

## 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 descriptive paragraph, the annotation. The purpose of the annotation is to create and collect a small number of documents that you can use to write your large research paper. We will focus on three types of resources:

**The primary text:** this is your chosen work, whether it is a particular book of Plato's *Republic*, the *Symposium*, etc. If the work is divided into books, like Plato's *Republic*, you will likely only focus on a specific book.

**Background sources:** these include encyclopedia entries and textbooks. Such resources do not argue for any particular view. They explain a text and often summarize the main interpretative disputes about a text. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy and the Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy are excellent. They are available online and will have suggestions for other readings.

**Secondary literature:** these include academic research about your chosen text. Very little is agreed upon and the secondary literature is where academics argue for one interpretation over the other. These come in the form of papers published in peer review journals and books published by academic presses. Papers run normally about 30 pages. While books are obviously longer, you normally will be able to focus on one or two chapters for your project.

## The Process

Creating an annotated bibliography calls for the application of a variety of intellectual skills: concise exposition, succinct analysis, and informed library research.

1. Locate and record citations to books, periodicals, and documents that may contain useful information and ideas on your topic. While you can use the library website, you should also go into the library. If you locate a book you think is useful, look at the rest of the shelf. Often you will find other relevant material.
  - **NB:** Use librarians! One of the main jobs of an academic librarian is to help users find research material. Tell them what you are interested in and they will help you figure out what to read.
  - Digital resources are risky. There is as much false information online as there is accurate information. If you do use online resources, try only to use resources found through the library's website.
  - A good place to start is the list of resources under 'Ancient Resources' on the course website.

2. Briefly examine and review the actual items. While you only need to skim these sources, you need to read them closely enough to decide whether they are relevant.
3. Choose those works that are relevant and helpful for your topic. Discard those that are irrelevant.
4. Of those you keep, cite the book, article, or document using the your preferred citation style, e.g., APA, Chicago, etc. Make sure to note the translator of any Greek texts.
5. Write a concise annotation that summarizes the central theme and scope of the work. For the primary text, identify the main claim/question that interests you and write a very short summary of the work, where your summary picks up on whatever is relevant for your topic. Think here of the context from the gobbets. For the other types of sources, explain how they relate to your question. If they contain an answer, or a variety of answer, clearly state those answers. You may also compare or contrast the various works you have cited, e.g., work A defends answer X, but work B rejects answer X and argues for answer Y.

## Requirements

- Your annotated bibliography must include **annotations** for your **one** primary text, **one** background source, and **two** secondary literature sources. Word limits (keep it short!):
  - Primary text: 250-500 words.
  - Background source: 150-250 words.
  - Secondary literature 1: 150-250 words.
  - Secondary literature 2: 150-250 words.
- Your annotated bibliography must include **citations** for i) your primary text, ii) at least **two** background sources, i.e., encyclopedias and textbooks, and (iii) at least **five** secondary literature sources, whether they be articles from scholarly journals or books published by academic publishers.
- **NB: You are being asked to collect and cite several sources that discuss your topic, but I am asking you to summarize just a few of these sources. I encourage you to complete the annotations for the rest of the citations before you write your paper, but that is not a requirement for this assignment.**
- Grading: this is worth 7 points towards your final grade in the course. (The proposed question was worth 3. The literature review, presentation, and final paper will be worth a total of 30.)