

GETTING THE BIG PICTURE

WHERE DO YOU FIND THE BIG PICTURE?

The information contained in a course outline provides an excellent overview of how a course will flow during a semester. Frequently, professors will list a number of course objectives or outcomes in their course outlines. The objectives or outcomes describe the core knowledge and skills that the instructor believes students should be able to demonstrate upon completion of the course. These objectives can be very useful for seeing “the big picture” as it can be difficult to determine what content is important, or the rationale for why certain content is included.



HOW DO YOU CREATE THE BIG PICTURE?

Course outlines list due dates for assignments, tests, and exams. At the beginning of each semester, it's a good idea to record all of the important dates (assignment dates, test dates) from each course outline into a time planner or calendar.

You can choose a paper-based calendar/planner or one that is digitally accessible (e.g. UofG Gryph Calendar, Google Calendar). Digital calendars have numerous benefits including reminders, cut and paste editing, easy to read digital text as well as multiple views (daily, weekly, and monthly).

Setting up a calendar allows you to view all of your due dates from all of your courses in one spot. This perspective is extremely useful in predicting how the semester will flow with regards to workload and studying. Using your calendar, you will easily be able to identify those times when you have many due dates or exams in close proximity.

Understanding how the due dates relate to one another can help you start the semester efficiently. Planning ahead, allocating sufficient time for readings, studying and completing assignments, and setting up a time plan and following through on it, will all help keep your workload more balanced and manageable throughout the semester. This helps to prevent feelings of being overwhelmed when many projects are due at the same time.

It's also helpful to review the timetable section of the course outline on a weekly basis. This keeps you aware of current readings and helps refresh both the content itself and the sequencing of the content found in the course. A review of topics helps to conceptualize how the course subject matter fits together and aids with recall when studying for tests and exams.