

# The Literature Review Process

Laying the foundations of your dissertation

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# Why bother? Who cares?

- It's a requirement
- To situate your own analysis
- To avoid major embarrassment

# How to go about it?

- See *Like Cattle and Horses* introduction
- Reading *around* your topic
  - Questions generate questions
  - Smith and nationalism, identity, historiography
- Situating analysis
- Identifying questions or gaps
- Refining your approach

# *Like Cattle and Horses*

- Grasps major arguments
- Evaluates strengths and weaknesses
  - Usefulness and limitations
  - Sensitivity to chosen context
- Identifies gap to be filled
- Refines own approach
  - Builds on strengths
  - Avoids mistakes of (eg) oversimplification, excessive emphasis on inappropriate factors...

# Detour: the *critical* approach

- Identify and summarise the BIG argument
- What is it based on?
  - Types of evidence
  - Types of approach
- Evaluation: usefulness and limitations
- Awareness of alternatives
  - Other evidence?
  - Other approaches?

# ...but what can I do?

- Reading around the topic
- Construct annotated bibliography
- Group your authors: perspective/approach
- Situate yourself
  - Account for perspectives *critically*
  - Account for yourself
- Talk to your supervisor
- And good luck!