Chlapaty Fellows Program
Literature Review Checklist

What is a literature review & why is it important?

A literature review investigates and analyzes published information available about a specific topic. As part of a larger research project in which you’ll be conducting primary research (gathering your own data), you need to include a brief literature review of secondary research (research others conducted).

Your literature review can inform your project by:

- Helping you understand the status of research about your topic over time
- Giving you ideas for focusing your topic
- Suggesting areas of further research for other scholars (including you!)
- Helping you determine potential specific research questions
- Suggesting methods of conducting primary research

Tips & tricks:

☐ Ask for help! If you haven’t taken a RES104 or another course with a strong library research component, you may not be familiar with searching for books, book chapters, articles, etc. See: http://www.dbq.edu/library/askus/

☐ Make one or more appointments with your liaison librarian. Find out yours at: http://www.dbq.edu/library/aboutus/libraryliaisons/

☐ Interlibrary Loan articles and books our library doesn’t have. Scholars at this level do so often.

☐ Determine the primary databases associated with your field of research.

☐ Connect the sources you review to your own research question.

☐ Consider timeliness of each of your potential sources. Older sources can be helpful in establishing background about your topic.

☐ Consider authors and their credentials.

☐ Ask your advisor and any community contacts if they have any scholarly sources to suggest.

☐ Use bibliographies from sources to locate more. If you see the same researchers cited often, they may be important in your topic area and you might consider searching for sources they published.

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