Overview

For this assignment you will prepare a draft and final literature review for your planning report. You will submit the draft literature review to your adviser by October 21. The final version of the literature review, due November 18, should incorporate the feedback received from your adviser.

Purpose

In-depth knowledge of the field you wish to study is a pre-requisite for credible research. The literature review assignment is your chance to show that you are familiar with the literature pertinent to your general topic of research, as well as to your more specific research question. A well-written literature review will help you with your planning report (and work as a professional planner) in many ways. For example, a good literature review helps you to:

1. Assess whether planning policies or tools you could recommend will achieve specific outcomes.

   This outcome is likely to be particular important to most 298 planning reports—and to your work as a planning professional. Planners are often asked to evaluate the potential effectiveness of a new policy under consideration, and one extremely useful technique for doing so is to review existing research. When decision makers consider adopting a new policy approach to a problem, one of the first questions they ask is: Will it work? A literature review is a method to see how past research can inform your answer to that question. Imagine that the Sunny Shores Village planning staff want to require all new commercial buildings to include rooftop solar panels as a strategy to reduce carbon emissions. The Sunny Shores Village Council asks you to find out (1) how much this policy will actually reduce emissions, (2) if there are other positive or negative environmental impacts, and (3) what the economic impact to building owners and tenants would be over a building’s lifetime. Various methods may help you to answer these questions, but one of the best can be a literature review.

2. Justify the value of your general research topic and/or specific research question.

   For many studies, a literature review provides evidence that a particular issue is an important current problem for communities (and thus worthwhile to study further). The literature review is also often the best way to demonstrate that there is a gap in knowledge about an issue, a gap your study can help to fill.

3. Assess whether certain methods will be useful to your project and/or how best to implement particular methods.

   A literature review can show you what methods other researchers have used to answer
questions similar to yours, as well as best practices in how to implement those methods. For example, if you want to assess public opinion on a particular topic, you may learn whether scholars looking at public opinion on similar topics have found it most useful to rely on surveys, interviews, or analysis of media coverage. Or if you are doing a GIS analysis relating urban form and travel behavior, it’s useful to see what variables and data sources other researchers have used to quantify urban form factors such as density and mixed use.

In order to achieve these purposes for this assignment, you will need to review a wide variety of literature on a small set of themes (which you will phrase as questions) related to the larger research question of your Planning Report. In reading and writing about each theme, you should aim to (1) evaluate whether each study uses sound methods, (2) evaluate how transferable the results are to your own project, (3) synthesize the lessons that one can learn by looking at the whole body of literature on each topic, and (4) discuss the relevance and/or importance of the theme in relationship to your other themes.

**What documents to include—and not to include—in the literature review**

You will read many documents while thinking about, researching, and writing your planning report, but not all documents should be part of this literature review assignment. Keep in mind that for this assignment you are only reviewing those documents—or those parts of larger documents—that help you to write about the objectives described above.

The literature review should evaluate items that are themselves analytical and research-oriented in nature. Many of these items will be academic or professional pieces that report on a particular research project completed on your topic; others might be published literature reviews prepared on your topic.

One type of document you should not include in the literature review is “primary documents” that you intend to analyze as part of your work. For example, you would not review the City of San Jose’s building code if the primary objective of your planning report is to suggest improvements to that code. (However, you might include a review of a journal article that critically evaluates the building codes of several cities). You also would not include in your literature review other city documents like the zoning code and general plan, even though these may be critical to your planning report.

**Important Note:** You may find that your specific research topic does not have extensive published literature. In this case you will want to work with literature that looks at closely related fields that can help you with your project. For example, if you find that there is very little literature on the design factors that reduce crime in urban plazas, then it might be useful to review literature that examines the design factors that reduce crime in public spaces similar to urban plazas, like parks or streets.

**The format for the final paper**

You should organize the final paper into six clearly identified sections using the following headings shown in bold.

1. **Introduction**

In a paragraph or two, describe the aim of the literature review. This section should also explain for readers how the rest of the literature review is organized.
2. Main Themes

This section, the bulk of the text, will evaluate and synthesize what you learned from the literature on three or four major themes in your area of study. The text must incorporate discussion of at least 30 sources, with at least 15 of those sources being articles from peer-reviewed journals.

To help you identify useful themes, prepare for each a question that will encapsulate what you want to learn about that theme. Here are samples of the types of questions that would work well for the assignment:

- What methods of community outreach most effectively engage youth?
- How do urban growth boundaries impact housing prices?
- What design features will successfully attract users to urban public plazas?
- Are cordon congestion pricing schemes equitable?

Recall that the point of this section is to “evaluate and synthesize” the literature you read on each theme, so that you can provide a detailed and nuanced answer to the question you pose about the theme. What is good evaluation and synthesis? At a minimum, for each theme you should describe the similarities and differences between the findings of the studies, discuss methodological or other issues that may explain differences among the studies’ findings, and summarize the key conclusions you draw from reviewing all the studies on each theme. Also, it’s important to discuss whether you think the overall findings from the studies are likely to apply to other places or groups of people (i.e., are the findings “generalizable”? The discussion below on the “The Qualities of a Good Literature Review” provides more information on how to prepare your analysis and synthesis.

For most students, Section 2 of the paper will cover three or four discrete themes and be around 2,000 words (that’s about 6 double-spaced pages if a 12-point Times New Roman font is used).

3. Conclusion

This section will recapitulate the important findings of the literature in a few paragraphs or a page and also discuss how your project will contribute to the current bodies of literature on your topic.

4. Annotated Bibliography

The bibliography should include a numbered table with the following information for each of at least 30 sources of literature:

1. A properly formatted citation of the source that follows the citation style guidelines explained in the URBP 298A syllabus. (Confirm with your adviser whether you should use Turabian’s “Bibliography” style or “Reference List” style.)


Here’s a template for the Annotated Bibliography:
Appendix A: List of On-Line Databases, Catalogs, and Keywords Searched
This section will list all the on-line library catalogs and databases you searched. For each catalog/database searched, list the keywords used.

Appendix B: Summary Table of Literature Reviewed
For each theme you write about, prepare a table summarizing the findings of the literature on that theme, as shown in Table 1 (below). Each row of the table will describe one study. The columns of the table should include, at a minimum: the study (just the author and date is fine), the main method, the key findings related to your theme, and notes on any key limitations or weaknesses of the study.

Feel free to add additional columns if there are other factors you want to analyze systematically across the studies.

Instructions for the Draft Literature Review (due October 21, 2014)
For the draft, you do not have to prepare all the material that will appear in your final paper. Instead, prepare a paper that mostly covers a single theme and related question of your choosing. More specifically, the draft must include the following items:

- **Section 2: Main themes and questions:** Write fully about ONE theme and question of your choosing. In addition, state the other two or three themes/questions that you plan to write about in the final paper.
- **Section 4: Annotated Bibliography:** Include all the sources you use to write about the single theme you focus on in the draft.
- **Appendix A:** List all the catalogs and databases you searched, plus the keywords used, for the single theme you focus on in the draft.
- **Appendix B:** Prepare a summary table for the sources used to write about the single theme you focus on in the draft.

Upload the draft literature review in MS Word format to the Assignments tab in Canvas (sjsu.instructure.com), or via email depending on the preferences of your adviser.

Instructions for the Final Literature Review (due November 18, 2014)
Prepare a revised literature review that covers all six of the required items and includes at least three or four main themes. Be sure that the final literature review incorporates the feedback received from your adviser on the draft assignment.

Upload the draft literature review in MS Word format to the Assignments tab in Canvas (sjsu.instructure.com).
### Table 1: What methods of community outreach most effectively engage youth? (Theme 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Key Findings</th>
<th>Key limitations/weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Smith 2011     | Focus groups with 29 teens in Chicago        | - Liked idea of being asked to do interviews with other teens on a topic of interest.  
- Didn’t like idea of attending community meetings where city staff will present information. | - Focus only on at-risk teens, so findings may not apply to other types of youth |
| Ko & Liu 2008  | Survey of 498 parents of elementary schools kids in Kansas | - Parents think their kids will like game-based exercises and interviewing their neighbors. | - Do parents really know what will engage kids?  
- Parents randomly selected from public schools across the state, so a fairly diverse sample (of Kansas). |

Etc.
The qualities of a good literature review

First, it’s important that the literature review not be a summary of your 30 sources in isolation from one another. Instead, you are seeking to evaluate and synthesize the material you’ve collected by showing patterns, themes, consistencies, and inconsistencies across all of the sources related to a particular theme.

You’re trying to show what we know about a topic from the research already conducted by others. To do this, you need to identify the common findings across different research on a single topic, as well as the issues where research seems to come to contradictory conclusions (debates in the field). To accomplish these tasks, it is not enough to say “Albert Green says X, and Mariko Kuo says Y.” You have to discuss whether “X” and “Y” are similar or different. In addition, you should try to explain any differences.

The following samples give simplified examples of two papers writing about the same theme. The first example provides no evaluation and synthesis, while the second example has quite good evaluation and synthesis (as emphasized by the underlined sections).

Example 1:

According to a 2006 study by Doodlebury, TODs in the Bay Area were found to attract primarily higher-income earners.1 According to a 2000 study by Snozwinkle of TODs in the Washington, DC, area, it was revealed that TODs there were explicitly marketed to wealthier households.2 In 2008, Escobar’s research on TODs in Phoenix proved that, despite aggressive marketing aimed at wealthier households, the TODs attracted new residents from a broad array of income groups due to the lower cost of living in TODs.3 She found that, due to proximity to public transit, the need for one less car in the household created substantial savings that appealed to persons across all income cohorts. Obama looked at one TOD in Buffalo, New York, and found people from a wide variety of income groups living there, but most were relatively lower income.4 Deng Kim also looked at two TODs in the same region.5 She found that families tended to be either considerably below or considerably above the local median income.

Example 2:

Five studies looking at whether TODs attract only high-income residents came to contradictory conclusions—or at least it appears this way on first glance. According to a 1999 study by Doodlebury, TODs in the San Francisco Bay Area were found to attract primarily higher-income earners.6 This finding was supported by Snozwinkle in a 2000 study of TODs in the Washington, DC, area that revealed TODs there were explicitly marketed to wealthier households.7

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6 Doodlebury, “High-Roller TODs.”
7 Snozwinkle, “Assessment of Marketing Approaches.”
However, Escobar’s 2011 study contradicted these findings. Her research on TODs in Phoenix showed that despite aggressive marketing aimed at wealthier households, the TODs attracted new residents from a broad array of income groups due to the lower cost of living in TODs. Living close to public transit meant that households needed fewer cars, a substantial savings that appealed to persons across all income cohorts. Two studies from TOD projects in Buffalo, New York, support this conclusion. They found that the median or mean income of residents was similar to, or lower than, local averages.

Although it is true that the overall conclusions to the studies are contradictory, a careful assessment of the detailed findings shows that the conclusions are not all as different as it might seem at first glance. In particular, the definition of income is important. Doodlebury’s study provides the best evidence that TOD residents might actually be high-income. However, the study defined the highest income group as families (of any size) with annual household incomes of $75,000 or more. Even back in 1999, that is a household income level that many researchers would consider middle-income rather than high-income for the San Francisco Bay Area. And since Doodlebury does not break down income levels farther, we cannot know how many of the families in the study had incomes close to that income level and how many had much higher incomes.

In addition, the different geographies and dates of the studies suggest two reasons why they may have come to different conclusions. First, Doodlebury and Snozwinkle’s studies, which found that the residents of TODs were wealthier, were both conducted in regions with large numbers of affluent residents and a high, unmet demand for housing. The other three studies, by contrast, focused on communities suffering from high unemployment and many properties on the market. The fact that the Phoenix and Buffalo studies found residents of all incomes attracted to the TOD suggests that there is nothing inherent in TODs that makes them undesirable to middle and lower-income residents. The high income levels found among residents in the Bay Area and DC studies may simply reflect the high demand for and cost of new housing in those markets. Second, it is important to note that the two studies finding TODs lacked residents from a mix of income groups are both a full decade older than the more recent studies by Escobar, Obama, and Kim, which did find residents from a mix of income groups. It may be that changes in the economy or increased supply of TOD units over that decade explain the divergent findings.

In sum, the research suggests – or at least does not contradict – the hypothesis that newer TODs built at modest cost can attract residents with a range of incomes. The exception might be in high-income communities like the Bay Area and Washington, D.C. It is not clear from the evidence reviewed if in these regions TOD living is so desirable that higher-income families will price out poorer ones.

Let’s compare some of the differences between the two examples:

1. Example 2 demonstrated LINKAGES between the authors’ research (some of these linkages are illustrated with underlining). This is the type of evaluation that makes it possible to take the next step and synthesize the findings from the literature review. By

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8 Escobar, “Phoenix TODs.”
9 Obama, “A Multidisciplinary Study”; Kim, “Roaming Buffalo.”
10 Doodlebury, “High-Roller TODs.”
12 Escobar, Phoenix TODs”; Obama, “A Multidisciplinary Study”; Kim, “Roaming Buffalo.”
contrast, Example 1 simply lists findings without tying them together to find commonalities or inconsistencies.

2. Example 2 summarizes the author's key findings across all the studies: that the evidence is mixed about whether TODs attract only high-income residents. This is what we are looking for when we talk about “synthesis.” (Note, also, that this key finding is handily placed at the beginning of the paragraph, letting readers immediately know the “core idea” that will be discussed in the rest of the paragraph.)

3. Example 2 evaluates the differences among the studies to see if there are methodological or other factors that may explain the differences among them.

4. Example 2 gives readers a sense of how much literature was reviewed. It’s not strictly necessary to include this number for each section of the literature review, but doing so can be helpful to show how in-depth the review was. For example, if 12 studies all conclude one thing, readers will probably have more confidence in the finding than if only two studies were reviewed.

5. Example 2 uses language that is less absolute, which is usually more appropriate when writing about research findings. In example 1 the phrase “Escobar's research on TODs in Phoenix proved that . . .” implies that Escobar's research presents the absolute truth on TODs, while in example 2 the phrase “Her research on TODs in Phoenix showed that . . .” accurately summarizes the findings without making strong claims about absolute truths.

Grading

Draft: You will not receive a letter grade, but you will receive comments from your adviser on the following criteria:

1. Does the draft include all required sections and content?
2. Does the draft clearly identify three or four themes in the literature useful to preparing your Planning Report, and have you framed a clear, answerable question related to each theme?
3. Does the paper evaluate and synthesize with nuance and depth the key findings from the literature on the single theme that is the focus for the draft? At a minimum, the draft should describe the similarities and differences between the findings of the studies on that theme, discuss methodological or other issues that may explain differences among the studies’ findings, and summarize the key conclusions you draw from reviewing all the studies on the theme.
4. Is the writing clear and easy to understand?

Final: Your adviser will assess the paper on the criteria below and assign a letter grade. To pass the assignment (and the URBP-298A course), you must receive a grade of “B” or higher.

Grading criteria:

1. Does the literature review include all required sections, as well as the required number of peer-reviewed articles (15 minimum) and total number of items (30 minimum)?
2. Does the literature review clearly identify three or four main themes in the literature and pose a question about each one?
3. Does the paper evaluate and synthesize with nuance and depth the key findings from the literature on each theme? At a minimum, the paper should describe the similarities and differences between the findings of the studies on each theme, discuss methodological or
other issues that may explain differences among the studies’ findings, and summarize the key conclusions you draw from reviewing all the studies on each theme.

4. Is the writing grammatically correct and free of typos?
5. Is the writing clear and easy to understand?
6. Are all citations in both the footnotes and bibliography properly formatted?

**Note on late papers:** Be sure to submit the assignments on time, as late submission may result in substantially delayed feedback from your adviser.