Different Styles of Bibliographies and Citations

A basic division exists between methods that employ a separate bibliography at the end of one's article vs. a method that does not. The author-date method I described as the method I preferred you use in this class is an example of having a separate bibliography.

But in many areas of the humanities, including many older philosophy works, it is more common to use footnotes exclusively. The first time that you refer to some work, you put the entire bibliographic details into a footnote at that place, and then in later places in your paper that you wish to refer to the same work, you say things like "Smith *op cit*" or "Smith *op cit*, p. 290" ['*op cit*' means "in the work cited"]. There are a number of conventions about what Latin phrase to use when there are no intervening different works being cited or when it is clear in the text the person to whom you are referring—you use *ibid, loc cit* and the like. This is a TERRIBLE SYSTEM and should be banned. Unfortunately, some big-name journals still use it in philosophy (e.g., *The Journal of Philosophy*).

Another TERRIBLE METHOD that is in use in many of the "hard sciences" (physics, some life sciences) is to refer to the first item that is cited as [1], the second item [2], etc. Then, in the bibliography at the end of the article, items are listed in order [1], [2], [3], … This means that the bibliography is not alphabetized, and that makes it a TERRIBLE SYSTEM, but maybe not so bad as the previous one, since there actually is a bibliography…it is just that you never know what is in the bibliography at a glance.

A modification of this last method is to give the bibliography in alphabetical order, but assign [1] to the first entry, [2] to the second entry, and so on. In the text you will say things like "…as [13] says…", where a number like [13] could appear in the very first sentence. This is NOT SO BAD as the previous systems, but one of the following two methods seems a better way to do more or less the same thing.

1. (A variant on the last method mentioned). List the items alphabetically in the bibliography, but instead of using the meaningless [1], [2], etc. to give them names, use things like [Pell98] to name an article written by Pelletier in 1998; use [PEH08] to name an article by Pelletier, Elio, and Hanson published in 2008, and so on. The BibTex postprocessor for LaTeX does a fine job at this, and if you intend to use TeX/LaTeX to produce your thesis, you should know BibTex.

2. (The author-year method). List the items alphabetically in the bibliography, and don't have abbreviations for them. When you want to cite some work in the bibliography, you cite the author's name and year, in parentheses. For example, you would say "Pelletier, 1998". Different journals have preferences for how to cite multiply-authored works; the most common one says that two authors are done like this: "Pelletier & Rudnicki, 1996" while three or more authors are done by using the first author's name and the phrase "et al". For example "(Pelletier *et al* 2008)".

Both of these latter two methods are GREATLY preferable to the first two methods mentioned above, and probably better than the third one. As I said before, I prefer the author-year method.

There are many different ways to implement the author-year method, mostly involving details about how things appear in the bibliography…such as what order to put the volume number and page numbers, whether to put the publisher name before or after the place of publication, and so on. Within our department no one cares, although if you are going to publish something, you need to follow the journal's stated policy in that matter (usually available on a link from the journal's home page that is called "instructions for authors").

Everyone would be MUCH happier if they learned LaTeX and BibTex. All this sort of thing would be taken care of automatically…the same bibliographic information that you store in a big electronic file can be formatted in any of these different ways simply by stating that you want to use such-and-so bibliography-citation style.