Annotated Bibliography

What is an annotated bibliography?
A bibliography is a list of sources (books, journals, websites, periodicals, etc…) used to research a topic. An annotated bibliography is similar, but it also includes a summary and evaluation of each source. The purpose of an annotated bibliography is to determine what’s in your source and how you might use it in developing your argument. It will help you read you to sources more critically, to extract valuable information, and to formulate your thesis by reading and responding to the existing literature.

What is the format for an annotated bibliography?
The format for an annotated bibliography can vary, so make sure you ask your professor for specific guidelines. The bibliographic information (author, title, date and publication information), properly formatted in a citation style such as MLA or APA, comes first. The annotations are in paragraph form – anywhere from a couple or sentences to a couple of pages – underneath the citation.

What information do I include?
The information to include depends on the specific guidelines of the research project. Some annotations are mere summaries and include answers to such questions as: What is the main argument? What is the point of the article or book? What topics are covered? How is the information presented? Most annotations, however, go beyond mere summary to evaluation. You may also answer, in paragraph form: Is this a useful source for your research topic? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the author’s argument?

A general outline for annotating

- Summarize
  - Subject, main point, thesis/argument
  - Make sure you paraphrase
- Assess
  - How useful is the source?
  - How does it compare to other sources?
  - Is the info subjective/objective?
- Reflect
  - How helpful is the source to you?
  - How does it shape your argument?
  - How can you use this source?