

Traditional Semester Calendar:

15 Calendar weeks + 1 extra Monday + Reading Day (Tuesday); Final Exams run W-F and the following M-Tu. Grades were due Thursday at noon.

Reason for extra Monday: one Monday is always missing from the academic calendar due to Labor Day (fall semester) and MLK holiday (spring semester) so the Monday at the end was there to make up for this, such that all classes would meet the same number of days.

(Note: spring semester has always had a missing Friday due to the “spring holiday” that always mysteriously falls on the Friday before the first Sunday after the first full moon after the vernal equinox. So spring MWF classes have always been short one 50-minute class period.)

Revised Semester Calendar:

15 calendar weeks, no extra Monday, no Reading Day; Final Exams run M-F of the week immediately following classes. Grades are due Monday at noon.

A 15 calendar week semester is effectively only 14 weeks long. In the fall we have a Fall Break (M-Tu) and a Thanksgiving Break (W-F). In the spring we have Spring Break (M-F). So either way exactly one Monday-Friday week is missing, leaving 14 weeks.

Traditional semester seat time: $(14 * 150) = (28 * 75) = (42 * 50) = \mathbf{2100 \text{ minutes}}$

Seat time with revised calendar: Fall MWF classes meet for 2050 minutes (-2.38%)

Spring MWF classes meet for 2000 minutes (-4.76%)

MW classes meet for 2025 minutes (-3.57%)

M classes meet for 1950 minutes (-7.14%)

Other concerns:

Losing the Reading Day makes it harder to schedule end-of-semester gatherings and meetings. (Reading Day also served as a potential make-up day for bad weather days.)

Students formerly got a two-day weekend break between the first three days of final exams and the final two days of exams. Now all exams are scheduled on five consecutive days. Eliminating the weekend break during final exams eliminates the time for students to study and “recharge their batteries” and may lead to lower performance on final exams held the last couple of days, especially for students with full schedules.

Grades are now due the Monday after the Friday of exam week, instead of the Thursday after the last final exam on Tuesday. So faculty now have three fewer days, total, to do all their grading, and will almost certainly have to sacrifice a weekend to grading, rather than having some flexibility to grade papers during the week vs. on a weekend. This may lead to faculty choosing different types of exam questions (e.g. multiple choice) that can be graded quickly.