WRITING AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adapted and revised from *Writing Across the Curriculum* by Sandra Nagy (via Southern Illinois University at Carbondale)

**Why write an annotated bibliography?**
- You get to know your subject or topic better because before you write an annotation, you must read the article carefully and think about what facts and analysis or opinions it offers you on your research topic.
- In the process of finding and reading sources, you are also focusing your topic better because you are “weeding out” those sources that do not really focus on what you are interested in writing about.

**Three questions to ask as you start to write your annotation:**
- What are the main, or most significant, ideas of this source?
- What is the author’s purpose in writing the article? Is it to inform the reader, without trying to persuade? Or is the purpose to create an argument for or against something and persuade the reader?
- How will this source help you in your research paper?

**Combine the Answers:**

**Example:** Smith focuses on the dropping illiteracy levels among school children, categorizing socioeconomic levels, racial groups, and parents’ educational background. Smith attempts to convince his readers that most children do poorly in school because their parents don’t work with them in home study sessions. This article is helpful to me because I can use it to discuss my topic of how student success in school is affected by their parents.

**Three more questions:**
- Is there any bias or slant in the source? (Does the author have a specific opinion s/he is trying to convince the reader is correct, especially about a controversial topic? Or is the author trying to present information neutrally?)
- Are there obvious omissions that seem important to the ideas being discussed?
- Does the evidence clearly support the author’s main points?

**Example:** While Smith’s data supports his position, his solutions seem too simplistic and very general. Because he ignores the busy schedules, as well as the attitudes and expectations of some parents, his “just do it” advice doesn’t seem likely to change the situation.

**Extra Tips:**
Use the author’s last name in referring to the author and use present tense to write the annotation.
Write SHORT paragraphs.
Combine answers (in your sentences) where possible.
Use MLA style for your entries.

**Last Points:**
Double space everything.
Use a “hanging indent” for each entry.
Shinn, Thelma J. “Living the Answer:” The Emergence of African American Feminist Drama.” *Studies in the Humanities* 17 (1990): 149-159.

In addition to plays by Hansberry, Childress, and Shange, Shinn discusses Kennedy’s plays. The focus on strong female characters by these playwrights shows the gender tensions within black society. According to Shinn, Kennedy, by emphasizing “the multiplicity of the inner self,” shows that these tensions must be “confronted internally” and then “integrated” (157). Shinn notes that Kennedy has shifted to an expressionist form to make these points. I found the points made in this article to be fairly obvious and not very helpful. (83 words)


Zinman analyzes the play in terms of “presence” and absence” of the characters, but as he says, not in as complex a manner as they are used to in the theories of Lacan, Saussure, and Derrida. He contends that the real subject of the play is absent (Essex) and that Kennedy has not found “a satisfying way to present absence on stage” in this play (12). In particular, according to Zinman, Kennedy’s use of realism limits the play to the “socially possible,” which are the same “forces the play intensely opposes” (8). The article was interesting, but I’m still not sure what a satisfactory absence would be. (107 words)

THE ASSIGNMENT

For this assignment, you will write annotations for four (4) sources you have uncovered through your research. Your annotations should each be about 100 words long, answering the questions on the reverse side of this sheet, and including a correct MLA-style citation for each source (see examples above). After the annotations, you will write a brief (150-200 word) reflection on how your research thus far has helped you to reshape your research question, and where you see your research project going as you move toward an outline and draft.

The annotated bibliography is due on Thursday, October 31. It may be submitted through Blackboard or as a printed copy.