

COS 50 Research Essay Assignment

Throughout the year, we have been studying how the promises of American democracy have been realized over hundreds of years and have often been in conflict with the country's many undemocratic practices ranging from slavery to restriction of voting and property rights, job and housing discrimination, and racial segregation. For the research essay, identify a social movement that has struggled for freedom and equality—e.g., African Americans, Latinos, women, the LGBTQ community, students, workers, immigrants, or Occupy Wall Street—and **write a 5-8-page paper explaining how this movement's struggle illuminates the idea of the human.**

Getting Started

Prior to the library visit on March 6, read the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (see UDHR website at <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/index.shtml>). Then, select one or two UDHR articles that you think relate specifically to your social movement, and reflect on their relevance to it. Also compose a list of organizations and individuals associated with the movement's history. You may use Wikipedia and other popular sites for this preliminary research. By March 6, you should have developed a list and a one-to two-paragraph summary of the group you plan to write about.

Based on this preliminary investigation, you will use the library visit to search for two kinds of texts: primary sources, e.g., speeches, interviews, and writing; and secondary sources, e.g., newspaper articles, scholarly essays or books, and encyclopedia entries.

Required Research Sources (minimum of four):

The following kinds of sources must be included in your Annotated Bibliography and discussed in your essay. You may not include a source in your Annotated Bibliography that is not discussed and cited in the body of your book.

- At least one course text
- At least one primary document
- At least one library sources (e.g., academic databases or book)
- At least one Internet website or other medium (e.g., film)

Timeline

- 3/6 Tentative topic due
- 3/20 Research question and annotated bibliography in progress (at least one primary source, one secondary source, e.g., a scholarly article, and one course reading)
- 3/27 Annotated bibliography and research question
- 4/3 Draft #1 of research paper
- 5/1 Revision of research paper

Research Proposal

The first step of the process is to write a 3-5-page research essay proposal, which will include:

- A tentative thesis (can be rough and should change);

- A plan of development; and
- An annotated bibliography

What Is a Thesis?

An **analytical** paper breaks down an issue or an idea into its component parts, evaluates the issue or idea, and presents this breakdown and evaluation to the audience.

2. Your thesis statement should be specific—it should cover only what you will discuss in your paper and should be supported with specific evidence.
3. The thesis statement usually appears at the end of the first paragraph of a paper.
4. Your topic may change as you write, so you may need to revise your thesis statement to reflect exactly what you have discussed in the paper.

Example of an Analytical Thesis Statement:

An analysis of the college admission process reveals one challenge facing counselors: accepting students with high test scores or students with strong extracurricular backgrounds.

The paper that follows should:

- Explain the analysis of the college admission process
- Explain the challenge facing admissions counselors

Annotated Bibliography Guidelines

A bibliography is a list of sources (books, journals, websites, periodicals, interviews, etc.) used for researching a topic. Bibliographies are sometimes called "References" or "Works Cited" depending on the style format you are using. A bibliography, as in an entry under the familiar Works Cited page, usually just includes the bibliographic information (i.e., the author, title, publisher, etc.) but an annotated bibliography discusses the nature of the source. Like the Works Cited page, entries in an annotated bibliography are listed alphabetically using proper MLA/BHS format.

For our purposes, an annotation of each source includes at least three paragraphs: a summary, evaluation and reflection. The information discussed in these paragraphs should be concise and precisely targeted to the research topic. Thus, the annotation for every source (primary and secondary) will provide the full bibliographic citation (MLA/BHS format) and the following:

Summary:

- Indicate the content or scope of the text
- Outline the main point or argument
- Indicate the intended audience

Evaluation:

- Indicate the background of the author(s)
- Discuss the reliability of the text
- Identify the research methods (if applicable)
- State the strengths and limitations of the text

Reflection:

- Highlight any special features of the text that were unique or helpful (charts, graphs etc.)
- Discuss the relevance or usefulness of the text for your research
- Point out in what way the text relates to themes, writings or concepts in your course
- Present your view or reaction to the text

These annotations are going to help you learn about your topic and thus write your book. Writing an annotated bibliography 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. At the professional level, annotated bibliographies allow you to see what has been done in the literature and where your own research or scholarship can fit.

Sample annotated bibliography entry of a secondary source:

Let's say you're writing a research essay titled *Influential Religious Figures and Irish Independence* and want to annotate the following source.

Harris, Helen, et al. *Seeing Historical Figures: 18th Century Ireland*. Boston: Cambridge UP, 2004. Print.

Summary: This is the annotation of the above source. In this example, I am following MLA guidelines for the bibliographic information listed above. If I were really writing an annotation for this source, I would now be offering a brief summary of what this book says about religious figures in 18th century Ireland.

Evaluation: After a brief summary, it would be appropriate to evaluate this source and offer some criticisms of 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?

Reflection: You can now reflect on this source. How does it fit into your research? Is this a helpful resource? Too scholarly? Not scholarly enough? Too general/specific? Does the source include religious figures and their participation in the Irish conflict with Great Britain?

Primary source citation format:

If you embed images or clips of any BHS material, you must also include the citation in a caption. Otherwise, cite any material from the BHS archive as follows:

[Identification of item, date (if known)]; Collection Name, [Call No.], [Box and Folder number]; Brooklyn Historical Society.

For example:

Astronomical Almanac, 1771; Lefferts family papers, ARC.145, Box 4, Folder 1; Brooklyn Historical Society.

You would then use the three-paragraph format to annotate this entry.