What is NOT a literature review?

- A literature review is **NOT** a review of all data sources
- A literature review is **NOT** a collection of short book reports
- A literature review is **NOT** a compendium of background information
What **IS** a literature review, then?

Before you begin to research primary* sources (databases, government documents, etc.), you must know who has contributed knowledge on your research topic and what knowledge they have contributed.

*the difference between primary and secondary sources is that primary sources deliver raw data, whereas secondary sources deliver interpretations and analyses of data.
What is the **PURPOSE** of a literature review?

- Recognize what other scholars have contributed effectively and convincingly on the topic
- Avoid "reinventing the wheel"
- Identify gaps in the existing body of knowledge related to your topic/question
- Build hypotheses to fill those gaps with your primary-source research
Typically, what types of writing assignments...

Require literature reviews?

- Theses
- Joint Applied Projects
- Capstone Reports
- Research papers (built on your own outside research)

Do not require literature reviews?

- Prompt response essays (built primarily on course readings)
- Reading summaries
- Memos and policy papers
Critical thinking and literature reviews

- Since literature reviews present the existing body of knowledge related to a research question/topic, the best way to deliver that information is by grouping literature by themes (not by author or by title)
  - You must think critically about how to group disparate pieces of literature
    - Is there consensus? Disagreement?
    - Do different authors prioritize different arguments?
  - You determine how and where the different arguments fit
Imagine you are a reporter at a cocktail party filled with the scholars and experts who have contributed knowledge to your research topic.

- What groups would form?
- Who would throw a drink at whom (metaphorically speaking, of course)?
- Who would be standing alone in a corner?