A LIT REVIEW’S PURPOSE

It summarizes, analyzes, and synthesizes a topic’s main findings from prior research.

It explains your assessments for what is strong, weak, inconclusive, and/or missing from the existing literature.

DO THESE FOUR TASKS

IDENTIFY WHAT SIMILAR STUDIES EXAMINED
What did the studies ask?
What did they use?
- Theories, variables, cases, data

IDENTIFY WHAT EACH STUDY CONCLUDED
What did the researchers find?

SYNTHESIZE THE COLLECTIVE RESULTS
Sort the works into three categories:
- What they agree about
- What they disagree about
- What they overlook

CRITIQUE THE QUALITY & QUANTITY OF THE ACCUMULATED RESEARCH
What are the valid key findings?
Where is more work needed?
- New variables, cases, or theories

ORGANIZE BY THEME OR THEORY

- Don’t simply summarize each source and its main findings, paragraph by paragraph.
- Explain how sources relate to each other.
- Synthesize how they inform your research question and planned exploration.


More Resources
- How to critique a text (Strategic Reading II)
- GWC Literature Reviews Page
- GWC Literature Reviews Recorded Workshop