

### **Non-Thesis Extended Literature Review Guidelines for SIGS Masters Students**

A literature review is a comprehensive overview of the existing research on a particular subject. It involves analyzing a range of scholarly articles and books on a topic, and writing a paper that systematically contrasts their major findings and arguments. This involves combining summary and synthesis. A summary is a recap of the key information in a source, while synthesis is a way of reorganizing that information into a bigger picture which situates findings within a broader literature.

To choose the non-thesis option, before the start of the student's last semester they must:

- Identify a SIGS faculty member who is willing to supervise the literature review project.
- Inform the SIGS academic program specialist (APS) that they plan to do the non-thesis option and ask them to set up an independent study course with their supervising professor.
- Identify a 3-credit elective course to support the literature review. This can be an actual course, or it can be a directed research course with the literature review supervisor.
- Complete the appropriate independent study and directed research contracts (found under forms/information specific to your program on the SIGS website) and submit them to the APS.
- The APS will then issue the student permits to enroll in the literature review course(s)

#### **Literature Review Guidelines**

- The final paper should be a minimum of 25 double-spaced pages, including bibliography.
- In consultation with the professor, the student should focus on the scholarly literature on a specific topic, including major books and articles as well recent research on the topic.
- The student is responsible for compiling the list of works to be included in the review and submit this to the instructor for approval no later than the third week of classes.
- The paper should identify and discuss the major issues, methods, controversies, trends, and/or differing perspectives in the literature.
- The deadline for handing in this literature review is the last day of classes.
- This class will be graded S (satisfactory) or U (unsatisfactory). An S grade is needed to graduate.
- Any additional parameters for the project are negotiated between the student and professor.

#### **Difference between a Literature Review and a Thesis or Academic Research Paper**

- “The main focus of an academic research paper (or thesis) is to develop a new argument.... you use the literature as a foundation and as support for a new insight that you contribute. The focus of a literature review, however, is to summarize and synthesize the arguments and ideas of others without adding new contributions.” - The Writing Center at UNC

#### **Sources to Learn More About How to Conduct a Literature Review**

- [USF Libraries](#)
- [The Writing Center at UNC-Chapel Hill](#)
- [Purdue University Writing Lab](#)
- [University of Wisconsin Writing Center](#)
- [University of Toronto](#)