

# Writing Remarkable Literature Reviews



## Course Adoption Packet

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Dr. Daveena Tauber

Dear Faculty,

First, thank you for partnering with ScholarStudio to offer one or more of our courses. We are honored that you are entrusting us with helping educate your students. We are passionate about graduate education and about giving students the tools they need to be successful.

We hope that you will find that our courses complement your instruction. We also hope that you will take some time to go through the course material yourself and think about how you can use, expand, and customize the exercises. Our courses offer instruction in helping students learn the written conventions of their fields, but we are not experts in your discipline. The more you do to help students identify the written conventions in your discipline, the better their writing will be.

### **Why offer a course on writing lit reviews?**

If you find yourself thinking, “no one taught me how to do these things; shouldn’t students figure this stuff out on their own?” you are not alone. Most of us were expected to learn academic writing by “osmosis.” One result of “osmosis” pedagogy is that graduate education has extraordinarily high rates of attrition: 40-60% at the doctoral level and higher (by some estimates) at the master’s level. Further, relying on the assumption that graduate students have or should bring these skills reproduces existing educational inequities, which is part of why we see higher attrition among women and under-represented students.

According to the “osmosis” model, teaching students writing and communication skills is “remedial.” But there are good reasons to question this view.

1. Intellectual work is and should be difficult, and we should be looking at students’ ability to do the work itself—not their ability to teach themselves all the skills they need.
2. Although faculty often assume students “should have” advanced communication skills if they are admitted to graduate study, the reality is that many programs do not screen for these skills. The Council for Graduate



Schools recommends that admission be seen as the capacity to do graduate level work *given appropriate instruction*. [find citation]

3. The largest growth in graduate education comes from populations that were historically under-represented—women, under-represented minorities, and older students. These students may not have a strong educational background, or their education may be decades in the past.
4. We live in a time of shrinking educational budgets, which means that more and more students in the U.S. are educated in under-resourced schools. Even if students had an undergraduate writing course (and not all do), they do not teach the genres necessary to graduate-level writing. Further, there is no guarantee that undergraduate coursework provided meaningful opportunities to write, get feedback, and revise.
5. There is widespread agreement in the fields of education, composition, and applied linguistics that graduate students benefit from being taught the written conventions of their fields and that it's a mistake to conflate an initial lack of academic writing skills with inability to do graduate level work.

At this point in history, there are many reasons that otherwise smart graduate students show up in your program without knowing how to write a literature review or a methods section.

We work from the premise that:

- most students are capable of producing appropriate academic prose when given instruction, feedback, and opportunities to practice;
- instruction in critical graduate-level skills supports access, equity, and retention;
- instruction in critical graduate-level skills supports both native speakers and additional language learners.

## Ways to Integrate a ScholarStudio Course

**Offer as a stand-alone resource.** If your program decides to use the course this way, we suggest that the program send out the announcement below, taking care to customize the parts highlighted in yellow.



**Integrate into an existing course.** Writing Remarkable Literature Reviews can work well as a unit in a methods course, prose, or writing course. It can be offered as a required or optional component.

### Ways to increase participation

- List course link on syllabi
- Put course link on student resource pages
- Mention the course in class
- Talk about course in thesis and dissertation advising meetings
- Send announcement and periodic reminders (see text below)

### Course Landing Page

Welcome!

The Geography and Systems Science programs at Portland State University have partnered with ScholarStudio to make Writing Remarkable Literature Reviews available to our students and faculty.

Writing literature reviews is often regarded as one of the most challenging parts of the thesis or dissertation. This course gives detailed instruction on how to read, organize, and write about the literature in your field, giving you the tools you need to create a literature review that synthesizes, not just summarizes, the literature.

If you are waiting to start writing your lit review until you have "all the sources," *stop waiting and take this course*. You will walk through steps that add value to your reading process as you read, making your literature review process much more efficient and effective.

We hope you find this a valuable and helpful resource.

This course presumes that you know how to search academic databases in order to find relevant literature. We strongly recommend taking workshops on searching and storing academic sources through the PSU Library ([library.pdx.edu](http://library.pdx.edu)).



## Text to use With Students

### Announcement

Dear Student,

We are excited to offer a new resource to help you move toward your degree. Because writing literature reviews is often regarded as one of the most challenging parts of the thesis or dissertation, we have partnered with ScholarStudio, a small firm that specializes in graduate education, to offer the online course Writing Remarkable Literature Reviews. The course is taught by graduate writing specialist Dr. Daveena Tauber.

This course will walk you through the skills and strategies you need to write the literature review section of your thesis or dissertation. The course consists of 9 video units and comes with a 36-page workbook full of samples, strategies, and exercises.

### Units

Unit 1: Introduction to the Literature Review

Unit 2: Types of Literature Reviews

Unit 3: A Process for Writing the Literature Review

Unit 4: Reading and Processing the Literature

Unit 5: Summary and Synthesis

Unit 6: Evaluating the Literature

Unit 7: Articulating the Gap in the Literature and the Rationale for Your Project

Unit 8: Introductions and Conclusions for the Literature Review

Unit 9: Narrative Choices

Access the course using this link. Please note that the program has a limited number of access coupons, so please do not share the link with people outside the program.

This course will be [required / optional]. The course will be available as [a standalone unit / part of an existing course].



## Reminders

1. If you haven't checked out the online Writing Remarkable Literature Review course, head on over to [link] and sign up. This course will walk you through the skills and strategies you need to write the literature review section of your thesis or dissertation.
2. We want to remind you that you can access the online course Writing Remarkable Literature Reviews at [link]. This course will walk you through the skills and strategies you need to write the literature review section of your thesis or dissertation.

## Logistics

The course is hosted on the Thinkific platform, and students will need to register at the site.

I will generate student slots for all of the students and faculty in the program plus a few extra. These slots are limited, so participants should be discouraged from sharing them with people outside the program.

I will be able to see how many students enroll and how much of the course they complete. I am happy to share this data.

I can schedule reminder emails or these can come from the department.



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The Parties understand and accept the terms of this Agreement as of the Effective Date.



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(Signature)

Daveena Tauber, on behalf of Licensor  
Licensee

**SCHOLAR STUDIO LLC**

Phone: (503) 512-9161

Email: [daveena@scholar-studio.com](mailto:daveena@scholar-studio.com)

(Signature)

**Representative Name**, on behalf of

Phone: (503) XXX-XXXX

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