphere shut down and experiencing the world from the right only.

VS.

[Neurophilosophy](http://scienceblogs.com/neurophilosophy/2007/10/the_left_brain_right_brain_myt.php) (which is the source of the comment “But this veers dangerously close to the [popular myth](http://scienceblogs.com/neurophilosophy/2007/10/the_left_brain_right_brain_myt.php) that the right brain is creative and artistic while the left is logical and deductive. In truth, virtually every complex thing we do depends on both halves of the brain, working together and complementing one another” from the [article](http://blogs.discovermagazine.com/notrocketscience/2011/02/02/can-electrical-jolts-to-the-brain-produce-eureka-moments/) we read in Discover Magazine.)

“The notion that someone is "left-brained" or "right-brained***"*** is ***absolute nonsense***. All complex behaviours and cognitive functions require the integrated actions of multiple brain regions in both hemispheres of the brain.”

When people make knowledge claims like those above, our TOK-training should kick in with an instinctive “How Do You Know!?” (Go ahead and say it out loud. You know you want to.)

If two claims are mutually exclusive (they cannot both be right), then the most reasonable thing to do is **evaluate** the claims. Remember, just because they cannot both be right, they can both be wrong, or one may be right and the other wrong. A TOK investigation seeks to justify which (if either) position is more worth believing/knowing.

# PART 1: Research + Data Collection

**Group “A”** will search for support for the argument that the Left and Right Brain are “specialized” trying to find the most convincing justification possible. Remember to consider “How Do They Know?!’

**Group “B”** will launch their research under the premise that the specialization is, in fact, a myth trying to find the most convincing justification possible. Remember to consider “How Do They Know?!’

You will work in teams of 2 (sub-groups) finding and extracting information from articles from reputable sources (see library.gsis.sc.kr 🡪 Online Databases). When using databases, I suggest searching broad first (e.g. “Right Brain Left Brain”) and then check “search within results” and add key words you think will help you find what you’re looking for within those results.

Copy down quotes you think are significant into a shared google doc (linked at the end of this sentence) with your whole team: ( \*\*GROUP A\*\* \*\*GROUP B\*\*). **Be sure to include the name of the author and any credentials provided for him or her and/or the publication that the article was original published in.**

For example:

According to Dr. E. Vill Moore, eminent researcher for MIT’s Mad Science Laboratory in California and twin of mild-mannered Mr. E. Moore – TOK Teacher, “Years of carefully documented and meticulously researched evidence have revealed the widely accepted truth in the scientific community that the right brain is located to the right half of the head. The left brain, is more to the left half. Unless you’re looking at someone from the front, then they are reversed from your perspective.” The article from which this is extracted was originally published in “Psychology for the Mad” November issue, 2018.

# PART 2: Evaluation

Once you have compiled evidence that supports your position, examine the evidence procured by the opposition, as well. Then, create a journal (individual, though you use collective data) in which you respond to the prompt:

Much of our knowledge comes from authority or perceived authority in our world. What can we do to justify our beliefs when respectable authorities are opposed on a given issue?

Top-tier responses will make reference to the data acquired in this activity, and will make reference to a personal or academic experience on the same topic, utilizing events from your own learning – present or past. You should make reference to at least two ways of knowing in your discussion. (These can be utilized as the two “perspectives” mandated in the criterion). Conclusions should give a definite, well-reasoned course of action in these situations. (Giving up is not an option.) ;)

The journal will be assessed using criterion A, but the score will be **double** a normal journal grade. This makes it **very significant** for your semester mark.

