In the Middle Ages, “auctoritas” was a currency that established the reputations of poets and kings, artists and historians, popes and politicians, lawyers and laymen. Medieval figures used a variety of strategies to construct and support their importance and influence. Kings and popes performed their authority through elaborate dress, rituals, and patronage, and extended power beyond their person through authorized dignitaries and royal seals. Vernacular writers silently incorporated or openly considered the influence of classical authors such as Ovid, Statius, and Virgil, or modeled their writing on more recent fathers (or more rarely mothers) of poetry. Theologians argued over the relative authority of Latin or vernacular Bibles and devout laymen and women were attacked for engaging in unauthorized modes of reading and worship. This conference seeks to explore the power exerted by “auctoritas,” variously signifying authority, authorship, influence, prestige, or legitimacy, on many levels of medieval culture and society.

We invite papers from a wide range of scholarly disciplines including, History, Art History, Musicology, Literary Studies, Religious Studies, Gender and Sexuality Studies, and Cultural History. Topics for papers may include, but are not limited to:

- Authorship
- Classical reception
- Gendered models of self-authorization
- Patronage, whether political, literary, or artistic
- Political authority
- Ecclesiastical authority
- Latinity and vernacularity
- Heresy and orthodoxy
- Genealogies, chronicles, and histories

We invite abstracts of no more than 300 words for 15-20 minute papers that engage with these and/or other questions concerning medieval “auctoritas”. Please submit abstracts as attachments to pennmedieval@gmail.com by January 15, 2017. Submissions should include your name, paper title, email, and institutional and departmental affiliation.