

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

HIST 11: U.S. History Through Reconstruction
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For this assignment, you will formulate a research question about a topic in US history and create an annotated bibliography that you could use to answer that question. You can choose any topic we have covered in class or something else that interests you.

WHAT IS AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY?

An annotated bibliography is a list of citations to books, articles, and documents. Each citation is followed by a brief (usually about 300 words) descriptive and evaluative paragraph, the annotation. The purpose of the annotation is to inform the reader of the relevance, accuracy, and quality of the sources cited.

INSTRUCTIONS

Step One: Choose your research topic

You can choose any topic you wish, as long as it relates to **US history before 1877**. Think about what has interested you from the course so far and follow that interest. If you wish, you can pursue this same topic for your final project later in the semester. Some broad areas from which to select a more specific topic might include:

- *empire*
- *foreign relations*
- *the environment*
- *gender and sexuality*
- *immigration*
- *law and the courts*
- *politics*
- *popular culture*
- *poverty and wealth*
- *protest and dissent*
- *public health*
- *race and racism*
- *religion*
- *science/medicine*
- *social life*
- *sports and leisure*
- *technology*
- *transportation*
- *war*
- *Any individual, event, institution, or idea from the lecture or readings that you want to learn more about*

Step Two: Formulate your preliminary research question

Now that you have chosen a topic, it's time to turn it into a research question. Please begin by reading [How to Ask a Good Research Question](#) and [Guide to Creating Research Questions](#). Formulating a research question will likely require you to do some research of your own.

Browse course materials related to your topic to begin to figure out what questions are relevant to the issue you are exploring.

Your research question should be *focused, debatable, and significant*. What does that mean?

- **Focused:** an effective research question is narrow enough that you could investigate and answer it in the context of an undergraduate essay.
 - - ✗ an overly broad question: "Why did the Roman Empire fall?"
 - ✓ a focused question: "What aspects of the political system of the Roman Republic survived the rise of dictatorship and empire?"
- **Debatable:** this should not be a factual question that could be answered by a "yes" or "no." Your question should be answerable in multiple ways.
 - - ✗ a too simplistic/factual question: "Who was the first person to sign the declaration of independence?"
 - ✓ a debatable question: "What factors might explain the historical inaccuracies in John Trumbull's famous painting *The Declaration of Independence*?"
- **Significant:** your question should be one that could, once answered, provide increased historical knowledge.
 - - ✗ an insignificant question: "Why are Ping-Pong tables green?"
 - ✓ a significant question: "What was the importance of "Ping-Pong diplomacy" to the relations between China and the US?"

Once you begin your research, you may need to refine your research question based on what sources are available and where your interest leads.

Step Three: Find four scholarly secondary sources using the SMC Library

- **Scholarly sources:** books, academic/peer-reviewed academic journal articles, book reviews in academic journals
- **Non-scholarly sources (don't use):** magazines, newspapers, social media posts, encyclopedias, Wikipedia, dictionaries (If you are uncertain about whether a source is appropriate, ask me!)

To find sources, I recommend looking at [SMC's History Library Guide](#) and searching the [SMC History Databases](#). Cynthia Bautista, an SMC librarian, also put together a [presentation on using library resources](#).

Step Four: Write a paragraph explaining each source

Each source citation must be followed by a 250-350 word **descriptive paragraph**, the annotation. Your annotation should include the following information:

- The purpose of the source
 - A summary of its content
 - For what type of audience the source is written
 - Its relevance to your topic
 - The strengths and/or weaknesses of the material
 - Any special or unique features about the material
 - At least one quote from the source (<1 sentence)
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WHERE TO FIND SCHOLARLY SOURCES

- [SMC Library History Research Guide](#)
- [SMC Library History Databases](#)
- [Google Scholar](#)

FORMATTING REQUIREMENTS

- Must include your title and research question at the beginning
- Times New Roman, 12-pt font
- 1-inch margins
- Double-spaced
- Citations should be in [Chicago Style](#)
- Each citation should be followed by a 250-350 word paragraph summarizing and analyzing the source

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Cal State LA Guide: <http://calstatela.libguides.com/c.php?g=767310&p=5506768>
- UCLA Guide: http://www.history.ucla.edu/sites/default/files/assets/annotated_bibliographies.pdf
- Cornell Guide: <https://guides.library.cornell.edu/annotatedbibliography>