

# Revising with Research: The Annotated Bibliography Assignment

## English 120 ♦ Fall 2024

As part of your final portfolio, you will submit an annotated bibliography of four secondary, contextual, or theoretical sources published in 1980 or later. These sources do not include the main texts you analyze in your papers; for example, if you are writing about *Vertigo*, the film itself would not be one of the sources you annotate in this assignment.

### The Four Sources

Among the four sources you ultimately include in this bibliography, you will include these:

- ♦ At least one **scholarly source not assigned for the class** (a peer-reviewed journal article or a scholarly book—if you aren't sure whether a source qualifies, please ask for clarification).
  - The search bar on the [front page of the College Libraries' site](#) is a great place to start looking for sources. You might hear teachers or librarians refer to using “Primo” for searches. Primo is the engine running the libraries' search. It works especially well for books but has also become increasingly useful for articles and book chapters. It is an excellent all-around starting point for research.
  - Google Scholar also draws on many kinds of sources, and it has helpful features showing related sources and citation counts, which give you a rough sense of sources that have attracted a wide scholarly readership. If you use Google Scholar from a campus connection, it can (like Primo) link directly to full-text versions of sources.
- ♦ At least one **reference source** that comes from the library's print reference section or the [Reference Resources page](#) of the library's English subject guide.
  - Recommended starting points: the general starting points are built into this source already. Within the Reference Resources page, Oxford Reference Online is a good place to go if you don't see a more specific source related to your research.
  - You can annotate the whole reference source or a single substantial entry.
- ♦ At least one **full-length scholarly book** not assigned for class. Note that you do not necessarily need to read the entire book to describe how it works. You can lean heavily on materials such as the table of contents, introduction, and chapter and section headings. Note that when you cite and annotate a book, you need to summarize the whole book, not just the part you plan to use in your paper. The description of your use of the source, naturally, can focus just on that part.
  - The libraries' search bar described above is great for finding books. You can filter your search results by going to “Material Type” on the left and choosing “Books.”

The fourth entry can be any other secondary, contextual, or theoretical source you find useful. You cannot use the same source to satisfy more than one of these requirements, and all of the sources you include should be cited in your portfolio papers.

## What to Write for Each Source

For each source, you will write three things:

- ♦ a **bibliographical entry** in Chicago Notes and Bibliography (NB) Style, as if it were part of a bibliography,
- ♦ a **summary of the piece's argument** in 150-200 words, and
- ♦ a description, of 100-150 words, of **how you plan to use the source** in your paper and how it has affected your thinking about your topic.

## Doing the Assignment during the Semester

I hope this assignment will help you build a sense of research as a process of discovery driven by curiosity. Many writers find curiosity-driven research especially valuable in the revision process, when the experience of writing the first version of a paper has sharpened your sense of what you want to learn from your sources. When we talk about your papers in conferences, I will be happy to discuss opportunities for using research in your revision process.

As you compose or revise papers, you and I will both look for places where you could use more information on a topic. Any number of research areas might come into play for you—literary, social, scientific, philosophical, and so forth. You might want to find out what a reference source can tell you about the historical context of *Small Axe*, for example, or find a poet's commentary on the role of chance in authorship, or see how *Citizen Kane* was reviewed when it was first released. I intend this assignment to support all of those kinds of inquiry and more, in response to your development as a scholarly writer this semester.

## Sample Entry: Scholarly Article

### Citation

Miller, J. Hillis. “*Wuthering Heights*: Repetition and the ‘Uncanny.’” In *Wuthering Heights*, edited by Linda H. Peterson, 371–84. Boston: Bedford, 1992.

### Summary

Miller begins his article with an epigraph taken from *Wuthering Heights*: “I don’t care—I will get in!”<sup>1</sup> In the novel, Lockwood utters this statement to express his determination to enter Wuthering Heights. For Miller, it also represents “the situation of the critic” of the novel.<sup>2</sup> Miller argues that, although *Wuthering Heights* entices the reader both by promising the pleasures of realist fiction—some kind of accurate picture of nineteenth-century Yorkshire—and also by using the enticement of a “secret explanation” for the novel’s mysteries.<sup>3</sup> Like Lockwood, the reader confronts “a mass of fascinating but confusing data” that comes tempers overconfidence.<sup>4</sup> Miller offers a long list of critics who have attempted to offer comprehensive explanations of the novel, but he contends that “[a]ll of these interpretations are . . . wrong.”<sup>5</sup> The rest of Miller’s article consists of readings of passages from the novel that offer unique and mutually incompatible ways of interpreting texts.<sup>6</sup> Examining all of these possibilities together creates a sense of impossibility.

### My Use of the Source

I am using this source in a paper about Nelly Dean’s shaping of family stories within *Wuthering Heights*. I agree with Miller that Lockwood confronts a mass a bewildering information that he—and therefore we—cannot fully interpret. However, I want to emphasize that Brontë shows how Nelly ensures Lockwood’s confusion by offering him partial views that reinforce his powerlessness to control his own situation. This interpretation leads to a different formulation of storytelling and control: whereas Miller’s deconstructionist perspective entices him to find irresolvable self-contradiction at the heart of any text, *Wuthering Heights* shows a guiding figure, Nelly, reaping the benefits of confusion and contradiction.

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<sup>1</sup> J. Hillis Miller, “*Wuthering Heights*: Repetition and the ‘Uncanny,’” in *Wuthering Heights*, ed. Linda H. Peterson (Boston: Bedford, 1992), 371.

<sup>2</sup> Miller, “*Wuthering Heights*,” 371.

<sup>3</sup> Miller, “*Wuthering Heights*,” 371.

<sup>4</sup> Miller, “*Wuthering Heights*,” 372.

<sup>5</sup> Miller, “*Wuthering Heights*,” 374, 375.

<sup>6</sup> Miller, “*Wuthering Heights*,” 381.