

### **WHAT A LITERATURE REVIEW IS...**

- Surveys scholarly sources relevant to a particular issue, area of research, or theory
- Provides a description, summary, and critical evaluation of each work
- Offers an overview of significant literature published on a topic
- Gives future research context by telling the story of work done so far<sup>1</sup>

### **ORGANIZATION QUESTIONS:**

- 1) Is my literature review organized chronologically or by topic? Am I clear about which approach is being used in the review?
- 2) Do I use headings or paragraph breaks to show distinctions in the groups of studies under consideration?
- 3) Do I explain why certain groups of studies (or individual studies) are being reviewed by drawing a clear connection to my topic?
- 4) Do I make clear which of the studies described are most important?
- 5) Do I cover all important areas of research related to his or her topic?
- 6) Do I use transitions and summaries to move from one study or set of studies to the next?
- 7) By the end of the literature review, have I made clear why my research is necessary?

### **REVISION QUESTIONS:**

- 1) Do I mention flaws, gaps, or shortcomings of specific studies or groups of studies?
- 2) Do I point out areas that have not yet been researched or have not yet been researched sufficiently?
- 3) Do I show a change over time or recent developments that makes my research relevant?
- 4) Do I discuss research methods used to study this topic and/or related topics?
- 5) Do I clearly state why his or her research is necessary?<sup>2</sup>

### **IMPORTANT:**

- For clarity, make sure to outline and *reverse outline* your review.
- The main purpose of your literature review is to show why your research question is *significant*.
- Find the major works that are applicable to your research question. Use these works to find related works.
- Once you have your major works, identify the relationships they share—use these relationships to begin your outline.
- Write as you go! Do not wait for a completed outline or all of your research literature.

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<sup>1</sup> adapted from <http://library.ucsc.edu/ref/howto/literaturereview.html>

<sup>2</sup> adapted from <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/994/04/>