



Writing Center

309 E. South Street  
TOS Education Building, Room 207  
[writingcenter@shawu.edu](mailto:writingcenter@shawu.edu)  
(919) 546-8468

## Annotated Bibliography

An **annotated bibliography** is a list of cited sources about a particular topic, in which each **citation** is followed by a brief discussion of the source. The **annotation** usually consists of just one paragraph, but your instructor may require more.

An annotated bibliography is useful for documenting your research in a specific area, exploring varying viewpoints, and summarizing main points from different sources.

Format requirements of an annotated bibliography vary greatly from one documentation style to another (MLA, APA, Chicago-Turabian).

There are two parts to every entry in an annotated bibliography: the **citation** and the **annotation**.

### The Citation

The citation includes the bibliographic information of the source (MLA, APA, Chicago-Turabian). The documentation style required for this information depends upon the course and will usually be assigned by your professor. Citations are organized alphabetically by the author's last name and the title of the source.

### The Annotation

The annotation is a brief paragraph following the citation.

**Purpose of the Annotation:** The annotation of a source can serve several different purposes; your professor may require your annotations to do some of the following:

- Condense the content of the source (write a brief summary of the information).
- Evaluate the credibility of the source (analyze for authority, accuracy, currency, objectivity).
- Assess the usefulness or relevant application of the source (how will the source help you in your research?).
- Discuss the writer's background (examine expertise).
- Analyze the intended audience (education, age, experience, needs, bias).

- Describe your reaction (credible source? Value of source? Analytical/emotional reaction?)

The length of an annotation depends upon the assignment. Shorter annotations will most likely cover only main points and themes; longer annotations may require a more in-depth description, discussion, or evaluation of the source. Consult the specific requirements for your assignment as your professor may dictate a word count or length for each annotation.

### **Sample Citation and Annotation**

Ehrenreich, B. (2001). *Nickel and dimed: On (not) getting by in America*. 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 Walmart 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 experiences 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.