

Annotated Bibliographies: What? Why? How?

Your final essay for the class will be a Argument/Research Essay about the effects of social media on understanding and evaluating important arguments in society. Although the direction you choose to go with this essay will be up to you, a good deal of external research is needed to help you develop an objective, academic, and balanced approach to your analysis.

Two weeks before your final essay is due, you will turn in an annotated bibliography of *at least four sources* related to your research topic. These should not be the only sources you examine, but rather most useful or influential ones. Your grade will be based on the variety and relevance of the sources and on the insight and clarity of your annotations.

We will also be creating a shared class Annotated Bibliography together. This will become a living, growing archive of annotated sources for you all to use in preparation for your final essays. First, we will discuss what they are, why we do them, and how to create them. Then we will discuss the process for accessing and editing the shared document. As always, please give yourselves plenty of time to work on this, reach out with any questions, and submit a draft to the Writing Tutors for extra credit.

Definition

A *bibliography* is a list of sources (books, journals, Websites, periodicals, etc.) one has used for researching a topic. A bibliography usually just includes the bibliographic information (i.e., the author, title, publisher; etc.). An *annotation* is a summary and/or evaluation. Therefore, an annotated bibliography includes a summary and/or evaluation of each of the sources.

For your assignment, your annotations must do the following:

Summarize: What are the main arguments? What is the point of this book or article? What topics are covered? If someone asks what this source is about, what would you say?

Assess: After summarizing a source, it is helpful to evaluate it. How does it compare with other sources on the topic? Is the information reliable, relevant, and authoritative? How can you tell? Is it this source inappropriately biased or relatively objective? What is the goal of this source? Does it properly and fairly deal with alternative points of view?

Purpose

To learn about your topic: Writing an annotated bibliography is excellent preparation for a research project. Just collecting sources for a bibliography is useful, but when you must also write annotations for each source, you're forced to read each source more carefully. You begin to read more critically instead of just collecting information.

To help you formulate a thesis: Every good research paper is an argument. The purpose of research is to state and support a thesis. So a very important part of research is developing a thesis that is debatable, interesting, and current. Writing an annotated bibliography can help you gain a good perspective on what is being said about your topic. By reading and responding to a variety of sources on a topic, you'll start to see what the issues are, what people are arguing about, and you'll then be able to develop your own point of view.

To develop enough authoritative, relevant and reliable support for your topic: Most topics that you will be writing about in college classes are very complex and multi-faceted. Usually just finding a single source or two on a topic will not be sufficient to really understand all of the angles and nuances of the topic under consideration. A well-researched and well-written annotated bibliography will help you to be thorough and exhaustive in your research and guard against oversimplification and other forms of research-related blind spots.

Format

The bibliographic information: The bibliographic information of the source (the title, author, publisher, date, etc.) is written in MLA format.

The annotations: The annotations for each source are written in paragraph form. The lengths of the annotations can vary significantly from a couple of sentences to a couple of pages. The length will depend on the purpose and the complexity of each source.

Annotated Bibliography Checklist

- Your annotations should be listed alphabetically, by the last name of the primary author of the selection (or whatever the first word of the citation happens to be). Be sure to use the **citation builder** websites to help you build your entries in proper MLA format. They can be found on the Library website and on our WR 122 Library Guide in the “Citation Style Guides” section. Sources found in the MHCC library databases are already in MLA format. Scroll down to the end of the article and the entry will be posted in full MLA format. Just copy and past it into your Bibliography. (Make sure to make it double-spaced and in “hanging” format as well.)
- At least TWO of your **sources** must be academic, peer-reviewed journals.
- At least TWO of your **annotations** must be longer and more thorough (at least a page each).
- Be as specific as possible with your summaries and analyses of each source. Don't just tell me it's a good source or that it's very useful. I am assuming this since it is a source you have selected to annotate. Explore *why* it is a good source and *how* it is useful, authoritative, and relevant to the topic.
- To complete this assignment, you must submit your finished work through the proper Blackboard submission portal AND add your chosen sources to the ***Shared Course Annotated Bibliography***. Click on the “Shared Course Annotated Bibliography” section of our Blackboard page. It will take you to a document where you will add your annotated sources. The individual submission space can be found in the Week Nine Module.
- **Do not** add sources that are already listed in the shared document. You may use any source you like for your essay, as long as it meets the other requirements for being a relevant, reliable, and authoritative source. ***But only add sources to the shared document that are not already listed.*** Carefully read through the shared document to make sure the sources you are adding are not already listed. If one or more of them are, you will need to replace those with other relevant, annotated sources.
- Click into the document and add your annotated sources. Make sure they are properly formatted, in alphabetical order, in bold type, and in hanging format. Annotations themselves should be in normal paragraph format and free from excessive spelling, gram-mar, and syntax errors.
- See Syllabus/Schedule for Due Dates.
- Examples of how to construct this assignment can be found below and in the “Sample Student Essays” section of our Blackboard page.

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WR 122-04

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Stem Cell Research: An Annotated Bibliography

"A single stem cell mutation triggers fibroid tumors." *Women's Health Weekly*, 24 May 2018, p. 2402. *Academic OneFile*, <http://link.galegroup.com/apps/doc/A539521341/AONE?u=mthoodcc&sid=AONE&xid=20c06852>. Accessed 4 June 2018.

This is the annotation of the above source. In this example, I am following MLA guidelines for the bibliographic information listed above. If I was really writing an annotation for this source, I would now be offering a full summary of what this source says about stem cell research.

After a summary, it would be appropriate to assess this source and offer some criticisms of it. Does it seem like a reliable and current source? Why or why not? Is the research biased or objective? Are the facts well documented? Who is the author? Is she qualified in this subject? Is this source scholarly, popular, some of both? The length of your annotation will depend on the assignment or on the purpose of your annotated bibliography.

"New Stem Cell Research Findings from National Cancer Center Research Institute Described (Ring1A and Ring1B inhibit expression of Glis2 to maintain murine MOZ-TIF2 AML stem cells)." *Obesity, Fitness & Wellness Week*, 12 May 2018, p. 5576. *Academic OneFile*, <http://link.galegroup.com/apps/doc/A537527858/AONE?u=mt-hoodcc&sid=AONE&xid=fd72bcc6>. Accessed 4 June 2018.

Not all annotations have to be the same length. For example, this source is a very short scholarly article. It may only take a sentence or two to summarize. Even if you are using a book, you should only focus on the sections that relate to your topic. Remember also, even if you are producing a shorter entry, it must still summarize, analyze, and reflect on the source's relevance, reliability, and academic authority.

Wan, William, and Laurie McGinley. "What you should know about stem cells, from promising research to dubious uses." *Washington Post*, 30 Apr. 2018. *Academic OneFile*, <http://link.galegroup.com/apps/doc/A536787037/AONE?u=mthoodcc&sid=AONE&xid=2cb26dca>. Accessed 4 June 2018.

Notice that in this example, I have chosen a variety of sources: a book, a scholarly journal, a Webpage, etc. Using a variety of sources can help give you a broader picture of what is being said about your topic. You may want to investigate how scholarly sources are treating this topic differently than more popular sources. Just make sure that you do not use popular sources in the place of more scholarly ones. Notice that the bibliographic information above is proper MLA format and the annotations are in paragraph form. Note also that the entries are alphabetized by the first word in the bibliographic entry. If you are writing an annotated bibliography with many sources, it may be helpful to divide the sources into categories. For example, if I was putting together an extensive annotated bibliography for stem cell research, I may divide the sources into categories such as ethical concerns, scholarly analyses, and political ramifications. For more examples, a quick search at the library or even on the Internet should produce several examples of annotated bibliographies in your area.