1: Developing Evidence-Based Arguments from Texts - ReadWriteThink

In the case of a literature review, you are really creating a new forest, which you will build by using the trees you found in the literature you read." Create a topic outline that traces your argument: first explain to the reader your line or argument (or thesis); then your narrative that follows should explain and justify your line of argument.

Bibliography Definition A literature review surveys books, scholarly articles, and any other sources relevant to a particular issue, area of research, or theory, and by so doing, provides a description, summary, and critical evaluation of these works in relation to the research problem being investigated. Literature reviews are designed to provide an overview of sources you have explored while researching a particular topic and to demonstrate to your readers how your research fits within a larger field of study. Conducting Research Literature Reviews: From the Internet to Paper. Importance of a Good Literature Review A literature review may consist of simply a summary of key sources, but in the social sciences, a literature review usually has an organizational pattern and combines both summary and synthesis, often within specific conceptual categories. A summary is a recap of the important information of the source, but a synthesis is a re-organization, or a reshuffling, of that information in a way that informs how you are planning to investigate a research problem. The analytical features of a literature review might: Give a new interpretation of old material or combine new with old interpretations, Trace the intellectual progression of the field, including major debates, Depending on the situation, evaluate the sources and advise the reader on the most pertinent or relevant research, or Usually in the conclusion of a literature review, identify where gaps exist in how a problem has been researched to date. The purpose of a literature review is to: Place each work in the context of its contribution to understanding the research problem being studied. Describe the relationship of each work to the others under consideration. Identify new ways to interpret prior research. Reveal any gaps that exist in the literature. Resolve conflicts amongst seemingly contradictory previous studies. Identify areas of prior scholarship to prevent duplication of effort. Point the way in fulfilling a need for additional research. Locate your own research within the context of existing literature [very important]. Sage, ; Hart, Chris. Doing a Literature Review: Releasing the Social Science Research Imagination. Sage Publications, ; Jesson, Jill. Doing Your Literature Review: Traditional and Systematic Techniques. Political Science and Politics 39 January A Step-by-Step Guide for Students. Types of Literature Reviews It is important to think of knowledge in a given field as consisting of three layers. First, there are the primary studies that researchers conduct and publish. Second are the reviews of those studies that summarize and offer new interpretations built from and often extending beyond the primary studies. Third, there are the perceptions, conclusions, opinion, and interpretations that are shared informally that become part of the lore of field. In composing a literature review, it is important to note that it is often this third layer of knowledge that is cited as "true" even though it often has only a loose relationship to the primary studies and secondary literature reviews. Given this, while literature reviews are designed to provide an overview and synthesis of pertinent sources you have explored, there are a number of approaches you could adopt depending upon the type of analysis underpinning your study. Types of Literature Reviews Argumentative Review This form examines literature selectively in order to support or refute an argument, deeply imbedded assumption, or philosophical problem already established in the literature. The purpose is to develop a body of literature that establishes a contrarian viewpoint. Given the value-laden nature of some social science research [e. However, note that they can also introduce problems of bias when they are used to make summary claims of the sort found in systematic reviews [see below]. Integrative Review Considered a form of research that reviews, critiques, and synthesizes representative literature on a topic in an integrated way such that new frameworks and perspectives on the topic are generated. The body of literature includes all studies that address related or identical hypotheses or research problems. A well-done integrative review meets the same standards as primary research in regard to clarity, rigor, and replication. This is the most common form of review in the social sciences. Historical Review Few

things rest in isolation from historical precedent. Historical literature reviews focus on examining research throughout a period of time, often starting with the first time an issue, concept, theory, phenomena emerged in the literature, then tracing its evolution within the scholarship of a discipline. The purpose is to place research in a historical context to show familiarity with state-of-the-art developments and to identify the likely directions for future research. Methodological Review A review does not always focus on what someone said [findings], but how they came about saying what they say [method of analysis]. Reviewing methods of analysis provides a framework of understanding at different levels [i. This approach helps highlight ethical issues which you should be aware of and consider as you go through your own study. Systematic Review This form consists of an overview of existing evidence pertinent to a clearly formulated research question, which uses pre-specified and standardized methods to identify and critically appraise relevant research, and to collect, report, and analyze data from the studies that are included in the review. The goal is to deliberately document, critically evaluate, and summarize scientifically all of the research about a clearly defined research problem. Typically it focuses on a very specific empirical question, often posed in a cause-and-effect form, such as "To what extent does A contribute to B? Theoretical Review The purpose of this form is to examine the corpus of theory that has accumulated in regard to an issue, concept, theory, phenomena. The theoretical literature review helps to establish what theories already exist, the relationships between them, to what degree the existing theories have been investigated, and to develop new hypotheses to be tested. Often this form is used to help establish a lack of appropriate theories or reveal that current theories are inadequate for explaining new or emerging research problems. The unit of analysis can focus on a theoretical concept or a whole theory or framework. Sage Publications, ; Kennedy, Mary M. Systematic Reviews in the Social Sciences: Blackwell Publishers, ; Torracro, Richard. Terms, Functions, and Distinctions. Systematic Approaches to a Successful Literature Review. Structure and Writing Style I. Thinking About Your Literature Review The structure of a literature review should include the following: An overview of the subject, issue, or theory under consideration, along with the objectives of the literature review, Division of works under review into themes or categories [e. The critical evaluation of each work should consider: Methodology -- were the techniques used to identify, gather, and analyze the data appropriate to addressing the research problem? Was the sample size appropriate? Were the results effectively interpreted and reported? Does the work ultimately contribute in any significant way to an understanding of the subject? Development of the Literature Review Four Stages 1. Problem formulation -- which topic or field is being examined and what are its component issues? Literature search -- finding materials relevant to the subject being explored. Data evaluation -- determining which literature makes a significant contribution to the understanding of the topic. Analysis and interpretation -- discussing the findings and conclusions of pertinent literature. Consider the following issues before writing the literature review: Clarify If your assignment is not very specific about what form your literature review should take, seek clarification from your professor by asking these questions: Roughly how many sources should I include? What types of sources should I review books, journal articles, websites; scholarly versus popular sources? Should I summarize, synthesize, or critique sources by discussing a common theme or issue? Should I evaluate the sources? Find Models Use the exercise of reviewing the literature to examine how authors in your discipline or area of interest have composed their literature review sections. Read them to get a sense of the types of themes you might want to look for in your own research or to identify ways to organize your final review. Narrow the Topic The narrower your topic, the easier it will be to limit the number of sources you need to read in order to obtain a good survey of relevant resources. A good strategy is to begin by searching the HOMER catalog for books about the topic and review the table of contents for chapters that focuses on specific issues. You can also review the indexes of books to find references to specific issues that can serve as the focus of your research. For example, a book surveying the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict may include a chapter on the role Egypt has played in mediating the conflict, or look in the index for the pages where Egypt is mentioned in the text. Consider Whether Your Sources are Current Some disciplines require that you use information that is as current as possible. This is

particularly true in disciplines in medicine and the sciences where research conducted becomes obsolete very quickly as new discoveries are made. However, when writing a review in the social sciences, a survey of the history of the literature may be required. In other words, a complete understanding the research problem requires you to deliberately examine how knowledge and perspectives have changed over time. Sort through other current bibliographies or literature reviews in the field to get a sense of what your discipline expects. You can also use this method to explore what is considered by scholars to be a "hot topic" and what is not. Ways to Organize Your Literature Review Chronology of Events If your review follows the chronological method, you could write about the materials according to when they were published. This approach should only be followed if a clear path of research building on previous research can be identified and that these trends follow a clear chronological order of development. For example, a literature review that focuses on continuing research about the emergence of German economic power after the fall of the Soviet Union. By Publication Order your sources by publication chronology, then, only if the order demonstrates a more important trend. However, progression of time may still be an important factor in a thematic review. The only difference here between a "chronological" and a "thematic" approach is what is emphasized the most: Note however that more authentic thematic reviews tend to break away from chronological order. A review organized in this manner would shift between time periods within each section according to the point made. Methodological A methodological approach focuses on the methods utilized by the researcher. For the Internet in American presidential politics project, one methodological approach would be to look at cultural differences between the portrayal of American presidents on American, British, and French websites. Or the review might focus on the fundraising impact of the Internet on a particular political party.

2: Developing critical thinking

A literature review surveys books, scholarly articles, and any other sources relevant to a particular issue, area of research, or theory, and by so doing, provides a description, summary, and critical evaluation of these works in relation to the research problem being investigated. Literature.

The learner comes to own a new idea or new way of thinking. Without this, school learning becomes a transitory experience with little application to future thought and action. What kinds of learning experiences and learning environments promote science learning? The research synthesized in How People Learn Bransford et al. Learner-centered environments pay careful attention to the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and beliefs that learners bring to the educational setting. For example, in Chapter 3 , Ms. In Chapter 5 , Joanna and her teacher colleagues at the science museum were carefully supported to begin with what they knew and pursue questions of interest in order to deepen and broaden their understandings. Students from diverse language backgrounds vary greatly in their abilities to express, communicate, discuss, and demonstrate their understandings of science and of scientific concepts by virtue of their developing language abilities CCSSO, Further, like all students, they vary in what they understand of science; this is complicated by the fact that their home cultures may not have exposed them to science as generally taught in schools. Inquiry and the National Science Education Standards: A Guide for Teaching and Learning. The National Academies Press. Knowledge-centered environments help students develop well-organized bodies of knowledge and organize that knowledge so that it supports planning and strategic thinking. Like experts, they are able to make connections among ideas. When they learn new knowledge, students also learn where it applies and how. They have opportunities to practice using it in novel situations. Their learning environments promote the sort of problem-solving behavior observed in experts Bransford et al. All of the Chapter 3 vignettes showed students attacking problems using their firsthand observations and science knowledge from other sources to build new general ideas. Assessment-centered environments help students learn to monitor and regulate their own learning. They learn to question why they believe what they believe and whether there is sufficient evidence for their beliefs White and Frederiksen, in press. These environments provide students with opportunities for feedback and revision. Community-centered environments require students to articulate their ideas, challenge those of others, and negotiate deeper meaning along with other learners. Such environments encourage people to learn from one another. They value the search for understanding and acknowledge that mistakes are a necessary ingredient if learning is to occur. A number of studies have examined learning environments that incorporate all four of these elements. In their studies of high school physics teaching and learning, Minstrell , , assessed the following research-based instructional techniques: The learning environment these researchers describe incorporates all the features discussed above. Many research studies of environments in which students learn for understanding use standardized measures of student achievement, although these measures do not emphasize the kinds of deep understanding on which the research is focused. Research on effective learning and learning environments has interesting parallels to the process of scientific inquiry itself Duschl, Both learner and scientist actively construct knowledge through confrontation with a new question, problem, or phenomenon, gathering information, and creating explanations. Throughout the process of inquiry, both constantly evaluate and reevaluate the nature and strength of evidence and share and then critique their explanations and those of others. A classroom in which students use scientific inquiry to learn is one that resembles those that research has found the most effective for learning for understanding. This consequence strengthens the argument for inquiry-based teaching. Although this research suffers from the lack of a shared, precise definition of inquiry, it is possible to look for patterns that show up across studies. In the s, several meta-analyses were done of the original research projects, in which the individual projects are re-analyzed as a whole to yield broader results than any one study alone can produce. In general, these meta-analyses show that inquiry-based teaching produces positive, Page Share Cite Suggested Citation: For example, studies of

inquiry-oriented curriculum programs Shymansky et al. However, there was essentially no correlation between positive results and expert ratings of the degree of inquiry in the materials. Wise and Okey showed a positive effect for what they called inquiry-discovery teaching for cognitive outcomes. Although Lott found only small differences between inductive and deductive approaches, the differences were in favor of the inductive approach, which incorporates elements of inquiry teaching and learning. Other meta-analyses conducted independently at approximately the same time, such as those by Weinstein et al. Studies in particular subject areas, such as biology Hurd, , also generally favored inquiry-based approaches. Other studies have demonstrated a range of other specific outcomes from inquiry-based teaching, including vocabulary knowledge and conceptual understanding Lloyd, , critical thinking Narode, , inquiry abilities and physics understanding White and Frederiksen, in press , and positive attitudes toward science Shymansky et al. In studies of underrepresented and underserved populations, inquiry-oriented strategies enhanced scientific ways of thinking, talking, and writing for language learners and helped them to acquire English and reasoning skills Rosebery et al. David Haury has provided a brief, but thorough, summary of the above research. His review concludes that inquiry-oriented teaching can result in outcomes that include scientific literacy, familiarity with science processes, vocabulary knowledge, Page Share Cite Suggested Citation: Another review from Flick addresses research on explicit instruction as well as inquiry-oriented instruction. If one accepts the full sweep of content in the National Science Education Standards, including conceptual understanding of science principles, comprehension of the nature of scientific inquiry, development of the abilities for inquiry, and a grasp of applications of science knowledge to societal and personal issues, this body of research clearly suggests that teaching through inquiry is effective. Research on inquiry is continuing. Some studies are directed at special student populations. Research by Delpit suggests the importance of students receiving explicit instruction in the skills they need to engage in science inquiry and learn from inquiry experiences. Other research by Rosebery et al. In their research on students with learning disabilities, Scruggs et al. Studies continue in other countries as well. A study in university-level biochemistry in Turkey Basaga et al. Another university-level study in Ireland Heywood and Heywood, found similar results on pupil tests for students in discovery and expository approaches, but greater student motivation with discovery approaches. A pattern of general support for inquiry-based teaching continues to emerge from the research. Page Share Cite Suggested Citation: As Hiebert points out in his discussions of the research support for the national mathematics standards, the question about the strength of that research is fair, even though it does not have a simple answer. Simple answers, in fact, do not provide the credibility necessary to support a substantially different approach to teaching and learning. Research has several limitations. First, research cannot determine goals or standards, which are primarily a reflection of values Hiebert, The standards being written by some states and districts are largely lists of factual information to be memorized. These reflect a different set of values than those behind the National Science Education Standards, which focus on major concepts in science and on learning for understanding. The methods of teaching most appropriate for these different kinds of standards vary as well. Second, research alone cannot establish what is best. Education is a very complicated enterprise, and most outcomes are influenced by more factors than can be identified, let alone controlled. Third, research cannot prescribe a curriculum or pedagogical approach for all students and for all times. Such decisions must always be made within a given context, and the level of confidence with which they are made changes with new information and new conditions. This said, there are several things that research can do Hiebert, It can be used to make decisions that are based on probabilities that a certain outcome will ensue. Thus, research can inform decisions but not guarantee that they are right for all circumstances. By reviewing many studies done under a variety of conditions and looking for patterns in the results, decision-makers can increase the possibility of success. Indeed, looking at a variety of studies can sensitize decision-makers to the complexities involved in a decision and to the crucial issues involved. Research also can help prevent mistakes. It can show that some goals, however lofty, are unattainable. And it can probe below the surface to indicate why certain results occur: Of particular interest when student learning is being assessed is the nature of the opportunities

students had to learn and achieve the outcomes. Research can also show what is possible and what looks promising. It can illuminate what students are capable of, what improvements are feasible, and what parts of reform visions are reasonable. In this respect, research can suggest what is not known and could benefit from some additional examination. For example, given the importance of formative assessment established in Chapter 4 , research has begun to focus on listening and feedback in science classrooms. The research base on learning and on effective learning environments makes a strong case for inquiry-based approaches. Research on programs and materials that incorporate inquiry also shows positive influences on many critical dimensions of student learning. Although the research demands a clearer definition of terms and falls short of illuminating all the complexities of teaching for understanding, the evidence from several streams of research is both positive and promising. Effective science teachers take a number of approaches to teaching.

3: Critical Reading of an Essay's Argument

A literature review may constitute an essential chapter of a thesis or dissertation, or may be a self-contained review of writings on a subject. In either case, its purpose is to: Place each work in the context of its contribution to the understanding of the subject under review.

Study guide For a printer-friendly PDF version of this guide, click here This Study Guide explains why literature reviews are needed, and how they can be conducted and reported. Related Study Guides are: Referencing and bibliographies , Avoiding plagiarism , Writing a dissertation , What is critical reading? What is critical writing? The focus of the Study Guide is the literature review within a dissertation or a thesis, but many of the ideas are transferable to other kinds of writing, such as an extended essay, or a report. What is a literature review? The ability to review, and to report on relevant literature is a key academic skill. To some extent, particularly with postgraduate research, the literature review can become a project in itself. It is an important showcase of your talents of: The process of conducting and reporting your literature review can help you clarify your own thoughts about your study. It can also establish a framework within which to present and analyse the findings. After reading your literature review, it should be clear to the reader that you have up-to-date awareness of the relevant work of others, and that the research question you are asking is relevant. Be wary of saying that your research will solve a problem, or that it will change practice. Why do I need a literature review? When readers come to your assignment, dissertation, or thesis, they will not just assume that your research or analysis is a good idea; they will want to be persuaded that it is relevant and that it was worth doing. They will ask questions such as: What research question s are you asking? Has anyone else done anything similar? What is already known or understood about this topic? How might your research add to this understanding, or challenge existing theories and beliefs? These are questions that you will already probably be asking yourself. You will also need to be ready to answer them in a viva if you will be having one. A critical review It is important that your literature review is more than just a list of references with a short description of each one. What is critical reading? This very short statement contains some key concepts, which are examined in the table below. The term now encompasses a wide range of web-based sources, in addition to the more traditional books and print journals. Increased ease of access to a wider range of published material has also increased the need for careful and clear critique of sources. You need to demonstrate to your reader that you are examining your sources with a critical approach, and not just believing them automatically. Interpretation You need to be actively involved in interpreting the literature that you are reviewing, and in explaining that interpretation to the reader, rather than just listing what others have written. Your interpretation of each piece of evidence is just that: Your interpretation may be self-evident to you, but it may not be to everyone else. You need to critique your own interpretation of material, and to present your rationale, so that your reader can follow your thinking. Creating a synthesis is, in effect, like building interpretation upon interpretation. It is essential to check that you have constructed your synthesis well, and with sufficient supporting evidence. When to review the literature With small-scale writing projects, the literature review is likely to be done just once; probably before the writing begins. With longer projects such as a dissertation for a Masters degree, and certainly with a PhD, the literature review process will be more extended. There are three stages at which a review of the literature is needed: This can involve further review with perhaps a slightly different focus from that of your initial review. This applies especially to people doing PhDs on a part-time basis, where their research might extend over six or more years. You need to be able to demonstrate that you are aware of current issues and research, and to show how your research is relevant within a changing context. Staff and students in your area can be good sources of ideas about where to look for relevant literature. They may already have copies of articles that you can work with. If you attend a conference or workshop with a wider group of people, perhaps from other universities, you can take the opportunity to ask other attendees for recommendations of articles or books relevant to your area of research. Each department or

school has assigned to it a specialist Information Librarian. You can find the contact details for the Information Librarian for your own area via the Library web pages. This person can help you identify relevant sources, and create effective electronic searches: You can then begin your process of evaluating the quality and relevance of what you read, and this can guide you to more focussed further reading. Taylor and Procter of The University of Toronto have some useful suggested questions to ask yourself at the beginning of your reading: What is the specific thesis, problem, or research question that my literature review helps to define? What type of literature review am I conducting? Am I looking at issues of theory? What is the scope of my literature review? What types of publications am I using e. What discipline s am I working in e. What time period am I interested in? You may also want to make a clear decision about whether to start with a very narrow focus and work outwards, or to start wide before focussing in. You may even want to do both at once. It is a good idea to decide your strategy on this, rather than drifting into one or the other. It can give you a degree of control, in what can feel like an overwhelming and uncontrollable stage of the research process. Ways of finding relevant material Electronic sources Searching electronic databases is probably the quickest way to access a lot of material. Guidance will be available via your own department or school and via the relevant Information Librarian. There may also be key sources of publications for your subject that are accessible electronically, such as collections of policy documents, standards, archive material, videos, and audio-recordings. References of references If you can find a few really useful sources, it can be a good idea to check through their reference lists to see the range of sources that they referred to. This can be particularly useful if you find a review article that evaluates other literature in the field. This will then provide you with a long reference list, and some evaluation of the references it contains. An electronic search may throw up a huge number of hits, but there are still likely to be other relevant articles that it has not detected. So, despite having access to electronic databases and to electronic searching techniques, it can be surprisingly useful to have a pile of journals actually on your desk, and to look through the contents pages, and the individual articles. Often hand searching of journals will reveal ideas about focus, research questions, methods, techniques, or interpretations that had not occurred to you. Sometimes even a key idea can be discovered in this way. It is therefore probably worth allocating some time to sitting in the library, with issues from the last year or two of the most relevant journals for your research topic, and reviewing them for anything of relevance. EndNote and RefWorks are software packages that you can use to collect and store details of your references, and your comments on them. As you review the references, remember to be a critical reader see Study Guide What is critical reading? Keeping a record Keeping a record of your search strategy is useful, to prevent you duplicating effort by doing the same search twice, or missing out a significant and relevant sector of literature because you think you have already done that search. Increasingly, examiners at post-graduate level are looking for the detail of how you chose which evidence you decided to refer to. They will want to know how you went about looking for relevant material, and your process of selection and omission. You need to check what is required within your own discipline. If you are required to record and present your search strategy, you may be able to include the technical details of the search strategy as an appendix to your thesis. Plagiarism Plagiarism is regarded as a serious offence by all Universities, and you need to make sure that you do not, even accidentally, commit plagiarism. It can happen accidentally, for example, if you are careless in your note-taking. This can mean that you get mixed up over what is an exact quote, and what you have written in your own words; or over what was an idea of your own that you jotted down, or an idea from some text. This has the advantage that, when you come to use that example in your writing up, you can choose: Help is available regarding how to avoid plagiarism and it is worth checking it out. Your department will have its own guidance. When to stop It is important to keep control of the reading process, and to keep your research focus in mind. Rudestam and Newton It is also important to see the writing stage as part of the research process, not something that happens after you have finished reading the literature. Wellington et al It is often not until you start explaining something in writing that you find where your argument is weak, and you need to collect more evidence. A skill that helps in curtailing the reading is: Decisions need to be made

about where to focus your reading, and where you can refer briefly to an area but explain why you will not be going into it in more detail. Writing it up The task of shaping a logical and effective report of a literature review is undeniably challenging. Some useful guidance on how to approach the writing up is given by Wellington et al It must relate to your study. It must be clear to the reader where it is going: Wherever possible, use original source material rather than summaries or reviews by others. Engage in a dialogue with the literature, you are not just providing a summary. Often, the literature review will end with a statement of the research question s. Having a lot of literature to report on can feel overwhelming. It is important to keep the focus on your study, rather than on the literature Wellington

DEVELOPING THE ARGUMENT : MAKING THE CASE FOR THE LITERATURE REVIEW pdf

4: Literature Review

A literature review is a piece of discursive prose, not a list describing or summarizing one piece of literature after another. It's usually a bad sign to see every paragraph beginning with the name of a researcher.

Print view The ability to think critically is a key skill for academic success. It means not taking what you hear or read at face value, but using your critical faculties to weigh up the evidence, and considering the implications and conclusions of what the writer is saying. On the first, you are on a country walk and you come across a notice which tells you not to attempt to climb a fence because of risk of electrocution. Would you pause to consider before obeying this instruction? On the other hand, suppose you were to receive a letter from a local farmer announcing that he proposed to put up an electric fence to protect a certain field. In this case, would you not be more likely to think about his reasons for doing so and what the implications would be for you and your family? In the first case, you are thinking reactively and in the second, you are thinking critically. An allied skill is the ability to analyse â€" that is, to read or listen for the following points: How robust are the points presented as evidence? Does the author have a coherent argument, and do the points follow through logically from one another or are their breaks in the sense? Can you spot flaws? Is the conclusion clearly presented? Are there signs of bias or persuasion in the language, such as use of emotional appeal, or indications that the author adheres to a particular school of thought or methodological perspective an example here might be that of someone whose methodological approach was strongly quantitative, or qualitative? How do the views presented differ from those of others in the field? The key to critical thinking is to develop an impersonal approach which looks at arguments and facts and which lays aside personal views and feelings. This is because academic discourse is based according to key principles which are described as follows by Northedge Critical and analytical thinking should be applied at all points in academic study - to selecting information, reading, writing, speaking and listening. Of these, learning to read and evaluate information critically is perhaps the most important skill, which if acquired can then be applied to other areas. Selecting information critically The first stage in reading critically is to exercise care in the information you use - how trustworthy is it? For printed material, consider: For books, who is the publisher? Is it a reputable academic publisher? For journal articles, does the article appear in an academic journal? Your tutor should be able to tell you what the leading journals are in your field. For both, who is the author and does he or she come from a respectable academic organization? How recent it the publication date, and are you using the latest edition of a textbook? Particular care needs to be exercised when using information from the Internet. This will be the topic of another article on this site, but you need to consider relevance and in particular: What is its source? Is it from a commercial or academic organization, and if the latter, is it from well-known one? Is it written in an academic style, with references, substantiated claims etc.? There are many journals which are published on the Internet. Not all of these are subject to the process of peer review, which involves the content being checked by people of standing. When reading academic texts, you need to employ certain procedures. Analyse and criticize the argument: Are the reasons sufficient, and are they valid to the argument, in other words do they support it, or would it be possible to draw other conclusions from them? Does the author develop the argument in a logical and coherent fashion, i. What is it â€" statistics, surveys, case studies, findings from experiment are all examples of evidence that may be presented. You should also examine the intrinsic qualities of the evidence, for example how recent are case studies? How robust are experiments? How large and representative is the survey? Is evidence anecdotal for example, stories of one person being cured from a particular treatment are less impressive than clinical trials? What are the conclusions, and are they supported by the evidence? It may be possible to present what appears to be flawless research, which may yet not justify the conclusions. A good example here is the ongoing debate on child care, and whether mothers are better off at home looking after their children themselves. In the s, John Bowlby presented good arguments why mothers should stay at home, which was subsequently reputed by later researchers, whilst the stay at

home argument is now making a return. What are the alternatives? Does the author have a particular agenda, revealed as in the case of a particular view of research, see above or hidden for example, particular reasons, political or other, for arguing a case? Does the evidence really lead to the conclusions offered or might there be other explanations see the example in 4 above. Air traffic in the Southeast of the country is becoming increasingly great, there are three airports and the plan is to expand the airport at Lutwick to ease congestion at the other airports and help with the expected tripling of demand by 1. Pollution from aircraft is one of the biggest problems of our times. We must therefore oppose the plans and press for an environmental impact tax on aviation 8. A critique of the above passage The first sentence is a descriptive statement: The second sentence is a non sequitur - there is no explicit link with the first statement. A survey is a piece of evidence, but how reliable is the source, 60 per cent of what number and when was the survey carried out? That Lutwick was bombed during the war is a non sequitur, and is not essential to the case. This is emotive language. This assumes a causal connection between the enlarged airport and congested motorways, but there may be other reasons why motorways are congested. These statements constitute evidence, but they are not substantiated, referenced or quantified. What forecasts, how many more houses over what area, where will the flooding be and why will it result from hard surface run-off? The conclusion is clearly stated, but its first part that plans must be opposed clearly shows the bias of the writer, and the second part the environmental impact tax does not necessarily follow from the evidence, which is specific to a particular location. Writing critically Much has been written elsewhere on this site about the writing process, so we will only make brief reference here. Planning is the key: You need to employ the same critical judgement to your own writing as you do to that of other people, although it can be more difficult to assess your own work! Check your line of reasoning is clear â€" start out by stating what you propose to do, organize your information in a logical pattern, and reach a clear and substantiated conclusion. Ensure that the evidence you use is valid according to the criteria set out above, under Reading critically. Be aware of the difference between descriptive writing, which tells a story, using statements, explanation and lists etc. You will also need to put forward a reasoned argument, which will help develop your thinking skills, particularly as verbal debate proceeds at a more rapid pace than writing or reading, which are mostly solitary activities.

5: What is a Literature Review - UA Library

A literature review is a specific type of research paper that focuses on published literature on a given topic. It is often the first step in doing original research, either scientific or otherwise.

Introduction One of the major claims made regarding qualitative methods is that they diverge from scientific explanation models in terms of the need for hypothesis testing. A scientific hypothesis is based on a background theory, typically assuming the form of a proposition whose validity depends on empirical confirmation. Otherwise, a hypothesis is nothing but an imaginative conjecture. Moreover, when researchers do not obtain empirical confirmation for their hypothesis, the theory in question or part of it may not be able to predict relevant aspects of the phenomenon under investigation. Their primary interest is to achieve understanding Verstehen of a particular situation, or individuals, or groups of individual, or sub cultures, etc. In summary, qualitative methods are primarily inductive, in contrast to the deductive methods of experimental science. The debate centers around how we justify that what we know is valid. More specifically, induction is the form of reasoning based on empirical observation in the process of developing scientific laws and theories. Thus, induction negotiates the relationship between empirical reality and its theorization, in addition to the production and validation of knowledge. For example, qualitative methods have been accused of reflecting the problems pointed out by philosophers of science e. In other words, qualitative researchers tend to prioritize logic emerging from experience, preferring to expand their knowledge from it as opposed to using a priori, deductive, concepts. Qualitative researchers have for decades reacted to this distorted view of the field e. Of the many examples that could be cited, I highlight grounded theory methodology GTM. There are differences among researchers using this approach e. GTM rests in a state of permanent tension between 1. What is the role of theory in qualitative research? Alternatively, what function do empirical data play in the theorizing process? Answering these questions is important for the continuing advancement of qualitative methods as well as the inclusion of this field in the discussions of similar issues that have been witnessed in the philosophy of science. As a starting point, I recapitulate the main characteristics of the so-called problem of induction, arguing that it raises important questions regarding the value of theory in science. Next, I review ways of describing the theory-empirical data relationship that have been proposed in order to address the problem of induction in the realm of the philosophy of science. Against this backdrop, I discuss how qualitative researchers have dealt with the question of induction, using a "generic analytic cycle" common to qualitative methods as an illustration. In the last sections, I propose reconsidering the role of theory in qualitative research. I argue for the need to recover a substantial definition of theory in these studies. According to HUME [] , there are two primary ways to validate knowledge: Knowing facts is equivalent to identifying their causes and effects. However, observing facts, describing them in their manifestation, does not amount to science. There must be a leap from the visible to the invisible, and herein lies induction: The inductive leap allows us, based on singular facts, to create statements about sets of facts and their future behavior. What permits us to go from a singular fact to a statement about facts in general or future facts? According to HUME [] , induction does not involve a logical base. The "statement about all" is not contained in the "statement about some. HUME claims that it is merely habit that causes us to think that if the sun rose today, it will do so once again tomorrow. There is therefore a psychological component in this knowledge-building process. In other words, HUME demonstrated that passing from some to all is an emotionally and imaginatively based process, and that the root of any knowledge is sensory experience. The past may not be the best guarantee for current knowledge; otherwise, how can we explain unpredictable events? In the well-known analogy cited by POPPER , the fact that we observe innumerable white swans does not allow us to assume that there will never be a black one. Another relevant question is distinguishing between empirical generalizations, based on the observation of a recurring number of singular cases, and universal generalizations, in the form of laws. Without resorting to metaphysics, how do we attest to the truth

of universal laws, which establish necessary non-accidental connections between events, based on observations of singular cases only QUINE, , p. According to the skeptic HUME, all what we can do is create hypotheses about how things should occur, drawing from our own empirical experiences or habits; we can never determine the ultimate fundamentals of the phenomena. They argue that a large number of observations, obtained experimentally over a wide range of circumstances, allow inference from the empirical particular to the theoretical universal. Knowledge, they assert, can be constructed on the basis of repeated observations, to the point where no observational statements conflict with the law or theory thereby derived, or up to an established saturation point. He purports that if there is no logical support to infer a universal law from singular experience, there must be support for the opposite. That is, we can legitimately allege that a theory is true or false based on singular observational statements. Thus, the order is inverted: There is no observation without theory, since perception itself is influenced by expectations, previous experiences, and accumulated knowledge. At the same time, theoretical assertions without empirical content do not tell us much about the world. Theory must be confirmed or falsified by experience. From this emerges the well-known hypothetical-deductive method. The empirical world is supposed to determine if such a conclusion is confirmed true or pure speculation. For example, LAKATOS , states that a theory consists of a complex of universal statements embedded in particular research programs , rather than a single statement, like a hypothesis, that can be tested straightforwardly. This calls into question the value of the falsifiability of discrete hypotheses. Moreover, QUINE , , , proposes that we conceive theories holistically, as a web of interlocked statements, such that concepts can only be defined in terms of other concepts that make up the network and confer meaning on them, as well as relate them to experience. As a result of these criticisms, it is concluded that the value of theories is not restricted to allowing the elaboration of hypotheses to be individually tested; they are essential to explain the phenomena to be investigated. So, the primary focus of researchers should not be on data, but rather on the phenomenon, which is embedded into a given theoretical web. Relationship Between Theory and Empirical Data One of the most widely prevalent ways of thinking about the theory-data relationship is that the latter verify the former. This viewpoint is associated with the philosophy of logical positivism, which introduces a distinction between direct observation which is not theory-laden , and theory, whose value depends on the justification allowed by empirical data. Thus, theoretical statements should have empirical content, if they are to be trusted as claims about the world. The truth about a theoretical statement depends on a "correspondence theory" of truth: Positivists vehemently reject any pretense of metaphysical justification for scientific activity, arguing for the impossibility of synthetic propositions, that is, non-contingent statements. Only analytic propositions for example, logical and mathematical statements can be aprioristically true, since they have no empirical content and therefore say nothing about what really takes place in the world. However, a difference between them and the classical empiricists of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, including HUME, is that the positivists gave a linguistic and logical formulation to their theory of knowledge. A sentence with meaningfulness is a true sentence, corroborated verified by experience. In its strong version SCHLICK, , the criterion of verifiability assumes the existence of basic propositions that are capable of serving as the basis for the process of empirical observation. Thus, a statement is only significant true when we can, at least initially, verify it using basic propositions that indicate its meaningâ€"for example, a statement which is caused, as immediately as possible, by perceptive experiences AYER, In its weak version REICHENBACH, , the concept of probabilistic confirmation has been a field of investigation by the logical positivists, who sought to develop a system of inductive logic capable of determining the probability of a hypothesis being true as a function of a set of available data. From the perspective of the previously mentioned hypothetical-deductive model, it is up to empirical data to falsify a hypotheses developed aprioristically by researchers. But what does it mean for a hypothesis to be falsifiable? It means that the hypothesis cannot in principle be true in and of itself. A hypothesis results from an exercise of intellect, creative capacity, and consideration of context, since available knowledge offers us concepts, ideas, relationships, etc. Thus, in principle, as a product of human intellect, any hypothesis can be true, even

though it apparently makes no sense. Ultimately, the data tell us if our hypotheses are consistent. If confirmed, they contribute to human progress; if falsified, they should be substituted for by others. This shows that a theory must be always subject to revision, reconsideration, and improvement. In addition to those concerns already cited, another exists, related to the extent of falsification. Considering science from a historical and sociological perspective, several theories that initially seemed to have been falsified, which would indicate that they should be discarded, later proved to be true. Furthermore, when a hypothesis is falsified, it does not necessarily mean that the entire theory from which it was deduced should be discarded. This seems to show there is something more involved in the relationship between theory and empirical dataâ€"for realists, for example, this "something more" is the structure of the world itself WORRALL, , which is represented by the theory, if the latter is to be true. When associated with statistical models, for example based on frequency distribution, theories identify or represent repetition and patterns in a particular class of events. They seek order in the world. From a realist perspective, theories must be interpreted literally: There is a reality independent from us, and in order for theories to be scientific, they must tell us the true nature of this reality. This poses several problems for realists. One, which is of interest here, is the problem of how to explain the existence of two or more empirically successful theories explaining the same phenomenon. It indicates that there is no way to guarantee an essential, definitive connection between theory and any particular facts and properties of the world. The same phenomenon can be legitimately explained in different ways, using distinct theories and theoretical models. Therefore, the aim of a theory would not be "pegged" to the world, but would be designed to help us represent the world in aspects relevant to a proposed transformation of part of it. According to this pragmatic or antirealist perspective, phenomena are not discovered by science, but constructed by it. This argument depends on the premise that we can never come to know the true nature of the world due to the existence of unobservable entities. Phenomena themselves can be examples of the unobservable, since their postulation depends on their incorporation into a theoretical web. This reorders the relationship among a number of key concepts: However, a strong empiricist culture likely persists in our research activities, sustaining a certain "theoretical allergy" and conceptualizing theory and theories in an excessively restrictive sense. Does this also apply to qualitative research? To answer this question, I will now discuss the problem of induction and the role of theory in qualitative research. Induction and Theory in Qualitative Research 4. As a result of this growth, we have today a complex, diversified field influenced by a large number of schools, authors, and epistemological perspectives. It therefore seems risky to make assertions regarding qualitative methods which are best given in the plural. Nevertheless, I will attempt to do so in this section. Specifically, I will illustrate what seems to me to be the analytic core of many qualitative data analysis methods: I argue that this analytic cycle exposes the tensions inherent in the process of developing inductive theory from empirical data.

6: The Principles of Argumentation

In fact, making an argumentâ€"expressing a point of view on a subject and supporting it with evidenceâ€"is often the aim of academic writing. Your instructors may assume that you know this and thus may not explain the importance of arguments in class.

Decide on a topic It will help you considerably if your topic for your literature review is the one on which you intend to do your final M. However, you may pick any scholarly topic. Identify the literature that you will review: Familiarize yourself with online databases see UMD library resource links below for help with this , identifying relevant databases in your field of study. Using relevant databases, search for literature sources using Google Scholar and also searching using Furl search all sources, including the Furl accounts of other Furl members. Some tips for identifying suitable literature and narrowing your search: Start with a general descriptor from the database thesaurus or one that you know is already a well defined descriptor based on past work that you have done in this field. You will need to experiment with different searches, such as limiting your search to descriptors that appear only in the document titles, or in both the document title and in the abstract. Redefine your topic if needed: Try to narrow it to a specific area of interest within the broad area that you have chosen remember: It is a good idea, as part of your literature search, to look for existing literature reviews that have already been written on this topic. Import your references into your RefWorks account see: Refworks Import Directions for guide on how to do this from different databases. You can also enter references manually into RefWorks if you need to. Analyze the literature Once you have identified and located the articles for your review, you need to analyze them and organize them before you begin writing: Skim the articles to get an idea of the general purpose and content of the article focus your reading here on the abstract, introduction and first few paragraphs, the conclusion of each article. You can take notes onto note cards or into a word processing document instead or as well as using RefWorks, but having your notes in RefWorks makes it easy to organize your notes later. Group the articles into categories e. You can record the topics in the same box as before User 1 or use User 2 box for the topic s under which you have chosen to place this article. Decide on the format in which you will take notes as you read the articles as mentioned above, you can do this in RefWorks. You can also do this using a Word Processor, or a concept mapping program like Inspiration free 30 trial download , a data base program e. Access or File Maker Pro , in an Excel spreadsheet, or the "old-fashioned" way of using note cards. Be consistent in how you record notes. Note key statistics that you may want to use in the introduction to your review. Select useful quotes that you may want to include in your review. If you copy the exact words from an article, be sure to cite the page number as you will need this should you decide to use the quote when you write your review as direct quotes must always be accompanied by page references. Since different research studies focus on different aspects of the issue being studied, each article that you read will have different emphases, strengths. Your role as a reviewer is to evaluate what you read, so that your review is not a mere description of different articles, but rather a critical analysis that makes sense of the collection of articles that you are reviewing. Identify major trends or patterns: As you read a range of articles on your topic, you should make note of trends and patterns over time as reported in the literature. This step requires you to synthesize and make sense of what you read, since these patterns and trends may not be spelled out in the literature, but rather become apparent to you as you review the big picture that has emerged over time. Your analysis can make generalizations across a majority of studies, but should also note inconsistencies across studies and over time. Identify gaps in the literature, and reflect on why these might exist based on the understandings that you have gained by reading literature in this field of study. These gaps will be important for you to address as you plan and write your review. Identify relationships among studies: You may also note that studies fall into different categories categories that you see emerging or ones that are already discussed in the literature. When you write your review, you should address these relationships and different categories and discuss relevant studies using this as a framework. Keep your review focused on your

topic: As you take notes, record which specific aspects of the article you are reading are relevant to your topic as you read you will come up with key descriptors that you can record in your notes that will help you organize your findings when you come to write up your review. If you are using an electronic form of note taking, you might note these descriptors in a separate field e. Evaluate your references for currency and coverage: Although you can always find more articles on your topic, you have to decide at what point you are finished with collecting new resources so that you can focus on writing up your findings. However, before you begin writing, you must evaluate your reference list to ensure that it is up to date and has reported the most current work. Typically a review will cover the last five years, but should also refer to any landmark studies prior to this time if they have significance in shaping the direction of the field. If you include studies prior to the past five years that are not landmark studies, you should defend why you have chosen these rather than more current ones. Summarize the literature in table or concept map format Galvan recommends building tables as a key way to help you overview, organize, and summarize your findings, and suggests that including one or more of the tables that you create may be helpful in your literature review. If you do include tables as part of your review each must be accompanied by an analysis that summarizes, interprets and synthesizes the literature that you have charted in the table. The advantage of using Excel is that it enables you to sort your findings according to a variety of factors e. Definitions of key terms and concepts. Research methods Summary of research results Step 6: Synthesize the literature prior to writing your review Using the notes that you have taken and summary tables, develop an outline of your final review. The following are the key steps as outlined by Galvan In the case of this Educ introductory literature review, your initial purpose is to provide an overview of the topic that is of interest to you, demonstrating your understanding of key works and concepts within your chosen area of focus. You are also developing skills in reviewing and writing, to provide a foundation on which you will build in subsequent courses within your M. Consider how you reassemble your notes: A literature review is not series of annotations like an annotated bibliography. In the case of a literature review, you are really creating a new forest, which you will build by using the trees you found in the literature you read. You may find the program Inspiration useful in mapping out your argument and once you have created this in a concept map form, Inspiration enables you to convert this to a text outline merely by clicking on the "outline" button. This can then be exported into a Microsoft Word document. Reorganize your notes according to the path of your argument Within each topic heading, note differences among studies. Within each topic heading, look for obvious gaps or areas needing more research. Plan to describe relevant theories. Plan to discuss how individual studies relate to and advance theory Plan to summarize periodically and, again near the end of the review Plan to present conclusions and implications Plan to suggest specific directions for future research near the end of the review Flesh out your outline with details from your analysis Step 7: Writing the review Galvan, Developing a coherent essay Galvan, Aim for a clear and cohesive essay that integrates the key details of the literature and communicates your point of view a literature is not a series of annotated articles. Use subheadings, especially in long reviews Use transitions to help trace your argument If your topic teaches across disciplines, consider reviewing studies from each discipline separately Write a conclusion for the end of the review: Provide closure so that the path of the argument ends with a conclusion of some kind. How you end the review, however, will depend on your reason for writing it. If the review was written to stand alone, as is the case of a term paper or a review article for publication, the conclusion needs to make clear how the material in the body of the review has supported the assertion or proposition presented in the introduction. On the other hand, a review in a thesis, dissertation, or journal article presenting original research usually leads to the research questions that will be addressed. Check the flow of your argument for coherence.

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In this case the 'whole' will be your structured review of relevant work, and your coherent argument for the study that you are doing. Creating a synthesis is, in effect, like building interpretation upon interpretation.

Contact How to Write a Literature Review A literature review is a specific type of research paper that focuses on published literature on a given topic. It is often the first step in doing original research, either scientific or otherwise. It is more than a mere summary of the literature, however, as it presents analysis, patterns, and critiques of individual sources, groups of sources, and the body of literature as a whole. Not to be confused with a book review, a literature review surveys scholarly articles, books and other sources e. The purpose is to offer an overview of significant literature published on a topic that critically analyzes a segment of a published body of knowledge through summary, classification, and comparison of prior research studies, reviews of literature, and theoretical articles. Someone reading a literature review should gain an understanding of trends, issues, unresolved questions, controversies, and the importance of the scholarly knowledge related to a specific question topic. The literature review format can vary by discipline , according to the purpose for the review, or with different venues for publication. A review may be an end in itself or a preface to and rationale for engaging in primary research. A review is usually a required part of grant and research proposals and often a chapter in theses and dissertations. Stages in conducting a literature review: What specific question will you research? What are the components within the question? An overview of the subject, issue or theory under consideration, along with the objectives of writing the literature review Division of works under review into categories e. In every element of the literature review, it is essential to use correct English grammar and spelling. It will also help you correct punctuation. In addition, with its dictionary, thesaurus, and writing enhancement tools, WhiteSmoke will allow you to write precisely what you mean to say. Its online, all-in-one-solution will make writing a literature review easier than ever. A common format for writing a literature review: Define or identify the general topic, issue, or area of concern, thus providing an appropriate context for reviewing the literature. Point out overall trends in what has been published about the topic; or conflicts in theory, methodology, evidence, and conclusions; or gaps in research and scholarship; or a single problem or new perspective of immediate interest. Group research studies and other types of literature reviews, theoretical articles, case studies, etc. Summarize individual studies or articles with as much or as little detail as each merits according to its comparative importance in the literature, remembering that space length denotes significance. In assessing each piece, consideration should be given to: Does the work ultimately contribute in any significant way to an understanding of the subject? Provide the reader with strong "umbrella" sentences at beginnings of paragraphs, "signposts" throughout, and brief "so what" summary sentences at intermediate points in the review to aid in understanding comparisons and analyses. Summarize major contributions of significant studies and articles to the body of knowledge under review, maintaining the focus established in the introduction. Evaluate the current "state of the art" for the body of knowledge reviewed, pointing out major methodological flaws or gaps in research, inconsistencies in theory and findings, and areas or issues pertinent to future study. Conclude by providing some insight into the relationship between the central topic of the literature review and a larger area of study such as a discipline, a scientific endeavor, or a profession. Place each work in the context of its contribution to the understanding of the subject under review 3. Describe the relationship of each work to the others under consideration 4. Identify new ways to interpret, and shed light on, any gaps in previous research 5. Resolve conflicts among seemingly contradictory previous studies 6. Identify areas of prior scholarship to prevent duplication of effort 7. Point the way forward for further research 8. Always use WhiteSmoke English grammar software to check your grammar.

8: The Literature Review: A Few Tips On Conducting It | Writing Advice

The literature review, therefore, serves as the driving force and the jumping off point for your own research investigation." (Ridley, , p.2) When constructing a literature review, you want to ensure that it does the following.

Reviews generally range from words, but may be longer or shorter depending on the length and complexity of the book being reviewed, the overall purpose of the review, and whether the review is a comparative analysis examining two or more books that focus on the same topic. Professors assign book reviews as practice in carefully analyzing complex scholarly texts and to assess your ability to effectively synthesize research so that you reach an informed perspective about a research problem or issue. There are two general approaches to reviewing a book: This is done by stating the perceived aims and purposes of the study, often incorporating passages quoted from the text that highlight key elements of the work. Additionally, there may be some indication of the reading level and anticipated audience. It should include a statement about what the author has tried to do, evaluates how well [in your opinion] the author has succeeded in meeting the objectives of the study, and presents evidence to support this assessment. For course assignments, most professors will want you to write this type of review. University of New Hampshire; Book Reviews: How to Write a Book Review. Writing and Style Guides. Since most course assignments require that you write a critical rather than descriptive review, the following information about preparing to write and the structure and style of reviews focuses on critical book reviews. Common Features While book reviews vary in tone, subject, and style, they share some common features. A review gives the reader a concise summary of the content. A review offers a critical assessment of the content, often in relation to other studies on the same topic. This involves documenting your reactions to the work under review--what strikes you as noteworthy or important, whether or not the arguments made by the author s were effective or persuasive, and how the work enhanced your understanding of the research problem under investigation. Your key sentences should say, "This book shows Developing an Assessment Strategy There is no definitive methodological approach to writing a book review in the social sciences, although it is necessary that you think critically about the research problem under investigation before you begin to write. Therefore, writing a book review is a two-step process: A useful strategy in preparing to write a review is to list a set of questions that should be answered as you read the book [remember to note the page numbers so you can refer back to the text! The specific questions to ask yourself will depend upon the type of book you are reviewing. For example, a book that is presenting original research about a topic may require a different set of questions to ask yourself than a work where the author is offering a personal critique of an existing policy or issue. Here are some sample questions intended to promote critical thinking about the book as you read. What is the central thesisâ€"or main argumentâ€"of the book? If the author wanted you to get one main idea from the book, what would it be? How does it compare or contrast to the world that you know or have experienced? What has the book accomplished? What exactly is the subject or topic of the book? Is it clearly stated? Does the author cover the subject adequately? Does the author cover all aspects of the subject in a balanced fashion? Can you detect any biases? What type of approach has the author adopted to explore the research problem [e. How does the author support his or her argument? What evidence does the author use to prove his or her point? Is the evidence based on an appropriate application of the method chosen to gather information? Do you find that evidence convincing? Why or why not? How does the author structure his or her argument? Does it follow a logical order of analysis? What are the parts that make up the whole? Does the argument make sense to you? Does it persuade you? How has this book helped you understand the research problem? Would you recommend the book to others? Beyond the content of the book, you may also consider some information about the author and the general content. Question to ask may include: Who is the author? The nationality, political persuasion, education, intellectual interests, personal history, and historical context may provide crucial details about how a work takes shape. Does it matter, for example, that the author is affiliated with a particular organization? What difference would it make if the

author participated in the events he or she wrote about? What other topics has the author written about? Does this work build on prior research or does it represent a new or unique area of research? Out of what discipline does it emerge? Does it conform to or depart from the conventions of its genre? These questions can provide a historical or other contextual standard upon which to base your evaluations. If you are reviewing the first book ever written on the subject, it will be important for your readers to know this. Colorado State University; Book Reviews. University of North Carolina; Hartley, James. Purdue University; Writing Book Reviews. Structure and Writing Style I. Bibliographic Information Provide the essential information about the book using the writing style asked for by your professor [e. Depending on how your professor wants you to organize your review, the bibliographic information represents the heading of your review. In general, it would look like this: The Whites of Their Eyes: Princeton University Press, Reviewed by [your name]. This statement should be no more than one paragraph and must be succinctly stated, accurate, and unbiased. Why did the author write on this subject rather than on some other subject? From what point of view is the work written? What is the general field or genre, and how does the book fit into it? If necessary, review related literature from other books and journal articles to familiarize yourself with the field. Who is the intended audience? Is it formal or informal? You can evaluate the quality of the writing style by noting some of the following standards: How did the book affect you? Were any prior assumptions you had on the subject that were changed, abandoned, or reinforced after reading the book? How is the book related to your own personal beliefs or assumptions? What personal experiences have you had that relate to the subject? Would you recommend this book to others? Note the Method Illustrate your remarks with specific references and quotations that help to illustrate the literary method used to state the research problem, describe the research design, and analyze the findings. In general, authors tend to use the following literary methods, exclusively or in combination. The description presents background and setting. Its primary purpose is to help the reader realize, through as many sensuous details as possible, the way persons, places, and things are within the phenomenon being described. The author tells the story of a series of events, usually thematically or in chronological order. In general, the emphasis in scholarly books is on narration of the events. Narration tells what has happened and, in some cases, using this method to forecast what could happen in the future. Its primary purpose is to draw the reader into a story and create a contextual framework for understanding the research problem. The author uses explanation and analysis to present a subject or to clarify an idea. Exposition presents the facts about a subject or an issue clearly and as impartially as possible. Its primary purpose is to describe and explain, to document for the historical record an event or phenomenon. The author uses techniques of persuasion to establish understanding of a particular truth, often in the form of a research question, or to convince the reader of its falsity. The overall aim is to persuade the reader to believe something and perhaps to act on that belief. Critically Evaluate the Contents Critical comments should form the bulk of your book review. Has the purpose of the book been achieved? What contributions does the book make to the field? Is the treatment of the subject matter objective or at least balanced in describing all sides of a debate? Are there facts and evidence that have been omitted? Can the same data be interpreted to explain alternate outcomes? Is the writing style clear and effective?

Making an Argument-- Every Thesis Deserves Its Day in Court You are the best (and only!) advocate for your thesis. Your thesis is defenseless without you to prove that its argument holds up under scrutiny.

While argumentation tends to focus on logic supported by verifiable examples and facts, persuasion can use unverifiable personal anecdotes and a more apparent emotional appeal to make its case. Additionally, in persuasion, the claim usually comes first; then the persuader builds a case to convince a particular audience to think or feel the same way. Evidence-based argument builds the case for its claim out of available evidence. Solid understanding of the material at hand, therefore, is necessary in order to argue effectively. This printable resource provides further examples of the differences between persuasive and argumentative writing. One way to help students see this distinction is to offer a topic and two stances on it: Trying to convince your friend to see a particular movie with you is likely persuasion. The claim that typically answers the question: Project, for example, this essay on Gertrude in Hamlet and ask students to identify the claim, reasons, and evidence. Ask students to clarify what makes this kind of text an argument as opposed to persuasion. What might a persuasive take on the character of Gertrude sound like? You may also wish to point out the absence of a counterargument in this example. Challenge students to offer one. Point out that even though the claim comes first in the sample essay, the writer of the essay likely did not start there. Rather, he or she arrived at the claim as a result of careful reading of and thinking about the text. Share with students that evidence-based writing about texts always begins with close reading. See Close Reading of Literary Texts strategy guide for additional information. Guide students through the process of generating an evidence-based argument of a text by using the Designing an Evidence-based Argument Handout. Decide on an area of focus such as the development of a particular character and using a short text, jot down details or phrases related to that focus in the first space on the chart. After reading and some time for discussion of the character, have students look at the evidence and notice any patterns. Record these in the second space. Work with the students to narrow the patterns to a manageable list and re-read the text, this time looking for more instances of the pattern that you may have missed before you were looking for it. Add these references to the list. Use the evidence and patterns to formulate a claim in the last box. Claims can also be more or less complex, such as an outright claim The character is X trait as opposed to a complex claim Although the character is X trait, he is also Y trait. For examples of development of a claim a thesis is a type of claim , see the Developing a Thesis Handout for additional guidance on this point. Once students have a claim, they can use the patterns they detected to start formulating reasons and textual references for evidence. Use these ReadWriteThink resources to help students build their plans into a fully developed evidence based argument about text:

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