Literature Review Sample Outline*

*This is an outline for a paper that already has an introduction where 1) the research field and topic has been described, 2) a review of relevant literature has been given to provide context, and 3) a research question or thesis statement has already been identified. This sample has been modified to address CMGT 540 requirements.

Introduction (already written)

I. CARS Model followed for the structure of the Introduction

II. Example Research Question: What features of composition and rhetoric characterize graduate student writing in interdisciplinary contexts?

Literature Review

III. First Bucket or Theme 1: Student Writing
   a. Overview of the characteristics of the theme (commonalities, differences, nuances)
   b. Subtheme 1 (narrow, but grouped findings related to the theme): Undergraduate Writing
      i. Study 1 (Research Question(s), Methods/Participants, Related Findings):
         “In a qualitative study examining Latino high school students, Campos (2016) found that the participants ….”
      ii. Study 2 (Research Question(s), Methods/Participants, Related Findings):
         “In a similar study with African-American high school students, Sung (2015) identified three key factors…Sung surveyed across three different high schools, which may partially explain differences in responses.”
      iii. Study 3 (Research Question(s), Methods/Participants, Related Findings)
      iv. Do these studies share commonalities? How do these studies differ? Discuss.
   c. Subtheme 2: Graduate Writing
      i. Study 1 (Research Question(s), Methods/Participants, Related Findings)
      ii. Study 2 (Research Question(s), Methods/Participants, Related Findings)
      iii. Study 3 (Research Question(s), Methods/Participants, Related Findings)
      iv. Do these studies share commonalities? How do these studies differ? Discuss.

IV. Second “Bucket” or Theme 2: Published Writing
   a. Follow a,b,c, and so on from above

V. Conclusion: An evaluation/critique of the existing literature**
   a. What are the contributions of this literature to the field?
   b. Return to your thesis statement or RQ
   c. What are the overall strengths? What are the overall weaknesses?
   d. What might be missing?
   e. What are some next steps for research? The next steps should explicitly address how to “correct” for strengths, weaknesses, and gaps.

**Might not be required for CMGT 540 final paper

Adapted from the Center for Writing & Rhetoric at Claremont Graduate University, “Writing Literature Reviews.”