Sample Assignments for Authority is Constructed and Contextual

1. Ask students to find several scholarly sources on the same topic that take very different stands. How was it that the authors came to different conclusions? Does it have to do with authority?

2. Have students look at a blog, a video on YouTube, a collection of tweets, or some other type of social media regarding a contemporary event (e.g. demonstrations at Tahrir Square during the "Arab Spring" events). Ask them to describe how they would analyze and evaluate the authority of the author(s) of the information. Are there ways to determine whether the individual was an actual witness or participant in the events? Are there ways to identify whether the individual or group that developed a collection of information has a particular political bias? Can they determine whether the author(s) has a particular status within the group s/he represents or is the individual reporting as an "average citizen"?