**Designing Online Classes to Accommodate Multiple Spring Breaks**

Eric Salahub FRCC

**Guiding Design Principles for Multiple Spring Breaks:**

* Design for equity so that each student can take whichever Spring Break week that works best for them.
* Design so that the teacher gets to take a week off for Spring Break!
* Design for learning! A Spring Break scheme doesn’t need to undermine learning; in fact, it might even foster more learning.
* Design for clarity so that everyone understands the Spring Break scheme well before Spring Break.

**Spring Breaks Design Suggestion**

This design advice is based on the fact that FRCC has always had to deal with multiple Spring Breaks. In my previous role as the Online Instructional Coach, I helped online teachers from across the disciplines find ways to effectively accommodate students in the same class who had different Spring Breaks. I’ve also taught online classes with multiple Spring Breaks for more than 20-years!

Spring Break dates sometimes change from year to year so it is vital to check. For Spring 23 there are three different breaks across CCCS schools.

Here is my go-to design option for multiple Spring Breaks. There are two variations included in green and yellow.

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| **For the 15-week SP 23 Semester** |
| Week 1 (Jan 17-21) – Week 8 (March 5-11) | Teacher and students working on together. |
| Spring Break Scheme 1Week 9 March 12-15 | First Break (March 12-18) | This option designs 2-calendar weeks to accomplish week 9 work and 2-weeks to complete week 10 work. These 2-week units overlap in the middle.Make the Week 9 deliverables due by March 25th and the Week 10 deliverables due by April 1st. This allows each student to take the break of their choice while keeping student work synchronized as much as possible. Some students will have a week where they are working independently while their teacher is on break. This can work fine as long as student KNOW when their teacher is on break and they know exactly what they need to be doing during that week when they won’t be in contact with their teacher. |
| Second Break (March 19-25) |
| Spring Break Scheme 1Week 10 March 19- April 1) | First Break (March 12-18) |
| Second Break (March 19-25) |
| **Variation 2 below** |
| Spring Break Scheme 2Weeks 9/10(March 12 – April 1) | First Break (March 12-18) | This option designs 3-calendar weeks to accomplish a 2-week unit of coursework.Make the Week 9&10 deliverables due by April 1st. This allows each student to take the break of their choice and they will always have 2-calendar weeks to complete 2-weeks of coursework.Some students will have a week where they are working independently while their teacher is on break. This can work fine as long as student KNOW when their teacher is on break and they know exactly what they need to be doing during that week when they won’t be in contact with their teacher. |
| Second Break (March 19-25) |
| Third Break (Mar 26-April 1) |
| Week 11 (April 2-8) – Week 16 (May 8th) | Teacher and students working on together. |

**Spring Break Schemes in the Syllabus**

Just make sure to address this up front. I suggest including information about Spring Breaks in the Important Dates section or somewhere else that make sense. Here’s an example pulled from an online syllabus of mine from a few Spring semester ago.

**Important Dates**

* **Course Run Dates:** This is a 15-week course that starts Jan 21st and ends May 9th
* **Course Drop Dates:** Feb 5th is the last day to drop with a refund. April 19th is the last day to withdraw with a “W” recorded.
* **Spring Break:** Larimer Campus Spring Break: March 17-23 and Westminster and Boulder County Campus: March 24-March 30. Since we have students from all campuses in our classes, we will discuss how Spring Break will work a bit later this semester. You will get spring break!

I hope this short guide was useful.

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**Some Faculty Specific Examples:**

1. **I have my assignments due at the end of both Spring Breaks to allow for students to choose which one works best for them. For example, I will give them two weeks to complete assignments and they are all due by Sunday and/or Monday end of day.**
2. I check in with students via Video and Regular Announcement explaining what is going on and which Spring Break I will be on. I find it easier to wait to grade anything until after Spring Break is over.
3. **If you have a circumstance where you have three different Spring Breaks, I usually give everyone two weeks to do the assignments and I start grading on week three for me. The students who have the late Spring Break should have already completed the assignment, because they had two weeks to do it.**
4. Once again, you should do a video announcement at beginning and then I send out an announcement letting them know what Spring Break we are on. I remind them that assignments will be coming due so be mindful that you do not get two weeks off. The chart below is on my syllabus and I make sure to remind them. It can be confusing at first. Another thing, I send out Intelligent Agent to help guide them (it starts in the middle and continues until the end of Spring Break or that Monday). It will alert the student when they have completed the assignments that you deem are important.

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| Week | Date | Topic | Concept Check | Discussions | Activities | Knowledge Checks | Projects |
| 4 |  3/16-3/30(includes Spring break) | Food and Hunger  | Concept Check #4 | Discussion #2 |  | Knowledge Check #2 | Citizen Science Due  |
| 5 | 3/30 | Technology & Culture | Concept Check Technology  |  | Fact or Myth  |  | DOT Project Opens |

1. **You need to construct your syllabus to allow for at least two weeks so that the assignments align. I have already started to be more lenient with giving students more time with the information, but that is not always possible on shorter parts of term. But, I still allow my 10-week students two weeks to get items done for Spring Break. If you need to grade items, then I grade when you come back from Spring Break.**
2. One day maybe we can have one Spring Break, but until then. Just try to be mindful about what assignments you want them to do and how much time you are giving them. Honestly, some students will not read and listen so they will not start working on their assignments until the very end. I do not feel bad when I say you had two weeks to do this assignment. I will be taking points off for it being late.

If you would like to contact me, my information is below. Yes, I am a Science Adjunct Faculty and a Learning Designer!

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