(Small-Scale) Literature Review

Overview: For college writers, one of the most important skills is to be able to read ideas across a set of carefully selected sources in order to answer a research question. A literature review presents answers to a research question by exploring themes or trends in the scholarship in a manner that takes the various authors’ ideas into consideration. Your task in this literature review is to present a knowledgeable guide to selected scholarly literature about one issue pertaining to writing. For this assignment, you will build on the skills you used in the previous two papers—especially your ability to critically analyze sources and to use quotes, summaries, and paraphrases effectively.

Goals: The main goals of this project are for you to learn about the writing-related issue that you explore, as well as to learn about:

- writing in academic situations where you are asked to read critically and to synthesize (e.g., to construct, formulate, assemble, or combine);
- finding, choosing, and reading scholarly sources; and
- using genre analysis as a tool for your writing.

It is likely that for most of you, this is your first attempt at a literature review. We won’t attempt to write literature reviews that “cover” all of the available scholarship on a given topic. Instead, the emphasis will be on finding relevant sources, reading them actively, and making meaning by reading across texts.

Audience: Your primary audience is other CORE 120 students; you are to provide your classmates with a scholarly guide to one specific issue related to writing. You and I are also audiences for this writing-to-learn project.

Procedures and Requirements: To compose your literature review, complete the steps below. Keep all notes, outlines, graphic organizers, and drafts of your work.

1. Develop a research question about writing. State this question in your online journal.

2. Gather at least seven sources from scholarly perspectives on the topic. Find relevant sources by exploring databases (e.g., EBSCO, CompPile, ERIC, and JSTOR), books on reserve, and the college library catalog. Avail yourself of help from the reference librarians, too!

3. Read your sources with an eye to understanding each of the individual pieces—while also noticing themes, trends, or debates that emerge across your collected sources. As you read, take notes on important information and insights from each source. Create a working APA-style annotated bibliography as you read.

4. Construct either an outline with thesis or a graphic organizer with thesis. Show how you plan to organize your discussion of the themes, trends, or debates that you observe as you read across the sources. How will you categorize and arrange the ideas?

5. Study examples of literature reviews and observe the conventions for the structure, style, and diction typically used in this genre.

6. Compose a formal literature review that presents to your classmates your explanation of the themes, trends, or debates that you observe across scholarly literature on your topic. Think of your literature review as a scholarly guide to your topic: give your
perspective across the pieces while also offering thoughtful, careful rhetorical analysis of
the contributions of individual authors. The final draft should be 1250-1350 words and
should meet the standards listed in the grading section below. Bring electronic copies to
class throughout your work on the project. The final draft is due Tuesday, March 6.

Workshop drafts: Meeting due dates for the workshop drafts is important for you and for
your classmates who will be learning with you. Each time that you miss one of these deadlines or
come unprepared for a workshop will result in a full-grade reduction from your score on the
paper.

Grading: The Literature Review is worth 20% of your final grade. A quality paper will:

✓ Respond to a clear, relevant research question.
✓ Present a thorough, accurate, and insightful explanation of themes, trends, or debates that
you observe across the scholarly literature that you collected on your selected topic.
✓ Offer thoughtful, careful rhetorical analysis of the individual texts.
✓ Consider genre, audience, purpose, and situation to make effective rhetorical choices about
content, structure and organization, and style and voice.
✓ Apply academic conventions for grammar, usage, and mechanics.
✓ Document in APA style any and all sources whose words, ideas, or illustrations are cited or
used in the paper.
✓ Demonstrate a developed and accurate understanding of course readings and activities.