

## RS5550: Seminar in Research Methods

This guide supports research for graduate students in the RS5550 course.

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### Basic Research

The interdisciplinary resources below are great places to start your research. Variations of your keywords and the use of the **Connectors** will help you yield more targeted searches in all the resources in this guide. See the **Search Strategies** tab for tips on how to accomplish this.

- [One Search](#)  
Search for articles, books, media, and Link + all at the same time. Use boolean keywords for the best results.
- [Academic Search Premier](#)  
Multi-subject database; articles from journals & other publications.
- [Google Scholar](#)  
Provides a simple way to broadly search across many disciplines for scholarly literature, including peer-reviewed papers, theses, books, abstracts and articles.
- [ProQuest Databases](#)  
Multi-subject database; articles from journals & other publications
- [JSTOR](#)  
Searches back runs of scholarly journals; art & architecture, language & literature, history, economics, social sciences, mathematics, ecology and music. JSTOR now includes some current issues for selected titles. Ebooks from scholarly publishers are also available.
- [Agricola](#)  
Subject coverage includes landscape architecture in addition to agriculture, plant science, and related topics.
- [Web of Science](#)  
Provides seamless access to Science Citation Index Expanded, Social Science Citation Index, and Arts & Humanities Citation Index. This interdisciplinary database is especially useful for fields such as URP.

### Resources from other Disciplines

- [AgEcon Search](#)  
AgEcon Search collects, indexes, and electronically distributes full text copies of scholarly research in the broadly defined field of agricultural economics including sub disciplines such as agribusiness, food supply, natural resource economics, environmental economics, policy issues, agricultural trade, and economic development. Open access; no login required.
- [Agris](#)  
1975 - present: International database covering agricultural sciences and technology containing citations for conventional and non-conventional ("grey") literature

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**Social:**

[in](#) [t](#)

**Subjects:**

Architecture, Art, Environmental Design,  
Ethnic Studies, Graphic Design,  
Landscape Architecture, Regenerative  
Studies, Spanish Language & Literature,  
Urban & Regional Planning, Women's  
Studies

economics, policy issues, agricultural trade, and economic development. Open access, no login required.

- [Agris](#)  
1975 - present: International database covering agricultural sciences and technology containing citations for conventional and non-conventional ("grey") literature.
- [Education Research Complete](#)  
Education Research Complete is the definitive online resource for education research. This massive file offers the world's largest and most complete collection of full text education journals. It is a bibliographic and full text database covering scholarly research and information relating to all areas of education. Topics covered include all levels of education from early childhood to higher education, and all educational specialties, such as multilingual education, health education, and testing. The database also covers areas of curriculum instruction as well as administration, policy, funding, and related social issues.
- [Education Resources Information Center \(ERIC\)](#)  
After searching for a topic of interest, use the filters in the left column to fine tune your results.
- [PubAg](#)  
(National Agricultural Library, USDA) PubAg is a portal to USDA-authored and other highly relevant agricultural research. At launch, it delivered over 40,000 full-text journal articles by USDA staff and includes nearly 450,000 citations. Open access; no login required.








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### More Resources & Tutorials

-  Getting Started  
Source: VCU
- Literature Reviews: An Overview for Graduate Students.  
Source: NCSU Libraries
-  Literature Review Matrix  
Source: VCU
- Purdue Owl Lit Review tips for Graduate Writing Workshops
-  The process handout  
Source: Nita Bryant, Virginia Commonwealth University

### Lit Review 101



A literature review asks: What do we know - or not know - about this particular issue/ topic/ subject?

How well you answer this question depends upon:

1. the effectiveness of your search for information
2. the quality & reliability of the sources you choose
3. your ability to synthesize the sources you select

### The Process

The "literature" represents an on-going scholarly conversation. A literature review "re-views" – looks again – at what others have said, done, found in a particular area.

The "literature" you choose will inform and underpin everything you write, so plan searches carefully.

[▶ Search](#)[▶ Assess](#)[▶ Summarize](#)[▶ Synthesize](#)

Source: Nita Bryant, Virginia Commonwealth University, November 18, 2013.

## The Process

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### Search

#### Search

An effective literature search:

- reduces time spent looking for information
- maximizes quality and appropriateness of results
- helps clarify the scope of your research topic
- helps define and "refine" the research question(s)
- helps find data and research methods
- helps locate a 'niche' in the literature
- helps identify experts/ important works in the field



## Assess

Topic relevance: Is the literature on the same topic as you proposed to study?

Individual and site relevance: Does the literature examine the same individuals and sites you want to study?

If not

**Re-search if necessary – revise strategies, select new keywords, change databases, etc.**

**Re-fine the research question(s)**

**Re-assess the relevance of the literature**

**Repeat process if necessary**



## ► Summarize

### Summarize



Summarize each source to:

- Recap the important and most relevant information found in each source
- Identify variables
- Identify context/ setting
- Identify theories
- Identify findings

## ► Synthesize

### **Synthesize**

Integrate the literature – enter into the on-going scholarly conversation with your own narrative about how these perspectives, findings, conclusions, fit together with one another – and – with your research questions

- Identify similarities and differences
- Trace the intellectual progression of the field, including major debates
- Reflect upon the importance of the body of literature for your research
- Evaluate the sources and advise the reader on the most pertinent or relevant.

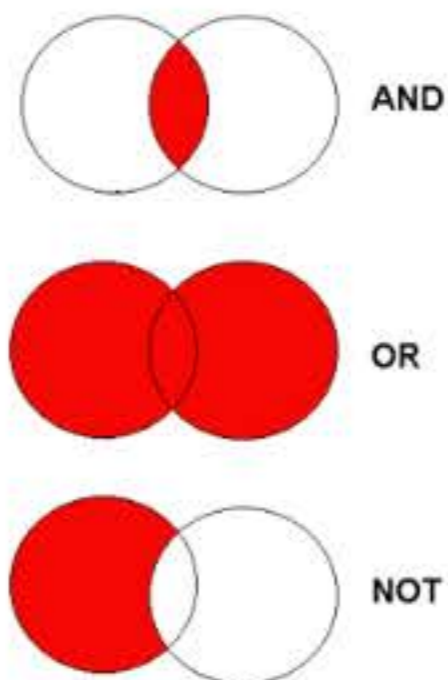


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### Connectors

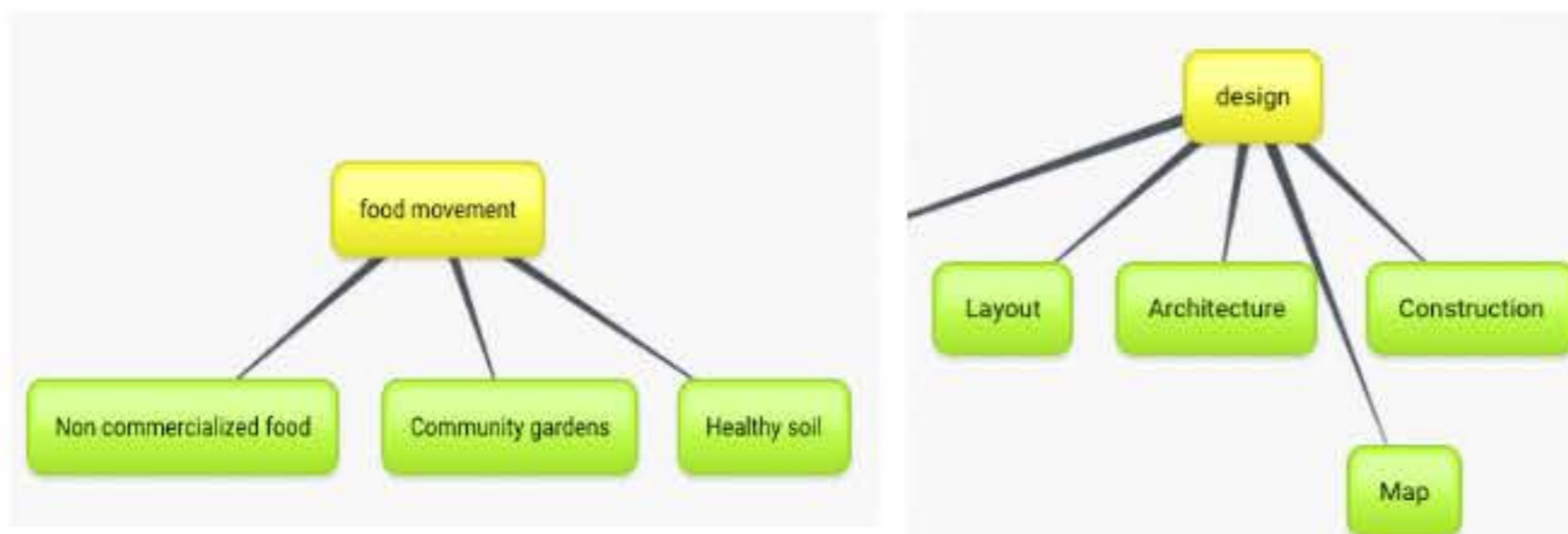


### Mind mapping



**Bubbl.us**

Developing keywords from your research topic question is the first place to start before research. The video below will unpack how to do this task. You can use [Bubbl.us](#) to keep all your keywords including related terms and synonyms in one place. It also can help to visually see how terms are related to others. See the example below.





### Search Tip

#### Truncation Searching:

Truncation is used to shorten a keyword to its **root-word level**. It also finds all suffixes or endings of a word.

Use the asterisk:

#### **histor\***

Truncation symbol with this example will retrieve: **history, histories, historic, historical, historian, etc.**

### How to develop keywords from your topic



Video by University of Houston Libraries

