Respect the Reader:

KNOW WHAT YOU’RE TALKING ABOUT & WHO YOU’RE CITING, ALWAYS.

Let's start thinking about the Annotated Bibliography by seeing its role in forming our focused essay topic and thesis. In fact, the first thing you will do after forming a general topic will be to begin working on your Annotated Bibliography. That's because the A.B. is a fundamental research tool that helps you to keep track of the sources you've found, evaluate and synthesize them. You are required to "annotate" your sources in order to foster synthesis and evaluation. Only as you begin to synthesize your sources can you develop a strong thesis and begin to build a solid essay draft. Therefore, the first part of the article project we will workshop is the A.B.

Your A.B. is a map of your research process, so it tells me a lot about how you've been developing your argument, and where you may need to go to better develop it. That is why your A.B. will be due for a grade along with the Half Draft of your article, thus allowing me to respond to both and to help you strengthen the research, and as a result, your essay development. While you will not submit your A.B. again once it has been graded, I hope that you will continue to use it as you add further research to your article.

The Article-Expose' Half Draft:

Part of what we'll learn through this process is how to expand an article-length topic from something that can be handled in 4 pages (1800 words), into something that requires 7 or more pages to address (3400 words or more). For some of you, the half draft may represent a more simplistic, less refined version of your thesis, while for others, it may represent a refined but under-supported thesis. Regardless, the half draft allows me to see where you want your argument to go, but assumes that you still have a lot to due in terms of supporting, illustrating, and developing that argument.

Your half draft will follow MLA format, with citations, a title, and a Works Cited page (separate from your A.B.). In the Half Draft itself, you are only required to include TWO of the sources that you list in your A.B. (minimum of 6 sources).

I will first review your A.B. to get a feel for your body of research before reading your Half Draft, so that I can give you feedback on your research as well as your writing.

Sources & the 70/30 Ratio:

As your research and your essay develop, please be careful that you do not overwhelm your text with source information. Your research should give rise to your ideas without dominating your essay. Remember that 70% of your material should be YOUR thoughts, analysis, and interpretation of the issues, your own words and presentation of views. No more than 30% should be quoted or paraphrased source information.

The Annotated Bibliography:

What IS an Annotated Bibliography?
The purpose of an Annotated Bibliography varies. In the library, you can find volumes of annotated bibliographies on almost any topic. The difference between an A.B. and a simple bibliography (list of works) is that an AB includes a notation about each entry, so that researchers can decide whether or not that text might be helpful to them – whether or not it talks about issues they are interested in.

[Hint – If you find a RECENT AB on your topic, it can really help you with your AB – just be careful that the texts you find in it are AVAILABLE in the library. You can also cull the bibliographies and works cited pages of other texts on your topic]

OUR PURPOSE: 1. To Help us FOCUS on a TOPIC & REFINE our APPROACH or CLAIM – this is a preliminary source-finding process to discover what may be available on a potential topic, whether or not you’ll be able to pursue it, and how to pursue it; 2. To force us to evaluate each sources’ credibility and/or relevance; 3. To help us synthesize sources on a topic and develop a picture of how sources contribute to a conversation on the subject; 4. An exercise in building a ready-made works cited page for your paper

TYPES OF SOURCES YOU MAY INCLUDE:
- scholarly articles on the topic(s)
- scholarly books or chapters therein
- scholarly articles on contextual issues potentially relating to your discussion
- articles or books on a concept that could inform your discussion (a topic on bullying might benefit from a psychology article on kids and behavior)
- material from CREDIBLE website sources on your topic
- interviews which provide context, credibility, evidence, and/or perspective on/to the discussion
- PRIMARY texts such as images, speeches, songs, or laws that you may analyze for discussion
- ALL SOURCES SHOULD BE CREDIBLE AND TIMELY – sources used for purposes of credibility should come from an authority, and those addressing quickly-changing issues should be as recent as possible. “Old” sources or texts should be old for a reason, and not because you didn’t bother to find more recent material.

WHAT YOU MUST INCLUDE:

Your Annotated Bibliography must include no fewer than six (6), varied, and appropriately timely sources (in MLA citation format) for your topic, for which you will write a brief (approx. 3-5 sentences) note indicating what the source is about, its credibility, and how you might use it. AT LEAST ONE of these sources MUST be from a scholarly, peer-reviewed journal, i.e. it should be scholarly research by an expert in a field (like: cultural studies, media studies, psychology, sociology, STEM fields, literature, history, etc).

OVERVIEW, HOW-TO & TROUBLE-SHOOTING:
From the beginning of the researched-article journey, this Annotated Bibliography, source-finding mission should help you begin to develop some ideas about what’s out there on the topic/issues you’re interested in. Each source ought to have some potential use for you (i.e., you might disagree with their argument, or they’re ideas will help to inform yours, or they’ll help you explain something that’s key to your discussion, etc.). Ultimately, when I read your A.B., I should know what topic(s) you’re considering based on your source choices.

YOU SHOULD READ EACH SOURCE COMPLETELY to accomplish this. You CAN locate an article’s gist within the first three pages, or in its abstract (please...
ask for my help, if you get confused). You can also assess its credibility based upon where you found it, who published it, and how old it is (the more recent, the better). See your handbook for guidance on evaluating sources. But, to be about to make solid claims about your topic, you need to be reading what’s out there!

IF YOU CANNOT FIND ANY SOURCES THAT SEEM TO ADDRESS YOUR TOPIC, see a resource librarian, and then contact me – you may be searching ineffectively, or in the wrong places. Consider that you DON’T want sources that are making your exact claims!! You want the information necessary for you to make such claims on your own. If we are STILL unable to unearth anything, then this shows that your topic will be very difficult to pursue and that you ought to reconsider it.

IF YOU HAVE TROUBLE FINDING RECENT SOURCES, or wish to use a source older than 10 years, see a resource librarian, and/or contact me. There are certainly exceptions that can be made if the source is particularly necessary to your argument and if you are also able to locate at least two other more recent resources.

EXAMPLE A.B. ENTRY:


Gilbert & Gubar argue that Northanger Abbey is a subversive “indictment of patriarchy,” and base this on its relationship to the gothic genre and contemporary gender issues. Although it is clearly an old piece of scholarship, it was published by a university press, and is still a touchstone text on Austen. I would use their argument to talk about Northanger's relationship to Udolpho as a gothic novel, and argue against their claim that [fill in the blank].

MOST IMPORTANTLY – Remember that YOU CAN DO THIS!!!!

This Annotated Bibliography and Half Draft are designed to HELP you, not torture you with minutia. This is a vital step in the process and you CAN use it to your advantage!

Remember that the process of building the A.B. IS GOOD RESEARCHING turned into an assignment, and is necessary to develop any credible sense of the information on a given subject.