

How to Do a Literature Review

POSC 3410 – Quantitative Methods in Political Science

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Goal for Today

Discuss how to organize and write a literature review.

The Problem

Your professor wants an “original paper” due at the end of the semester.

- S/he doesn't want a summary paper of things you've read.
- S/he wants some kind of original analysis.

What does it mean to provide an “original paper”?

- It means your professor doesn't want you duplicating what someone else did.

In order to advance an original analysis, you need to review what others have done on your topic and how what you want to do is novel and new.

- This the **literature review**.

The Problem

The literature review is tedious for professors to read/write in their own work, but it's important for a student assignment they grade.

- You must communicate to your professor as early as you can that you know what you're doing.

How we typically go about doing this:

- Professors are experienced and know the material well.
- Grad students have some intermediate training.
- Undergrads have neither the experience nor much of the training.

This lecture will try to help.

Obtaining Sources

There are two places you should look for material.

1. The syllabus
2. Google Scholar

Undergrad Syllabi

Syllabi for undergrad courses aren't great resources, but they are a place to start.

- Compare/contrast a grad syllabus with an undergrad syllabus for the same course.

Undergrad syllabi: less readings overall, more emphasis on textbooks.

- Textbooks aren't really helpful, nor are they original analyses.
- Do follow the citations in the textbook, though.

Start with the Syllabus

The syllabus is still the best place to start.

- Your professors writes the syllabus to introduce the student to the field.
- They constitute what the professors believes to be the most important works.

Hint: it's also a signal from the professor about what s/he believes the student will have evaluated in writing the end-of-the-semester paper.

- You should also do the readings...

“Google It”

“Googling it” is the next most obvious thing to do.

- Don't use regular Google. Use Google Scholar.

The Benefits of Google Scholar

There are multiple benefits of Google Scholar

- Can search *inside* many books and articles.
 - Your library search relies on keywords, which is not as helpful.
- Search results are presented more intuitively.
- Search results also gather more, and more relevant, items of interest.

Best of all, Google Scholar links to your university library.



Articles (include patents) Case law

Figure 1: Select "Settings"

Scholar Settings

Save

Cancel

Search results

Languages

Library links

Account

Collections

- Search articles (include patents).
- Search case law.

Results per page

10



Google's default (10 results) provides the fastest results.

Figure 2: Select "Library links"

Scholar Settings

Save

Cancel

Search results

Languages

Library links

Account

Show library access links for (choose up to five libraries):

Clemson

e.g., *Harvard*

- Clemson University - Full-text @ Clemson
- Clemson University Libraries - Clemson Fulltext Link

Online access to library subscriptions is usually restricted to patrons of that library. You may need to login with your library password, use a campus computer, or configure your browser to use a library proxy. Please visit your library's website or ask a local librarian for assistance.

Figure 3: Enter your university name, check boxes, and save.

Searching for Sources in Google Scholar

Let's assume I'm writing a paper on why citizens rebel against the government.

- If you were paying attention in a civil war class, we'd call this "civil war onset".
- I know from the syllabus about different motivations of anti-government rebels.

In other words, are rebels motivated mostly by legitimate grievances or by opportunities to accumulate wealth?

- This is the **greed vs. grievance debate**.

My job is to write a paper that can address part of this debate.

Searching for Sources in Google Scholar

I will start by searching for *rebel group motivation* on Google Scholar.

- I'll search *greed grievance civil war* next.

rebel group motivation



About 67,600 results (0.03 sec)

The spoils of nature: Armed civil conflict and **rebel** access to natural resources

[P Lujala](#) - *Journal of Peace Research*, 2010 - [jpr.sagepub.com](#)

... Several studies have argued that natural resource wealth considerably alters a **rebel group's motivation** to emerge and its opportunities for survival. ... Direct mechanisms: Greedy and aggrieved rebels and viable uprisings A **rebel group** needs **motivation** for fighting. ...

Cited by 142 [Related articles](#) [All 8 versions](#) [Cite](#) [Save](#) [More](#)

[Full-text @ Clemson](#)

Geography as **motivation** and opportunity: **Group** concentration and ethnic conflict

[NB Weidmann](#) - *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 2009 - [jcr.sagepub.com](#)

... Geography can be the **motivation** for fighting. ... Lastly, there is also an intrinsic value of territory to a **group** (Toft 2002, 2003), an issue that I will ... Rough terrain has been hypothesized to provide shelter for **rebel** groups from government forces, making mountainous regions more ...

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[\[PDF\] from harvard.edu](#)

[Full-text @ Clemson](#)

Understanding civil war: a new agenda

[P Collier](#), [N Sambanis](#) - *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 2002 - JSTOR

... found in most societies, so what distinguishes rebellious from peaceful societies cannot be motivation-or at least not simply **motivation**-but rather ... socially diverse societies have a lower risk of conflict as reflecting the need for social homogeneity within a **rebel group**: a diverse ...

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[\[PDF\] from worldbank.org](#)

[Full-text @ Clemson](#)

Geography, **rebel** capability, and the duration of civil conflict

[H Buhug](#), [S Gates](#), [P Lujala](#) - *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 2009 - [jcr.sagepub.com](#)

... In addition, **rebel group's** military capability, **motivation**, and objectives may be influenced by the availability of valuable natural resources in the conflict region. All of these factors constitute aspects of geography. Page 7. 550 *Journal of Conflict Resolution Hypotheses* ...

Cited by 127 [Related articles](#) [All 9 versions](#) [Cite](#) [Save](#) [More](#)

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Figure 4: Notice it links to Clemson's library.

greed grievance civil war



About 30,100 results (0.60 sec)

Greed and grievance in civil war

P Collier, A Hoeffler - Oxford economic papers, 2004 - Oxford Univ Press

Abstract We investigate the causes of **civil war**, using a new data set of **wars** during 1960-99. Rebellion may be explained by atypically severe **grievances**, such as high inequality, a lack of political rights, or ethnic and religious divisions in society. Alternatively, it might be ...

Cited by 4669 Related articles All 45 versions Cite Save More

[PDF] from ox.ac.uk
Full-text @ Ciemson

Beyond greed and grievance: feasibility and civil war

P Collier, A Hoeffler, J Rotzner - Oxford Economic Papers, 2009 - Oxford Univ Press

Abstract **Civil war** is the most prevalent form of large-scale violence and is massively destructive to life, society, and the economy. The prevention of **civil war** is therefore a key priority for international attention. We present an empirical analysis of what makes ...

Cited by 455 Related articles All 16 versions Cite Save More

[PDF] from ox.ac.uk
Full-text @ Ciemson

Greed, grievance, and mobilization in civil wars

PM Regan, D Norton - Journal of Conflict Resolution, 2005 - jcr.sagepub.com

Abstract **Greed, grievances**, and mobilization are generally offered as explanations for rebellion and **civil war**. The authors extend arguments about the precursors to nonviolent protest, violent rebellion, and **civil war**. These arguments motivate a series of hypotheses ...

Cited by 194 Related articles All 9 versions Cite Save More

[PDF] from nd.edu
Full-text @ Ciemson

[book] Greed & grievance: Economic agendas in civil wars

MR Berdal, D Malone - 2000 - books.google.com

• to II Economic Agendas in **Civil Wars**, 'sat edited by Mats Berdal and David M. Malone A Project of the International Peace Academy ... **GREED & GRIEVANCE** This One DA2H-3LK-L571 ...

^ A project of the International Peace Academy ... **GREED & GRIEVANCE** Economic ...

Cited by 860 Related articles All 5 versions Cite Save More

Paradise is a bazaar? Greed, creed, and governance in civil war, 1989-99

I De Soysa - Journal of Peace Research, 2002 - jpr.sagepub.com

... 1998 for a review), a debate that relates intimately to the **greed** versus **grievance** ... organize violence and objective factors gener- ating individual and group **grievance** are totally ... instances argued by many (Kaldor, 1999; Mueller, 2000), does this represent legitimate **grievances?** ...

Cited by 405 Related articles All 10 versions Cite Save More

[PDF] from unu.edu
Full-text @ Ciemson

Ethnicity, insurgency, and civil war

JD Fearon, DD Laitin - American political science review, 2003 - Cambridge Univ Press

... conditions, **civil war** may require only a small number with intense **grievances** to get ... Collier and Hoeffler (1999, 2001) find similarity that measures of "objective **grievance**" fare worse ... economic variables, which they initially interpreted as measures of rebel "**greed**" (ie, economic ...

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[PDF] from stanford.edu
Full-text @ Ciemson

Figure 5: Different, more focused, searches get different, more focused, results

Searching for Sources in Google Scholar

New question: what relationship exists between public opinion and Supreme Court voting?

- I don't know this material like I do civil wars.
- Let's search *public opinion supreme court* to see what comes up.

Articles

Case law

My library

Any time

Since 2014

Since 2013

Since 2010

Custom range...

Sort by relevance

Sort by date

 Include patents Include citations Create alert**[CITATION] Public opinion and the Supreme Court**

TR Marshall - 1989 - Unwin Hyman Boston

Cited by 351 Related articles Cite Save More

The Supreme Court as a Countermajoritarian Institution? The Impact of Public Opinion on Supreme Court Decisions. Full-text @ ClemsonW Mishler, [RS Sheehan](#) - American Political Science Review, 1993 - Cambridge Univ PressAbstract Although normative questions about the role of the **Supreme Court** as a countermajoritarian institution have long excited controversy in democratic theory, empirical questions about how far the **Court** acts contrary to majoritarian **opinion** have received less ...

Cited by 421 Related articles All 2 versions Cite Save More

Republican schoolmaster: The US Supreme Court, public opinion, and abortion

CH Franklin, LC Kosaki - The American political science review, 1989 - JSTOR

The United States **Supreme Court** has a historical role as a "republican schoolmaster," inculcating virtues in the citizenry. The role as teacher to the republic also serves the interests of the **Court**. As the "weakest branch," the **Supreme Court** needs **public** support if ...

Cited by 233 Related articles All 8 versions Cite Save More

[\[PDF\]](#) from nyu.edu**Public opinion and the US Supreme Court: FDR's court-packing plan**[GA Caldera](#) - The American Political Science Review, 1987 - JSTORI show the intimate connection between the actions of the justices and support for the **Supreme Court** during one of the most critical periods of US political history, the four months of 1937 during which Franklin D. Roosevelt sought legislation to [pack](#) the high bench ...

Cited by 189 Related articles All 3 versions Cite Save More

[\[PDF\]](#) from usc.edu**Public opinion and the United States Supreme Court: Mapping of some prerequisites for court legitimization of regime changes**

WF Murphy, J Tanenhaus - Law and Society Review, 1968 - JSTOR

ANY RELATIVELY STABLE POLITY must possess means for converting many, if not most, demands made on political authorities into satisfying outputs, whether material or symbolic. Failure to cope with pressing demands might lead to a severely dysfunctional loss of ...

Cited by 196 Related articles All 2 versions Cite Save More

The Supreme Court and public opinion: Judicial decision making in the post-New Deal period

DG Barnum - The Journal of Politics, 1985 - Cambridge Univ Press

Abstract The countermajoritarian activism of the **Supreme Court** is usually assessed in terms of the willingness of the **Court** to overturn legislation and/or to protect minorities. Using these criteria, the post-New Deal **Supreme Court** emerges as an exceptionally active ...

Cited by 132 Related articles All 3 versions Cite Save More

Full-text @ Clemson

Public opinion, the attitudinal model, and supreme court decision making: A micro-analytic perspectiveW Mishler, [RS Sheehan](#) - The Journal of Politics, 1996 - Cambridge Univ Press

Full-text @ Clemson

Figure 6: Definitely a good place to start

Making the Most of Google Scholar

Some tips:

- Search results are ordered by relevance (by default).
 - Select “sort by date” if you want the other alternative.
 - Better yet: set a custom range of the past 20 years or so to the present.
- Google Scholar can find if someone has made the article freely available.
- “Cited by” gives an indicator of how influential the argument is.
- Google Scholar also lists the journal. Some are higher-profile than others.

What Counts as a “Good Source”?

Professors are interested in scholarship, not journalism or advocacy.

- I'm not going to accept a literature review based off *New York Times* or *Wall Street Journal*.
- At best, these illustrate current events or some statistics to be explained.

Your professor wants to know you've read and evaluated scholarly books and articles.

Evaluating Book Sources

Books are great sources, but should not be the exclusive source type.

- Citing a textbook is generally a bad look.
- General rule: quality of book is correlated with marquee name of university press.
- There are also several good commercial publishers.
- Check the book's citation count in Google Scholar.

Good Book Publishers

Cambridge, Harvard, and Oxford are generally the best book publishers.

- Next best: Chicago, Cornell, Michigan, Princeton, Stanford, and Yale.

There are several good commercial publishers as well.

- e.g. CQ Press, CRC Press, Longman, Norton, Pearson, Prentice Hall, Rowman and Littlefield, Routledge, Sage, Springer, and Wiley.

Evaluating Article Sources

Articles should be the modal search result, and in your bibliography too.

General Interest Political Science Journals

- American Political Science Review
- American Journal of Political Science
- Journal of Politics
- British Journal of Political Science
- Political Research Quarterly
- Social Science Quarterly
- Annual Review of Political Science
- PS: Political Science & Politics
- Political Science Research & Methods
- Polity

Check my website for other journal sources. It's in my "how to do a literature review" document.

- We generally call these "field journals".

Gathering the Sources You Need

Some final tips.

1. Your literature review should be light on sources more than 20-years-old.
 - Some citations are to “core” or “classic” material, but you’ll need newer stuff as well.
2. Think of a “literature review of a literature reviews” approach.
 - i.e. find the newest, most original analysis.
 - Read the article, but focus on the literature review.
 - Track down and read those sources mentioned in the literature review.
 - Find the sources mentioned in *those* literature reviews. Repeat.

What the Literature Review Isn't

Don't lose track of the literature review's purpose: summarize scholarship on a topic of interest.

- I don't care that you read a bunch of stuff.
- Don't treat it like an annotated bibliography.
- Don't list arguments disconnected from a bigger point.
- Don't advance your argument.
 - That comes next in the paper.

What the Literature Review Is

At a minimum, the literature review must answer these questions:

1. What's the puzzle or problem to be solved?
2. What do we know already?
3. What do we *not* know?
4. Why is all this important?

Your literature review ultimately justifies your paper by identifying what others have done and indicates how you'll add to it.

Framing a Literature Review

There's no one right way to do a literature review.

- It kinda depends on your question/puzzle.

Some common frames follow:

1. Why is A the case and not B?
2. We know a lot about A, but not about B.
3. A and B disagree about C. Who is right?

Why is A the Case and not B?

I see this a lot in political theory and IR theory. Examples:

- Louis Hartz: why are there no competing ideologies to Locke in the U.S.?
- J.L. Gaddis: why didn't the U.S. and USSR fight each other?

If not done right, this does carry a normative tone.

- Focus more on what is and not what ought to be.

We Know About A, but not About B

I use this one a lot. I call it the “gap in the literature” frame.

- Alternatively: “unaddressed question”, or “the next step”.

Be careful with this frame.

- Lots of boring questions go “unaddressed”.
- Political scientists tend to cringe at the phrase “filling a gap in the literature”.

Emphasize the substantive importance if this is the frame.

- i.e. construction workers fill gaps; academics try to solve problems.

A and B Disagree About C. Who is Right?

This is the “competitive hypothesis” or “horse race” frame.

- Pit competing explanations against each other and see who’s right.

The “attack” frame is derivative of this.

- i.e. A’s explanation for C is incorrect.
- Be careful with this: *critique*, don’t “attack”.
 - Science is about improving what others have done before you.

Conclusion

Howard Becker (1986, 141-2) illustrates the literature review's purpose.

- i.e. don't build a table from scratch. Re-assemble what others have done into something new.

You will master this in time, but learn from reading and emulating.

- Read. Write. Edit. Repeat.

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