LITERATURE REVIEWS MADE EASY
WHERE DO I BEGIN?
WHAT IS A LITERATURE REVIEW?

• We will talk about both process

• And product
WHAT IS A LIT REVIEW?

• Definition:

• A lit review surveys, summarizes, and links information about a given topic.

• A GOOD lit review assesses this information and distills it for the reader.
WHAT IS A LIT REVIEW?

• “The best lit reviews tell a good story.” – Regina Winters

• A lit review provides **context** and **background** for your work.

• It’s an essay, a **synthesis of information** relevant to your work.
WHAT DOES A LIT REVIEW DO?

- Clarifies understanding of the field
- Explains the rationale for your research
- Places your research within a broader context
- Evaluates the results of previous research
- Defines key concepts and ideas
- Identifies research in related areas that is generalizable or transferable to your topic
- Identifies relevant methodological issues
WHAT A LIT REVIEW IS NOT

• A lit review is NOT an annotated bibliography
• Annotated Bibliographies:
  • Cite various works
  • Summarize major points of those works
  • Talk about the importance of each work to the reader or larger community
  • Discuss gaps in the literature or shortcomings of the works
• Are useful tools
• Are first steps to a good lit review –
• Don’t stop there!
WHAT’S THE PROCESS?

1. Define/refine topic
2. Determine approach
3. Research effectively
4. Read critically
   *Take great notes*
   *Be organized*
5. Analyze and evaluate
6. Draft written product
7. Edit and refine
DEFINE/REFINE TOPIC

• What’s your **current knowledge** base?
• Do you **know what you don’t know**?
  Don’t feel bad – that’s often the case...
• Do **get help**!
• This might be an iterative process, but it’s easier if you begin **focused** and with some general knowledge already.
DETERMINE APPROACH

- Develop a **set of questions** to be applied to all articles
- How will you **structure** your lit review?
  - Chronologically
  - Thematically
  - By relationship to your own work
RESEARCH EFFECTIVELY

- **Tabby Farney** is your best friend – seriously!
- **Mine references** from sources, look for repetitions and reviews
- Use **high quality** sources
- Use a **variety** of sources
- Connect the dots
YOU MAY KISS A LOT OF FROGS

“When you’re gathering information for your lit review, you won’t use everything you gather – use the best of the best of the best!” – Regina Winters
ANALYZE AND EVALUATE

• What is your research question and how does this material relate?
• Are there foundational articles/seminal works which must be included?
• How is the topic framed?
• Are there fringe works or other materials that should not be included?
• Is there a central debate that should be acknowledged and addressed?
• Where is the topic headed in the future?
READ CRITICALLY

• What is the **source**, the **claim**, and the **conclusions** of the material?
  • **Perspective** and/or bias
  • **Reason(s)** for publishing
  • **Significance** of findings

• What are the **assumptions** and **evidence**?

• Is the **methodology** valid?
  • **Flawed** reasoning or fallacies
  • **Alternative** explanations
  • **Omissions**

• **How does it relate?**

• **What does it mean?**
TAKE GREAT NOTES

- **Highlighting** is good for skimming
- **Margin notes** suggest your analysis and connections of material
- **Outlines** may be useful for complex or important works
- **Spreadsheets or grids** help track numerous sources across consistent variables or metrics
- **Checklists** help track progress and connections
- **Summaries** with additional notes from your own analysis and processing – and written in your own words – help cut down transaction costs when reading and reviewing many sources
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Journal</th>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Theory traditions</th>
<th>method</th>
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<tr>
<td>Levine, T.</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Tools for the study and design of collaborative teacher learning: the affordances of different conceptions of teacher community and activity theory</td>
<td>Teacher Education Quarterly</td>
<td>To improve the conceptual tools available for the design and study of T ela. articles sets out different distinctions among several popular notions of T community</td>
<td>Activity theory</td>
<td>Each conception analyzed as to:</td>
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<td>Third space</td>
<td>the degree to which the construct specifies a mechanism of Tg</td>
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<td>Implications for the PR of Tg</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Illustrative suggestions for reusing this construct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Exploring Lg. in Ts COP</td>
<td>Teaching and Teacher Education</td>
<td>Relatively little research examines how proficient supply intellectual, social and material resources for Tg add innovations in practice. This paper examines the theory-building potential of audio- and videotaped records of situated interaction among Ts in the course of everyday work</td>
<td></td>
<td>This research joins three analytic resources to examine problems of teacher development and school reform: theoretical and empirical work rooted in social constructivist traditions of social science and focused on communities of practice, the cumulative body of research on institutional conditions of teachers’ work and teacher learning; and established methods of micro-ethnography and discourse analysis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chapter 3 is a ‘sober assessment’ of the challenges facing the...
BE ORGANIZED
DRAFT THE WRITTEN PRODUCT

• A list of **who said what** is the **starting point**, not the final product
• **Tell the story**, make your case
• Use your **own words**
• Write to your **audience**
• Make **connections** for your readers
• **Cite** accurately

“A lit review should provide a conceptual framework.” – Interim Provost Terry Schwartz
CONSTRUCTING THE PRODUCT

• Introduction
  • Topic and importance
    • Use facts
    • History and/or background
  • Narrows topic
  • Talks about implications
  • What will this section say?
  • How will you say it?
CONSTRUCTING THE PRODUCT

• **Sections** help with **navigation**
  • Start by painting the big picture by theme
  • Discuss aspects using works
    • Start with large or important works
    • Discuss more detailed studies as needed and appropriate
  • Provide assessment about quality
  • Overall and specific
  • Gaps, new directions, info needed?
EDIT AND REFINE

• Let it sit

• Get outside opinions and assistance

• Don’t rush this step
SOME EXAMPLES

http://www.rmit.edu.au/library/literaturereview#Exampleofagoodandbadreview

Bad review

Sexual harassment has many consequences. Adams, Kottke, and Padgitt (1983) found that some women students said they avoided taking a class or working with certain professors because of the risk of harassment. They also found that men and women students reacted differently. Their research was a survey of 1,000 men and women graduate and undergraduate students. Benson and Thomson’s study in Social Problems (1982) lists many problems created by sexual harassment. In their excellent book, The Lecherous Professor, Dziech and Weiner (1990) give a long list of difficulties that victims have suffered.

Good review

The victims of sexual harassment suffer a range of consequences, from lowered self-esteem and loss of self-confidence to withdrawal from social interaction, changed career goals, and depression (Adams, Kottke, and Padgitt, 1983; Benson and Thomson, 1982; Dziech and Weiner, 1990). For example, Adams, Kottke, and Padgitt (1983) noted that 13 percent of women students said they avoided taking a class or working with certain professors because of the risk of harassment.
USE AVAILABLE RESOURCES

- Campus level
  - Writing Center
  - Library
  - Others
- School of Public Affairs
  - Instructors
  - Advisors
  - Call on me – I can help provide direction!
    Pam Sawyer  psawyer@uccs.edu
READY TO ROLL!