

Annotated Bibliography (optional assignment)

Build Your Skills while researching your Fields of Study

Why opt to do this assignment?

- **Map a topic:** Writing the AB will give you necessary background in your AoC, and help you recognize journals, topics, and authors in your field.
- **Skill-build:** Writing AB's are an important skill for pre-writing a paper and for keeping organized notes for a research project or paper. (This skill is essential to writing a thesis, creating an independent study, or throughout graduate school!)

The assignment: Pick a specialized subtopic within your Area of Concentration on which to create an annotated bibliography (AB) of research articles.

- If possible, choose a topic that requires you to draw from multiple disciplines.
- Articles should be from peer-reviewed sources to ensure quality.
- Make sure it includes some of the most cited articles, so that you know the important foundational writings and be sure to include recent articles, so you have the latest developments.

How do I create an annotated bibliography (AB)?

An AB is a list of citations followed by a brief description and evaluation to help you track and evaluate relevance and note research approaches. Here are the general steps, but you can choose to do it in a way that is helpful to you:

- **Cite the Source:** Begin with a full citation of the source in the required style (e.g., APA, MLA, Chicago). This is the same as you would do for a regular bibliography or reference list.
- **Summarize:** In your annotation, start by summarizing the main argument, purpose, and key findings of the source. What are the authors' main conclusions?
- **Evaluate:** Next, evaluate the source –its reliability and quality. Are the arguments well-supported? Does the author have any biases?
 - **Note the research methodologies used.** Not only will you build your knowledge of how research methodologies work, this will help you think about how you may want to research a related topic, such as qualitative interviews, quantitative surveys, case studies, document analysis, etc.
- **Notes on Relevance:** How is this source is relevant to your own research or project? Does it support/contradict other sources? You can begin to think about how you will use it in your work. (Or, you can highlight key points, as in the example.)

Tips:

- **Citation management tools** (such as Zotero) which may be offered by your home campus can be helpful, and pulling and formatting citations in your preferred style (such as APA) and allow you to take notes.
- See the CUNY BA video on **how to write an annotated bibliography** and a sample, below.

Sample - Annotated Bibliography Entry

Wonham, M., & Derby-Talbot, R. (2023). Questions Instead of Majors: Implementing a Self-Authored Concentration Program. *Studies in Higher Education*, 48(4), 603-616.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2022.2151998>

Key points:

- Traditional majors, focused on fixed courses and facts, might not prepare students for our rapidly changing world (often called "VUCA" for volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous).
- Self-authored concentrations (SACs) flip this idea: students first learn *how* to ask their own questions, and then gain knowledge and skills as they pursue those questions. These opportunities are often not available until graduate school.
- SACs help students develop intellectual maturity and independence, teaching crucial skills like critical thinking, problem-solving, and adaptability—skills employers really value.
- Quest University Canada's "Question" program is a great example of a SAC. Students design their own interdisciplinary studies with guidance from professors.
- Quest's "Question Plan" includes a personal statement, an academic statement and plan, key readings, course and experiential learning plan, and choosing a faculty mentor.

Research Methodology:

- Case Study on Quest University Canada's "Question" program over 14 years, including speaking with founding faculty members to understand how the program started; quantitative data on the 82 "Question" courses taught; and analysis 1,054 unique "Questions" designed by graduates during the time period. They used the Student Engagement Survey (NSSE) instrument to compare students' engagement scores to other top universities on student involvement and also included the authors' personal experience as faculty at Quest from their years of teaching and mentoring in the program.