

Literature Review

Dr. Frances Clynes

Dissertation Seminar

Friday 31st March 2023



Agenda

What is a Literature Review?

Primary and secondary sources

‘Location of study in the context of existing scholarly literature.’

How to Begin

Context is King

Analytical Approach

Thread it Through

‘A Good Literature Review’



What is a Literature Review?

MA CAA Dissertation Handbook

‘Location of study in the context of existing scholarly literature.’

‘Include a literature review of the main primary and secondary sources. In the case of site surveys primary sources may be limited, but could include guide-books, travel guides, local histories, web pages, blogs and so on.’

Primary Sources

Original
Manuscripts

Published Works of
Research Subjects

Social Media Posts



Secondary Sources

JSTOR

Online Databases

Academic Texts

Conference Proceedings

Peer-Reviewed Journals

- *Culture and Cosmos*

PhDs

Google Scholar (with
caution)





‘Location of study in the context of existing scholarly literature’

What question is your dissertation aiming to answer?

The fundamental question is ‘what is already known about it?’

What are the latest contributions in the debate?

What are the current thoughts?

What is new?

Who disagrees with whom?



‘Location of study in the context of existing scholarly literature’

How will your research add to current knowledge?

How will you contribute to the debates?

Have you considered all arguments?

With whom do you agree and disagree?



‘Location of study in the context of existing scholarly literature.’

Has your research been done before?

Is this a well-worn argument?

Can you extend it?

Can you repeat it in another area?



How to Begin

Who are the major scholars in the area?

- Who are always cited?
- What is their position in the argument?
- Who agrees with them?
- Who opposes their views?
- Has this changed over time?
- Are their views still relevant?

Context is King

When were they writing?

What was the background?

Examples:

Theodor W. Adorno, *The Stars Down to Earth and Other Essays on the Irrational in Culture*

Jung, CW 10: *Civilization in Transition*



Your Research

A contribution to scholarship

A piece of original thought
that contributes to the
debate in the area your
covering

Ask yourself:

- Is it relevant?
- Does it directly contribute to answering my fundamental question?
- Avoid 'interesting' tangents



Avoid 'interesting' tangents

'A simple but clever way to avoid this pitfall is to create sub-sections/headings in your Literature Review chapter that link directly to your specific research objectives.'

John Biggam, *Succeeding with Your Master's Dissertation: A step-by-step handbook* (Berkshire: Open University Press, 2008), p. 51.



Analytical Approach

Have a critical and analytical approach to the literature

- What was their methodology?
- Are they taking a position in a current debate?
- What is the author's motivation?
- What has influenced their opinions?
- Have they overlooked something?
- Are they factually correct?



Are they factually correct?

‘Respondents were asked to choose their sun sign, yet there are errors in her method of determining their sun sign. These errors resulted in people born approximately twelve days each year being unable to choose their correct sign, or choosing it but having their choice wrongly classed as an inaccurate choice.’

- Hamilton, Margaret M., ‘Incorporation of Astrology-Based Personality Information into Long-Term Self-Concept’, *Journal of Social Behaviour and Personality*, 1995, Vol. 10, No. 3, pp. 707-718



Thread it Through

The first step in your dissertation

Everything else comes from it

Basis for your research

Refer back to it in your findings and conclusions





‘A Good Literature Review’

It lays out what research has been done by others relevant to your research aim/objectives.

It presents the work of others in a clear, interesting and progressive manner.

It provides evidence of in-depth critical evaluation

It highlights pertinent/emerging issues

It cites a variety of relevant sources properly

- John Biggam, *Succeeding with Your Master's Dissertation: A step-by-step handbook* (Berkshire: Open University Press, 2008), pp. 51 52.

The Unending Conversation of the Academy...



‘You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about....

You listen for a while until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar. Someone answers; you answer him/her; another comes to your defense; another aligns themselves against you.... The hour grows late, you must depart. And you do depart, with the discussion still vigorously in progress.’

Kenneth Burke (1941 [1967]), *The Philosophy of Literary Form*.
London, University of California Press. p.111.



HPCA7022 MACAA Dissertation Module Seminars 2022/2023

All seminars are at 4:00 pm UK time, which will shift between GMT to BST. The seminars will be held on a Thursday afternoon in Semester 1 and on Friday afternoon in Semester 2. In each seminar there will be time for discussion and general questions.

	Date	Topic
Seminar 1	Thursday 20 October 2022	Student presentations of their MA thinking Plus skills lecture
Seminar2	Thursday 17 November 2022	Student presentations of their MA thinking Plus skills lecture
Seminar 3	Thursday 15 December 2022	Student presentations of their MA thinking Plus skills lecture
Seminar 4	Friday 17 February 2023	Student presentations of their MA thinking Plus skills lecture
Seminar 5	Friday 31 March 2023	Student presentations of their MA thinking Plus skills lecture
Seminar 6	Friday 12 May 2023	Student presentations of their MA thinking Plus skills lecture
Seminar 7	Friday 5 June 2023	Student presentations of their MA thinking Plus skills lecture

Next Seminar

FRIDAY 12TH MAY
2023

4PM GMT