



The CENTER for STUDENT SUCCESS

PLANNING YOUR SEMESTER

Syllabus shock: the feeling at the beginning of each semester when students realize all they need to complete over the next few months. Following this guide will help you to break up your work throughout the semester. The goal is for you to be **proactive, not reactive**, as you approach your tasks each week.

Creating a Master Schedule:

- Ask your Student Success Advisor for the **Semester Scheduling Template**—you are going to use this to create a **Master Schedule**, with all your due dates in one place.
- Fill in the left column of the template with **dates** for each week of the semester.
- Put everything possible from your syllabi into this document, using one column for each class.
 - Drop **weekly assignments/reading/quizzes** into their appropriate week.
 - Tip: calculate exact page amounts for each week so you know when you will get hit with some extra long chapters.
 - Drop **large assignments** (midterms, exams, papers) into the week they are due.
 - Now, do some **backwards planning** by adding further details into the weeks leading up to these larger assignments. You do not want to start studying/writing the week they are due!
 - For **midterms/exams**, write “study for ___” in the preceding 2-3 weeks.
 - For **larger papers**, work backwards to **set benchmarks**, breaking this larger task down into smaller tasks. For example, if you have a research paper due November 20th, you might set up this timeline (writing each task in the appropriate week):
 - Final draft: November 18
 - Rough draft submitted to Writing Center: November 10
 - Main argument completed: November 1
 - Thesis developed: October 20
 - Sources compiled: October 1
 - Identify paper topic: September 15
 - Consider giving yourself a **due date buffer** ahead of larger assignments. You never know what unexpected things may come up those last few days. Aim to complete assignments a few days early.
- Your Master Schedule is now complete, with all your assignments and due dates in one place!

Using your Master Schedule:

- Throughout the semester, refer to your Master Schedule at the **start of each week** to see exactly what is due in each class.
- Use this schedule to help you with your **prioritizing work** by answering the question “What do I *need* to do?” vs. “What do I *want* to do?” You may feel like reading tonight, but if you have completed your reading for the week and there are other assignments still due this week, you need to do what is most pressing.
- If you need help with this planning process at any point in the semester, talk with your Student Success Advisor.

NOTE: the sight of this completed Master Schedule may cause even more anxiety, since you will see just how much you need to complete! For suggestions on productivity, time management, and how to get things done, see our handout on **Time Management & Productivity**.