**Annotated Works Cited OWL Purdue handout** Dana Bisignani, Allen Brizee

A "Works Cited" is a list of sources (books, journals, Web sites, periodicals, etc.) one has used for researching a topic.

An **annotation** is a summary and/or evaluation/reflection. Therefore, an **annotated works cited** includes a summary and/or evaluation/reflection of each of the sources. Your assignment will:

* Give a full, accurate **MLA entry** for the source using the most recent format (consult your manual!)
* **A summary paragraph:** What are the main arguments? What is the point of this book or article? What topics are covered? If someone asked what this article/book is about, what would you say?
* An **Assessment paragraph**: After summarizing a source, evaluate it. Does it seem like a reliable and current source? Why? Is the research biased or objective? Are the facts well documented? Who is the author? Is she qualified in this subject? Is this source scholarly, popular, some of both? Is it a useful source? How does it compare with other sources in your bibliography? What is the goal of this source?
* **A reflection paragraph**: Once you've summarized and assessed a source, you need to ask how it fits into your research. Was this source helpful to you? Too scholarly? Not scholarly enough? Too general/specific? How does it help you shape your argument? How can you use this source in your research project? Has it changed how you think about your topic? How does it fit into your research?

**Why should I write an annotated works cited?**

**To learn about your topic**: Writing an annotated works cited is excellent preparation for a research project. Just collecting sources for a bibliography is useful, but when you have to write annotations for each source, you're forced to read each source more carefully. You begin to read more critically instead of just collecting information.

**To help other researchers**: Extensive and scholarly annotated works cited are sometimes published. They provide a comprehensive overview of everything important that has been and is being said about that topic. You may not ever get your annotated bibliography published, but as a researcher, you might want to look for one that has been published about your topic.

Sample MLA annotated works cited entry

In the sample annotation below, the writer includes three paragraphs: a summary, an evaluation of the text, and a reflection on its applicability to his/her own research, respectively.

Lamott, Anne. *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*. New York: Anchor Books,

1995. Print.

Lamott's book offers honest advice on the nature of a writing life, complete with its insecurities and failures. Taking a humorous approach to the realities of being a writer, the chapters in Lamott's book are wry and anecdotal and offer advice on everything from plot development to jealousy, from perfectionism to struggling with one's own internal critic. The discussions are accompanied by demonstrations of the writer’s work in progress. In the process, Lamott includes writing exercises designed to be both productive and fun. She extends commentaries on the efforts in the pieces offered as examples.

Lamott offers sane advice for those struggling with the anxieties of writing, but her main project seems to be offering the reader a reality check regarding writing, publishing, and struggling with one's own imperfect humanity in the process. Rather than a practical handbook to producing and/or publishing, this text is indispensable because of its honest perspective, its down-to-earth humor, and its encouraging approach. The author’s ‘voice’ in this case comes across as informal yet sincere, clearly expressing empathy with the struggling or unconfident writer. Lamott’s style reinforces what Smith and Taylor have indicated as hallmarks of professional writing distress and stands apart from the more methodical approach advocated in Berndez’s work.

Chapters in this text could easily be included in the curriculum for a writing class. Several of the chapters in Part 1 address the writing process and would serve to generate discussion on students' own drafting and revising processes. Some of the writing exercises would also be appropriate for generating classroom writing exercises. The commentaries would be appropriate to begin collaborative dialogues about the writing and review processes. Students should find Lamott's style both engaging and enjoyable. Lamott’s work contributes to a personal understanding of writing anxiety as a shared reality.

NOTICE:

* Author is referred to by last name.
* No “I” expressing personal reaction
* Each section performs a specific function
* Only the MLA entry is at the left margin—all paragraphs are indented