DEWC
Debby Ellis Writing Center

PLANNING LONG PAPERS

When planning longer papers, it can be helpful to break them into smaller parts and then set a date for yourself by which you plan to accomplish each goal. This chart can help you to plan out the steps of your writing project!

Date	Goal	Notes/Follow-up
	Choose a research topic	
	Meet with Research Librarian Identify the most significant/influential sources about your topic, important databases, etc.	
	Start background/contextual research Find/ skim/read 5-10 sources that provide background information about your topic. Consider not only reference materials, but introductions to collections of essays, book reviews published in journals, and "state of the field" essays.	
	Determine a research question What are some unanswered questions/ unconsidered ideas/ problems with other peoples' arguments about your topic? *Is your question audience-aware? Is it ambitious?* *Is it arguable?* *Is it answerable?* *Is it appropriate in scope?*	
	Draft your thesis/hypothesis Double-check: *Is it specific, appropriate, debatable & significant?* ***Having trouble drafting a thesis?*** ***Come by the DEWC! We can help!***	
	Meet with your professor during office hours Along with other questions, you might ask: *Does thesis sound appropriate for a paper of this scope?* *Are there any foundational background sources they'd recommend?* *Are there any similar arguments/articles you can look at as models for organization?* *Are there any "methods" texts – theoretical backgrounds – that can help frame your thesis?* (This probably goes without saying, but be sure to take lots of notes during this meeting!)	

Research Round II

Here's a chance to look up the sources recommended by your capstone prof. and begin addressing some of the questions he/ she may have posed about your research.

2nd Draft of Thesis/Hypothesis

1st Draft of Outline

Break your thesis into its most basic parts. What (three, four, five, six, etc) things will you need to prove to get your reader to agree to your thesis? *This outline will be full of holes. That's okay.*

Start a "significance" file.

Now is the time to begin thinking about the question "so what?" Starting a "significance" file (on your computer or on paper) will allow you to keep track of how other scholars on your topic frame their work as important, and to jot down ideas about the significance of your own research as they occur to you.

Research Round III

Now that you know which