I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

Literature reviews are an essential component of dissertations and if done in an exacting manner they can often stand alone on their merits as substantive scholarly contributions to the professional knowledge base. This course aims to build knowledge and skills related to (1) evaluating and synthesizing research primarily in academic publications and secondarily in government documents and other sources of information related to one’s dissertation topic and (2) writing literature reviews that can be potentially successfully subjected to the peer review process.

The course (SWK8904) serves as the precursor to the Dissertation Proposal Seminar II (SWK8290), which provides a more comprehensive attempt to draft a dissertation proposal on a research topic of students’ choosing. SWK8904 equips students with a set of ground rules, assumptions, and techniques for understanding scholarly work in a range of professional disciplines that comprise the social sciences, with an emphasis on social work and social welfare literature.

Literature reviews published in peer-reviewed journals set the standards for the course. Ideally, the course will prepare students to produce a literature review that could stand on its merits to warrant publication in a peer-reviewed scholarly journal. Concomitantly, whatever work gets done to meet that goal and related standards will serve students well as preparation for the coherent narrative literature review section of their dissertation proposals.

Students are encouraged to build tables that succinctly summarize the literature by theoretical orientation, relevant findings, methodological procedures. The tabular summaries will form the basis of a draft of the literature review component of their prospective dissertation proposals, while making a case for investigating a researchable topic, presumably one that forms the basis of students’ dissertations.

Readings and online discussions are designed to help students develop a reasonably coherent first draft of the literature review that forms the basis of their dissertations. Style, mechanics, and language use are scrutinized and students will also have the advantage of incorporating feedback by constructively critiquing each other’s work as they refine their first working drafts of the literature reviews. A comprehensive self-editing checklist for refining the final draft of the literature review is also provided, as well as examples of published literature reviews.
II. EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

A. Knowledge Objectives

At the end of the semester, students will know how to:

1. Undertake a comprehensive literature search.

2. Evaluate the theoretical and methodological merits of quantitative and qualitative research articles.

3. Synthesize findings from previous studies in tabular and narrative forms.

4. Write a literature review that coherently summarizes the extant literature, identifies gaps in that literature, suggests needed research, and lays the bases for studies that will form the basis of their dissertations.

B. Skill Objectives

At the end of the semester, students will be able to:

1. Identify and use effectively a variety of sources from which to gather extant literature about a topic of their choosing, one preferably related to their prospective dissertation proposal.

2. Evaluate the merits of case studies, narrative analyses, surveys, correlation studies, regression analysis studies, factor analysis studies, discriminant analysis, experimental and quasi-experimental studies.

3. Build tables to summarize the literature by topic, research questions and related hypotheses, use of theories (that is, as an orienting framework for variable selection, testing hypotheses, etc.), methods, and findings.

4. Prepare and use guidelines for writing the first draft of a literature review and developing a coherent essay.


6. Critique others’ work and incorporate others’ feedback to refine initial drafts of the literature review.

7. Self-edit and refine a final draft of the literature review.
III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. Texts and Readings

Required Texts


Recommended Text


Examples of literature review articles available in CANVAS in Module 1 of the course:


B. Course Assignments

1. Readings

It is expected that all reading assignments listed as "required" in the course outline will be read and that students will make every effort to avail themselves of the recommended readings.

2. Specific Assignments

Assignment 1: Tabular Summaries of the Extant Literature

Students will prepare tables summarizing the extant literature of a topic of their choosing, preferably related to their prospective dissertations, by general topic areas, specific research questions and related hypotheses, use of theories (that is, as an orienting framework for variable selection, testing hypotheses, etc.), methods, and findings.

Due date: Class 9 / Module 2

Assignment 2: Final Draft of the Literature Review

Students will write a literature review that coherently summarizes the extant literature, identifies gaps in that literature, suggests needed research, and lays the bases for studies that will form the basis of their dissertations.

Due date: Class 13 / Module 3

Maximum length: 12-15 pages (excluding references), double-spaced, 12-pitch font.

It is expected that assignments will be handed in on the due date.

Adherence to APA style of sectioning, referencing and margins is required. It is expected that students will evidence communication skills consistent with doctoral education standards. Students are advised to carefully proofread their written work (by self and others) before they submit it.

C. Class Design: Active participation in online discussions is requisite.

D. Grading: The University grading system will be applied. The grade will be based upon the extent to which the student meets the course objectives, as demonstrated in the form, content and promptness of written assignments as well as class attendance and participation.
Criteria for final grades are:

1. Tabular Summary of the Literature 30%
2. Final draft of the Literature Review 55%
3. Critique, feedback, & online participation 15%

E. **Evaluation**: Students are provided opportunity to evaluate doctoral courses. An evaluation form pertaining to the course and instructor will be distributed at the last class session. There will also be oral discussion of students' perspectives about the course.

Evaluation is ongoing. Students are encouraged to provide feedback about their learning needs throughout the semester.

G. **Plagiarism**: Students should remember that the School will not condone plagiarism in any form and will sanction acts of plagiarism. A student who presents someone else's work as his or her own work is stealing from the authors or persons who did the original thinking and writing. Plagiarism occurs when a student directly copies another's work without citation; when a student paraphrases major aspects of another's work without citation; and when a student combines the work of different authors into a new statement without reference to those authors. It is also plagiarism to use the ideas and/or work of another student and present them as your own. It is not plagiarism to formulate your own presentation of an idea or concept as a reaction to someone else's work; however, the work to which you are reacting should be discussed and appropriately cited. Any student who can be shown to have plagiarized any part of any assignment in this course will automatically **FAIL** the course and will be referred to the Associate Dean for disciplinary action that may include expulsion.

H. **HIPPA ALERT**: In line with the new HIPPA regulations concerning protected health information, it is important that you understand that any case information you present from your work will need to be de-identified. What this means in that any information that would allow another to identify the person needs to be changed or eliminated. This includes obvious things like names and birth dates but may also contain other information that is so unique to the person that it will allow for identification, including diagnosis, race/ethnicity, or gender. If diagnosis, race/ethnicity, or gender is directly related to the case presentation it can be included if it will not allow for identification.
COURSE SCHEDULE

Class 1-2/Module 1  INTRODUCTION & OVERVIEW OF THE COURSE
Overview of course and course assignments
Purposes of Literature Reviews
Role of Literature Reviews in Research
Planning the Literature Review

Required Reading:


Yorks, L. (2008). What we know, what we don’t know, what we need to know – Integrative literature reviews are research. *Human Resource Development Review*, 7, 139-141.

Class 3-9/Module 2  SEARCHING THE LITERATURE; ORGANIZING IDEAS:
EVALUATING BASIC COMPONENTS OF RESEARCH LITERATURE;
EVALUATING RESEARCH ARTICLES BY TYPE OF STUDY: QUANTITATIVE STUDIES I;
EVALUATING RESEARCH ARTICLES BY TYPE OF STUDY: QUANTITATIVE STUDIES II;
EVALUATING RESEARCH ARTICLES BY TYPE OF STUDY: QUANTITATIVE STUDIES III;
EVALUATING RESEARCH ARTICLES BY TYPE OF STUDY: QUALITATIVE STUDIES I;
EVALUATING RESEARCH ARTICLES BY TYPE OF STUDY: QUALITATIVE STUDIES II;
BUILDING TABLES

Required Readings


Pyrczak, F. (2008). *Evaluating research in academic journals* (4th edition). Chapter 1, “Background for evaluating research reports” (pp. 1-12), Chapter 2, “Evaluating titles” (pp. 13-22), Chapter 3, “Evaluating abstracts” (pp. 23-32), Chapter 4, “Evaluating introductions and literature reviews” (pp. 33-46), and Chapter 5, “A
closer look at evaluating literature reviews” (pp. 47-54).

Pyrczak, F. (2008). *Evaluating research in academic journals* (4th edition). Chapter 6, “Evaluating samples when researchers generalize” (pp. 55-68), Chapter 7, “Evaluating samples when researchers do not generalize” (pp. 69-76), and Chapter 8, “Evaluating instrumentation” (pp. 77-90).


**Class 10-13/Module 3**  
**WRITING THE REVIEW**

Tabular summaries of the literature

**Required Readings**


**Class/Module 14**  
**Catching Up, Tying Up Loose Ends**

COURSE EVALUATION
Bibliography (Helpful Texts)


Helpful Articles


