Writing the Literature Review Paper

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As Director of Writing Across the Curriculum, I’ll be working with faculty and students across the university to improve student writing. I consult with instructors and departments, and I teach writing in a wide variety of courses when students in those courses are starting a writing assignment. I will also be working with students and faculty in the Department of English and Film Studies, my home department.

I am the author, co-author, or editor of six books and 29 articles, including Writing Instruction in Canadian Universities. My current research interests include the development of doctoral student writing, writing assignments across disciplinary fields, and rhetorical approaches to text encoding. Currently I serve as co-President of the Canadian Association for the Study of Discourse and Writing (CASDW), the

http://www.ualberta.ca/~graves1/index.html
Would you like to improve the writing of your students? Improve their learning of your lecture material? Are you looking for new ways to engage your students in your course materials? If this interests you, contact Roger Graves or 492-2169.

What can we do for individual instructors:

- meet to talk about ways to incorporate informal (short, impromptu) writing assignments into any class, small or large
- review via email any assignment you give students that has a writing component to help make it clearer for students and to help develop grading rubrics to improve the speed and accuracy of grading
- visit your class to help students get started on your writing assignments

What can we do for departments:

- hold workshops on creating good writing assignments
- host discussions of how to improve the writing of students in your programs
- conduct reviews of writing assignments in your departments/courses to identify exactly what your students are being asked to write—and to ensure that they have access to resources on how to write (online and on-campus)

Upcoming Presentations and Workshops:

http://www.humanities.ualberta.ca/WAC/
The writing process

Getting started
- Explore the assignment
- Make rough notes
- Pick a tentative topic

Getting feedback
- Make an appointment at the centre for writers
- Get feedback on your draft/revise

Revising
- Work on style and lower order concerns
- Proofread, consult checklist for assignment
Getting organized

Organize paper sections similar to your proposal

- **Abstract (325 words max.)**
- **Introduction and Context**: Identify the problem, issue; strong statement of aim [thesis]; briefly outline what you are going to cover in the body
- **Body of paper**: literature review: summaries of articles, argument joining them together
- **Conclusions**: Summarize your findings; does a coherent perspective on this topic emerge from your reading?
- **References**: List all references you have cited in your text (minimum 5).
Possible topics
What topic will you study?

- Identify a topic of inquiry
- Translate that topic into a thesis by stating what your attitude is to that topic
- Leisure and vice combined to form what have been called “sinful pleasures” in the boom-town gold rush economy of the Klondike. The absence of traditional social hierarchies in this time and place, combined with the fuel of easy money and masculinity, accounted for this new conception of leisure.
Ex. [this study] will be a unique scholarly contribution as very few studies genuinely combine oral history and the documentary record.
My research will develop a set of terms that describe animal hoarding and distinguish it from animal collecting; I will also summarize the solutions to the problem of animal hoarding that appear in the research literature.
Thesis statements

- Specific
- Manageable
- Interesting
According to new approaches in pain management, nurses must obtain three kinds of knowledge if they are to respond effectively to a patient’s pain: knowledge of self, knowledge of pain, and knowledge of standards of care.

[original/passive voice] New approaches to pain management stress three kinds of knowledge for nurses to obtain if they are to respond effectively to a patient’s pain: knowledge of self, knowledge of pain, and knowledge of standards of care.¹
Thesis statement

Working thesis:
Getting organized

Thesis= main claim, argument
The absence of traditional social hierarchies in this time and place, combined with the fuel of easy money and masculinity, accounted for this new conception of leisure

Body: subsidiary claims

1. Free enterprise capitalism in the Klondike contributed to a dominant ideological stance that valued the free choice of the individual to pursue whatever leisure activities they wanted—including gambling, drinking to excess, and womanizing—with few, if any, restraints.

2. Leisure in the Klondike boomtown created and enforced a particular kind of masculinity in contrast to the “rational recreation” of more established cities and towns in the Northwest.
3. Analytical/critical annotations

An objective evaluation of a work's contents, quality, and limitations. Length is typically between 100-200 words.

- Gives full bibliographic information for the work.
- Gives the authority and the point of view of the author.
- Evaluates the contents, scope, and quality.
- Points out the merits and deficiencies.

From http://guides.library.ualberta.ca/annotations
Summarizes the article

Evaluates ("discuss the value")
In “Use of Physical Restraints and Psychotropic Medications in Alzheimer Special Care Units in Nursing Homes,” Phillips, Sprye, Sloane, and Hawes question whether or not Alzheimer’s patients are less likely to be restrained or medicated as a result of residing in Special Care Units (SCU) in nursing homes. They found, however, that these patients were no less likely to be restrained and, in fact, they were more likely to receive psychototropic medication. (72 words)
Hints for summarizing

- Previous summary took 5 pages of article and turned it into 2 sentences
- Look in the article’s Introduction for the question they are asking (in this case, paragraph 2)
- Look in the Results for the findings (in this case, the last paragraph of the Results)
This study looked at a large amount of data (1100 residents in 48 SCUs) from a small geographical area—only four U.S. states. The extent to which the findings of this study apply to Alberta are unclear, particularly since these standards vary considerably from state to state. Nevertheless, the authors speculate that SCUs led something of a revolution in Alzheimer’s patient care—these units demonstrated that the use of physical restraints could be avoided, and that may account for the similarity in use in both SCUs and regular units. (89 words)
Putting it all together

- Write the Abstract last, after you have finished
- Create an outline that shows how the summaries are connected
- Write transitions sentences between paragraphs in the body to tell your reader how these articles are connected
- Get feedback from a trusted reader: classmate, friend, Centre for Writers tutor