

**CAPSTONE
LITERATURE REVIEW OR INDEPENDENT RESEARCH PROJECT
INSTRUCTIONS & GRADING RUBRIC**

What is a literature review?

“Literature reviews ... are critical evaluations of material that has already been published... By organizing, integrating, and evaluating previously published material, authors of literature reviews consider the progress of research toward clarifying a problem. In a sense, literature reviews are tutorials in that authors

- Define and clarify the problem;
- Summarize previous investigations to inform the reader of the state of research;
- Identify relations, contradictions, gaps, and inconsistencies in the literature; and
- Suggest the next step or steps in solving the problem.”

(APA manual 6th edition, pp. 10)

What is an independent research project?

A research project involves a literature review leading to a gap in our knowledge or identifying inconsistencies in the literature. The next step is collect your own data to be able to fill that gap or resolve that debate.

Objectives: By completing this assignment you will:

- Become more comfortable finding, reading, and evaluating scholarly sources
 - Conduct a thorough search primarily in peer reviewed journals to obtain relevant sources
 - Evaluate sources, relying primarily on empirical sources that were published within the last 10 years
 - Evaluate methods and conclusions of journal articles, recognizing weaknesses or biases in studies
 - Evaluate the state of the field in some area, noting gaps in our knowledge
- Optionally, become more comfortable doing and writing up empirical research
 - Design a case study, survey or experiment that will provide data that can fill the gap or resolve the inconsistency found in the literature
 - Collect data observing ethical requirements
 - Carry out qualitative or statistical analyses of the data
- Communicate in the manner of the discipline of psychology (use APA style properly, adopt a scholarly voice)
- Become adept at making connections between studies to integrate findings, thus moving beyond summarizing studies separately
- Create new knowledge by comprehensively evaluating some issue to determine what is known, what alternative explanations exist, what conclusions might be drawn, and what directions for future research (or practice) are evident

Choosing a Topic

You will choose a topic in any area of psychology. The topic can be related to any one area (such as social psychology, cognitive psychology, clinical psychology, etc.) or it can be in the intersection of several different areas. It can be theoretical or applied in nature. Be sure that you choose a topic that strongly interests you; however, please note that it can be difficult to research a topic which is particularly emotional for you. I recommend choosing a topic about which you can write objectively, as a psychologist would. Before settling on a topic, conduct a brief review of the literature to ensure that there are enough sources to develop a paper of this scope. Remember that you are expected to include at least 20 scholarly peer-reviewed sources.

Choosing an Approach: Within your chosen topic, you must develop a thesis statement which will guide your research and review. To form an effective thesis statement, you might consider one of the following approaches:

- Comparative approach – consider similarities and differences between two perspectives
- Problem-solution approach – propose the topic as a problem, outline possible solutions, and then evaluate each solution to draw your conclusion
- Debated-topics approach – present current empirical research and theory to address each side of a debated topic (support may come from differing psychological subfields or perspectives) and evaluate the debate in light of scientific evidence and theory.

Assignment overview:

Abstract: Your abstract should provide the reader with a brief synopsis of your review. This should be the last part of the paper that you write. Your abstract should include an explanation of the research question, a summary of central ideas addressed in the review, suggestions for future directions, and a clear description of your thesis statement.

Introducing your topic: Your introduction should explain the question to be explored and provide a preview of your paper. It should include a clear thesis statement and define the concepts which are central to your paper

The body of your review. You should organize the body of your review around central ideas which are supported or refuted by multiple research studies. A strong review must synthesize several pieces of original research to support each idea. Typically, a review article will have many references (often 30 or more). However, the author will not discuss every article in exhaustive detail. Rather s/he may cite only a single idea or main point from some articles, while providing greater detail for others. You must decide how much detail to include from each of your sources. As a general guideline, you should include only as much detail as is necessary to make your point.

The body of your review should be carefully balanced to present all sides of your chosen issue. Specify whether evidence for a particular point is strong (i.e., many peer-reviewed studies have reached the same conclusion), weak (i.e., supporting studies have design flaws, cannot be generalized beyond the sample used, or have not been replicated), or inconclusive (i.e., conclusions from different studies are contradictory). If the definition of key terms in the field is inconsistent, point out these inconsistencies. Identify gaps in knowledge and areas needing continued research.

Method and Results (optional). If you choose to collect your own data, follow APA style in writing up your case study, survey or experiment. The Methods section should describe your participants, the materials you use for data collection and the precise procedures of data collection. The results section should describe your results in appropriate detail. Make sure that all tables, figures or illustrations are numbered and given a meaningful title.

Discussion and future directions/implications: If you collected your own data, the Discussion section should explain how your results fill the gap or resolve the debate you identified in the introduction. Your paper should include a section proposing future studies that are needed to draw a definitive conclusion, as well as practical implications that stem from your review or empirical research. All papers should offer some guidance regarding next steps that psychologists can take in addressing the issue.

Conclusion: Your paper should end with a section labeled “Conclusion” where you restate your thesis and address the conclusions that can be drawn from past research. Support your thesis by summarizing the evidence you discussed earlier in the paper. This may include evidence supporting your thesis and evidence ruling out alternatives. Your conclusion should not introduce new ideas, but it should give a strong sense of closure to your paper.

Common mistakes

- **“Study stacking”** refers to describing each study in sequence without integrating their conclusions. If you find that you are referencing one study per paragraph, you may be “study stacking.” To avoid this mistake, aim to include several references in each paragraph and identify connections between the studies you review.
- **Inappropriate use of quotations** is common in student review papers. It is NOT appropriate to quote material directly from an article unless you need the author’s exact words to make a point. For example, if you are writing a review on the effects of the “black box” warning label on anti-depressants, you may want to quote the exact language of the warning label in order to make your point. While quotations are necessary in some instances, this is VERY rare. To meet the goals of this assignment, it is critical that you read the articles, synthesize the material, and describe it for your reader in your own words.
- Students sometimes have difficulty writing in a **scholarly voice**. When you write scientific papers in APA style, you should focus on past research, not on your own personal experiences. APA style literature reviews rarely use first person voice (“I”).

Intermediate & Final Assignments:

Your capstone paper should reflect your best work as a psychology major at McDaniel College. These intermediate assignments are designed to ensure that you receive adequate and frequent feedback to help you develop the best literature review possible. Therefore, **I will not accept any assignment until the previous assignments have been submitted. However, you will receive no credit for work submitted after the due date.**

Topic Ideas: You will also submit a typed statement of 2-3 possible topics for your literature review. You may include multiple separate ideas or multiple iterations of a similar idea. Your statement should indicate the question you propose to address and why it is important to the field of psychology.

Formal Topic Statement: After receiving feedback about your topic ideas, you will submit a formal topic statement for your literature review. This statement should indicate your topic, as well as what approach you intend to take.

Bulleted Draft or Outline: You will submit a detailed outline which includes all of the main points (with citations) that you plan to discuss in your literature review. The outline should include at least 15-20 references and an APA-style reference list.

Draft for Instructor Review & Individual Consultations: You will submit a draft of your literature review in near-final form for my review. Please include questions or concerns that you would like me to address in our individual meeting. If there is a section that you want me to pay particular attention to, please note it on the draft.

Research Proposal (Optional): If you intend to collect your own data, you will submit a research proposal stating your research hypothesis, the number and demographic characteristics of participants you intend to involve, the independent and dependent variables, the method of your data collection and the method of data analysis you intend to use.

Draft Method and Results Sections for Instructor Review (Optional): You will submit a draft of the Method and Results sections.

Final Literature Review: On the last day of class, you will submit your final paper. Be sure to incorporate feedback from your outline, peer review, and consultations. **The paper is due at the beginning of class.** No late papers will be accepted. Students who do not meet this deadline will receive a grade of zero.

Guidelines for the Bulleted Draft or Outline

Your outline should reflect the organization of your literature review; including the introduction, body, future directions/implications, and conclusion. You should specify a heading for each paragraph which reflects the main point of that paragraph. Underneath each heading, you should list the main points you plan to make in that section, including citations for the sources you will incorporate. Your submission should include an APA-style reference list (including at least 15 references) and an evaluation of what areas of your paper need strengthening. Use the rubric provided below as a guide in constructing your outline. This outline is worth 30 points.

Tips for Annotated Outlines

- Each heading should BRIEFLY and DIRECTLY express the main idea of that section.
- Your annotations must be directly related to this topic sentence—do not ramble about the details of the section, but rather elaborate on the section's main idea.
- Keep the annotations brief and directly stated, at a level of generalization that summarizes the entire section. Discuss the main idea—the major contribution—of each research article, not all of the details.
- Remember—the annotated outline should help you conceptualize the larger paper and make timely progress toward the paper's completion.
- Make this outline as close to final form as possible. Converting a strong outline into a paper requires significantly less work. Tips by Barry W. Hamilton, Ph.D., Northeastern Seminary

BULLETED DRAFT/OUTLINE

<i>Content Area</i>	<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Points</i>
INTRODUCTION	○ Does the thesis statement identify the problem effectively?	5

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Does it briefly explain why it is significant? ○ Are key topics defined, as necessary? 	
BODY OF THE REVIEW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Is research evidence incorporated appropriately throughout the outline (main points are summarized and integrated into the paper)? ○ Is evidence well synthesized so that each point is supported by research in an integrated way (avoid study stacking)? ○ Does the writer specify whether the evidence is weak, strong, or inconclusive? ○ Is the outline balanced in considering all aspects of the issue, avoiding bias? 	10
FUTURE DIRECTIONS & IMPLICATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Does the outline clearly state the next steps necessary to address this issue? ○ Do these suggestions follow logically from the literature reviewed? 	5
CONCLUSION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Does the conclusion restate the thesis accurately? ○ Does it address the conclusions that can be drawn from past research? ○ Does it summarize the evidence discussed earlier in the paper? 	5
ORGANIZATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Organization. Is the outline well-organized? ○ Does it use headings effectively to convey this organization 	2.5
REFERENCES & APA FORMAT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Does the outline reflect APA style; including format, citations, and references? ○ Were at least 15 references used? Were they from peer-reviewed journals? ○ Were sources cited correctly in the text? 	2.5
TOTAL POINTS		30

Guidelines for the Final Paper:

Your final paper should include an introduction of your topic, the body of your review, the description of your own data if relevant, an evaluation of future directions or implications, and a conclusion. Be sure to incorporate feedback from your outline and consultations. The paper must include at least 20 peer-reviewed sources and should be 4 to 5 thousand words in length (excluding title page and references). **The paper is due at the beginning of the last day of class.** No late papers will be accepted. Students who fail to meet this deadline will receive a grade of zero. Use the rubric below and the overview on p. 2 of this assignment as a guide.

FINAL PAPER GRADING RUBRIC

<i>Content Area</i>	<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Points</i>
ABSTRACT 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Does the abstract provide a clear summary of you paper? ○ Is it one paragraph, including no more than 120 words? 	10
INTRODUCTION 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Does the introduction clearly explain the question to be explored? ○ Does the thesis statement identify the problem and briefly explain why it is significant? ○ Is the thesis statement expressed clearly and effectively? ○ Is the introduction concise and interesting? ○ Are key topics defined, as necessary? 	15
BODY OF THE REVIEW 100	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Is research evidence incorporated appropriately throughout the body of the paper (main points are summarized and integrated into the paper)? ○ Are relevant research findings clearly explained? ○ Is evidence well synthesized so that each point is supported by research in an integrated way (avoid study stacking)? ○ Are the conclusions drawn from the research valid? ○ Does the writer specify whether the evidence is weak, strong, or inconclusive? ○ Does the paper avoid quotes, unless the exact wording is critical to the argument? ○ Is the paper balanced in considering all aspects of the issue, avoiding bias? 	100

METHOD AND RESULTS 100 (OPTIONAL)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Does the research hypothesis follow logically from the literature review? ○ Are the subsections appropriate? ○ Are the participants described with all relevant details given? ○ Are the experimental or survey materials described in sufficient detail? ○ Is the procedure described clearly and in sufficient detail? ○ Is the appropriate method of data analysis used? ○ Are the results presented clearly and meaningfully? ○ Do the results relate to the hypothesis? 	100
FUTURE DIRECTIONS & IMPLICATIONS 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Does the paper clearly state the next steps necessary to address this issue? ○ Do these suggestions provide sufficient detail? ○ Do these suggestions follow logically from the literature reviewed? 	20
CONCLUSION 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Does the conclusion restate the thesis accurately? ○ Does it address the conclusions that can be drawn from past research? ○ Does it summarize the evidence discussed earlier in the paper? ○ Does it avoid introducing new ideas? 	10
CLARITY, ORGANIZATION, & CONCISENESS 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Clarity of writing. How clearly does the paper communicate each point? ○ Organization. Is the paper well-organized? Does the paper use headings effectively to convey this organization? ○ Conciseness. Does the paper state points in a direct, concise manner? 	20
PROFESSIONALISM 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Tone. Does the paper use an appropriately formal/academic tone (e.g., avoid slang, contractions, clichés, first person pronouns)? ○ Mechanics: Does the paper use grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure correctly? ○ Presentation: Is the paper professional in appearance? 	15
REFERENCES & APA FORMAT 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Does the paper follow APA style, including format, citations, and references? ○ Were at least 20 references used? Were they from peer-reviewed journals? ○ Was the reference list attached? Was it complete and accurate? ○ Were sources cited correctly within the text? 	10
TOTAL POINTS		200 or 300

Paper Specifications Checklist: Your paper is expected to meet the criteria below. Note: This is not a list of all specifications; please read the assignment guidelines and grading rubric carefully before submitting your final paper.

- The paper is 4 – 5 thousand words in length (excluding title page, references)?
- The paper includes at least 20 empirical, peer-reviewed sources.
- The font is equivalent to Times New Roman or Arial 12 pt font.
- The paper is stapled (if it's too thick, secure it with a binder clip).
- The honor pledge is included on the title page and signed.
- The paper has an abstract (one paragraph summary, no more than 120 words)?
- The paper has a clear thesis statement.
- The paper reflects thoughtful and coherent organization.
- The paper only uses quotations that are truly unique in their phrasing or where it is necessary to capture someone's statement verbatim (and would lose important information in paraphrasing). These quotations are cited appropriately.
- The paper avoids study stacking (most paragraphs use several references and integrate studies to make a broader point).
- The paper meets APA style guidelines. Check the format of the title page, abstract, title again at start of paper, in-text citations, inclusion of page numbers for all quotes, use of headings/subheadings, reference page, and figures (if used).
- All information from external sources is cited appropriately, using APA style. A list of references is included.
- Grammar and punctuation are correct.