Ask the Better Question:

Using Bigfoot to Introduce Constructive Approaches to Authority

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Hello, I'm Kate

Liaison Areas:
- Business & Economics
- Portland Seminary
- School of Theology
- Mathematics
- Undergraduate Education
- Undergraduate Psychology
- Undergraduate Social Work

Other Hats I Wear:
- Outreach & Engagement
- Information Literacy Coordination for Undergraduate Core Classes
This is Jenny.

Jenny is the original developer for the Bigfoot activity, and laid the foundation for gen-ed collaboration that I get to build on now.

Jenny Bruxvoort, MSLIS
Visiting Research and Instruction Librarian
Hope College, Holland, MI
Today we will:

- Contrast the more common desconstructive methods of evaluation with a positive constructive approach to authority in information sources.

- Check out The Bigfoot Activity (including some of the stages of development and variations), and consider if it might be useful in your own context.

- Discuss the benefit of using fantasy example topics in classroom activity and demonstration.
Who has authority?
Who gets to decide?
Who has authority?
Who gets to decide?

And how do I teach you to answer that correctly on your own?
"I need to use good sources."
"I need to use good sources."

What is a "good source"?
"That's 'fake news'."
"That's 'fake news'."

Previous experiences reinforce a culture of hypercriticism.
"My professor says it's got to be...."
"My professor says it's got to be...."

Assignment criteria is not always contextually appropriate to the topic.
There's a lot of noise
"a rhetorical perspective toward research-based writing by characterizing products of research in terms of how writers use them in their texts"

What can I learn from this source?
The Bigfoot Activity
Do I have authority?
Six Investigatory Purposes

1. Provide evidence of Bigfoot at George Fox
2. Research paper on the history of Bigfoot
3. Convince a friend that Bigfoot exists
4. Debunk a Bigfoot sighting
5. Tell the class how people describe Bigfoot
6. Find a Bigfoot yourself
The Original Variation
Asynchronous Online

Drawing of Bigfoots
Artist Unknown, but suspected to be under the age of 10.

Question 2

"The F.B.I. Once Helped in the Hunt for Bigfoot"
written by Liam Stack in The New York Times

Provide evidence of Bigfoot at GFU
Report on how people describe Bigfoot
Write a research paper on the history of Bigfoot
Convince a friend that Bigfoot exists
Debunk a Bigfoot sighting

Provide evidence of Bigfoot at GFU
Explain to me in a classroom discussion setting how people describe Bigfoot
Write a research paper on the history of Bigfoot
Convince a friend that Bigfoot exists
Debunk a Bigfoot sighting
Find a Bigfoot yourself
Cognitive Overload and Fantasy in Trying Times
The transition from a state of puzzle and perplexity to rational comprehension is full of lively relief and pleasure.

-William James (1897), The Sentiment of Rationality, in *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy* available from Wikisource.
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It's uncomfortable to deconstruct your worldview.
He believed in rational thinking and scientific inquiry, which was why he never won an argument with his mother, who believed in people doing what she told them, and believed it with a rock-hard certainty which dismissed all opposition.

- Terry Pratchett (2009), Nation.
Questions & Discussion

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