

The Annotated Bibliography

What is an annotated bibliography? An annotated bibliography is a bibliography of source materials with a paragraph or two following the bibliographic entry that has two components: 1) a brief summary of the main points presented in the source; and 2) an explanation for why this source is important evidence for your subject. The annotated bibliography is worth 10% of your final grade.

FORMAT: Double-spaced, standard fonts and margins, double-spaced *only* between entries. Please boldface the bibliographic citation itself.

SPECIFICS: Create an annotated bibliography of sources you are reviewing for your research paper.

- You must follow the MLA guidelines and format exactly for all bibliographic entries, including alphabetical listing of the entries.
- The annotated paragraphs should be constructed using complete sentences, using proper punctuation, and should be free of spelling errors.
- Your explanatory paragraphs should be well developed. One- or two-sentence paragraphs are not acceptable, nor are long, but empty paragraphs.

Note: I fully recognize that emphases change in the process of writing a research paper and that you may choose to add or subtract sources from the final research paper. However, the Works Cited page for your research paper should be substantively similar to the entries which appear in your Annotated Bibliography. You will not include the annotations in the Works Cited page of your research paper.

CONTENT OF SECONDARY SOURCES: You will develop one bibliography which incorporates a minimum of four entries for each of the two categories described below, i.e. at least four articles offering mainstream media coverage (if available), and at least four scholarly articles and/or book chapters. You should have a total of *no fewer than 10* annotated bibliographic citations.

- **Mainstream News Media (at least 4 sources of this type)**

You should first select articles on your topic that have appeared in the news. This part of your research will help you determine if your topic has been adequately covered by the **mainstream** news sources. Articles that appear in non-mainstream sources may also be valuable to you and should be included as part of your research. You should look for articles that have appeared in about the past four years. If there is substantial **mainstream** coverage (more than about 25-35 articles) choose at least four that seem representative and work with them. If there is primarily non-mainstream coverage, again, choose representative articles. Since these are news articles, they will be rather short and easy to summarize. [Use *LexisNexis Academic* on the W.I. Dykes Library research database site.]

- **Scholarly Books and Essays (at least four sources of this type)**

You should next select scholarly articles and books. You will find these in the Fondren Library's research databases and in the online catalog. Because these texts will be longer and more complicated, you may have as few as five sources. While you may use additional or different texts as time goes on, choose the five that seem the most promising to you at this moment. [Use *Academic Search Premier* on the W.I. Dykes Library research database site.]

- **Websites (no more than two sources of this type)**

You are welcome to use websites that you believe to be credible sources. Please use no more than two such sites unless your issue has received so little mainstream news coverage that your main sources of information are alternative news, university, or federal sources found on the Internet.

THE RESEARCH PROCESS:

1. Make a note of the source on a 3 x 5 card, on a legal pad, or in a bibliography file on your computer, using the MLA works cited format. THIS WILL HELP YOU SAVE TIME LATER. Also consider setting up an EBSCO account on Academic Search Complete where you can save all articles accessed through this database for use throughout the semester.

2. Go on to evaluate each source, determining how that source will help you in investigating your chosen topic. After a summary paragraph, in another paragraph, evaluate your source for its usefulness to your directed inquiry. In evaluating, you should consider the following criteria:

—Currency: is the source recent enough to give you information that is up-to-date? Timeliness is especially important to help you answer the question about coverage. However, both contemporary and historical sources will be valuable to you, depending on how you use them.

—Authority: What authority does this writer have in speaking on this topic? Is the journalist doing a quick job of reporting, or have they written an article that contains some depth? Have they written other articles on the topic or a related topic? Where does the article appear? What is the editorial policy of the newspaper or journal? If the writer is someone who has devoted herself to studying your chosen topic and is well known and respected as an authority in her field, then her contribution to your paper will help extend your own credibility. If the book or article is published in a well-respected university press or scholarly journal, or if the writer has credentials from a reputable university in that specific field, then the writer speaks with some authority. Writers who base their judgments on personal experience also have a particular kind of authority, but it is limited unless it is backed up by other sources or analysis.

—Relevance to your inquiry: In what ways is this source useful to you in your inquiry? Keep in mind your own questions as you collect sources.

—Balance of perspective: What point of view does this writer hold? In conducting research, you'll need to consider those writers who do not share your point of view. You'll need to be able to respond to critics of your point of view in order to form a balanced and well-thought out argument. Your annotated bibliography should contain representations of various positions on the topic as well.

3. Your annotated bibliography will contain the proper MLA citation of the source, followed by your substantial paragraph describing and evaluating that source. As you research, you must photocopy any sources you intend to use for your research paper, so you can turn them in with the final essay.