



# The Writing Center

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO  
DENVER | ANSCHUTZ MEDICAL CAMPUS

## Annotated Bibliography

A bibliography is a list of books, articles, and other documents cited in proper documentation style. An annotation, a brief (250-500 words) descriptive and evaluative paragraph, follows each citation. The purpose of the annotation is to detail and critique the relevance, accuracy and quality of the source cited. Annotations are not simply abstracts. Instead, annotations are both descriptive and critical; they provide a summary while also exposing the author's point of view, clarity and authority.

### **Purpose of an Annotated Bibliography:**

- Gather information and learn about a topic
- Provide a comprehensive overview of other research on the topic
- Inform readers as to the source's relevance in your research
- Identify issues surrounding the topic and what other scholars have said about it
- Help other scholars search for and critique potential sources for their research
- Formulate a thesis or hypothesis for your own research

### **Annotation Format:**

- Cite the source in proper documentation style (i.e.—MLA, APA, Chicago)
- Write the annotation in paragraph form
  - Do not include citations or quotations within the annotation
  - Reference the author (if needed) by last name in the text of the annotation

### **Annotation Content:**

- Summarize: Create a brief summary of the source that describes the central argument, main supporting points, research method, and conclusions.
- Assess: After composing the summary, evaluate the source. To do this, determine and discuss the source's value, credibility, bias and reliability.
- Reflect: Once you've summarized and assessed the source, describe how it fits into your research. Discuss how it contributes to your argument and/or how it affected your thinking about the topic. In some instances, you may be asked to discuss how you will use the source in your paper.

## **Assessment of the Source:**

Consider the following criteria when evaluating sources:

- Author: The authors' credentials are important to prove their credibility. Consider institutional affiliation, educational background, past writing and experience as it relates to research. Consider whether or not the source is written in the authors' area of expertise.
- Date of Publication: The date of publication is important to show how current the source is. Topic areas of continuing and rapid development, such as computer engineering and medical science, demand current information.
- Edition or Revision: Many editions or printings may indicate that the work has become a standard source in a given discipline and is therefore more reliable.
- Publisher: If a source is published by a university press, it is likely to be scholarly. Although a reputable publisher does not guarantee quality, it does demonstrate that the publisher may have a high regard for the source being published.
- Type of Journal: The distinction between scholarly and popular journals is important because it indicates different levels of complexity in conveying ideas.
- Intended Audience: Consider the authors' intended audience and what role tone, vocabulary and complexity have in the presentation of information.
- Objective Reasoning: Verify facts. Distinguish between clear, factual information and sources that use emotion-arousing language and statistics.
- Coverage: Consider if the material is thorough and consistent with what is found in other sources on the same topic. Widely divergent ideas or a lack of verifiable facts might indicate a problem with credibility.
- Writing Style: Think about the organization and main points of the source. If a source is not logical or organized, it may not be the most reliable or credible source.

### Sample Annotated References (APA Style)

Doe, J. (2009). Applications of realist political theory. *Journal of Political Theory*, 99(12), 304-310.

Doe, an Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Bratislava, argues that despite developments in constructivist international theory, realism is still the best paradigm for understanding International Relations (IR). Doe takes five principle assertions from classical realism and modern constructivism and applies them to three prominent events in recent IR: the attacks on the U.S.S. Cole, the 9/11 attacks and the war in Iraq. Doe determined that since realism puts greater emphasis specifically on the given nature of the world stage, realism is more useful and more correct than constructivism.

While Doe's analysis is useful, the study does not sufficiently answer why a political theory emphasizing a given nature of international relations is more ideal than a theory that does not emphasize it. Regardless, the definitions of realism and constructivism, as well as the general principles behind the methodology, are the most useful aspects of this article, even if its execution of the methodology is poor. I will use Doe's definitions of realism and constructivism in my own research.

### Sample Annotation (Chicago Manual of Style)

Borstelmann, Thomas. *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001.

Borstelmann, a Professor of Modern History at the University of Nebraska Lincoln, explores the role of race in the domestic and international politics of the American Cold War. He contextualizes the Civil Rights Movement in the international arena in order to argue that the American Civil Rights Movement was tied to the rise of postwar anti-colonialism and the rise of anticommunist culture. Further, Borstelmann contends that the American Civil Rights Movement evolved into an international human rights movement that continues today.

Because Borstelmann focuses his research on American policymakers and civil rights leaders, he is successful at identifying the ways in which Cold War politics served to expose America's racial injustices. He reveals the dichotomies and conflicts of American domestic and foreign policy with the reality of blacks in America during the time period in question. This source is valuable because it establishes the mounting tension that eventually culminated in the race riots of 1967, which is a major aspect of my own research. However, this is a historical narrative that has little insight into why racial tension continued to increase despite major policy changes.

### Sample Annotation (MLA Style)

Ascione, Frank and Phil Arkow, eds. *Child Abuse, Domestic Violence, and Animal Abuse: Linking the Circles of Compassion for Prevention and Intervention*. Indiana: Purdue University Press, 1999. Print.

This book collection of essays explores the link between animal abuse and human violence, providing the legislative and legal contexts and its applications. The book's contributors include advocacy authors, industry organization directors, psychologists, professors, veterinarians, state representatives and a previous U.S. Secretary of Defense. Each contributor uses his or her voice to support the claim of a correlation between animal abuse and human violence, as well as to offer possible solutions.

This book will be an invaluable research tool to help establish ethos and logos due to its use of expert opinions and scientific studies. Because it is such a comprehensive work, I will likely reference it often in my paper. Also, I can use this source to respond to the opposing view that there is not a definitive link between animal abuse and human violence.

For further information on related concepts, please see the following handouts:

- Avoiding Plagiarism
- Introducing Source Material