overview:
The 10-12 page research paper that treats one or two (at the most) authors we’ve read this semester. The paper will be due in stages and will incorporate some outside sources to support your argument. There are two stages:
1) the annotated bibliography/proposal (Tu April 4, in class)
2) the final version of the paper (Th Apr 27, in class)

choosing a topic
You may write on any topic you like and I encourage you to choose something which interests you. Some ideas: write on the recurrence of a theme in a single work (the use of death and dying in several Poe poems); compare two writers on the same subject (e.g. the role of nature in Emerson and Thoreau); read an additional work by an author who interests you and compare it to one we read (e.g. read “The Divinity School Address” if you’re interested on Emerson and religion); However, your topic must be both interesting and arguable; think in particular about issues and topics that have generated a lot of debate in class. Browsing back through the bulletin boards is an excellent way to find a good topic – look in particular for things people disagreed about.

STAGE ONE: annotated bibliography/proposal: due Tues. April 4, in class – 5% final grade
There are two components to this portion of the assignment: 1) the annotated bibliography 2) a draft of your introduction

Bibliography (consult the MLA Style Guide for how to format a bibliography)
• find at least five outside secondary sources that deal in some way with your chosen topic. Additional primary sources (e.g. another essay by Emerson) does not count towards this number. These articles must come from academic journals or books; web sources are acceptable only if they are the digital version of an academic journal. The MLA Bibliography database, available through the Geneseo Library on-line catalog is a good place to start:
http://eres.geneseo.edu/webpage/resources/titlesearch.asp?Resource=Both&title=mla
can also be reached from library home page. Under “Quick Links,” in the “Database Title Search,” type “MLA.” Click on link to database)

• you’ll need to use at least two of these sources in your final paper. In other words, some of the things you find you will read, summarize and then discard as not useful.
• start this process early: our library may not own copies of what you want; you’ll need to request them from IDS (Information Delivery Services). If you do not have an account with IDS yet, you’ll need to set one up.
http://library.geneseo.edu/services/IDS.shtml

• for each article you read, you need to: 1) write a concise summary of the author’s overall argument and 2) critically evaluate the persuasiveness/usefulness of the article to your project. All citations should be MLA style
**Introduction**

The draft of your introduction should provide (1) some context for the problem/issue you’ll address, (2) the significance of what you’ve found and (3) clearly state what you’ll argue. It’s perfectly fine to be a bit unsure about what you might argue at this stage – there’s plenty of time to revise before the final version in due, so do the best you can to express what shape your argument will take.

Example (stolen from a scholarly article on Poe and Wordsworth):

> No two discussions of poetry could at first sight appear more different than Wordsworth’s “Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*” and Poe’s “Philosophy of Composition.” The first has been read as an important Romantic manifesto, sometimes inconsistent, sometimes dated, but always to be taken seriously. The second has been read as a theoretical spoof that, because it cannot be taken at face value, cannot be taken seriously at all. Both, however, can be read as complex texts in their own right – as texts whose very complexities tell us a great deal about the nature of poetic language. I would like to suggest here some directions for such a reading, first by examining the rhetorical slipperiness of each theoretical text, then by invoking for each writer a poem...that both exemplifies and undermines the neatness of the explicit theory. (from Barbara Johnson’s “Poe and Wordsworth on the Nature of Poetic Language”)

**Evaluation**

The bibliography will be graded using the following criteria:

- minimum requirements for the assignment met
- clarity of summaries of secondary sources
- quality of critical evaluations of sources

**STAGE TWO: Final version of paper:** due the last day of class, Th Apr 27. 25% final grade

Based on my feedback on the proposal, you’ll use your own ideas, direct evidence from the text to support every point you make, and supporting evidence from at least two outside articles to write the final 10-12 page paper. YOU MUST TURN IN THE GRADED BIBLIOGRAPHY WITH THE FINAL VERSION OF THE PAPER

**mechanics/style**

must have a title, 10-12 pages, standard fonts and margins, spell-checked, proof-read, double-spaced, numbered pages, stapled; include list of “works cited” using MLA.
WHAT IS AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY?

An annotated bibliography is a list of citations to books, articles, and documents. Each citation is followed by a brief (usually about 150 words) descriptive and evaluative paragraph, the annotation. The purpose of the annotation is to inform the reader of the relevance, accuracy, and quality of the sources cited.

ANNOTATIONS VS. ABSTRACTS

Abstracts are the purely descriptive summaries often found at the beginning of scholarly journal articles or in periodical indexes. Annotations are descriptive and critical; they expose the author’s point of view, clarity and appropriateness of expression, and authority.

THE PROCESS

Creating an annotated bibliography calls for the application of a variety of intellectual skills: concise exposition, succinct analysis, and informed library research.

First, locate and record citations to books, periodicals, and documents that may contain useful information and ideas on your topic. Briefly examine and review the actual items. Then choose those works that provide a variety of perspectives on your topic.

Cite the book, article, or document using the appropriate style.

Write a concise annotation that summarizes the central theme and scope of the book or article. Include one or more sentences that (a) evaluate the authority or background of the author, (b) comment on the intended audience, (c) compare or contrast this work with another you have cited, or (d) explain how this work illuminates your bibliography topic.

CRITICALLY APPRAISING THE BOOK, ARTICLE, OR DOCUMENT

For guidance in critically appraising and analyzing the sources for your bibliography, see How to Critically Analyze Information Sources. See http://www.library.cornell.edu/olinuris/ref/research/skill26.htm
SAMPLE ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY ENTRY FOR A JOURNAL ARTICLE

This example uses the MLA format for the journal citation:


The authors use data from the National Longitudinal Surveys of Young Women and Young Men to test their hypothesis that nonfamily living by young adults alters their attitudes, values, plans, and expectations, moving them away from their belief in traditional sex roles. They find their hypothesis strongly supported in young females, while the effects were fewer in studies of young males. Increasing the time away from parents before marrying increased individualism, self-sufficiency, and changes in attitudes about families. In contrast, an earlier study by Williams cited below shows no significant gender differences in sex role attitudes as a result of nonfamily living. While the methodology of this piece is sound, the conclusions the authors draw could often be a bit more explicit and terms could be more precisely defined. When they say “values,” for example, whose values are they referring to, and does everyone in their sample hold these same beliefs? Overall, the article was provocative, but since my paper will deal more with the construction of masculinity, and this study has more interesting results for the female subjects, I expect to cite small bits for context for my argument, but don’t think most of their conclusions will help my argument.