

Writing Assignment I: Annotated Research Bibliography

Grade weight: 150p

An annotated bibliography is a list of citations to books, articles, and documents. Each citation is followed by a short, usually about 100-150 words, descriptive and evaluative paragraph, the actual annotation. The purpose of the annotation is to inform the reader of the relevance, accuracy, and quality of the sources cited. Submit the annotated bibliography in the Blackboard Dropbox in .doc, or .rtf format. **Due date: October 15.**

Purpose of assignment:

A review of the literature on a particular subject, in this case, the preliminary research you will do for your research paper for this class. Consequently, you will need to think of a topic/thesis on which you may want to write your research paper. I know this is early in the semester, but try to decide on at least a tentative topic. It is also possible that your research for this assignment will help you find an interesting topic.

Annotations vs. Abstracts:

Abstracts are the simply descriptive summaries often found at the beginning of scholarly journal articles or in periodical indexes. Annotations are descriptive and critical; they expose the author's point of view, clarity and appropriateness of expression, and authority.

How to read:

In order to select the sources you want to include in your bibliography you will have to do a fair amount of reading. However, remember that at this point you are not reading for in-depth, detailed knowledge, but rather skimming and summarizing the main points of the source. Later, when you are writing your research paper, you will want to return to your sources and read them with greater attention to detail. However, you will then know from your annotated bibliography which sources are the most important to your topic, and which ones can safely be omitted.

How to write:

Creating an annotated bibliography calls for the application of a variety of intellectual skills: concise exposition, succinct analysis, and informed library research. First, locate and record citations to books, periodicals, and documents that may contain useful information and ideas on your topic (See "Online resources" below). Briefly examine and review the actual items. Then choose those works that provide the greatest completeness as to perspectives on your topic. Cite the book, article, or document using MLA style.

Write a concise annotation that summarizes the central theme and scope of the book or article. Include one or more sentences that (a) evaluate the authority or background of the author, (b) comment on the intended audience, (c) possibly, compare or contrast this work with another you have cited, or (d) explain how this work illuminates your bibliography topic.

Style:

Because each annotation is fairly brief, only directly significant details should be mentioned and any information apparent in the title can be omitted from the annotation. In addition, background

materials and references to previous work by the same author usually are not included, unless you are listing these as well as separate entries in your bibliography..

Scope & Limitations:

You should phrase your topic/thesis in such a way that you do not have to read extreme amounts of sources in order to adequately cover the research area. In short, make sure you limit your topic adequately, and state the limitations in the title of your bibliography. The thesis for your bibliography will essentially be the same as for your research paper, though naturally you may want to modify the thesis as you find out more about the topic through your research.

Example of title:

John Keats's *Lamia*: An Annotated Bibliography on
Scholarly Writings Commenting on Woman-As-Serpent Imagery in Keats's Writings

By Jane X. Doe

Sources:

The bibliography should include a minimum of six secondary sources (that is, texts dealing with the work you are writing about), of which none may be an online source such as a webpage, blog, online encyclopedia, etc.¹ If you include an article found online, for instance in a scholarly database, but which has previously been published in a hardcopy publication, that article may be counted as a non-online source. The ASU library offers many online articles these days, which can be found through the research databases (below).

How to locate your sources for your bibliography entries: Online resources:

Research databases:

Books

- [The Library catalog](#)

Articles

- Go to <http://library.lib.asu.edu/search/y>
These databases may be useful to locate articles and books relating to the subject you wish to cover with your bibliography. Search for the following databases by name: [America: History and Life](#), [Arts and Humanities Citation Index](#), [JSTOR](#) (the mother of all full-text databases in the humanities), [Essay and General Literature](#), [Historical Abstracts](#), [Humanities Full Text Index](#), [MLA Bibliography](#) (the most prestigious bibliography for research in the humanities),

¹ Note that all sources in the annotated bibliography should be “secondary sources”—research/academic sources. The literary work(s) you are writing about (a.k.a. the “primary source”) is not a research source and should not be included in the bibliography. A primary source is a term used in a number of disciplines. Generally, a primary source (also called original source) is a document, recording or other source of information that was created at the time being studied, by an authoritative source, usually one with direct personal knowledge of the events being described. It serves as an original source of information about the topic. Primary sources are distinguished from secondary sources, which often cite, comment on, or build upon primary sources. The primary work (=novel, short story, epic, poem, play, etc) does not count as a source. Please note that Wikipedia, Sparknotes, Enotes, and similar are *not* valid scholarly sources. If in doubt, please ask.

[Nineteenth Century Masterfile](#), [British Humanities Index](#), Athena: Classical Mythology (Hayden library workstations only), [Iter: Gateway to the Middle Ages and Renaissance](#), [EBSCO Host](#), and many others.

Correct Format for the Citations:

The bibliography should be composed in MLA format, and **in alphabetical order** and without numbering.

The *English Department Guide to Style*

(http://www.public.asu.edu/~cajsa/Guide2Style_complete.pdf) (PDF) will be an indispensable source and shortcut to how to cite MLA style correctly, and also a wealth of other tips on scholarly writing and research in the humanities.

- An example of a very well written annotated bibliography on Greek drama:
<http://members.tripod.com/DemKoutsogiannis/biblio2.htm>

Sample Annotated Bibliography Entry for a Journal Article in MLA format:

A book

Sewell, Wayne. *Weaving a Program: Literate Programming in WEB*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1989.

Sewell explains the code language within these pages including certain lines of code as examples. One useful idea that Sewell uses is to explain characters and how they work in the programming of a Web Page. He also goes through and describes how to make lists and a title section. This will be very useful because all Web Pages have a title section. This author also introduces Pascal which I am not sure if I will include in my manual but after I read more about it I can decide whether this will be helpful to future users. This book will not be the basis of my manual but will add some key points, which are described above.

An article

Waite, Linda J., Frances Koblin Goldscheider, and Christina Witsberger. "Nonfamily Living and the Erosion of Traditional Family Orientations Among Young Adults." *American Sociological Review*. 51 (1986): 541-554.

The authors, researchers at the Rand Corporation and Brown University, use data from the National Longitudinal Surveys of Young Women and Young Men to test their hypothesis that non-family living by young adults alters their attitudes, values, plans, and expectations, moving them away from their belief in traditional sex roles. They find their hypothesis strongly supported in young females, while the effects were fewer in studies of young males. Increasing the time away from parents before marrying increased individualism, self-sufficiency, and changes in attitudes about families. In contrast, an earlier study by Williams cited previously shows no significant gender differences in sex role attitudes as a result of non-family living.

Topic vs. Thesis

The thesis should explain exactly what interesting aspect of your topic that you will write about in the paper. A topic is a general area of inquiry; “topic” designates the general subject of your essay. A thesis is an idea, stated as an assertion, which represents a reasoned response to a question at issue and which will serve as the central idea of a unified composition.

How to compose a thesis statement, think about how it satisfies the following tests:

- Is it an idea? Does it state, in a complete sentence, an assertion?
- Does it make a claim that is truly contestable and therefore engaging?
- Are the terms you are using precise and clear?
- Has the thesis developed out of a process of reasoning?

Once these questions have been satisfactorily answered, use the resulting thesis to organize your evidence and begin the actual writing. As you do so, bear in mind the following questions:

- What is my purpose in writing? What do I want to prove?
- What question(s) does my writing answer?
- Why do I think this question is important? Will other people think it equally important?
- What are my specific reasons, my pieces of evidence? Does each piece of evidence support the claim I make in my thesis?
- Where does my reasoning weaken or even stop? Am I merely offering opinions without reasoned evidence?
- How can I best persuade my reader?

Let’s say your topic is “Domestic violence in Shakespeare’s *Othello*”. Your thesis then, should make some sort of contestable assumption about that topic, for instance (thesis): “Though *Othello* is overtly a play about an abused wife, I will demonstrate that it is in fact a dramatization of the exposed and powerless status of women in Renaissance society at large.”

Having established a tentative thesis, you will set about finding secondary sources that support your argument. Every source cited as evidence needs to in some way strengthen your argument. If it does not then it does not belong in the paper.

POSSIBLE TOPICS

1. Discuss the image of the hero as it is portrayed in the *Iliad*. What is the ideal of the hero in this work? Why are they sometimes considered tragic heroes? Use specific examples or characters to illustrate this conception. In what way does this conception reflect or challenge the contemporary concept of the hero? Does the image of the Greek hero make sense in our contemporary world?
2. Achilles’ fall from heroism into barbarism.
3. Male friendship in the *Iliad*.
4. Father and Son Relationships in the *Iliad*.
5. Describe the mourning process as seen in Achilles’ reaction to the death of Patroklos. What other examples of similar behavior are shown in the *Iliad*? How are they different from modern America’s customs of mourning?
6. A discussion of Dante’s *Divine Comedy* as an epic in the Classical tradition.

7. Dante's *Comedy* as an intertextual hub of Classical and Christian literature.
8. A discussion of the sonnet form as particularly suitable for erotic and romantic poetry.
9. Inter-racial love in *Othello*: Empowerment or warning?
10. The dangers of female sexuality in *Othello*.
11. Domestic violence in *Othello*.
12. Concepts of honor in *Othello*.
13. Iago, Satan's "Father".
14. Rebellion vs. Christianity in Milton's *Paradise Lost*.
15. *Paradise Lost* as a Protestant Epic.
16. A discussion of the monstrous in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*.
17. "Satanic" creation in *Frankenstein*.
18. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* as an indictment of science.
19. Class and Culture in "A Rose for Emily"
20. Southern Gothic: Sexuality and Insanity in "A Rose for Emily"
21. **Name your own topic!!**

Due Date: The Annotated Bibliography is **due October 15** (midnight). Please upload the bibliography to the SafeAssign dropbox..