What’s an annotated bibliography?

An annotated bibliography is a list of books, articles, or other documents, consisting of a citation followed by a brief evaluation of each work listed.

An annotated bibliographic citation is made up of two parts.

- The **citation** describes the essential components of the work. For English classes, citations are written using the MLA format. Complete rules are in the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* Call number: LB2369.G53 2009.

- The **annotation** is a 2–3 sentence critical summary of the work. The annotation should summarize the central theme of the work, describe the author’s authority or background on the subject, and describe his or her bias toward the topic.

The annotation must include:

- a restatement of the author’s thesis and conclusions
- a description of the evidence the author(s) used to support the thesis
- a statement about how this source relates to the others in your bibliography
- a statement about how and why this source will be helpful for your own research

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Examples of Annotations

***Note: Many online databases provide abstracts or summaries of the articles they index. You may not copy those abstracts and present them as your own annotations. Doing so may be considered to be plagiarism.***

The following are examples of good annotations submitted by former CALM Lab students.


Du Coudray discusses the resemblance and reflection of the werewolf symbol in the nineteenth century as a reflection of a cultural identity crisis in which the werewolf as a literary symbol represents both the myriad discourses that arose at this time concerning all forms of identity, from sexual and psychological to economic and social. The werewolf, de Coudray argues, represents the penultimate Other of a societal group (the white male bourgeoisie) gifted with a base and monstrous power to destroy that this group feared existed in reality. Her thesis is supported using New Historicism methodologies of relating public and private accounts along with historical
data and criticisms. This account of the werewolf provides a view of the second time period I will be assessing: the Victorian medievalist revival where the werewolf as a literary symbol was much less prominent than other aspects of medieval culture.

In this essay, Smith raises objections regarding the idea that the work of Henry James and Virginia Woolf is limited and dehumanized. Smith argues that James and Woolf deal with the art of relationships instead of the “realities” that more conventional writers do. She examines multiple works by each author and how they deal with the subtle and minute complexities of life and relationships. This source does not examine Mrs. Dalloway in depth, but it could be useful in gaining a comprehensive view of Woolf’s literature as a whole and the relationship between her different works.

Tourage traces themes of gender and sexuality through the poems of Rumi. He finds both masculine and feminine characteristics in the examined texts that often correlate with sexual prowess and potency. Sexuality is a major theme in most Romantic Oriental works. Whether it is the effeminate Arab male or the exotic harem, Europeans saw the East as a sexualized place. I intend to compare and contrast sexuality in the Orient as interpreted in the poetry of Rumi with the perceptions of the Romantic Orientalists.

How can I write an annotated bibliography without reading the whole book or article?

To write an effective annotation, you need not necessarily read the entire work. For a book, you should read the preface, the introduction and the conclusion. You should also read any notes provided by the author, and look carefully at the table of contents and index to see what topics the author covers. Read the author’s credentials and any notes he or she provides about the work. Look at the sources the author cites and uses to draw conclusions.