

## Writing a Critical Preface for Your Annotated Bibliography

Scholars who publish annotated bibliographies typically introduce them with a critical preface that explains the scope and purpose of the bibliography. When you write a critical preface for your own annotated bibliography, you have a chance to highlight your critical thinking and show the purposeful way that you conducted your research. Typically the critical preface includes the following information:

- A contextual overview that shows the purpose of the annotated bibliography and suggests its value and significance for the reader
- The research question posed by the author
- The dates during which the bibliography was compiled
- An overview of the number of items in the bibliography and the kinds of material included

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### Should the United States Establish Mandatory Public Service for Young Adults?

#### An Annotated Bibliography

##### Critical Preface

Today, national service programs like AmeriCorps seem to be gaining the attention of young adults who are facing a hostile job market and are unsure about their futures. I have also noticed some proposals to create a kind of draft that would extend

beyond military service to require terms of civil service from young adults, putting them to work on projects that meet basic needs like hunger and poverty. These plans are always controversial, especially in America, where we value freedom of choice. With this research project, I set out to explore the following questions: Should the United States require a year of national service from all its young adults? How would a plan of this scale be feasible? These questions are particularly important during a time of scarce resources, Congressional budget battles, growing social and economic divisions among our citizens, and general public mistrust of government. The country seems to be reevaluating the optimal level of citizen involvement in public life and where we should invest public resources.

I conducted this research over several days in early February 2013. My research included a variety of sources: a scholarly research study, two articles from a popular newsmagazine, an article from an online non-profit-sector journal, two webpages that provided program overviews and background information, a fact-checking website, and a nonprofit webpage of testimonials from national service participants. This research helped me better understand our current system of national service opportunities and see how this system could be expanded. The testimonials and the scholarly research study by Jastrzab et al. also highlighted the impacts national service has on individual participants. Several of these sources (particularly Rosenman and Kinsley) illuminated the different values, beliefs, and assumptions that drive disagreements about mandatory national service. Ultimately, these sources convinced me that our nation and young adults could greatly benefit from expanding national service, although I remain concerned about the feasibility of implementing a mandatory plan.