

# A. SOC 102: LITERATURE REVIEW DRAFT

*By Jacqueline Brooks*

**Course:** Soc 102: Methods

**Project:** Literature Review Draft

**Description:** A literature review is a critical analysis of existing scholarship. In this assignment, you are required to create a detailed, in-depth discussion of the literature related to your selected topic. In Sociology an adept review of the literature has many goals: 1) it reveals what is known about a specific topic, 2) it outlines the concepts and theories used to explain social phenomena related to your topic, 3) it reveals the various research methods used to study the topic, 4) it exposes any significant controversies in the field, 5) it exposes any inconsistencies in the field, and 6) it unveils any unanswered research questions in the field. Thus, by the time you have finished reading your selected articles and books, you should have a firm grasp of the pertinent issues related to your topic.

It is important that your literature review is not an extended annotated bibliography. Rather, writing in essay form, your task is to develop a critical review of your selected works. This means your essay should be analytical not descriptive (move away from writing summaries). Your literature review should do the following:

1. Ask questions about the significance of the scholarship in the field. In Assignment One, you answered the So What question. Now, tell the reader how the leading authors in the field answer this question. What makes the selected topic an important topic of sociological inquiry?
2. Make connections among the varied work in the field. It is important that you draw linkages among the different journal articles and books that comprise your literature review. You have several options, choose ONE:
  - a. You can develop a literature review that is based on synthesized coherence. Use this format if the majority of your selected works seem disconnected and do not relate well to each other. This is often the case when studying an under-researched topic. Your task is to impose coherence by highlighting the gaps in the existing research. Your critical analysis will discuss the existing holes in the current literature and identify ways to strengthen work in the field.
  - b. You can develop a literature review that is based on progressive coherence. Use this format if your selected works reveal consensus, and you can identify significant themes. For example, if studying race inequality in education group together the works that discuss tracking, or the works that discuss high teacher to student ratio, or the works that discuss poor access to needed technology. This type of literature

review is most common. Your critical analysis will discuss several themes identified in the literature.

- c. You can develop a literature review based on non-coherence. Use this format if there is little agreement among your selected works. This is often the case with hotly contested topics such as video gaming and its influence on behavior. Some argue video gaming has negative effects on behavior, while others argue it is beneficial. Where do researchers mostly disagree? Where do researchers mostly agree? Your critical analysis will discuss the major points of agreement and discord.

3. Identify the strengths and weaknesses of the scholarship in the field. It is important that you identify areas where research in the field is strongest, and areas that require further work. Students often struggle to write authoritatively. Here, you can develop this skill. The reader is not looking for judgment, but an informed assessment from a budding expert in the field.

4. Identify and discuss the major theoretical ideas that frame the work in the field. Theory is an essential part of sociological research. Your literature review should address the major theoretical perspectives that frame the work in the field. For example, much of the literature that addresses class inequality is based on Neo-Marxian ideas that challenge the role of the government and big business in perpetuating inequality. Which theoretical constructs are prevalent in the field?

5. Use 11 - 12 point font, 1" margins on all sides. Use ASA style (in text citations, and reference page). You can find ASA style guidelines on Canvas. In addition, the following website is helpful: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/583/01/>

Your assignment should be approximately 4 pages. Your literature review should include at least 4 scholarly works.

Please submit your work to Canvas.