

Writing a Literature Review: Instructional Websites and Some Samples (AKA “Review Essay”)

There is no one correct way to write a literature review. Scholars take many different approaches. These websites discuss the crafting of a literature review from many different perspectives, though most of them come from libraries or university writing centers:

- <http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/literature-reviews/>
- <http://www.smu.ca/administration/library/litrev.html>
- <http://guides.library.vcu.edu/lit-review>
- <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/666/01/>
- <http://www.cgu.edu/pages/899.asp>
- http://www.trinity.utoronto.ca/library_archives/theological_resources/Theological_guides/literature_survey_bibliography.html
- <http://www.slideshare.net/kevingarysmith/07-literature-review>

One can also learn about the variety of ways a lit review can be crafted by skimming reviews written by other scholars. The following examples were selected to provide some variety: they take a variety of approaches to the selection of materials to review, and they illustrate a wide range of approaches in both the review’s structure and means of analysis.

For Those of Us Learning to Do Lit Reviews

Reviews of 3-5 book length publications

Gay, Douglas. “Review Essay: Rewiring Practical Theology.” *Political Theology* Vol. 12, No. 4 (2011): 608-612.

Geiger, Matthew W. and Ryan Gardner. “Review Essay: Five Books About Religion, Young Adults, and Secondary Education.” *Religious Education* Vol. 107, No. 4 (2012): 416-428.

Hardy, Douglas S. and William L. Selvidge. “Review Essay of Some Recent Work on Spirituality and Mission.” *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* Vol. 6, No. 1 (2013): 109-121.

An example of analyzing selected works by one author

Bingaman, Kirk A. "Transforming Our Understanding of Theories, Paradigms, & Mental Disorders: The Legacy of Donald Capps in the Field of Pastoral Care and Counseling." *Pastoral Psychology* Vol. 58 (2009): 619-628

An example of reviewing one substantial book

Mercer, Joyce Ann. "A Universally Particular Psychology? A Feminist Practical Theological Exploration of Indigenous and Cultural Psychology." *Pastoral Psychology* Vol. 56 (2007): 81-94.

More Demanding Approaches

A thematic review of traditional literature

Hatami, Hossein, Ebrahim Afjei, Maryam Hatami, and Neda Hatami. "Monotheistic and Spiritual Style Literature in Traditional Medicine's Resources." *Journal of Religion and Health* Vol. 53 (2014): 438-448.

An example of scholars reviewing a broad range of literature

Greider, Kathleen J., Gloria A. Johnson, and Kristen J. Leslie. "Three Decades of Women Writing for our Lives." In *Feminist and Womanist Pastoral Theology*. Ed. Bonnie Miller-McLemore and Brita Gill-Austern. Nashville: Abingdon, 1999.

An example of a senior scholar reviewing a broad range of literature to investigate an emerging trend in institutions like the one in which he teaches

Yong, Amos. "Whence and Whither in Evangelical Education? Dispatches from a Shifting Frontier—A Review Essay." *Christian Scholars' Review* Vol. 42, No. 2 (Winter 2013): 179-192.

An example of a senior scholar reviewing a broad range of literature to address an area of research not commonly addressed in the tradition he studies

Nakasone, Ronald Y. "A Brief Review of Literature of Buddhist Writings on Spirituality and Aging." *Journal of Religion, Spirituality and Aging* Vol. 20, No. 3 June (2008): 220-226.

And, for comic relief, if nothing else, here is a review of the research habits of theologians

Penner, Katharina. "Information Behavior of Theologians: A Literature Review." *Theological Librarianship* Vol. 2, No. 1 (June 2009): 67-82.