Course Syllabus

Course Information
Meeting time: Tuesdays: 4:30-7:10
Meeting place: WWPH 5404

Instructor Information:
Instructor: Dr. Veronica G. Sardegna
E-mail: sardegna@pitt.edu
Office: WWPH 5108
Office hours: by appointment only

Teaching Assistant: Eva Kowalewski
E-mail: evsk7@pitt.edu
Office hours: by appointment only

Course Description
This course serves as a capstone course for anyone seeking the M.Ed. degree in the School of Education. Courses in research methodology and/or disciplined inquiry are established by the department as prerequisites to this course.

This course synthesizes and deepens students’ skills in, and understanding of, research as a valuable ongoing practice for educational practitioners. In this course we will explore epistemological, methodological, and ethical issues associated with the conduct of research. The course is structured as an intensive experiential seminar. Each student will conduct a small-scale research study based on a study proposal completed prior to starting this course. The outcome of the course is a thesis project and an oral presentation of the project. Writing the thesis is an organic process so students should be prepared to give and receive a lot of feedback and do multiple rewrites of their documents.

Course Objectives
In this course, students will learn to

- design a literature review study (for students with no access to school settings) or an action research study (for students with access to school settings);
- formulate appropriate research question(s) and collect data to answer the question(s);
- search the literature and select relevant educational research based on the research question(s);
- evaluate the effectiveness of methodological approaches based on the research question(s);
- consider different perspectives as they interpret, analyze, and synthesize research based on the research question(s);
- collect relevant primary or secondary data;
- interpret and analyze findings using appropriate analytic strategies;
- discuss a new understanding of practice based on an educational problem;
- use discourse moves in order to improve the readability of their research study;
- provide constructive feedback to peers on their research projects.

**Required Text**


**Additional Required Readings**


**Online resources:**

- How to Write a Literature Review: [http://library.ucsc.edu/ref/howto/literaturereview.html](http://library.ucsc.edu/ref/howto/literaturereview.html)
- How To Write A Literature Review: [http://www.sportsci.org/jour/9901/wghreview.html](http://www.sportsci.org/jour/9901/wghreview.html)
• APA-Style Help from OWL Purdue Online Writing Lab and APA Style: 
  https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/ 

Recommended Readings:


Course Format

We will meet in our classroom weekly. You will find the required readings, a collection of sample published articles, and instructions for assignments on our CourseWeb. Please note that you should complete only one for the following final projects:

• **Classroom Action Research Project:** This kind of project is for students who are currently student teaching and have access to field research settings. This type of research is based on primary source material and serves as the “data” for secondary sources, such as Literature Review studies (see description below).

• **Literature Review Research Project:** This kind of project is for students who do not have access to children, youth or adults, and do not want to do a collaborative project that could provide access to field research settings. This type of research involves deep analysis of published studies, texts and secondary source documents, using them as data sources for analysis, synthesis and interpretation to answer research question(s). Literature review research studies are **not** a version of the literature review that simply happens to be longer. They are more than summaries of existing published work; they are arguments for a particular point of view on the literature that you have read. This type of research involves the exclusive use of secondary source materials (so no interviews or field observations) while rigorously following all steps in the research process.

There are two kinds of individual assignments that serve as stepping stones for your final projects: Assignments for Peer Feedback (PF) and Assignments for Teacher Feedback (TF) (see due dates on Course Schedule and description of these assignments below). These assignments consist of consecutive drafts of the final project (Draft #1, 2, 3, and final project). To avoid requests for extensions and afford the instructor a more manageable grading workload each week, students will be asked to choose a group (G1/G2) for submission of TF Assignments during the first week of class. In choosing a submission group, students are encouraged to consider their organization and writing skills, and competing tasks. Assignments that are submitted after the due date for G1/G2 submission will receive half credit.
Though this course is designed to provide extensive instructional resources and regular feedback, inevitably, student(s) may find they need additional guidance with unique situations they encounter in conducting their research. Students should plan to initiate conversations with their instructor via email to alert her to questions and challenges they are facing. In the first week of class, students will receive a link to an online document that will allow them to sign up for individual appointments with me or Teaching Assistant Eva Kowalewski, during the semester. I will be available via Skype and during office hours as noted in the online sign-up sheet. Also, writing help can be obtained from the Writing Center at Pitt by scheduling for individual appointments at http://www.writingcenter.pitt.edu/.

Assignments

This course is intensive. Students have to accomplish a research study in a short amount of time. The research process has many steps. For this reason, the research process is divided into the following assignments that will organize and scaffold students’ final projects.

- **IRB Training and Clearances** (5 points).

  Students will begin their exploration of ethical issues by completing two IRB training courses on Research Integrity and on Human Subjects Research in the Social and Behavioral Sciences and submitting their certificates of completion. If they are conducting an action research study in a school, they will have to submit a copy of the credentials obtained for working with children. A detailed description of the required clearances is posted on CourseWeb. Upon submitting IRB certificates of completion, and a copy of the credentials (if needed), students will receive 5 points.

  Discussions will be ongoing throughout the course to guide students through ethical situations they may encounter. Though students will submit IRB certificates from the completion of their training courses, it is not anticipated that students will design studies requiring IRB review or approval. Studies done in this course are expected to fall into the category of class assignments that provide practical application during the learning of research skills and processes. Certainly the paper produced in this course will serve as an example of students’ writing and research skill development. However, the work students do in this course is not designed to be publically presented at conferences or submitted to journals for potential publication.

- **Peer Feedback (PF Assignments)** (35 points):

  Students will complete seven PF Assignments, which constitute drafts of chapters for their final projects, and submit them for peer feedback throughout the semester (Modules 1-6). PF Assignments are meant to support student work before their submission of the four TF Assignments noted below. PF Assignments should be brought to class (12-font, double-spaced) on the day they
are assigned and completed as much as possible during class time. **Please bring electronic copies of your drafts and a laptop to work on this feedback during class.** Students will receive guidelines and checklists for peer-feedback and will be graded based on the quality of the feedback provided to a peer. Occasionally, some of these PF Assignments will be completed outside of class time. The due date for these assignments are on the Friday following the class they were assigned. Yet, most are expected to be completed during class time.

- **Drafts #1-3 and Final project (TF Assignments)** (110 points):
  
  There are four TF assignments distributed throughout the semester (see Course Schedule and Guidelines for Chapter Components):
  
  1. **Draft #1** (20 points): Chapters 1 and 2;
  2. **Draft #2** (20 points): A revised version of Chapters 1 and 2, a Matrix of Key Studies/Data Collection Instruments, an outline of Key Findings, a draft of at least one key finding, and a tentative Reference List;
  3. **Draft #3** (30 points): A revised version of Chapters 1-2 and Matrix of Key Studies/Data Collection Instruments, and a complete Chapter 3 and Reference List;
  4. **Final Project** (40 points): Abstract, Table of Contents, Chapters (1-4) and Appendix.

  Each submission must include a revised version of earlier drafts. TF Assignments should be submitted in word (12-font, double spaced) via the Assignment Tab on CourseWeb.

- **Academic Writing Support Assignment** (10 points):

  Following class guidelines, samples of published studies (posted on CourseWeb), and tips from Graff, Birkenstein, and Durst (2015) and Feak and Swales (2016), students will work in groups to develop writing templates of typical discourse moves that enhance the readability of research papers. Each group will work on developing these writing templates for a chosen section of their research papers. These guidelines will be then posted on CourseWeb for reference and writing support for the whole class.

- **Poster Presentation** (20 points):

  Upon completion of their research projects, students will develop a poster to present their work at a scholarly gathering with students and faculty of the Foreign Language Education Program on the last week of class. Guidelines for this poster presentation are posted on CourseWeb.

- **Professionalism and Participation** (20 points):

  Collaboration is highly valued and a regular practice in research communities of practice. In this course, all students are valuable sources of insight for each other. The main source of supportive feedback will come from fellow students serving in the role of a critical colleague. Integrity and respectful interactions are
essential both within our course and within research. It is expected that all students will treat each other with respect at all times. It is further expected that all students will comply with the student codes of conduct established by the University of Pittsburgh and the guidelines for Academic Integrity of the School of Education.

**Assignment Point Distribution**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Each Worth</th>
<th>Number of Assignments</th>
<th>Total Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IRB Training and Clearances</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peer Feedback Assignment</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>35</td>
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<tr>
<td>Drafts #1 &amp; 2</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>40</td>
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<tr>
<td>Draft #3</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Project</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Writing Support Assignment</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poster Presentation</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionalism and Participation</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Points</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td><strong>200</strong></td>
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</table>

**Grading**

A    93 – 100%
A-   90 – 92%
B+   87 – 89%
B    83 – 86%
B-   80 – 82%
C+   77 – 79%
C    73 – 76%
C-   70 – 72%

Below 70 is failing. A “B” or better is expected in graduate classes.

**DIL Departmental Grievance Procedures**

The purpose of grievance procedures is to ensure the rights and responsibilities of faculty and students in their relationships with each other. When a student in DIL believes that a faculty member has not met his or her obligations (as an instructor or in
another capacity) as described in the Academic Integrity Guidelines, the student should follow this procedure:

1. The student should talk directly to the faculty member to attempt to resolve the matter.
2. If the matter cannot be resolved at that level, the student should talk to the relevant program coordinator.
3. If the matter remains unresolved, the student should talk to the associate chair of DIL (currently Dr. Patricia Crawford).
4. If needed, the student should next talk to the SOE associate dean of students (currently Dr. Michael Gunzenhauser).
5. If the matter still remains unresolved, the student should file a written statement of charges with the dean’s designated Academic Integrity Administrative Officer (currently Dr. Michael Gunzenhauser)

Class Attendance Policy

Class attendance is mandatory in both the PY, MAT, and MED programs. Given the short amount of time for courses and the nature of classroom instruction in a professional program, missing one 3-hour class can result in serious deficits to your knowledge and can have effects on your understanding of future classes. In undergraduate general education courses, the emphasis is often on note taking, memorization, and multiple choice mid-term and final examinations. Unlike undergraduate classes, ‘making up’ what you missed is not possible in a graduate course. Graduate courses require your active participation in class activities and discussion, your responsibility to a group for completion of projects, and your contribution to the class in terms of presentations and demonstration lessons. There is NO WAY to make up work missed in a graduate class. Please do not ask how to make up work if you have missed a class. There is no extra credit, no additional assignments, and no appointments with instructors for tutoring on what you missed. Your instructors are not your private tutors.

For the above reasons, the following attendance policy has been established for the PY, MAT, and MED program:

1) **You are permitted ONE EXCUSED ABSENCE per course per term.** An excused absence means that you have communicated with your instructor that you will miss or have missed a class and have the necessary documentation to allow your instructor to make a decision on whether the absence is excused or unexcused. It is NOT up to you to decide whether your absence is excused and simply telling the instructor that you will miss a class does not excuse you from the class. You must receive verbal or written confirmation from the instructor that you will miss a class does not excuse you from the class. You must receive verbal or written confirmation from the instructor that your absence has been excused. The one excused absence will not have an effect of your final course grade. You are, however, responsible for finding out what you missed from other students in the class and lack of knowledge about course content because of an absence is not excusable or reasonable for a
graduate student. If you do not receive confirmation from the instructor that your absence is excused, you may assume that your absence is unexcused and will have an impact on your course grade (see #3).

2) **Two days of lateness or early exit exceeding 30 minutes also count as one absence.** In other words, if you are late or leave early twice without being excused by your instructor, an unexcused absence will be recorded, resulting in a lowering of your final course grade. While I understand that the parking situation is difficult at Pitt, please keep in mind that we have a limited amount of time for each class and will start each day promptly at 4:30 PM. Chronic lateness of less than thirty minutes (i.e., being late on a regular basis) may also constitute an absence.

3) **Beyond the one excused absence, additional absences will result in the lowering of your final course grade by one letter grade for every unexcused absence.** Keep in mind that in graduate school you may be required to re-take a course for which you have received a C. A grade of C is not an acceptable grade for a graduate student. The expectation is that you will do exemplary work in all your courses. A QPA of 4.00 should not be an unreasonable expectation for you. In the future, you will be seeking strong letters of recommendation for positions and mediocre work in courses does not permit an instructor to recommend you highly with no reservation.

**During the course of the semester, it is also possible that absence from and tardiness to class is necessary beyond the reasonable one absence policy.** In these cases, the absence or tardiness must be excused by the instructor, must be documented, and will be given for only extenuating circumstances such as death in the family or serious illness that requires medication and/or hospitalization (headaches, a slight cold, or fatigue do not count as serious illnesses). Excused absences and tardiness will not be given for cars breaking down, traffic congestion, family obligations, routine doctor or dentist appointments, a planned family vacation, or delays at your school site. We all teach classes, work in schools, have family responsibilities, and deal with transportation issues. These matters must be planned for in advance so they do not interfere with your responsibilities as an intern and a graduate student – BE PROACTIVE, NOT REACTIVE. If absence or tardiness beyond the reasonable one absence policy is necessary and approved by the instructor, a work plan must be discussed and agreed upon to make up missed class time. An excused absence or tardy beyond the first will not result in a lower grade if all work due or assigned for the class and work plan is completed.
### Course Schedule

**PF** denotes assignments for peer feedback; **TF** denotes assignments for teacher feedback.

**G1** denotes group 1 (early submission); **G2** denotes group 2 (late submission)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Week</th>
<th>M.</th>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Readings Due</th>
<th>Assignments Due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>I. Introduction, Purpose and Research Questions</td>
<td>-Feak &amp; Swales (2009), pp. 1-11. -Steward (2004) -Language Center (2005) -Online resources -Samples of published research on CourseWeb</td>
<td>-Bring draft of Ch. 1 for feedback. <strong>PF1: Ch.1</strong> (due Friday, 1/20).</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/17</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>-Reviews vs. Overviews -Research Review Methods -Literature Reviews as Primary Research Projects vs. Literature Reviews as Secondary Research Projects -Characteristics of Well-Written Introductions -Purpose and Research Questions</td>
<td><strong>Writing Focus</strong>: Ch. 1</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| 1/24  | 3  | II | **II. Methodology** | -Characteristics of Well-Written Literature Reviews  
-Strategies for Literature Searches  
-Matrix of Key Findings  
-Methodology Section (Literature Review Studies)  
-Guidelines for Peer Feedback  
**Writing Focus:** Ch. 2 (including Matrix of Key Findings)  
-Webster & Watson (2002)  
-Zorn & Campbell (2006)  
-Feak & Swales (2009), pp. 12-32. | -Bring draft of Ch. 2 and Matrix of Key Findings for feedback.  
-IRB/School Clearances Assignment: (due Tuesday 1/24)  
-PF2: Ch. 2 (due Friday, 1/27) |
|------|----|----|---------------------|--------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| 1/31 | 4  | III| **III. Findings/Results** | -Matrix of Key Studies (cont.)  
-Methdology Section (Action Research Studies)  
**Writing Focus:** Ch. 1 & 2 (including Matrix of Key Findings/Data Collection Instruments) | -Burns (2005)  
-Phillips & Carr (2014): Ch. 3-5  
-Steward (2004)  
-Torraco (2005) | -Bring revised drafts of your Chs 1 & 2, Matrix, and Data Collection Instruments for feedback.  
-PF3: Chs. 1-2 (due Friday, 2/3)  
-TF1 First Draft: Chs. 1-2 (due Tuesday, 2/7, for G1 and Friday, 2/10, for G2) |
| 2/7  | 5  |    | **III. Findings/Results** | -Data/Key Findings Interpretation  
-Outlines, Mind Maps  
-Writing Guidelines for Reporting Key Findings  
-References – APA-Style format (6th edition)  
-Citation patterns  
**Writing Focus:** Outline of Key Findings, Report of First Key Finding, In-text Citations, References | -Whittemore & Knafl (2005)  
-Feak & Swales (2009), pp. 33-59  
-APA-Style Online Resources | -Bring outline of findings and a draft of your first key findings/results for your first research question for feedback. |
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
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</table>
| 2/14  | 6   | - Discourse Moves  
- Taking a Stance  
- Academic Writing Support Presentations  
**Writing Focus:** Discourse moves, Key Findings. | - Feak & Swales (2009), pp. 71-92  
- Phillips & Carr (2014): Ch. 6  
- Bring Ch. 6 (First Key Findings) for feedback  
- **PF4:** Outline of Key Findings, Report of First Key Finding, Reference List (due Friday, 2/17)  
- Academic Writing Support Assignment |
| 2/21  | 7   | - Writing Strategies  
- Tone and Style  
- Writing and Redrafting  
**Writing Focus:** Ch. 3 | - Feak & Swales (2009), 60-69.  
- Bring Ch. 3 (complete) for feedback  
- **TF2 Second Draft:** Chs. 1-2; Matrix of Key Studies, Outline of Key Findings, Draft of at least 1 Key Finding, Reference List (due Tuesday, 2/21, for G1 and Friday, 2/24, for G2) |
| 2/28  | 8   | IV **Findings and Discussion**  
- Finishing Report of Findings  
- Discussion of Findings  
- Pedagogical, Practical and Research Implications  
**Writing Focus:** Ch. 3, intro to Ch. 4 | - Bring Ch. 1-3, and chart/outline with implications/conclusions drawn and supporting details, organized by themes presented.  
- **PF5:** Chs. 1-3 and outline for Ch. 4 (due in class) |
<p>| Mar 7 |      | Spring Break |            |</p>
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Topics</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| 3/14 | 9   |      | -Discussion of Findings  
-Areas of Future Research  
-Writing Guidelines  
**Writing Focus:** Ch. 4 |
|      |     |      | -Phillips & Carr (2014): Ch. 7  
-Bring Chs. 1-3 for feedback.  
-**TF3 Assignment:** Third Draft: Chs. 1-3, Appendix and Reference. If ready, also include Ch. 4. (due Friday, 3/17, for G1 and Tuesday 3/21, for G2) |
| 3/21 | 10  |      | -Writing Strategies  
-Tone and Style  
-Workshop Time for Peer Feedback  
**Writing Focus:** Ch.4 |
|      |     |      | -Bring Chs. 1-4 for feedback.  
-**PF6: Ch. 4**  
(due Friday, 3/24) |
| 3/28 | 11  | V    | V. Conclusion and Abstract  
-Abstract & Table of Contents  
-Workshop Time for Peer Feedback  
**Writing Focus:** Abstract, Conclusion, format, and proofreading. |
|      |     |      | -**PF7: Complete Research Project**  
(due Friday, 3/31). |
| 4/4  | 12  | VI   | VI. Poster Presentations  
-How to Prepare a Poster Presentation  
**Writing Focus:** Posters |
|      |     |      | -**TF4 Final Project:** (all components)  
(due Friday, 4/7) |
| 4/11 | 13  |      | -Poster Presentations  
-Finishing Research Projects |
|      |     |      | -Bring your poster information |
| 4/18 | 14  |      | -Doing Poster Presentations |
|      |     |      | -**Assignment:** Oral Presentations |
Guidelines for Chapter Components

Action Research Study

Abstract (150 words)
- Cover all parts, but especially purpose and conclusions.

Table of Contents
- Reflect actual page numbers.
- Maximum three levels in depth.

Chapter I - Introduction (5-6 pages approx.)
- **Background**: Show existence of problem and need for study. Cite at least 6 most prominent studies or articles in a literature review. Provide a definition of terms and concepts that situate the study.
- **Purpose of the Study**: Carefully describe the purpose of the study or the statement of the problem.
- **Research Questions**: Delineate the critical research questions accurately and in detail.

Chapter II – Methods (3 pages approx.)
- **Participants and Context**: Include how you addressed ethical issues, such as working with human subjects and researcher bias.
- **Data Collection**: Discuss your sources and limits to the data collection including anything purposely not gathered. Include instruments, such as questionnaires in an Appendix.
- **Data Analysis**: Describe what you will do with the information/data you collected, include data management and approaches you used to find patterns and themes.

Chapter III – Findings/Results (8-10 pages approx.)
- Divide into major and minor levels (headings) that represent the logical organization of the patterns and themes within the findings.
- Provide evidences from the data to illustrate and support the patterns and themes. Using tables and figures is encouraged.
- Conduct a thorough analysis of the data to present meanings of the patterns and themes. Triangulate data and imagine alternative interpretations.
- Develop the theoretical or conceptual base for the study in light of your research questions, so that it is purposeful and cohesive rather than a presentation of interesting pieces of data.
Chapter IV - Discussion, Conclusions & Recommendations (4-5 pages approx.)

- Using the research questions as a guide, discuss what the findings mean in light of other research you reviewed.
- Draw conclusions from this discussion. You might even make a bulleted list. This is the bottom line, what did it all mean at the end.
- Recommend areas for further research that yours did not cover or that became apparent.
- If appropriate, include a “Recommendations for Practice” or “Recommendations for Policy” section where you make suggestions, drawn from your study, for what practitioners or policy makers in the field might do or implement.

References

- Follow APA-Style format for both your in-text citations and reference list. Before your final submission, verify that works cited in the text are referenced appropriately in the reference list and that all the sources listed on your reference list have been cited appropriately in the text.

Appendix

- Include data collection instruments, such as questionnaires, rubrics, etc.

Literature Review Research Study

Abstract (150 words)

- Cover all parts, but especially purpose and conclusions.

Table of Contents

- Reflect actual page numbers.
- Maximum three levels in depth.

Chapter I - Introduction (2-3 pages approx.)

- **Background**: Articulate a clear and appropriate focus for the literature review. State the specific reason for choosing to do this review now and in this way. What are the motivations for this research study?
- **Purpose of the Study**: Provide the research question that guides your literature review. You should first select one focal topic and three critical research questions. The focal topic becomes stated as the purpose of the study and the critical research questions structure the entire study. These questions should not only guide the search strategy for the literature review, but should also guide the writing. Most parts (introduction, major headings, and conclusions) can be derived from these questions. End with a thesis statement that attempts to answer the question.
- **Definition of Terms**: Provide a definition of key terms and concepts that situate the study.
Chapter II – Methods (3-4 pages approx.)

- State in detail the databases explored, the key words and search items used, and the inclusion and exclusion criteria applied in the sample selection of data. That is, offer information to satisfy the reader of the rigor of the review and the trustworthiness of the conclusions. If specific decisions were made to limit the search (e.g., language, date of publication, etc.), this should be stated as well.

Chapter III – Key Findings (8-10 pages approx.)

- Derive a set of themes from the key elements of the research questions or from the thesis statement. These themes can serve as the major and minor levels (headings) for the body of the literature review. Review relevant prior literature using a concept-centric (rather than an author-centric) approach.
- Describe, integrate and synthesize findings (rather than just summarize).
- The information presented should be well organized and offer a set of coherent answers to the research question.
- Pay attention to the tone of your writing—be respectful of the studies you review.

Chapter IV - Discussion, Conclusions & Recommendations (4-5 pages approx.)

- Provide a discussion of common and divergent conclusions reached by different sources, and of controversial issues (if any).
- Using the research questions as a guide, focus on explaining and evaluating conclusions reached by the key sources you reviewed.
- Construct an argument about the conclusions reached within each theme, questions/gaps that remain, reasonable speculations, areas of future research.
- Present concluding implications for researchers and practitioners.
- Pay attention to the tone of your writing—be respectful of the studies you evaluate.

References

- Follow APA-Style format for both your in-text citations and reference list. Before your final submission, verify that works cited in the text are referenced appropriately in the reference list and that all the sources listed on your reference list have been cited appropriately in the text.

Appendix

- Include a matrix of the studies you reviewed.