The epistemology of case studies

Felicia Keesing
Bard College
And for tomorrow, I want you to write an essay on the topic of independent thought.

"Everyone, got that?"

Baa! Baa! Sir! Baa!

In my view, Jefferson's defense of these basic rights lacked conviction. Okay, any discussion of what I've covered so far?

Of course not. You're too busy getting it all down.

Let me just add that personally I believe the Bill of Rights to be a silly, inconsequential, recapitulation of truths already found in the Constitution. Any comment?

Scruble! Scruble! Scruble!

No, scratch that! The Constitution itself should never have been ratified! It's a dangerous document! All power should rest with the Executive! What do you think of that?

Jefferson was the Antichrist! Democracy is Fascism! Black is white! Night is day!

Teaching is dead.

Boy, this course is really getting interesting. You said it. I didn't know half this stuff.
Reflective Judgment model

• Derived as descriptive model
  – How knowledge is viewed
  – How knowledge is justified

• Early stages
  – Knowledge is from authority
  – Evidence is not necessary

• Later stages
  – Evidence is necessary
  – Interpretation of evidence is critical
Stages of Reflective Judgment

• Stage 2
  – Knowledge is absolutely certain, but may not be immediately available
  – Beliefs are justified by direct observation or from authorities

“If it’s on the news, it has to be true.”

(King & Kitchener 1994)
Stages of Reflective Judgment

• Stage 4
  – Nothing can be known with certainty
  – Beliefs are justified with evidence, but choice of evidence is idiosyncratic
Stages of Reflective Judgment

• Stage 4

“I’d be more inclined to believe [evolution] if they had proof...I don’t think we’ll ever know. People come up with different interpretations because people differ. Who are you going to ask? Because no one was there.”

(King & Kitchener 1994)
Stages of Reflective Judgment

• Stages 6 and 7
  – Knowledge is actively constructed
  – Some points of view are more valid than others, based on the quality of evidence and its interpretation

“One can judge an argument by how well thought-out the positions are, what kinds of reasoning and evidence are used to support it, and how consistent the way one argues on this topic is as compared with other topics.”

(King & Kitchener 1994)
Effects of college on epistemological stage

Keesing – Case Study Conference 2010
Effects of college on epistemological stage

Keesing – Case Study Conference 2010
How could you challenge student perception that knowledge comes from authority?
How could you challenge student perception that all points of view are equally valid?