**12.1 Analyzing an Article**

Now that you have reviewed numerous abstracts to gauge relevant topics and identified a conversation in the recent literature that spans at least three articles and at least two disciplinary journals, you are ready to read the three articles closely and analyze the content. For 12.1, you will select the first article on the topic and read the entire article closely and critically so that you can annotate it, which you will share with the class. Then you will write an annotation, which you will upload to Canvas as part of Assignment 12.1. Your annotation will include a complete summary of the text and note elements for analysis and synthesis. As a result, when you read the article, you will want to annotate with the intention of noting all the information you will need to write a successful annotation.

**Close Reading**

Proficiency in close reading, annotating, summarizing, analyzing, and synthesizing are foundational to success in higher education and beyond. [Bloom’s Taxonomy](https://www.usf.edu/atle/teaching/blooms-taxonomy.aspx) organizes learning as a progression through knowledge and comprehension to analysis and synthesis. Reading and writing play a critical role in advancing through these steps. Knowledge is cultivated and conveyed by summarizing the content. Comprehension is developed and displayed by engaging the material within an assignment. Analysis is enabled and encouraged by applying the tools of deconstruction. Synthesis is achieved and advanced by connecting these steps across texts.

Close and critical reading is required to understand a text. Close reading observes a text closely in order to deepen understanding of the material and prepare you to summarize and contextualize the text. Critical reading deconstructs the text in order to support interpretations or arguments based on textual evidence. Both are needed to summarize a source in order to prepare for analysis. To practice both, we will look at some techniques for annotating as you read that facilitate a close and/or critical reading. Then we will discuss how to translate the notes you made as you read into an annotation.

**Annotating**

Annotating is an important skill that will transfer throughout and beyond the Academy into every professional discipline and many personal practices. Annotating allows readers to prioritize information and summarize based on comprehension of the text, which allows the reader to dissect and digest the content while reading, both of which are necessary for comprehension. Annotating and annotation are distinct but overlapping concepts and practices.

The act of **annotating** a text means making notes, marks, or comments throughout the document. Any text can be annotated, and every annotated text should be annotated with an intention or assignment in mind. Notes can be made on digital texts or on print documents using whatever technique or approach works best for the reader and the task.

**An annotation** is simply a note; it can summarize, explain, question, or analyze. Researchers often *annotate* texts while reading and then create a one-paragraph *annotation* to organize the notes on the text into a succinct overview of the source for use in an annotated bibliography and/or for future use in a paper. Annotations generally summarize the text, but extended annotations can also include elements of analysis or synthesis, depending on how the content will be used.

Annotate, then, is the verb meaning the process of marking up a text with intentional notes as you read, while an annotation is the noun referencing the concise, summary note compiled from the notes made while reading.

Academic articles are written by experts for experts, so they require close, critical reading to comprehend. Popular publications deserve similar scrutiny when used in college-level research. All sources should be annotated with the assignment in mind. Always think about how you plan to use the source and what information you need to gather as you annotate. Considering the details of the assignment will help you know what to look for and note as you read, which will help you avoid needing to revisit or reread the text.

While you are reading for Assignment 12.1, you also know that you will use content from this article and your annotation in your Analytic Exploration, so read with both in mind. Both assignments require the integration of formatted source material, and utilizing the template (below) will ensure that you fulfill that requirement. As you read and make notes, you also want to remember that you will need all the required information to integrate and format direct source material. Consider the format you are using so that you can collect content according to the style. For instance, MLA generally prefers direct quotes, while APA encourages paraphrased content. Both direct quotes and paraphrases require in-text citations. As you read your first article, read and annotate for summary and analysis, as well as a general understanding of the content needed to connect the texts across the conversation.

**Annotating for summary**: Making notes as you read is an important technique for close and critical reading. While you read, summarize each section or paragraph as concisely as possible. On print copies, you can summarize in the left margin, and for digital texts, you can use notes or comments, or you can start a separate doc to keep your reading notes. Different software has different tools, but the general idea of summarizing as you read is always possible and useful. Be sure to summarize only the major events and ideas of the text without adding your thoughts (which would be a response instead of a summary) so that you can pull the threads together to write a summary of the text. And underline intentionally and cautiously. Underlining too much is easy and not effective. The summary notes can be reviewed to remember the text, deepen understanding and comprehension, and write a comprehensive summary. Consider any additional or other requirements of the assignment so that they can be included in the notes made while you read.

**Annotating for analysis:** In addition to summarizing sections of the text as you read, you will want to ask critical questions of the text, note where you supplement the text with context (where you recognize allusions or make personal connections), recognize and record contradictions, and offer very brief interpretations. Critical annotations can be used to deconstruct the text for purposes of analysis. On hard copies, this can be done in the right margins, and on digital copies, you can use any technique that allows you to distinguish between your summary notes and the critical notes that deconstruct the text with your thoughts about the text. For instance, elements you want to include in summaries could be coded using one color, and critical comments that could feed analysis, could use a different color highlight so that the comments noted for each could be identified. Again, consider any additional or other requirements of the assignment so that the can be included in the notes made while you read.

**Annotating for comprehension**: While you are reading closely and critically, think of what else you can note (words you want to define, concepts you want to look up, connections across articles that can inform synthesis, reflections on your reading practices that track when or where you get distracted), but be sure not to write too much. Consider what could help you understand the text and topic better. Once you have read the text and annotated the margins or digital spaces, your summary notes will help you construct an overall understanding of the text and your critical notes will be ripe for interpretation, questioning, or criticism.

All three of these approaches are useful when reading all three of your academic articles. Once you have marked-up your article for 12.1, you will share it with the class as discuss your process. You will also write and annotation (paragraph) based on your annotated document (the notes you made while reading).

**Annotation**

For all three of our articles, you will write an extended annotation that summarizes the text and includes elements of analysis and synthesis. All three of the annotations you submit for the three articles you read should follow a similar format. The annotation template included in this reading is a great option and can be tailored or expanded to fit your content and topic. Be sure to have your specific annotation format in mind as you read each article so that the notes you make are informed by the approaches noted above and the specific annotation you plan to use for this assignment.

The intention of the Analytic Exploration is to analyze the overall conversation on your topic as is exists across three academic articles and within a few popular and primary sources. Analyzing the conversation requires some analysis of each article, but before a text can be analyzed, it must be summarized. The step of summarizing a text identifies the content that is relevant to the specific assignment and prioritizes the content based on the assignment, which allows the reader as researcher to comprehend the text fully and to identify the important elements for analysis. Not all analyses are the same. In addition to recognizing the various types of analysis and the different expectations depending on the discipline, analysis must occur within the context. Even a basic close and critical reading of a text intended as analysis must be informed by the assignment and begin with a summary.

Ideally, this means that to analyze a text thoroughly, it needs to be read once and annotated for summary and then read again and annotated for analysis. As you advance into your major, that will be an important skill for you to learn and practice. If you want to practice that skill now, reading each of your articles more than once is a great way to produce exceptional work. Because you haven’t moved into a discipline yet, and because this is probably your first attempt at reading, summarizing, and analyzing scholarly articles in a discipline, combining these steps into one read that annotates for summary and analysis is an acceptable option. For our purposes, preview the article once to skim for structure and then read the article closely while making notes to support your summary, analysis, and comprehension.

When summarizing, be sure to avoid interpretation or editorialization. Integrating quotes can be useful. While the main goal of summarizing is to recount the essential elements of the reading that are priorities to the intention and meaning, an additional goal is to avoid stating your opinion (intentionally or unintentionally), which is not relevant to summary. Identifying key elements as you read and writing section summaries in the margins will still create a strong foundation for your summary.

**Summary Annotation Template**

Once you have re[ad closely and critically and](https://docs.google.com/document/d/14TyjT4F6ReEGcOTspabLQwqOLGyxSDH7KsfGQvZnLoE/edit?usp=sharing) marked up the text, read through your notes so that you can write an annotation. The design of the annotation should be determined by the assignment and should include all the required elements. Annotations are generally one or two paragraphs depending on the text being read, the information being gathered, and the aim of the overall project.

To create consistent annotations, it is useful to develop a template (or [précis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Critical_pr%C3%A9cis)) that includes all the information you intend to note while reading. While our initial goal is summary, we also want to construct our annotation template with the goal of analysis, perhaps even synthesis, in mind.

To start, let’s look at how to organize our summary of our academic article by reviewing an example of a general annotation template that includes a signal phrase and an in-text citation in MLA:

**1)**  In (**“Article title,”**) (**Author full name**) (**verb**: *investigates, explores, examines*) + (**summary of article topic**) and (**verb**: *asks, questions, considers*) + (**state the research question/hypothesis**).

Including the author(s) and the title of the text in the first sentence of the annotation with a specific verb is a great formula for a signal phrase. Listing the topic and research question is also very useful and can be included as one or two sentences. The beginning of the abstract often includes this information, but when writing an annotation for an article, pull content from beyond the abstract.

**2)**(**Last name of author**) (**verb**: *argues, demonstrates, finds, reports, claims, asserts*) that . . .  “**quote thesis/conclusion/argument** of article with an in-text citation” (24).

The most important information to locate while reading a text is the thesis, which is likely the answer to the research question. Terms such as findings and results in the abstract usually signal that the thesis will follow, and the complete statement is often in the first few paragraphs and/or the conclusion.

**3)** (**Author’s last name**) findings (**verb**: *support, refute, expand, complicate*) + (**connect the findings to your thesis** or research question and the argument being made) **or** (**connect to other research**: *a different author’s claim, a different position or argument or thesis*).

To integrate the source into your writing, connect the findings of the article to your research by explaining how the article’s argument is related to your research. You can do this by noting how the thesis supports, refutes, expands, or complicates your research question or thesis. Analysis, interpretation, criticism, and evaluation can be included and you can note limitations, but those steps require moving beyond summarizing the article and connecting it to the question. The finding can also be synthesized by connecting it to other articles you include in your research.

Developing a solid understanding of what the author is arguing so that you can integrate it requires reading the article (with added attention to beginning, the results, and the end). Combining the three sentences together creates an annotation that summarizes the reading. The author’s name, article title, and publication may be mixed up or expanded for length and variety, but those key components should appear in all three or your article annotations. You can change the formatting to fit any style required by your Instructor or your discipline.

In order to populate this template, the required information must have been noticed and noted while reading the text. Thinking through an annotation template is a helpful step in the process of preparing to read and annotate any text. By reading intentionally with the assignment in mind, you can avoid wasting time by highlighting the wrong things, which will result in needing to reread the text or not being able to find your way back to what you read. When reading longer texts, writing a summary at the end of each chapter or major section will help feed your overall annotation.

More substantial annotations that include specific information, such as direct quotations or paraphrased details, and analysis can provide more than a summary overview and can serve as content for the text you are constructing. Make sure to format the source material with the page number or paragraph so that you can use it in assignments. An extended annotation, such as our assignment, can both expand the three-sentence summary and add elements of analysis and synthesis.

**Analysis**

There are many specific types of [analysis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Analysis), but in general, when we talk about analyzing a text, we mean reading it carefully and taking dividing it into pieces to scrutinize each element. Like the terms annotation and argument, the term analysis is used as a verb and a noun, which can be confusing until you understand it in context. Analysis can be used to describe the act of reading for deconstruction and to gather data, and analysis can be used to describe what you do to the data you gather.

We already started to practice analysis when we deconstructed arguments in Project 1.A number of the same techniques are useful in our analysis of academic articles, but the differences in the assignment and the sources also need to be taken into consideration. When we analyzed arguments, we questioned each step in the process in search of limitations, contradictions, and overstatements. The same practices can be applied to analysis of academic texts, but analysis of academic texts is far more difficult because obvious errors in reasoning or research design are unlikely. And for our assignment, you are not trying to counter or refute the claims, so the goal is textual and contextual analysis in order to support synthesis.

We are reading and deconstructing three academic articles to explore the conversation and to synthesize the findings. The goal, then, would be to understand the research design and the results for each and to connect and compare them, not in an attempt to discredit or refute. Academic articles do the work of refutation and replication across the conversation, and it is generally the case that they will build upon each other, but our goal is not to enter that argument. When you move into the work of your discipline, you will construct work that joins the conversation. Our goal is to explore.

Like all analysis, exploration is built upon the simple task of questioning. Asking critical questions advances readers from summary into analysis and allows them to develop a thesis based on synthesis. Analyses can be formal, including only elements of the text, or contextual, including elements beyond the text. Every discipline uses analysis to deconstruct texts and provide a deeper understanding of material, and different disciplines analyze and synthesize additional materials across various media, data, and content.

When you think of lab work associated with a course in the natural sciences, it is easy to imagine the concrete task of dissecting a cell or specimen and looking at the separate pieces, perhaps under a microscope. Combining elements into something concrete is easy to imagine, too. Analysis and synthesis as they manifest through critical thinking are similar, but less concrete. Pulling pieces apart or putting them together is only the beginning of the work. Then you need to watch what happens, note the interactions, interpret the findings, and think of the next things to pull apart and put together.

While we are looking at different text in different disciplines and contexts, our textual and contextual analyses will use similar approaches and techniques. Analysis can deconstruct logic looking for flaws and fallacies, question the research, or problematize the methods, but the foundation of analysis is simply taking apart the pieces and exploring them. In our Analytic Exploration, you will move beyond compiling information by synthesizing the readings into a thesis.

**Adding Analysis to an Annotation**

The template we reviewed will create a very strong annotation that summarizes the reading. To add elements of analysis, simply expand the template and your reading to include additional elements. Always state the article’s research question and findings and your interpretation and integration of your analysis, but you can also address details from the article to grow your discussion of the source. Consider adding some of the following elements from the article to the annotation that you will grow into a paragraph (or 2):

* Method, study details, and parameters
* Stated interpretation of results
* Acknowledged limitations of research
* Other limitations you noticed that were not acknowledged: criticize, deconstruct or problematize the research or the findings and/or identify the potential need for further study on this topic.

Adding a question to the three from above can allow us to include some of these considerations in our template. Let’s look at those three with an added #2:

1)  In (“Article title,”) (Author full name) (verb: *investigates, explores, examines*) + (summary of article topic) and (verb: *asks, questions, considers*) + (list the research question/hypothesis).

**2) (Author last name) employs, utilizes, conducts, applies . . . (discuss details of the research such as method, theory, sample, constant/variable . . . ).**

3) (Last name of author) (verb: *argues, demonstrates, finds, reports, claims, asserts*) that . . .  “quote thesis/conclusion/argument of article with an in-text citation” (24).

4) (Author’s last name) findings (verb: *support, refute, expand, complicate*) + (connect the findings to your thesis or research question and the argument being made) or (connect to other research: *a different author’s claim, a different position or argument or thesis*).

The inclusion of the second question within the criteria we are using to annotate the text helps advance our summary toward analysis. The content can be added at the end or as a second paragraph, depending on your preference, assignment, and audience. Each question can be answered in one sentence or expanded to fill a few:

*In “Body Imagine: Male Concepts of Body,” Franklin Anderson examines the potential impact of idealized media images on male body image and asks how the viewer internalizes that impact.*

*Anderson employs a convenience sampling method to administer a survey about body image to a group of ninety men on a college campus. Half of the participant group view advertisements showing idealized male images before completing the survey while the other half view advertisements with images of nature scenes. Analysis of the survey data shows that “the men who viewed idealized images prior to taking the survey gave 15% more negative responses than their counterparts” (Anderson 27).*

*Although Anderson finds that the 15% difference in survey responses is not significant enough to confirm that viewing idealized images impacts male body image, he argues that “there is a correlation between the viewing of idealized images and negative body image” and suggests that the images men see every day may have at least some impact on the way that they view their bodies (29).*

*Anderson’s research supports the idea that the visual representations men encounter may impact the way they view their bodies. While not establishing causality, the study does suggest a relationship between images in the media and male body image. While Anderson acknowledges that the study does not address the potential impact that viewing such images over an extended period of time might have on males, he overlooks the fact that participants were recruited on a college campus, which may have limited the amount of diversity among participants, especially in terms of age.*

In a paper, this sample’s content would feed two or three paragraphs with transitions and integration, and move well into deconstruction of the text. The last part does add an element of analysis as evaluation by acknowledging a limitation of the research design, which is very strong and worth including in your annotations when possible, but simply deconstructing the text is enough to meet the expectations for our annotation assignment.

Our goal is to analyze each article with the intention of synthesizing the findings into a thesis that situates the research on our topic. We are only reading our first academic article for 12.2, but as we read the subsequent articles, we can go ahead and note the synthesis that will be needed for our Analytic Exploration. Expanding the example above to include synthesis might include the following:

*Anderson’s findings expand Dawson’s evidence relating the viewing of visual images and the presence of depression, and they refute Smith’s claim that men are bolstered by seeing representations of attractive men in the media. While Anderson acknowledges that his study does not address the potential impact that viewing such images over an extended period of time might have on males, he overlooks the fact that participants were recruited on a college campus may have limited the amount of diversity among participants, especially in terms of age. Dawson’s study, however, does include a broad range of subjects, but the total sample size is smaller. Smith, on the other hand, presents the smallest sample size, and he admits the limitations of his study based on the research design. Anderson even reports that Smith’s findings could not be replicated (28). Taken together, Anderson and Dawson provide stronger evidence in support of the claim that men are not empowered through the viewing of representations of idealized and stylized male bodies.*

A thesis would synthesize the findings of Anderson, Dawson, and Smith to paint an overarching picture of how the research across the three articles is connected. When only three sources are included, a thesis could include names, as in the final sentence of the example above. But when more sources are included, that is less effective. Instead, sources can be connected by theses.

(Despite prior research suggesting positive outcomes, viewing idealized representations of the male body may have a negative impact on the self image of viewers.) While our Analytic Exploration will do that work, we will build the foundation for it though our individual annotations. The more comprehensive your annotations, the more material you will have to work with and the less likely you will be to have to reread your articles when you merge your work into your Analytic Exploration.

**Exploring Annotation and Analysis**

As always, practicing with process is part of our goal, so for Assignment 12.1, print your article and annotate it on the print copy so that you can share your process and product with your peers in class. After discussing and reviewing your work in class, your annotation will be uploaded as Assignment 12.1 in Canvas as a discussion post.

In addition to reading for the information you will need in your annotation, also note the information you will need for your reference (Journal, author(s), title, year, volume, other according to format style), as well as anything you will need to know for the Analytic Exploration. You may think of it as reverse outlining the article. Consider the following general noteworthy elements:

* Hypothesis or Research Question or Problem: What is it, and where is it stated?
* Thesis, Findings, Results: What are they, where are they stated, and how are then demonstrated?
* Context: Is there context that helps you understand the topic? Could it serve as useful context for your Analytic Exploration?
* Review of Literature: Is there a literature review? How many sources are cited in the lit review? What important content is included? What other work is this built upon? Does it extend or replicate prior work or refute prior findings?
* Research design: look for the method, methodology, sample, cited theories, length of study, any other elements of the research design.
* Research and results: what do the authors do and what do they find?
* Conclusions and Discussions: how are the findings interpreted and integrated into the larger conversation on the topic?

Noting these elements as you read and annotate the text will provide content to populate your extended annotation template for Assignment 12.1. The content will be reviewed in class and uploaded shortly after class.