



Course Code & Title	LISS2006N Literature Reviews: Principles and Tips		
Convenor(s)	Professor Adrian Blau		
Institution	KCL	Department	Political Economy
Academic Year	2025-26	Term	Spring
Number of Sessions	2	Length of Session(s)	Session 1: 1.5 hours Session 2: 1 hour
Day, Date		Start and End time	Room Location
Session 1: Asynchronous learning Session 2: Wednesday 18 February		Session 2: 11:30 – 12:30	Session 2: Online
Enrolment Link:	Available to book on SkillsForge from 15th December 2025 . Click the course link to log in and register. Questions? Visit our Training FAQ here: Frequently Asked Questions - LISS DTP (liss-dtp.ac.uk)		

Course Description:

Most studies need some kind of literature review. But its nature, position and length can vary: there is no one way of doing a good literature review. A good literature review thus helps you tell a *story* – a story that is a key part of the study as a whole. This course will thus help you tell a better story by writing a better literature review.

The course consists of **two sessions**:

Session 1: Asynchronous learning

You will work through a pre-recorded presentation in your own time and at your own speed. This session will cover different ways of handling literature reviews, while also identifying the core feature of most good literature reviews, which is to help you justify your approach, by identifying what is good, bad and missing in previous research, the possibilities that will be tested, or the inconsistencies that will be resolved. It will also cover: literature searches; looking sideways at similar studies in other areas; when literature reviews should be neutral or critical; and structuring and categorising literature reviews. We will also discuss similarities and differences between literature reviews in PhD theses and journal articles.

NOTE: we will not cover systematic reviews, coding the literature, or the matrix approach.



Session 2: Live Q&A

The live Q&A gives you the opportunity to ask any questions and to network. You will be able to submit your questions in advance or ask them during the live session.

Meet your course convenor(s):

Adrian Blau is Professor of Politics in the Department of Political Economy at KCL, with over 20 years of academic experience. He works on politics, philosophy and history, from both social-science and humanities perspectives. He specialises on democracy in theory and practice, including corruption, equality and fairness; and on rationality and irrationality, past and present, including post-truth politics. He is also very interested in how we do what we do – both in terms of methodology, and in terms of how we actually do and write our research.

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this session, you will understand:

- (a) core principles of how to write a good literature review;
- (b) how a literature review helps you tell a better 'story';
- (c) different ways in which literature reviews can be done, structured and positioned; and
- (d) similarities and differences between literature reviews in PhD thesis and journal articles.

Reading list:

An excellent and very short introduction is Jeffrey Knopf, 'Doing a literature review', *PS: Political Science and Politics* 39:1 (2006), 127-32. Direct link is [here](#).

For more detail, see Helen Aveyard, *Doing a Literature Review in Health and Social Care: A Practical Guide* (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2010). 2nd edition.

N.B. Make sure you get the second edition, not the first.

Pre course preparation

For session 1, there is no preparatory reading for this part, but you will get more out of the course if you look at a few articles in your area (e.g. 3-4 articles you're currently reading), and ask yourself the following questions:

- (1) What are the approximate *lengths and positions* of the literature reviews in the articles you examined?



(2) How *neutral or critical* are the literature reviews in the articles you examined?

(3) How effectively or ineffectively did the different literature reviews contribute to advancing the *story* of the article?

For session 2, you are expected to complete the asynchronous materials of session 1 beforehand.

Number of students:

Min:

Max: 100

Accessibility

LISS DTP aims to provide an inclusive environment for everyone who attends our events to enable participation for all. If you have any special requirements such as alternative communication/presentation access needs, please let us know at liss-dtp@kcl.ac.uk.