

How to Write Annotated Bibliography Entries

The annotated bibliography entry should summarize the argument of a book and put it in conversation either with the rest of the field or with your own work. Annotated bibliography entries should be three paragraphs long. The first paragraph summarizes the biggest argument of the book. The second paragraph either expands your discussion of that big argument or does a deep dive into the argument of a specific chapter. For the last paragraph, you have three choices.

You can connect this text to other texts in the field/the major debates in the field, you can provide a substantive critique of the book, or you can explain how this book influences your thinking about your own work/projects. In the last case, it's fine if the book is not related to your project. This is about thinking broadly. Many kinds of texts can spark thoughts about how to make an argument or how to use theory or evidence.

Model Annotated Bibliography Entry/Placing the Book within the Field Version

Abby Lovett, MA, U of U 2024 , "From Slavery to Mass Incarceration"

Edward E. Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism* (Basic Books, 2014)

In his 2014 book *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism*, Cornell University history professor Edward Baptist uses archival documentation left behind by enslaved people through the records of the Works Project Administration, personal writings, newspaper reports, court records, and other primary source documentation to trace how the institution of slavery shaped the creation of American capitalism and directed the development of emerging global markets. Baptist's efforts serve as an intervention in a historiographic trend that attributed the abolition of slavery to the institution's declining financial productivity when compared to the free-labor capitalist system. Baptist contends that historians in the 19th and early 20th centuries actively worked to sever the clear linkages between the development of capitalism and the institution of slavery in order to portray capitalist systems as a sanitized alternative to the archaic predecessor of human bondage. In doing so, Baptist argues these authors have served to rationalize and ultimately validate the brutal institution of slavery to the benefit of former enslavers and their descendants. Baptist attempts to reverse this trend by showing the ways in which capitalist systems both built and relied upon slavery to achieve its hegemony both in the United States and in broader global markets.

In reconnecting the history of slavery to that of capitalism's development, Baptist shows the extent to which the United States relied upon the system of slavery to achieve its status as a world power in the nineteenth century. Where other scholars have emphasized the entrepreneurial and innovative talent of everyday white Americans in driving the country to achieve global superpower status by the end of the nineteenth century, Baptist demonstrates that African Americans' unfree labor in Southern cotton fields bankrolled the modernization of the US national economy and allowed for the rapid industrialization that drove the nation's ascendancy on the world stage.

The importance of Baptist's within and beyond the discipline cannot be overstated. Not only does he effectively refute a central narrative surrounding slavery's abolition--the assertion that abolition resulted from slavery's declining profitability relative to free labor--he also confronts several other potentially problematic trends in the recent historiography surrounding slavery and abolition. For instance, Baptist pushes back against the recent emphasis on "everyday resistance" among enslaved people, aptly noting that emphasizing resistance serves to portray enslaved people who could not or did not resist as undeserving of a place in the history books. Furthermore, he notes that though these histories attempt to restore enslaved people's agency, they ultimately serve to obscure the lived realities of the vast majority of enslaved people who could not resist their enslavers, giving the impression that by not resisting these individuals merely "accepted" slavery.²³ Baptist also importantly intervenes in the perception of slavery as a static institution, instead showing the ways in which slavery--and by extension, the lives of enslaved people--changed dynamically as the system developed and expanded. These observations collectively challenge historians to reconsider their static portrayals of slavery in favor of nuanced understandings of a system as varied and complex as the people trapped within it.

Model Annotated Bibliography Entry/Critique Version

Elizabeth Clement, MA, University of Pennsylvania, 1993 "Civil Rights Historiography"

Keep in mind this was written before Hall published "Long Civil Rights Movement," so we were all kind of heading in that direction in expressing our dissatisfaction with the "timing" of Civil Rights historiography.

Lawson, Steven F. *Running for Freedom: Civil Rights and Black Politics in America Since 1941*. (New York: McGraw Hill, 1991).

In *Running for Freedom*, Lawson focuses on the importance of suffrage for African Americans in their attempt to gain full economic and civil rights in this country. He argues that only the vote could empower African Americans within the American political system, and as long as they chose to accept the terms of that system, voting was the key to equal treatment and opportunity. Lawson's book thus focuses almost entirely on voting and on African Americans' role in national politics, particularly in presidential elections, and congressional legislation. He argues that Civil Rights leaders combined a strategy of intense local direct action protests with lobbying and negotiation on the federal level. They used direct action and white southern reactions to their demands for integration to push the federal government to intervene on behalf of African Americans. Loath to commit itself to their concerns, the federal government only intervened when African American protest became so embarrassing that it threatened to turn national or international opinions against the government.

Lawson's work is interesting insofar as he, like George Lipsitz in his book on Ivory Perry, continues his investigation beyond the rise of Black Power and the "disintegration" of the Movement. In narrowing his focus to voting and Black political power, he can conceive of Civil Rights broadly and look past the life span of a leader, or the success and failure of a particular ideology or strategy. He continues his analysis through the campaigns of Jesse Jackson for the

Presidency in 1984 and 1988, as well as studying the effects of mayoral races in cities like Chicago, Atlanta and New York. Ultimately, Lawson does not restrict Civil Rights to an era; rather he analyzes the long-term struggle for political and economic equality in the 20th century, a struggle that African Americans have not won, and one that will continue indefinitely.

However, by focusing on traditional politics Lawson perpetuates a profoundly middle-class bias in his study. He's right when he states in his introduction that the new scholarship on Civil Rights needs to combine a discussion of local and national activities. However, his choice of topics limits the effectiveness of this critique when he analyzes the area of Civil Rights most dominated by the middle class, electoral politics. He examines Civil Rights from the point of view of those involved in political struggle from above, an arena even more removed from the daily concerns and protests of the masses than the direct-action protests of the Movement. Except for SNCC and CORE, the Civil Rights Movement organized the middle-class to address the grievances of middle-class African Americans. This is not to say that working-class African Americans did not support or participate in the Movement, or that they did not benefit from the gains made. Rather, it points to the fact that the Movement, by focusing on desegregation and voting, usually failed to address the more basic concerns of housing, health care and poverty. The emphasis on electoral politics in Lawson's work forces him to look at an even smaller, often more privileged elite. Black politicians never had the economic or political power of their white counterparts, and they often entered politics as a way of consolidating gains made by the Movement, but they do represent an elite within that community, and their priorities often reflect their class status. Thus, although Lawson attempts to highlight the connections between the local and the national struggle, his focus on politics marginalized that aspect of the Black struggle.

Model Annotated Bibliography Entry/How This Book Helps Me Think about My Work Version

E Hopf MA, U of U, 2023 "Literature on Sex in Public"

Spearing, A.C. *The Medieval Poet as Voyeur: Looking and Listening in Medieval Love Narratives*. Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Spearing's book examines the role of the poet (and audience) as voyeur in medieval poetry. The book does not really have a unifying argument – other than the immediate claim that the medieval poet acted as voyeur – as each chapter focuses on different poems and takes different ideas from them. To frame this book, Spearing's first two chapters focus on medieval understandings of the centrality of looking to love: love has to be initiated by the gaze, and looking is inherent to pleasure. However, it can turn to the Freudian sense of voyeurism, where looking inhibits actually engaging in "normal" sexual relations because the looking becomes the focus of pleasure itself. Despite expanding on his psychoanalytic framing at the start, he does not quite successfully link it back to how the look harms the viewer – it can harm the ones watched, especially in the case of adultery, but there were only a few examples, out of several dozen poems he analyzed, of the poet expressing any negative outcome for themselves in looking. I take the point that the poet, and the audience, are perpetually kept in the state of looking, and not being able to join in, yet he does not fully explain why that is harmful to us. I did really enjoy

this book, and that last point is not to criticize it too harshly. I wanted Spearing to keep going, because the literary analysis was very interesting. I just couldn't figure out how it was meant to connect to the start of the book.

The ways Spearing discussed the role of public and private in the medieval world was particularly helpful. In many ways, the public and private of the medieval world are reversed from how we think of them now – the mead hall, in the lord's home, was the public, and the forest, the outdoors, was the private. The lord's bedchamber itself was semi-private, being an area where one could theoretically have attained privacy in the way we understand it today, but it was also public in the ways servants would go in and out and knights or people the lord wanted to honor would be invited in. This serves as a very important reminder that these definitions are not static, and I have to be mindful of what I mean when I use these terms. One thing that I found useful with this book was its introduction and first chapters that laid out theories of looking. Spearing begins with an examination of Freud's understanding of scopophilia. This helped me gain a better understanding of Freud's theories and how they might be applied in useful ways, which is helpful in the face of my inability to stand reading Freud himself. I am generally leary of psychoanalytic analysis, but I appreciated this crash course, especially as voyeurism is a word I use many times in *Two Angles*, and reading this book reminded me to clarify that the way I use it is not the pathological, negative way. Spearing generally uses the term voyeurism to describe an aberrant behavior, and he adds that humans "almost invariably" opt for privacy to engage in sex, which the breadth of this list would seemingly contradict. At the same time, it is true that some works, like Houlbrook's, describe a movement to privacy as soon as it is an option for the affluent. In contrast, Leap and Berlant and Warner, for example, describe the joys people can find from public sex, and certainly my analysis in *Two Angles* centers on the idea that public sex can be something that people choose to engage in because they want it. Certainly, Fink's photographs of himself having sex with other men in his own apartment indicate that he would not have to engage in the public sex scene if he did not find something enjoyable in it. I do not believe Spearing has enough evidence to make such a claim about human nature; however, I will grant him that within the conventions of medieval poetry, seeking privacy (but never being able to access it) is indeed a primary characteristic.