

## **21L.010 Annotated Bibliography: Guidelines**

### **(...and a Handy Resource to Keep for Future Research Projects!)**

This project is intended to introduce you to college-level research work, to provide you with the knowledge you need in order to teach the class, and to help you develop your ideas for your major essay. The bibliography should thus be considered an important stage on the way to your 8-page analytic essay, as well as a part of your group work.

When applying for research time or money within academia, or when seeking grants funding for professional work, one usually needs a brief project proposal or description, supplemented by a pertinent bibliography. In some areas, this might be called a “literature review”: like many in the humanities, we who study literature more specifically prefer to call this an annotated bibliography. The scholarly form of the annotated bibliography is a very useful reference tool (and one to which UROPs or graduate students often contribute as research assistants). Being adept at giving a concise, accurate synopsis of a complex argument is also a more generally useful ability.

In this instance, your project has been given to you (to teach the class), so you can focus on matching your bibliography to those needs. However, as you are doing the reading and preparation, also keep in mind that you will be writing an essay that includes attention to this play: start thinking about what most interests you about the play personally, so you are doing “double duty” as you research. [I will say more about the long essay in class on Tuesday.] The themes and questions you have identified as important for understanding your play serve as the starting points for your research. Nevertheless, you should be open to adding other themes and ideas (should you need to) as you begin reading and thinking.

To help you get started, Mark Szarko of the Humanities Library staff has constructed a special webpage for you, linked to the Materials/Assignments section. He lists three types of online search tools. There are many more, but these should get you going. The first listed is the World Shakespeare Bibliography, which includes its own brief comments about the entries: do NOT use these as YOUR annotations! That is plagiarism. Moreover, it won't

suffice. DO use the summaries to see whether you think the entry is “on topic” for your research.

Some databases (such as the MLA) will also indicate which works cited are available at MIT. Those that are not can be directly requested through Inter-Library Loan (ILL) from the site itself (see the endnote\*). The ones available at MIT, you get yourself. Do not confine yourself to online resources alone, and do *not* assume that a Google Search guarantees truth: many of the most important, respected scholarly books are *not* available in digital form, and much of what is posted has not been checked by experts for accuracy! YOU are responsible for knowing that the scholarship is reliable and true, so if you aren’t an expert yourself, take advantage of the scholarly presses and “peer reviewed” status of major journals.

Once you have begun to locate books or articles, you will find more possible citations in the footnotes and the back of books; at the library, you will find other related books on the shelf near the volumes you seek (this is the glory of what we call “open stacks,” as opposed to “closed stacks” where only librarians can rummage among the books and documents). Reference librarians can be very helpful if you have trouble locating a source you need.

Nevertheless, there are some very reliable online sources, and JSTOR (on the Webpage) is one of them. It covers selected years for a selected number of journals. The obvious advantage here is that you get not just the citation but the articles themselves, which are downloadable in pdf format. So start reading, taking notes, and thinking as you read.

***What you turn in:***

The annotated bibliography is essentially an alphabetical list of references, in each case followed by a paragraph summarizing the text in a way that suggests its relevance. However, for this assignment we will modify the description slightly.

Your task is to identify texts relevant to your group project of teaching the class, and to provide a short synopsis of each one’s main argument. You will most likely locate and read more texts than you actually describe in your bibliography: the ones you don’t find pertinent should be included in the list (with a full citation) but not summarized. Take notes on the useful

articles and books as you read. And then, after you've read each one, write up a brief summary of its argument or main points in as concise and coherent a manner as you can. Try to keep the description brief---in general, aim for 1/8 page single-spaced (or, ideally, less) per article/chapter. Remember, however, that the summary should give a clear sense of what the article was about and why you chose to summarize it. When summarizing books, focus only on those parts of the whole text that are of relevance to your topic.

A single document should be submitted by each group, and it should include at least 25 citations. Not all of you will find the same number of useful sources, or provide the same number of annotations. However, each of you should contribute *some* of the annotations, and those you write should be followed by your initials, in parentheses (DH in my case). You should share your learning with the group so that all of you feel you know about all the works cited on your group bibliography. If you read something that confuses you but seems important, you might want to have another group member read it as well.

Merge and alphabetize all your entries, and give full citations following the MLA style listed in *Easy Writer*. Proofread the document, and make sure your entire group feels included and comfortable with the final product.

**REVISED DUE DATE: SES #20**

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