

**HIST 297: History Colloquium
Literature Review Assignment
Prof. Sellers, UMW Fall 2019**

Students will complete an 8-10 page literature review, complete with title, footnotes, and bibliography. The goal of this assignment is to demonstrate your familiarity with the existing literature on your chosen topic—certainly some of the facts, but also the central works, approaches, theories, and major scholarly debates that characterize this field. The ability to describe these sources is important, but you should also develop an evaluation of the current state of the field as your thesis/argument.

This review should consider a minimum of eight scholarly sources, but more may be appropriate; at least five of those must be books, and at least two must be scholarly articles, while the rest should be a mixture of books and articles pertinent to your topic. Remember, we have collectively discussed books by Francis Parkman, Francis Jennings, and Fred Anderson to set up the general progression of the scholarship on the French and Indian War/Seven Years' War, and you have already closely examined one article for your first written assignment as well as a book for your book review. Integrate that work into your literature review, while adding the results of your additional independent research. You do not need to accord each of these works equal weight in your paper, and some might even be relegated to footnotes as additional examples of broader trends that you consider more carefully in relation to the major works you feature more prominently.

Pieces of a literature review

- (1) You should begin with a brief introduction of your topic, including a brief summary, major events and figures, etc. Our larger topic for this course is the Seven Years' War/French and Indian War, but each of you has developed a more focused, individual topic within that larger topic.
- (2) Your thesis evaluating of the literature—explaining its evolution, critiquing what it has/has not accomplished.
- (3) An argument, using your books and articles as evidence. In these discussions, you should include basic identifying information (the work's title and date, the author's credentials), and you will want to consider the author's argument, her/his supporting arguments and major evidence.

Organization

We have read a number of historiographic essays this semester, and discussed the ways in which those authors structured their reviews of the literature. You should recall those examples and our discussions as models for what you are trying to accomplish in this essay. Those examples arranged the scholarship they evaluated chronologically, thematically, and methodologically, etc., depending on what made most sense to the author. The key for you will be to figure out the most logical organization for your topic. One way to approach this is to carefully consider how authors and their works relate to one another—for instance, we know Parkman wrote in the mid-19th century, that Jennings explicitly responded to Parkman's interpretations, and that Anderson later synthesized a broad range of works that Jennings helped inspire. A literature review focused on those three authors, then, would make the most sense arranged chronologically. As you work, think about how one discussion—whether of an author or a topic or a theme—leads logically to the next. If you could cut your paper into separate paragraphs and rearrange them without consequences, you may be listing points rather than building a well-structured argument. This is often the case in unsuccessful “essays” that simply discuss one book/article at a time, rather than combining their treatments of multiple works to make a unique point evaluating the status/accomplishments of those authors collectively.

It often makes sense to arrange literature reviews thematically, with a chronological arrangement within each section, but make sure to explain the relation between those sections. Similarly, make sure you remind your reader that you are relating these works to each other.

Documentation

Each source you discuss in the body of your paper should be documented in your footnotes, and appear separately in your bibliography. You may include additional supporting, but less significant, sources in your footnotes as well. Remember to refer to Jack Bales's citation guide (available at <http://libguides.umw.edu/content.php?pid=245752&sid=2029722#6812498>) and/or the online Chicago Manual of Style (<http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/16/contents.html> from a campus network), and keep in mind that citations follow different formats in footnotes and in bibliographies.

Formatting

All assignments should adhere to the department's standard style: 1" margins; 12 pt. Times New Roman font; a title page including the paper title and author's name (centered, all caps), course number and title, instructor, and date; pages numbered consecutively through all materials, excluding title page; and a bibliography.

Grading and due dates

The draft of your literature review is due Wednesday, November 13, in class. You should bring a hard copy to class for the peer review and revision workshop, AND submit an electronic or paper copy separately to the instructor. These drafts will be returned to you on Wednesday, November 20 with comments. Failure to submit a draft or participate in the peer review process will reduce your grade by 10%/one letter grade.

The final literature review is due by class time on Friday, December 6, and may be submitted in hard copy or electronically.

You will be graded only on the final submission (though the draft and peer review are required of all students), and I will use the grading rubric posted in the Files section of Canvas.

Writing Center reminder

Students are required to visit the Writing Center for a consultation at some point in the process of writing the literature review (you can determine when it will be most useful for you—just remember they can help you brainstorm, plan, and outline; proofread and edit; organize and revise; etc.). Schedule your appointment online at <http://academics.umw.edu/writing-fredericksburg/schedule-an-appointment/> Failure to consult with the Writing Center will automatically reduce your grade on this assignment by 10%/a full letter grade.

*For another (but similar) discussion of literature reviews, see <http://cas.umw.edu/historyamericanstudies/history-department-resources/historiography/literature-review-guidelines/>

*For more reminders on writing about historiography (including a sample essay), see <http://cas.umw.edu/historyamericanstudies/history-department-resources/historiography/>