How to write an annotated bibliography in APA-style

The purpose of an annotated bibliography can be to 1) summarize the main points of a source, 2) evaluate the quality of a source, and/or 3) comment on the usefulness of a source for a project.

In this assignment, you should focus on the first two. When summarizing a source, consider: what is the purpose of the source (paper, book, video, etc), or what is the author trying to accomplish? How do they get the answers to their questions, or what methods do they use? What are their primary conclusions or findings?

When evaluating the quality of a source, consider: is it peer-reviewed research? If it is not peer-reviewed, do the authors cite the sources of information they are presenting? Does it seem well-researched? Does it have a clear slant or bias? If sources are not peer-reviewed or if they seem biased, that doesn’t automatically make them bad. However, it does mean that we need to be careful about taking what they say at face-value, so we need to look closely at where they are getting their information from and how they are presenting it in order to assess its message.

The following is an example of an annotated bibliographic entry for a book. Keep in mind that, for a full annotated bibliography, all sources should be listed in alphabetical order by last name (as is the case with a regular bibliography) and, following APA style, all entries should be double-spaced and have a hanging indent.

Example Entry (borrowed from Purdue OWL):


In this book of nonfiction based on the journalist’s experiential research, Ehrenreich attempts to ascertain whether it is currently possible for an individual to live on a minimum-wage in America. Taking jobs as a waitress, a maid in a cleaning service, and a Walmart sales employee, the author summarizes and reflects on her work, her relationships with fellow workers, and her financial struggles in each situation.

An experienced journalist, Ehrenreich is aware of the limitations of her experiment and the ethical implications of her experiential research tactics and reflects on these issues in the text. The author is forthcoming about her methods and supplements her experiences with scholarly research on her places of employment, the economy, and the rising cost of living in America. Ehrenreich’s project is timely, descriptive, and well-researched.