

DA 401, Spring 2023

Professor Matt Lavin

Domain Knowledge Assignment

This assignment fulfills a crucial step in project planning: writing a brief but thorough literature review focused on domain knowledge relevant to your topic. The literature review establishes your credibility in the field but, most importantly, it creates rhetorical space for your contribution by establishing a gap or unsolved problem in your field of study.

Literature Review

A literature review is a critical summary of what the published research in a domain area says about a specific topic or question. It should identify what is known, what is debated, and what critical gaps in knowledge remain—in other words, the intellectual merit of the subject. Ideally, it should also state how the work applies to the “real world,” including its broader impact. Think of this as a mini literature review paper that could stand on its own (not a rundown of your specific study or planned methods), that describes the landscape of the field to which your work should apply, or from which your method or idea originates.

In the context of this seminar, your literature review will demonstrate your familiarity with work in the field that is relevant to your proposed project. It will also help set the stage for how/why your project represents a next step to gaining scholarly knowledge in that area, and/or provides a useful product that can be used broadly by practitioners.

Your literature review is the foundation for your semester long project, and it should be taken seriously. It will also be the basis for your introduction section in your final paper, so putting in the time and doing strong work now will save you time and effort for later synthesis.

Organizing Your Work

Your submission should be formatted like an essay, not an annotated bibliography (details below). It should contain complete sentences and well-constructed paragraphs. A good literature review has an easy-to-follow organizational pattern and combines both summary and synthesis, and possibly, critique. A summary is a recap of important information, but a synthesis is a re-organization of that information that links concepts and gives a new interpretation of old material. Alternately, it might track the intellectual progression of a domain area, or a debate through time. Or it may make a critique of which sources are the most relevant, accurate, or are now outdated. The best literature reviews are often topical and chronological in the sense that they describe multiple eras, waves, or phases of research on a subject.

Your literature review should contain the following components. You may choose to use headers for different sections, and name them, as you see fit.

Component	Description
Title	Brief and informative, gives some idea of the main point of your review.
Introduction	Gives a quick idea of the topic of the literature review, such as the central theme or organizational pattern.
Body	Contains your discussion of sources and is organized topically and within topical paragraphs, thematically or chronologically.
Conclusion	Discuss what you have drawn from reviewing literature so far. Where might the discussion proceed in the future? What remaining questions or next steps are there? This is a good place to start establishing the "connective tissue" that will link your overview of prior scholarship to the work you are planning to do but you should not go into detail about your own project.
References	Make sure all outside sources are cited properly, with in-text citations and a works cited page (or footnotes with a bibliography). You can use any citation style your domain area tends to use, such as MLA for languages and literature; APA for psychology, biology and social sciences, and Chicago style for history. Whatever you choose, you should use well-established standard and keep your choice consistent throughout the submission. Every citation in the reference section should be cited at least once in the text, everything cited should appear in the list of works cited. The submission must contain at least eight citations.

Notes

1. Your literature review should be based on scholarly literature of topical and methodological relevance to your research question. While there may be a relevant secondary source (magazine article, blog, etc.), these would not count toward the required scholarly sources.
2. Your literature review should not contain sources related to the skills, competencies, and methods you want to learn. We will do separate, in-class assignments skill building and citing sources to justify your choice of methods.

Assignment Details

Required length: Approximately six double-spaced pages, in standard font and size

Number of sources: At least eight scholarly references for the literature review

Literature review: Complete sentences, including intro, body, conclusion, and references

How to turn it in: Upload as PDF on Canvas

Deadline: By 11:59 p.m. on Sunday, February 12