

### *Outline for a Literature Review*

While outlines can vary depending upon the way in which you would like to organize the body of your literature review, the primary flow should include the following information.

#### **Introduction**

- ☐ Define the context (referencing the topic of the review)
- ☐ Explain the purpose/reasons for reviewing the literature
- ☐ Identify the sequence of your review (what general information in what order)
- ☐ Clarify the scope of your review (what you will incorporate and what you will not (specify if an element falls outside of your scope).

*For example, if your dissertation is on the effectiveness of communicative language teaching (CLT) for second language learners, you may explain that a majority of research explores the effectiveness of CLT practices in the K-12 public school setting. However, as your study is specifically focusing on adult education, this review will not focus on those practices in depth but may refer to them as options for consideration.*

#### **Body**

- ☐ Organize the literature either chronologically, thematically, methodologically, or theoretically (even a mix)
- ☐ Analyze, synthesize, and interpret the information from your reliable sources and make connections regarding your topic (focus on the significance of the information but avoid simply summarizing and/or adding your opinion)
- ☐ Generally, we go from a wide view of the topic to the specific area you will focus on in your study

*For example, if your dissertation is on the influence of social media on business success in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, you may wish to explain the history of social media and when businesses started using it. Eventually, you would narrow this down until you identified the gap in terms of what is not known about the influence of social media on success and use that specific gap to then guide your study.*

#### **Conclusion**

(Here we are focusing on why our research should matter...not on reiterating the main points from your entire review)

- ☐ Restate the most important findings/points from your review of the literature available
- ☐ Offer an evaluation on the current information available on your topic (potentially the limitations)
- ☐ Identify the gap you will proceed forward with in your research