

Fall 2011

# Writing Assignments: Annotated Bibliography + Research Paper

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## **Writing Assignment II: Annotated Bibliography**

Medieval Christianity

HIST 1333: Fall 2011

### **Assignment**

Create an annotated bibliography of three secondary sources on any topic relating to medieval Christianity. This assignment requires you to do three things:

1. Search for secondary sources using scholarly research methods;
  2. Read three secondary sources about your topic;
  3. Write an annotated bibliography of the three secondary sources.
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### **Part I. Library Research Session: Friday 9/30.**

During class, brainstorm two or three possible topics that you would be interested in researching. As part of our instruction session, start tracking down sources for these topics in the Coates Library Catalog, JSTOR, and Project Muse. Which topics are the most viable?

### **Part II. Topic Proposal: Due in class Monday, 10/3.**

List one or two topics that you would like to researching for this project. In no more than 100 words, explain why you're interested in each topic and what types of sources you've found so far.

### **Part III. Preliminary Bibliography: Due in Class Monday 10/10.**

After our second library session (Friday 10/7), decide which of your proposed topics you plan to research. Using the tools we've learned about, find at least FOUR secondary books or articles that relate to your topic.

At the top of the page, type out your research topic. Then, for each source, type out:

- A bibliographical reference that follows Chicago style guidelines;
- The library call number for printed books and journals *or* the stable URL for electronic texts;
- A fifty-word description of how you found the source. What resource or database did you use? What search terms did you enter? Why did you choose this particular source from the list of results?

Note: use *only* the research methods we learned about in Friday's library session. Wikipedia, Google, and other search engines are not permitted. Remember, this is a working list: you do not have to read these sources yet!

### **Part IV. Annotated Bibliography: Due in Class Friday 10/28.**

Choose THREE of your secondary sources and create an annotated bibliography, following the guidelines on the next page. At the top of the page, write the topic of your bibliography. For each of your three sources, type out:

- A bibliographical reference that follows Chicago guidelines;
  - An annotation paragraph of 150-200 words, placed immediately underneath each bibliographical reference;
  - A word count for the paragraph at the end of each entry.
- 

### **Other Important Information**

I will collect these assignments in hard copy at the beginning of class. Please turn in all preliminary assignments—with my comments on them—with your final project. An electronic copy of your final annotated bibliography is due at 5:00 PM on Friday 10/28. You must turn in a hard copy AND an electronic copy! Late work will not be accepted or graded unless you get my permission in advance.

Your annotated bibliography should be double spaced in 12-point Times font, with staples and page numbers; margins should measure one inch on each side. DO NOT use a cover sheet. Each source MUST be cited in Chicago style: see [lib.trinity.edu/lib2/cite.php](http://lib.trinity.edu/lib2/cite.php) OR [www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools\\_citationguide.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html).

**PLEASE NOTE: All preliminary work is required! If any of the preliminary items are missing, the assignment is not complete and will not be graded.**

## What's an Annotated Bibliography?

A regular bibliography is a list of primary and secondary sources about a particular topic. Each entry provides the author, title, and publisher of each source, as well as the place and date of publication. Bibliographies are included in most scholarly books. If you write a research paper or an essay that uses primary or secondary sources, you always include a bibliography (sometimes called a Works Cited list) so that your reader knows which texts you consulted in your research.

An annotated bibliography provides more information about each source than a regular bibliography. In addition to the information you'd find in an ordinary bibliographical entry, annotated bibliographies include a short paragraph summarizing what each source is about and why it's important. Annotated bibliographies are useful research tools because they help you keep track of what you've read and remind you how each source relates to your topic.

## Choosing a Topic

You may choose any aspect of medieval Christianity to research. I will approve your topic and preliminary bibliography before you begin the final stage of the assignment.

## Choosing Your Sources

Your annotated bibliography must include three secondary works of scholarship.

- Each source must be written by a different author.
- At least one source must be an article from a scholarly journal;
- At least one source must be a chapter or essay from a scholarly book;
- Each source must be between 15 and 25 pages long.

## Writing an Annotated Bibliography

Your objective for this assignment is to find, read, and engage with medieval historical scholarship. Each annotation paragraph should demonstrate that you have read and understood the author's argument.

As you're composing your annotated bibliography, ask yourself the following questions:

- What is the author's thesis? How does each author construct his or her argument?
- What evidence does the author use? What primary texts are discussed?
- What conclusions does the author draw? Are you convinced by these conclusions?
- What new information or interpretations does the text offer about your topic?

Successful annotated bibliographies do more than paraphrase. In addition to summarizing each article or chapter in your annotation paragraph, make sure that you're applying your own analytical skills to these secondary texts. Based on your knowledge of the medieval world, do the author's claims seem convincing? How does the author's argument enhance your knowledge of this topic? Does one of your texts explicitly disagree with another—and if so, what is the point of contention? After reading these sources, what analytical questions do you have? Plan to devote one or two sentences at the end of each annotation to your own scholarly response to the article!

## Some Friendly Suggestions

Annotated bibliographies are discussed in detail in Rampolla's *Pocket Guide to Writing in History*. I strongly recommend that you read Rampolla's suggestions and examples as you work on this assignment.

I will be glad to meet with you to discuss this assignment! Feel free to visit my regular office hours or email me to make an appointment.

## Writing Assignment III: Research Paper

Medieval Christianity

HIST 1333: Fall 2011

### Assignment

Write a research paper of 4-5 pages on any aspect of medieval Christianity, from c.300 through c.1400. I recommend continuing with the topic you researched for Writing Assignment II, but you may select a new topic if you prefer.

This paper must have an analytical argument, based on discussions of:

- **1 primary source.** You can read an entire medieval text if it's relatively short (like *The Dream of the Rood*), but you may focus on an excerpt of a longer text instead (like a chapter of the *Benedictine Rule*).
- **3-4 secondary sources.** Your secondary sources may be scholarly books or articles. You should employ the same research methods you used to compile the annotated bibliography for Writing Assignment II.

Note: If you are continuing with the same topic you researched for Writing Assignment II, at least one of your secondary sources must be the result of a new search.

### Due Dates

Fri 11/4

#### **Library Research Day! Meet in Coates Library**

Bring a list of one or two potential topics. (I will not collect these.)

Mon 11/7

#### **Due in Class. Preliminary Assignment 1: Topic Proposal and Working Bibliography**

Type up and turn in:

- A research topic, explained in 2-3 sentences. What historical question will you investigate?
- A preliminary bibliography of at least TWO primary and FIVE secondary sources, all cited according to Chicago style guidelines. Each secondary source should be approximately 15-25 pages long; the length of the primary source is up to you. For each source, include 1-2 sentences (approximately 50 words) explaining how you found each source and why you selected it from your list of hits.

Fri 11/11

#### **Library Research Day! Meet in Coates Library**

Fri 11/18

#### **Due in Class. Preliminary Assignment 2: Working Thesis and Outline (1-2 pages)**

By now, you should have read your primary source and at least one new secondary source. Type up and turn in:

- A working thesis for your research paper.
- A brief (1-2 page) outline of your argument, including specific points about your primary and secondary sources. You may organize your outline however you like—in bullet points or in continuous prose—as long as you're clearly setting out your argument.

Fri 12/2

#### **Due in Class. Final Paper**

I will collect this assignment in hard copy at the beginning of class, along with all preliminary assignments—with my comments on them. An electronic copy of your final draft is due at 5:00 PM on Friday 12/2. You must turn in a hard copy AND an electronic copy! Late work will not be accepted or graded unless you get my permission in advance.

Your paper **MUST** be double spaced in 12-point Times font, with page numbers and staples; margins **MUST** measure one inch on each side. Do not use a cover sheet. Sources **MUST** be cited in Chicago style: [lib.trinity.edu/lib2/cite.php](http://lib.trinity.edu/lib2/cite.php) OR [www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools\\_citationguide.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html). **All preliminary work is REQUIRED! If any of the preliminary items are missing, the assignment is not complete and will not be graded.**

**A note on length.** This is a 4-5 page paper. This means:

- The paper must be **at least** FOUR full pages, with one line on the fifth page.
- The paper must be **no longer than** FIVE full pages, with one line on the sixth page.

- Your bibliography page **does not** count toward the 4-5 page total.

## Assignment Details

### Rationale

This assignment requires you to use the analytical and research skills you've practiced this semester. You'll need to choose a topic, compile a bibliography of primary and secondary sources, provide your own critique of the medieval text, and contextualize your ideas with secondary scholarship. Like any research project, this paper requires you to synthesize information in a coherent and persuasive way. However, the best research papers do not simply regurgitate what you've read: they have a complex thesis and original argument of their own. Even though you're focusing on the work of medieval authors and modern historians, make sure your paper presents your own ideas!

### Research Topic

The best way to approach the research topic is by identifying a historical problem and proposing a question—usually beginning with a “why” or “how”—that will help you propose an explanation. For example:

- Medieval clergy frequently opposed capital punishment in theory, yet they participated in secular judicial trials that condemned criminals to death. How did clergy justify these apparently conflicting positions?
- Although solitary asceticism began as an important element of Christian practice, it was discouraged by Church authorities in the later Middle Ages. Why did this change in attitude occur, and how did it affect people's ability to lead an individualistic religious life?

### Working Bibliography

This should look like your preliminary bibliography from Writing Assignment II—but with primary sources, too.

- Include at least TWO primary sources (any page count) and FIVE secondary sources (15-25 pages each).

**Note.** If you are continuing with the topic you researched in Writing Assignment II, you must have at least TWO NEW SECONDARY SOURCES on your working bibliography for Writing Assignment III. Include the sources from the previous assignment, if you plan to use them again, but please indicate that you wrote about them last time.

- Each source must be cited according to Chicago style guidelines.
- Each source should be followed by a Coates call number, stable URL, or a note that you've ILL-ed the item.
- Include 1-2 sentences (approx. 50 words) explaining why you selected each source.

### Working Thesis and Outline

The working thesis should explain your research topic and address the historical question you plan to ask. The working outline should provide the main points of your argument and supporting examples from your primary and secondary sources, in 1-2 pages.

- Remember: you don't have to squeeze your thesis into a single sentence!
- It's okay if your thesis and outline evolve as you start drafting your paper. This is just a starting point.

### Final Paper

The final paper should be 4-5 pages long (see note above). You are encouraged to use quotations from your primary source, especially if you are offering a close reading of the text. Quotations from secondary texts should be used sparingly: they should only be used if the author's exact words are vital to understanding his or her point; otherwise paraphrase in your own words. **Quotations should never be used to convey narrative detail!** If you're not discussing the language directly, think carefully about whether you need to include a direct quotation.

ALL quotations and paraphrases must be cited in the body of the paper: you must identify the text and page number if you refer to an outside source. ALL sources must also be listed in a Chicago-style bibliography attached to the end of the paper. However, the bibliography should only cite sources that you've referenced in the body of the text.

Your final paper should be polished work: make sure you save time to edit and proofread what you've written. Please remember that your computer's spell-check will not catch all errors!

### A Friendly Reminder

Remember that you're welcome to come talk to me during office hours—and I strongly encourage you to come in and discuss your project! The fabulous Trinity librarians are always available to help, as are the peer tutors in the Writing

Center in Coates Library. Finally, it's worth consulting Rampolla's *Pocket Guide to Writing in History*, a great resource with valuable tips on conducting historical research.