

MA Research Commitment

Assignment 2, MA Thesis Proposal

Joshua Gary Mausolf and Nora Nickels

Due 11:59 PM CDT on November 2nd

Requirements:

The MA Research Literature Review should be a **10-15 pages, double-spaced**, and clearly articulated review that introduces your research question and situates your thesis into both the theoretical and empirical context. The literature review should clarify how your research question will contribute to existing theory in your social science subfield. Often, the literature review will include testable empirical hypotheses or theoretical suppositions, either of which should be grounded in existing theoretical arguments and empirical evidence. Where necessary, you may need to provide a section establishing the “background” providing necessary context for your study. Within your literature review, include all the relevant in-text citations when referencing others’ work.

Attached to this assignment, please find further guidelines and suggestions to help you write a successful literature review. Below are the assignment requirements.

Required Sections:

- **Introduction:** 1-2 pages max
- **Literature Review:** 8-14 pages (*10-15 pages combined for intro and literature review*)
- **References:** 40-80 references, APA, ASA, or Chicago Style. Single Space with Hanging Indents. Reference pages not included in the 10-15 page length requirement.

1. Introduction

Your Literature Review Must Establish:

- A. What is your research question?
- B. What are your general hypotheses and provisional argument(s)?
- C. Why should we care about this topic?

You will notice these are the same ideas contained in the introduction of your thesis proposal. You can re-utilize a revised version of that segment in this assignment. *At most, this should be 1-2 double spaced pages.*

2. Literature Review

The literature review builds from the research question, argument, and expected contribution. Writing a polished literature review is a complex and iterative process. For inspiration, you might look at the introduction and literature review sections in top journals such as the *American Sociological Review*.

To help provide suggestions and guidelines of creating a literature review, below are a few sources that provide guidance:

Additional Resources in Crafting a Literature Review:

- Duke Literature Review Guide and Video
- Brandeis Literature Review Guide

What you will notice in both these guides and the example literature reviews (attached) is that these literature reviews are strategically structured to outline a synthesis of research traditions or relevant theoretical concepts needed to establish the background and research hypotheses. Often, these will reference several discrete or complementary research streams, which you, as the researcher need to synthesize how they relate and contribute to your research narrative. Your literature review should work to synthesize these in a way that builds a theoretical and empirical argument justifying the hypotheses of your study and substantiating their suppositions before you have done any analysis. In other words, your literature review provides a rationale for why you might expect the results you will later find.

*Note that your thesis project should primarily engage **social science literature** (even if it uses a method more common to computer science). Generally, your work will not be developing new methodologies but rather applying computational methods to a social science question. The literature and existing theory therefore should predominantly be found in leading social science journals (not computer science). In sociology this might be The American Sociological Review* or in economics The American Economic Review or journals of similar caliber in those or other social sciences and subfields.*

Attached to this assignment are several research articles for inspiration on creating a well-developed literature review. To help digest all the readings for this assignment (40-80 sources), attached, please find a chapter “Modes of Reading” that will assist in quickly digesting the main argument from a paper.

3. References (Works Cited)

Include an additional section of works cited. You should follow an accepted and consistent in-text citations and bibliography style such as ASA, APA, or Chicago.

You should include approximately 40-80 references in this section. References should primarily include research articles in top social science journals or academic works from university presses.

Submission

The assignment should be submitted in PDF format, attached to an email. The email should be sent to both Joshua Mausolf (jmausolf@uchicago.edu) and Nora Nickels (nnickels@uchicago.edu). This assignment is due by 11:59 PM, Central Time on November 2nd.

Late submissions will be deducted one letter grade for every day they are late.