PL12002: Literature Review

# Unit Assessment Summary:

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| 15 credits | Poster (Group Task): | 15% |
| Literature Review | 35% |
| Essay | 50% |

# Learning Outcomes:

You will demonstrate:

* an understanding of key concepts used in political argument and in the analysis of political phenomena;
* understanding of key analytical approaches to the study of politics and the role of ideas in politics;
* critical and analytical modes of thinking about politics and political analysis, including a capacity for the interrogation of the key categories via which we think and act, politically.

# Task:

Write a literature review on <topic of semester 2, week 1>.

Word limit:

<xxx> not including references

## Deadline:

dd/mm/yyyy hh:mm

## Submission:

Upload your work to Moodle

# What is a literature review?

In the social sciences, the word ‘literature’ means academic writing such as research papers, books, scholarly articles, or reports. It also means the ‘current thinking’ on a topic.

A literature review summarises and critically evaluates the existing research on a topic.

Summarising:

* Demonstrates your understanding of the essential material on the topic.
* It shows you can select the most relevant and most important research.

Critical evaluation:

* Explains the strengths and limitations of the selected material.
* It synthesises the current thinking by explaining how the literature supports, links, or contrasts with each other.
* It also identifies any gaps in the current thinking on the topic and recommends areas for further study.

Literature reviews are an essential tool for research (including dissertations) and in professional life (reports or business cases). It is necessary to understand the existing thinking on a topic before starting your own research or argument.

Here are some example literature reviews: <examples>

# Assessment

## Mark scheme:

[copy the department’s generic mark scheme -but grey out or delete the columns that don’t explicitly relate to the learning outcome]

## Additional feedback

* the quality of your written communication

The quality of written communication **does not** contribute to your mark in this task. However, spelling, grammar or paragraphing errors will limit your ability to summarise and critically evaluate within the word limit and at a high level. You should use this feedback to improve your next piece of work.

# Content and Process:

## Choose your question

The topic of <topic of semester 2, week 1> is extensive and a literature review should not cover every aspect of it. Instead, they focus on a smaller part of the topic or take a particular lens or perspective to review it.

Some examples of sub-topics or lens are:

* <e.g. What is the thinking on ….? >
* <e.g. What do <x> think about … ?>

Before choosing one of the examples or thinking of your own, you should first read the core material.

## Select the most relevant sources to your question.

As well as the core material, you should find some further thinking on your topic or lens. This is likely to be 2 or 3 articles or short chapters.

To find additional material, you should:

1. Decide your search parameters
   1. What you will search (University of Bath Library catalogue and Google Scholar)
   2. The date, age of the material
   3. The search terms or key words you will use
2. Read the title and abstract of articles or the introduction to longer texts to decide if they are relevant to your review
3. Use EndNote to reference the core and additional sources you have found

## Summarise each source’s thinking or information that is relevant to your question

1. What are the main points the source makes?
2. What stance or viewpoint has the source taken?

## Evaluate each source.

1. How reliable is the source?
2. What are the strengths and limitations of its approach?

## Compare the sources’ approaches and information

1. What do the sources agree about?
2. Are there differences between the sources’ ideas, approaches or conclusions?
3. Why are there controversies or differences of opinion on the topic?

## Plan your review’s structure

1. Choose a way you will organise your review into sub-topics. This should be a logical approach so that each paragraph develops the reader’s understanding of the field. Some examples of structures:

* Chronological: how thinking in the area has changed over time.:
  + the reasons why thinking has changed
  + the ways the sources develop or disagree with studies they have read.
* Thematic: grouping the sources by their idea
  + the authors’ different lenses or perspectives
  + the focus of the authors such as the impact of the problem on a particular group of people, place or issue
* Geographic: how thinking in the area differs by region or background
  + the different contexts of the studies that influence their focus
* You can choose other ways to organise your information if they are relevant to the material.

1. Organise your information into your structure. Note: some sub-topics will only be relevant to one or two of your sources.
2. Number the sub-topics in a logical order.

## Write your draft literature review by using your plan and notes

1. Write your introduction:
   1. Explain the importance or relevance of your question to the field
   2. Mention briefly some of the important ideas or thinkers
   3. Explains your approach to the review (chronological, thematic, geographic etc -this is your ‘stance’
2. Write your body paragraphs
   1. start with the most important sub-topic
   2. answer your question for each subtopic by synthesising your summaries (Step 3) and evaluations (Step 4) There should be more evaluation (your analysis of the sources) than summary.
3. Write your conclusion
   1. Give an overall answer to your question and refer to the stance you have taken
   2. State a gap in the research and explain why it should be conducted

## Re-draft your literature review

1. Check that your review answers your question
2. Check your the word count
3. Use the editor tool in Microsoft Word (free to students) to improve the quality of your writing
4. Check all of your material is referenced from EndNote

## Proofread and submit your literature review