RPTS 426

Developing Your Literature Review

This handout supplements your class handout on general guidance for identifying your topic and doing a literature review. It addresses what you need to do to develop your literature review once you have a group of journal articles. If you need help finding journal articles, consult the “Conducting a Literature Search in Scopus” handout located in your class library research guide (http://guides.library.tamu.edu/rpts426).

1. For this class you have been asked to write a literature review as part of your term project. The articles you choose for this need to be **scholarly, peer-reviewed sources**. If you want to learn more about what peer-review is, check out this short video tutorial created by librarians at North Carolina State University: https://www.lib.ncsu.edu/tutorials/peerreview/

Here is a sampling of things to look at to help determine if it’s a peer-reviewed article:
- **Authors and their credentials** are listed
- **Cites other sources** and has a reference list
- Published in a journal that has a peer-review process (you can google the journal)
- No ads; may contain graphics of **charts, tables, or pictures** from the research that was conducted

2. The next step is to **critically read your articles**. Reading a scholarly article takes time, so make sure you don’t skimp on this step. It’s helpful to **take notes as you read**.

Important things to take note of as you read:
- What is the **research question**?
- **Where did the study take place**, and **under what conditions**?
- What are the **methods used** for the study?
- What are the **major results** of the study?
- What are the **highlights of the discussion**?
- Are there **recurring or emerging themes**?
- Were there any **conclusions drawn**?
- Did the authors note any **areas for future research or gaps in the study**?

**This is very important:** when you read an article, you are looking for what these authors did. You want to see what their results were, and what they had to say about their results. If you find yourself wanting to cite information that they’ve cited from other researchers in their article (and pretty much only that information), that should be a red flag for you. If that’s the case, go find the article they are citing.

For some people, keeping an Excel spreadsheet can be very helpful for organization.