



Spring 2021 Reading Days Recommendations

On October 14, 2020, Provost Folks sent out an [email](#) announcing that Spring Break was being replaced by five Reading Days scattered throughout the Spring 2021 semester. Those Reading Days are scheduled on Feb. 25, March 9 & 10, April 2, and April 21. Regarding Reading Days, the [Registrar website](#) states “it is Faculty Senate policy that all forms of exams are prohibited on any Reading Day. Specific exceptions for certain courses may be made with approval from the appropriate academic unit head and academic dean. Students shall be informed of any such exceptions in the class syllabus.”

The intent for these reading days is to give students time, interspersed throughout the semester, to briefly disengage from coursework. In discussing that need in this most unusual semester, UA Registrar Alex Underwood wrote, “The ideal around the Reading Days is that there would not be assignments or exams due – so truly a day where there are not required classes or things – similar to Spring Break. We do have a [process](#) for specific classes to be exempt from the Reading Days.”

In this document, we would like to suggest some ways that you might accommodate the Reading Days that have replaced Spring Break. Please keep in mind that students are feeling overwhelmed by all the class modalities and juggling school, jobs, and family life, as well as likely frustrated by the elimination of Spring Break. Your compassion and patience will be appreciated.

- Include the scheduled Reading Days in your syllabus and explain how you have adjusted your curriculum and/or assignments to accommodate them.
- Consider replacing a few, high-stakes assessments or assignments with more frequent, lower-stakes assessments or assignments. This supports student learning, reduces your students’ anxiety, and may allow you to more easily accommodate the Reading Days.
- Early in the semester, check in with your students about mid-semester exams and/or major assignments in other classes. This would allow you to make adjustments to assignments or exams in your course to lighten students’ load around the time of the cancelled Spring Break.
- If you are teaching graduate students, keep in mind that their GTA grading loads may be heavy during the week that was Spring Break.
- Encourage your students to take the Reading Days as true breaks, to the extent possible. You can support this by not scheduling exams on the day following non-Friday Reading Days.
- Communicate regularly with your students to ask them how they are doing and what would help them be successful in your course. [D2L Survey tool](#) is a good way to do this efficiently.
 - How are you feeling? (great, busy but okay, sick, overwhelmed, confused, frustrated, tired -OR- text response)





- How much time each week do you usually spend studying or doing assignments for this course?
- What is something that you do to help yourself learn in this course?
- In the last week, have you gotten meaningful feedback about your work in this course?
- Do you feel that instructor(s) in this course care(s) what you think?
- What is something the instructor does in this course that helps you learn?
- Is there something the instructor could do or change that would help you learn?
- If your course relies on week-long content modules, the scattered Reading Days may present a challenge. For the weeks that include a single Reading Day, consider whether there is some content that you could eliminate this semester.
- Use the time of the cancelled the Spring Break week to assign students some reflective learning activities. For example, ask them questions about how the course content relates to their lives, how they could use course content to solve a problem, or how they might explain a particular concept in the course to a young neighbor.
- If you have regular assignment due dates, and one or more of the Reading Days fall on your due date, you could adjust those due dates to a later date. This will accommodate students who truly cannot submit assignments any earlier in the week. Be sure to remind students of the adjusted due dates for the impacted weeks.

For additional assistance with planning your spring courses please see the OIA's [Planning for Remote Teaching](#) website.

