

## Annotated (Evaluative) Bibliography Style Guide

An annotation is a brief description of a work such as an article, chapter of a book, Web site, or movie. An annotation attempts to give enough information to make a decision as to whether or not the reader should read the complete work *and* provides a critical evaluation of the work. (Some annotations are strictly descriptive and only tell what the work is about; this assignment, however, requires you to be critical as well as descriptive.)

The lay-out of an annotated bibliography is that of a traditional Works Cited page, with a short paragraph (at least a half-page single-spaced for this assignment) following each citation. The page should be titled “Annotated Bibliography.” Single-space entries and paragraphs, but include an extra space between the end of one annotation and the citation of your next source. (See sample.)

### **Step 1: Record the work’s complete bibliographic information.**

Use whichever documentation style is preferred in your discipline, APA or MLA. Be consistent in your documentation style for the entire bibliography.

### **Step 2: Begin with one or two sentences explaining the authority and/or qualifications of the author.**

For example, “Dr. William Smith, a history professor at XYZ University, based his book on twenty years of research.”

### **Step 3: Include a few sentences on the scope and main purpose of the work.**

“Scope” refers to the amount, both breadth and depth, of material the work covers. For example, you would want to note whether a research study was conducted on both the short-term and long-term side-effects of a new medicine or just the short-term side-effects. “Purpose” indicates what the author wants to do with the work: persuade, entertain, inform.

### **Step 4: Note any biases you detect.**

No work can be “objective” because every person brings her/his own experience, beliefs, and values to any subject. However, some authors are able to present all sides of an argument fairly, while others will obviously favor one side over another. Works such as editorials are, of course, intended to have a bias.

### **Step 5: Comment on the work’s intended audience.**

Depending on authorial choices like use of jargon, technical information, prose style, background information, and so forth, you should be able to determine whether the work is meant for an expert or non-expert audience on the topic.

**Step 6: Mention the work's relationship, if any, to other works in the area of study.**

Some works describe research projects that are part of larger studies. Other works are direct reactions to or against other works.

**Step 7: Conclude with a summary comment which provides your overall impression of the work.**

Sample Entry in MLA Format

Kennedy, George A. *Comparative Rhetoric: An Historical and Cross-Cultural*

*Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford U.P., 1998.

Kennedy, a former professor of classics, comparative literature and rhetoric and the renowned translator of Aristotle's *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse*, bases his theory of comparative rhetoric on decades of rhetorical study. He defines and provides examples of rhetoric from across the globe and from antiquity to modernity; he includes examples of rhetoric from non-literate cultures of the past and present and also discusses the "rhetoric" of social animals. He argues that a General Theory of Rhetoric can be developed from studying cross-cultural rhetoric. Such a theory, he contends, would include standardized terminology for describing rhetorical conventions of spoken and written discourse and would, ultimately, improve cross-cultural communication by establishing common ground for understanding the function and importance of language across racial, ethnic, religious, geographic, and ideological lines. Kennedy openly admits that he follows an Aristotelian paradigm, and he discounts theories of New Rhetoricians like Burke, Corbett, and Bruffee. *Comparative Rhetoric* targets an audience familiar with classical rhetoric but not necessarily rhetoricians themselves; students of communication, literature, or composition with a general background in classic and modern rhetoric would be comfortable with Kennedy's terminology. He provides rich historical and cultural contexts for every social group discussed in the book, so historical or anthropological expertise is not needed to appreciate his argument. Overall, Kennedy offers convincing evidence for the existence of universal rhetorical principles and lays the foundation for developing a cross-cultural General Theory of Rhetoric.