

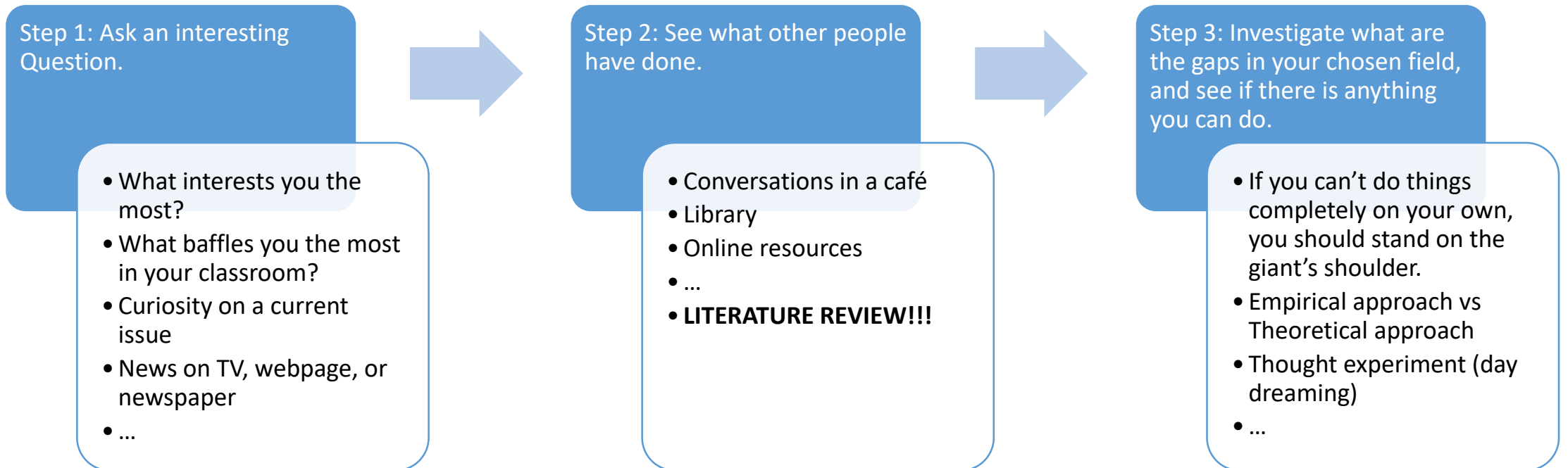
# How to ask the right questions, write a good essay, and do interesting research?

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Special Lecture on Essay Writing

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# Three simple steps of writing an essay/thesis



# Elements of an Essay

- Introduction
- Body
- Conclusion

# Literature Review

- What is a literature review?

*“A literature review is a survey of everything that has been written about a particular topic, theory, or research question. It may provide the background for larger work, or it may stand on its own. Much more than a simple list of sources, an effective literature review analyzes and synthesizes information about key themes or issues.”*

*- Allyson Skene, n.d., Writing a literature review*

# Literature Review

- Preferably, we would like to collect as many relevant journal articles as possible in the narrow field of your interests.
- Textbooks are primarily for learning and for finding the right references. You should not quote too many things from textbooks since they are second-hand information.
- Our UIC Learning Resources Center (LRC):  
<http://www1.uic.edu/hk/en/lrc>
- Purdue Owl: [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue\\_owl.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue_owl.html)

# Literature Review

- Below are the three most commonly used database for finding good working papers and journal articles:

For working papers:

- <https://ideas.repec.org/>
- <https://arxiv.org/>
- <https://www.ssrn.com/en/>

For journal articles

- [www.sciencedirect.com](http://www.sciencedirect.com)
- <https://www.jstor.org/>

# Literature Review

- Once you have found out and skimmed through enough journal articles, working papers, online articles... it is time to do the dirty work and write a literature review.
- Categorize what you have found out:

| People who believe that free-market leads to the best outcomes  | People who believe that central-planning is the best way to organize economic activities |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Smith (1776) found that...</li><li>• Friedman (1980) investigated the ...He proposed a new methodology...</li><li>• ...</li></ul> | <p>Marx (1894) argues that...</p> <p>Keynes (1936) suggests that...</p> <p>...</p>       |

# Literature Review

Venugopal, R., Neoliberalism as Concept, *Economics and Society*, vol.44 (2), 2015

What these critiques point to more broadly is that neoliberalism, which is often used to explain, critique, and challenge, is a term itself in need of some explanation and critical challenge. There are two standard ways of approaching such a project.

The first would be to take neoliberalism as a given doctrine, revealed by its key thinkers and articulated in canonical urtexts. This would involve re-reading these texts to extract authentic interpretations and deeper meaning, uncovering the provenance and trajectory of those ideas, contextualising the circumstances in which they arose, and documenting the lives and travails of the key thinkers (Mirowski and Plehwe 2009). For example, Raymond Plant's study of the neoliberal state is based on the writings of Friedrich Hayek, Michael Oakeshott and Robert Nozick (Plant 2010). Ha-Joon Chang describes neoliberalism as 'born out of an unholy alliance between neoclassical economics and the Austrian-Libertarian tradition' (Chang 2003: 47), while James Ferguson describes how: 'In perhaps the strictest sense, neoliberalism refers to a macroeconomic doctrine' (Ferguson 2010: 170).



# Literature Review

The second way would be to identify 'actually existing neoliberalism' in the real world. The answer to the question thus is to delineate and describe this phenomenon, trace its spheres of operation, and explain its dynamics. For example, Colin Crouch explains that 'in practice it is concerned with the dominance over public life of the giant corporation' (Crouch 2011:vii). Van Apeldorn and Overbeek (2012:4) describe it as 'a political project aimed to restore capitalist class power in the aftermath of the economic and social crises of the 1970s'. Aihwa Ong explains neoliberalism as a 'new mode of political optimization' (Ong 2006:3). Loic Wacquant argues that neoliberalism involves the growth and glorification of the penal wing of the state (Wacquant 2012).

# What tenses should we use in a literature review?

- <https://www.editage.com/insights/what-tense-should-i-use-when-writing-a-literature-review>

# Plagiarism

- You have to, by all means, avoid plagiarism.
- It implies an instant zero mark on the essay once plagiarism is detected.
- Plagiarism is taking others' ideas without giving credit to them. It is an act of theft.
- Be careful that sometimes you can even plagiarize yourself, if you used your past papers without making proper citations.
- This is why you need to learn Harvard/APA style referencing.
- For more information, please go to:  
[https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue\\_owl.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue_owl.html)

# The Art of Paraphrasing

## **Quotation vs Citation**

- When we used other people's ideas, it is important to make appropriate citation.
- Quotation is to refer to the author(s) in exactly the same lines and paragraphs. You need to put “...” mark on what you have quoted and tell the reader the exact page number.
- Most of the time when we cite other people, we need to paraphrase what he/she had said.

# Example: how to paraphrase?

- Here I paraphrase a paragraph from page 3 with a snapshot picture below.

Venugopal (2015) investigates neo-liberalism as a conceptual signifier. He proposes a noble extension beyond the conventional literature, which either takes a textual interpretation or examine the origin of neoliberalism from the real world.

...

## Reference

[1] Venugopal, R., Neoliberalism as Concept, Economics and Society, vol.44 (2), 2015

This paper advances a third way of answering the question by interrogating neoliberalism as a signifier and exploring its conceptual landscape. This approach does not take neoliberalism as a given body of textual knowledge in need of interpretation, or as a self-evident real world phenomenon or field of practice in need of abstraction, but examines what the word has come to mean, how it is used, and what the consequences are thereof. This implies

# After literature review, what can you do with your paper?

This paper advances a third way of answering the question by interrogating neoliberalism as a signifier and exploring its conceptual landscape. This approach does not take neoliberalism as a given body of textual knowledge in need of interpretation, or as a self-evident real world phenomenon or field of practice in need of abstraction, but examines what the word has come to mean, how it is used, and what the consequences are thereof. This implies scrutinising definitions, tracking the conceptual evolution of the term, mapping patterns of usage, and typologies of users. It involves interpolating between these patterns of usage to draw out inferences about what this term is used for, and what implications can be drawn from it. In doing so, it engages with conceptual debates on neoliberalism and juxtaposes these against a case study of its usage in the comparative political economy of development. Furthermore, while these concerns about terminological dysfunction are significant, they are also useful as an entry point to explore what it says about the knowledge that is built upon it, and the last part of this paper engages with on one such possibility.

# Reference

- At the end of your essay, you should list all the papers you have cited.
- **Do not list the papers that you have not cited or quoted.**
- Be aware of different types of sources that you have referred to, e.g. journal articles, working papers, online articles, books, etc.
- Please refer to [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research\\_and\\_citation/apa\\_style/apa\\_formatting\\_and\\_style\\_guide/reference\\_list\\_basic\\_rules.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_formatting_and_style_guide/reference_list_basic_rules.html)

for more detailed instructions on different styles of referencing.

# Conclusion

- In this special lecture, we have discussed a three-step approach to write an academic essay.
- We have emphasized on the importance of conducting a literature review.
- Literature review is not a list of papers you read.
- It is a journey that leads you to the frontier to the current state of research.
- Literature review, or survey paper, can stand alone as a piece of research work (if you write a good literature review, you deserve good marks for the essay).



# Conclusion

- Once you climbed to the top of current literature, it is time to ask what is the gap in the literature, and what can be done to fill the gap.
- Then you are ready to write an essay that expresses your opinion based on careful research.
- Eventually, we will focus on the next step after literature review: how to tackle a problem in economics or social science based on your literature review.