Backwards Planning for Your Zines! Project

And Your Life (Seriously!)

What is backwards planning?

Backwards planning (often referred to as "Backward Design") comes from the world of **education,** and it's a process by which teachers and educators plan curricula. Here's an education-based overview if you're interested in learning more: Understanding by Design | Center for Teaching | Vanderbilt University

How can it help me?

Backwards Planning is excellent for any goal you have in your life! Essentially, it helps you to manage a project. You look at your end-goal, your current state, and then you make a plan to get from where you are right now to your end goal in a particular period of time. While I learned this process formally in EdSchool, I've used to:

- Run the LA Marathon (twice)
- Plan a conference
- Plan events for a friend's wedding
- Plan for my comprehensive exams
- Plan literally every large project in my life

Let's do it right now!

Step 1: Find all the non-negotiable deadlines and put them on a calendar (*I already did this step for you*)

If you were doing this on your own, you'd want to grab your favorite calendar (paper, digital, or both), your syllabi and then put those dates in. I often like to use paper first somehow it makes more sense to me on paper than in a digital format when I'm initially planning.

Remember, all the due dates and instructions for this project [can be found here](#) (also linked on Classroom).

Note: this process *does* take time up-front, but it will SAVE you so much time and energy (and grief) later on. It's completely worth it!

Step 2: Determine Deadlines FOR YOURSELF

Some of you may thrive under the pressure of working all night to finish minutes under the deadline. I am not one of those people. Instead, I look at the **hard deadlines** that I have for any project, and then I **set my own deadlines.** Depending on the project, sometimes the deadlines I create for myself are a week before the hard deadline or a few days before the hard deadline. My goal for this step is to give myself what I call "buffer room," which is time that if something unexpected were to happen, I'd still have some time to get my work done before the deadline.

Go to the calendar below and add your self-determined deadlines. You'll want to make sure you can easily differentiate the **hard deadlines** that I've set for you and those you've set for yourself. You could make your deadlines in *italics* or color them with a different color so you don't get confused later.

Step 3: Determine Your Weekly Goals

The trick to not getting overwhelmed with large project is to trick your brain— you break up a large project into smaller goals so that you feel like you're just doing one small thing and can forget about how big of a project you're actually working on.

Now that you have your *self-determined deadlines*, you can use those to set **Weekly Goals** for yourself. What do you need to get done FOR EACH WEEK to be successful at completing this project? You'll notice that there is space for *two* goals per week, one for the project and one for reading. Just pay attention to the project goal right now— we'll come back to the reading goal later.

Step 5: Determine When You **Can't** Work on This Project

We all have different schedules! The goal is for you to make goals that work **for you**, which means attending to when you **can** and **cannot** do work for this project. Perhaps certain days are just a no-go for you due to class, athletic, family, or other personal commitments. Maybe you don't want to work on the weekends. That's fine! We'll account for those right now.

Look at the calendar and block out (I would use the color fill option on Google Docs) any days on the grid that you're NOT going to work on the project with a color (perhaps a dark grey?).

Step 4: Figure Out Your Reading Goals

Because you're working on a project that is connected to reading a book, you'll want to give yourself enough time to finish the book before you work on some of the components of the project. We'll do this right now.

Everyone reads at a different pace— that's okay! It's just a sign of how all of our brains work differently. We all have different strengths and capabilities, and your reading pace is in NO WAY linked to your overall intelligence level. Frankly, it doesn't say anything about you, except how quickly you can read.

Step 4A: Figure Out How Long Your Book Is

If you already have a book picked out, this step is easy! Go to GoodReads or simply look at your book and write down how many pages are in your book.

My book has _____ pages.

If you haven't yet determined a book, jump to step 4C. This will allow you to choose a book at a length appropriate for what you can reasonably finish as part of this project.

Step 4B: Figure Out How Many Days You Have Between Now and When You Need to Finish Your Book

Look at your calendar and see how many days are between now and the date that you will need to finish your book. Noël calendared a suggested date for you. However, you could likely extend that date to April 16th, if necessary.

The total days I plan to read is _____

Step 4C: Figure Out How Many Pages Per Day You Need to Read

Now, based on the **total number of pages in your book** and the **number of days between now and when you need to finish reading**, determine *the number of pages you need to read each day.* You can do this through math.

My total pages / number of day = My daily reading goal

My reading goal is _____

Step 4D: Figure Out How Much Reading You Can Reasonably Accomplish in An Hour

The next step is to determine if this goal is actually something you can reasonably do! The way to do that is to get a better sense of your reading speed. This step works best if you're doing it **with the book for your project**. However, in a pinch, you can use a book of a similar genre.

- Set a timer for 5 minutes
- Read at a **comfortable pace** for those five minutes (It's important that you read at a comfortable space, so you don't mess up the rigor of your goal).
- Write down the number of pages you're able to read in five minutes
- Now, multiply that number by 12. This will give you the number of pages you can reasonably expect to read in an hour

Step 4E: Readjust Your Goals (As Needed)

Go back to step 4C, the number of pages you you plan to read each day and compare that number with the number you just calculated in step 4D. Determine the number of hours you are committing yourself to each day. Does that number make sense? For example, if I were doing this process and came up with a reading rate that translated to reading 8 hours per day, that would not be a reasonable goal. I can't sit and read for that long! I have other things to do! If that were my situation, I would then need to go back and either:

- Add more days to my schedule for reading
- Choose a shorter book

Step 5: Figure Out Your Daily Task Goals

The final step is for you to go back to your calendar and determine, based on your **weekly goals** and the **number of days you're working each week on this project**, what reasonable daily task goals are for you.

These daily task goals will be different depending upon the deliverable. You can break tasks up in the way that make the most sense for you. For example, if you're making a daily task goal for your Final Project Proposal you could choose to break that up in multiple different ways. Here are just a few:

- You could break it up by PROCESS. For example,
  - Notes/brainstorming for Final Project
  - Type up notes/brainstorming into final version
- You could also break it up by section
  - The different sections are: content, materials, format, and circulation.
  - Depending on the number of days you want to work on this, you could work on one-two sections per day.

Weekly Goal	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	The Weekend
For Project: For Reading:	3/20/23 Reading Goal: Work Goal:	3/21/23 Reading Goal: Work Goal:	3/22/23 Reading Goal: Work Goal:	3/23/23 **Final Project Proposal Due** Reading Goal: Work Goal:	3/24/23 Reading Goal: Work Goal:	3/25 + 3/26/23 Reading Goal: Work Goal:
For Project: For Reading:	3/27/23 Reading Goal: Work Goal:	3/28/23 *Find & Copy Research Library Session* Reading Goal: Work Goal:	3/29/23 Reading Goal: Work Goal:	3/30/21 **Storyboards Due** Reading Goal: Work Goal:	3/31/23 Reading Goal: Work Goal:	4/1 + 4/2/23 Reading Goal: Work Goal:
For Project: For Reading:	4/3/23 Reading Goal: Work Goal:	4/4/23 Reading Goal: Work Goal:	4/5/23 Reading Goal: Work Goal:	4/6/23 Reading Goal: Work Goal:	4/7/23 Reading Goal: Work Goal:	4/8 + 4/9/23 Reading Goal: Work Goal:
For Project: For Reading:	4/10/23 Reading Goal: Work Goal:	4/11/23 ***Noël's suggested date to finish reading your book.***	4/12/23	4/13/23 **Blip for Literary Analysis Essay Due** Reading Goal: Work Goal:	4/14/23 Reading Goal: Work Goal:	4/15 + 4/16/23 Reading Goal: Work Goal:

		Preliminary Thesis Check-In on Classroom Reading Goal: Work Goal:				
For Project: For Reading:	4/17/23 Reading Goal: Work Goal:	4/18/23 Reading Goal: Work Goal:	4/19/23 Reading Goal: Work Goal:	4/20/23 **Literary Analysis Essay Draft Due** Reading Goal: Work Goal:	4/21/23 Reading Goal: Work Goal:	4/22 + 4/23/23 Reading Goal: Work Goal:
For Project: For Reading:	4/24/23 Reading Goal: Work Goal:	4/25/23 Reading Goal: Work Goal:	4/26/23 Reading Goal: Work Goal:	4/27/23 Reading Goal: Work Goal:	4/28/23 Reading Goal: Work Goal:	4/29 + 4/30/23 Reading Goal: Work Goal:
For Project: For Reading:	5/1/23 Reading Goal: Work Goal:	5/2/23 **Zine Fest— Project Due**				