

Annotated Bibliography & Critical History
(due in SS Assignments at the start of class on Day 15)

Part One: Annotated Bibliography

For this exercise, you will pull together and comment upon the critical sources you have consulted thus far (please note that you might not use all of these sources in your essay); doing so will allow you to see what kinds of critical dialogues surround your space/topic, thereby helping you decide where you would like to enter the conversation.

Writing an annotated bibliography has other benefits:

1. Such an exercise forces you to have a significant amount of research finished before you begin writing.
2. The lines of inquiry you consider in your annotations can be worked into your actual essay.
3. The citations in the annotated bibliography are *the same* as those that will appear in your final paper's bibliographical citations.

Annotation Format (Please note: The guidelines for this particular exercise are tailored to this research essay assignment)

Each annotation should begin with a source citation (either MLA or Chicago style). There are a number of resources you can consult to learn how to properly document your sources, including handbooks and online resources. See SS Resources for helpful handouts and links.

An annotation—containing approximately 5 sentences—follows the citation; it should include most (if not all) of the following:

- A brief overview of the content, scope, and argument of the documented source.
- How the source connects (or does not connect) to the other works cited in the bibliography.
- The source's significance in relation to your space/topic, or how you might consider this source in the context of your essay.

Though the number of sources that you will use in your final paper might be different, for this exercise you should **annotate 5 sources**.

Part Two: Critical History (3-4 pages)

Simply put, the critical history provides a short summary of the questions and debates surrounding your topic. What arguments are being made, and how are they similar to or different from each other? How are critics dialoguing with one another (how/why do they call up each other's research)? The final page of the critical history should discuss where/how you might enter the debate. Now that you have an understanding of the critical conversations surrounding your topic, how will you "occupy" your own space within the scholarly discussion? From what

angle might you approach the paper?—Do critics tend to neglect something that you would like to interrogate further? Is there one argument that intrigues you most, one that you might turn to when designing your own unique argument?

****The Dinner Party Analogy: Illustrating the differences between the annotated bibliography, critical history, and essay portions of a research project***

Here's one way to understand the difference between the annotated bibliography, critical history, and essay:

You're hosting a dinner party, and you've invited many of the critics writing on your research topic.

Annotated Bibliography (key words: **summarize, evaluate**): The first thing you do is take roll. In alphabetical order, you record the basic information about the critics' work, and then ask them to summarize their overall arguments and briefly provide supporting evidence.

Critical History (key words: **connect, converse**): Next, you begin the conversation by asking a specific question related to your own research. You record critic A's answer to this question, then ask critic B to respond to the question. Critic B agrees with Critic A, but she adds something new for the table to consider. Critic C then chimes in, disagreeing with Critics A and B and providing his own perspective. As these scholars speak, ***you remain silent*** and record what is said, including agreements, disagreements, and new questions that emerge. *Remember, this needs to appear in paragraph form, not dialogue.*

Essay (key words: **interpret, contribute**): Now that you know where your critics are positioned in relation to one another, it's time for you to consider where you stand. At this point, you enter the conversation, using your own evidence to back up your case, or to reinforce or place into question the ideas of others.