

Vanderbilt University

Leadership, Policy and Organizations

Class Number 9952

Spring 2018

For this assignment I would like you to complete a brief (no more than 2000 word) combined problem statement and literature review.

The problem statement section of this assignment should include a very brief statement of the problem to be studied, along with a statement of your research question. The research question, as described last semester, should make clear the population under study, your unit of analysis, and the dependent and independent variables. The problem statement and research question shouldn't take more than a page. You can use your previous research question, revise it, or choose a new one. The only limitation is that you must have a research question that can be answered using an available dataset.

The review should be more narrowly tailored than the kind of review you would compile for an article that has a major theoretical component, or a larger work such as your dissertation. Instead of covering the entire intellectual landscape in your chosen research area, your literature review should instead focus on one question: *What has been done to answer this research question, and how will your work add to the body of knowledge in this area?*

The focus of your lit review should therefore be your specific contribution to the established literature. The following list describes some (but not nearly all) of the ways in which your work can make a contribution:

- Applying a previously investigated research question to a new dataset
- Creating a new and improved analysis of a previously investigated research question (more appropriate model, better specification, etc.)
- Answering a previously unanswered research question.
- Resolving apparently conflicting evidence through improved analysis or a new dataset
- Improving the evidentiary basis for a given hypothesis.

The literature you review should be very narrowly tailored—you are primarily interested in works that have covered the same ground that you are covering. The emphasis should be on empirical work, with an eye toward both *describing* and *critiquing* what has been done before. While the number of works to be

described will vary depending on how extensive the research is in your area, you should conscientiously attempt to narrow down the focus of your review to those that are closest to the work you are attempting.

The *description* of relevant empirical work should include the question taken up by the authors, the data used, the method employed for analysis, and the results. Be quite specific about the results, including the size of the estimated impact of the independent variable or variables on the dependent variable. The *critique* of the work should say in what ways the research fails to achieve the objectives the authors set for the work. The critique of each article should point toward your own contribution—what others have failed to do, you will do in your article.

For this work and future work for this course, please conform to the stylistic guidelines provided by APA in the 6th edition of their handbook.