



Writing Center Academic Affairs

Documentation: Annotated Bibliographies

Writing an annotated bibliography is excellent preparation for a research project. Annotated bibliographies show you what has been done in the literature and where your own research or scholarship can fit. By reading and responding to a variety of sources on a topic, you start to see what the issues are, what the arguments are about, and how you view the topic.

An **Annotated Bibliography** is an evaluation of sources (books, journals, Web sites, periodicals, etc.) you used for researching a topic. **It usually includes: (1) the bibliographic information (i.e., the author, title, publisher, etc.) and (2) a summary and/or evaluation and/or reflection of each of the sources.** You should get specific guidelines from your instructor regarding which format (MLA, APA, Chicago/Turabian, etc.) to use and what type of information to include in each entry. The annotations should reflect your research project and/or the guidelines of your assignment. Use a **hanging indent** to ensure that the write-ups beneath the citations are indented and the author's last name is the only text that is flush with the left margin.

- **Summary:** What are the main arguments and point of this book or article? What topics are covered? If someone asked what this article/book is about, what would you say?
- **Evaluation:** Does the book or article contain information relevant to your project or course? How does it compare with other sources in your bibliography? Is the information reliable? Is this source biased or objective? What is the goal of the source?
- **Reflection:** How does the book or article fit into your research? Was this source helpful to you? How does it help you shape your argument? How can you use this source in your research project? Has it changed how you think about your topic?

Annotated Bibliography MLA Style

Lamott, Anne. *Bird by Bird: Some instructions on Writing and Life*. New York: Anchor Books, 1995. Print.

Lamott's book offers honest advice on the nature of a writing life, complete with its insecurities and failures. Taking a humorous approach to the realities of being a writer, the chapters in Lamott's book are wry and anecdotal and offer advice on everything from plot development to jealousy, from perfectionism to struggling with one's own internal critic. In the process, Lamott includes writing exercises designed to be both productive and fun.

Lamott offers sane advice for those struggling with the anxieties of writing, but her main project seems to be offering the reader a reality check regarding writing, publishing, and struggling with one's own imperfect humanity in the process. Rather than a practical handbook to producing and/or publishing, this text is indispensable because of its honest perspective. It is down-to-earth, and it is encouraging in its approach.

Chapters in this text could be included in the curriculum for a writing class. Several of the chapters in Part I address the writing process and would serve to generate discussion on students' drafting and revising processes. Some of the writing exercises would be appropriate for generating classroom writing exercises.

Annotated Bibliography APA Style

Ehrenreich, B. (2001). *Nickel and dimes: On (not) getting by in America*. New York: Henry Holt and Company.

In this book of nonfiction based on the journalist's experiential research, Ehrenreich attempts to ascertain whether it is currently possible for an individual to live on a minimum-wage in America. Taking jobs as a waitress, a maid in a cleaning service, and a Wal-Mart sales employee, the author summarizes and reflects on her work, her relationships with fellow workers, and her financial struggles in each situation.

An experienced journalist, Ehrenreich is aware of the limitations of her experiment and the ethical implications of her experiential research tactics and reflects on these issues in the text. The author is forthcoming about her methods and supplements her experience with scholarly research on her places of employment, the economy, and the rising cost of living in America. Ehrenreich's project is timely, descriptive, and well-researched.

Chapters in this text could be included in an economics class. Several of the chapters would serve to generate discussion on students' work experiences and opinions concerning minimum wage.

Annotated Bibliography Chicago Style

Davidson, Hilda Ellis. *Roles of the Northern Goddess*. London: Rutledge, 1998.

Davidson's book provides a thorough examination of the major roles filled by numerous pagan goddesses of Northern Europe in everyday life, including their roles in hunting, agriculture, domestic arts like weaving, the household, and death. The author discusses relevant archaeological evidence, patterns of symbol and ritual, and previous research. The book includes a number of black and white photographs of relevant artifacts.

Davidson paints a comprehensive history of the role pagan goddesses played in the everyday life of Northern European society. The history chronicles the influential role of environment and surrounding cultures in defining the goddess role in an accessible and articulate style.

Several chapters provide excellent supplemental information for the course. In addition, some suggest topics for additional research. Davidson's style makes the information easily accessible and incorporates research results seamlessly into the discussion.

Seahorn, C. (2014). *Annotated Bibliography*. Handout, School of Human Sciences and Humanities, UHCL, Clear Lake, Texas.

Sample Styles from: The Writing Lab & The Purdue OWL and Purdue University.