

Plan Your Semester: Spring 2022

Semester planning session by CK Kirch

Columbia University Writing Center

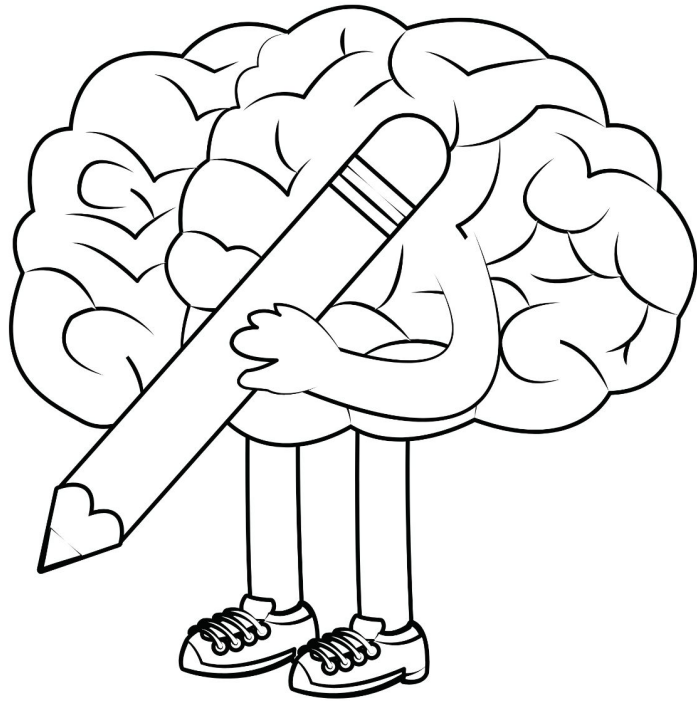
Writing Guides:

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What's on the menu?

1. Planning Challenges
2. Editorial Calendars
3. Your Semester Plan!
4. Course Correction

The problem with planning

Has this ever
happened to
you?

“I should have started this paper way earlier.”

“I’ll definitely start the next project right away.”

“I mean it this time! Gonna get it done super early.”

“Okay, the NEXT project, I’m totally starting *waaay* ahead of time.”

“... Dang it.”

Why does this happen?

- We tell ourselves to “start earlier” without defining what “earlier” means – so we don’t actually know *when* we want to start.
- We plan for someone else’s process rather than our own: we may leave out a step (or forget how long steps take) & don’t give ourselves enough time for them.
- Our projects have become more complex, and our old way of doing things doesn’t work anymore. More complexity = more steps = more time.
- We have a *lot* going on – classes, jobs, extracurriculars, hobbies, social lives, & other obligations – and it can be hard to fit it all in.

Planning Challenges

- How do I know I'm focusing on the right tasks when I have so many assignments and courses to juggle?
- How do I know what's most important for me to do right now, versus just doing what I feel like working on?
- How do I know I'm on track to meet my deadlines (without driving myself into burnout)?

What is an editorial calendar?

Editorial Calendar

a method of organizing writing tasks to meet deadlines and/or make consistent progress on one or more projects

- Breaks down a larger project/deadline into shorter, more manageable pieces
- Term from the publishing world, in which projects need to go through a number of checkpoints prior to publication
- A way to give yourself sub-deadlines on the way to a larger deadline
- Helpful for making sure you give yourself enough time to complete your projects
- Opportunity to learn about your writing process and adapt your future planning accordingly

Let's plan!

Step 1: Gather your deadlines

List out all of the assignments and deadlines you already know.

Focus on larger, multi-step projects (like essays, term papers, etc.)

Where to find assignments & deadlines:

- Syllabus
- Courseworks
- Other handouts

Words to skim for:

- “Grading” or “Assignments” (especially in section headings in the syllabus)
- “paper” or “essay”
- “response” or “written response”
- “midterm” or “final”

Step 2: Process Inventory

What are the steps you typically take to bring a writing project from conception to completion?

Bonus: When in your process would it be useful to visit the Writing Center?



Integrating multiple assignments
(and your actual life)

Now we're going to map your editorial calendar(s) onto the planner or calendar of your choice!

Materials needed:

- Deadlines/editorial calendars (you've made one so far!)
- Your personal schedule
- A place to write out your calendar:
 - ◆ physical planner, bullet journal, Google calendar, etc. (monthly calendar view recommended to start!)
 - ◆ something you actively use & will look at

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
						01
02	03	04	05	06	07	08
09	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

Now we're going to map your editorial calendar(s) onto the planner or calendar of your choice!

Option 1: Create separate editorial calendars for *each individual project*, then map them onto your calendar/planner at the same time, making adjustments as needed.

Option 2: Create an editorial calendar for your *most important project* first (e.g. a thesis, dissertation, or major term paper) and then map it onto your calendar/planner; next, create editorial calendars for your other projects directly onto your calendar/planner around those dates.

Things to consider:

- Your personal life
 - ◆ Birthdays or holidays?
 - ◆ Family or work obligations?
 - ◆ Travel plans or other events?

- Balancing multiple courses/assignments
 - ◆ Do you want to be working on multiple projects on the same day?
 - ◆ Difficult/effortful tasks vs simple/mindless tasks

- Rigidity vs flexibility
 - ◆ Specific tasks each day?
 - ◆ Goal tasks for the week?

- You can always make changes as needed!

What happens when things don't go as planned?

Things may change!

And that's okay!

- You'll get to know your own writing process better as the semester continues
- Your process/workflow may be different than you predicted
- Instructors might not give you prompts as soon as you expected
- Personal emergencies may happen
- There may be some assignments that aren't covered on the syllabus, or they might be different than what you expected

Making Course Corrections

Here are some things you can do to adapt as your semester progresses:

- Revisit your calendar as you complete your projects (easiest to reflect in the moment!)
 - What worked? What didn't?
 - Are there steps I forgot about I want to include next time? Are there things that took longer/shorter than expected?
 - Make adjustments based on what you learned about your writing process
- Need to get "back on track" fast?
 - What's the next milestone?
 - What are three "sprint" tasks I can do today/this week?



What is **one thing** you will take away from this workshop to apply to your semester planning?



Questions?