Memo: Holy Days of Observance
fall 2017-spring 2018

This guide to the most prominent holy days of several major religions is offered for your information. While there is a much greater breadth of observances and religions, these were selected as they are from the major traditions most represented on our campus and are likely to affect students during the time classes are in session (Monday through Friday), necessitating worship in a religious community or fasting. It is the student’s responsibility to make arrangements for missing class or coursework. Faculty and staff are asked to take these dates into consideration when making plans for the upcoming 2017-2018 academic year, including events outside of class such as speaker series and evening and weekend programs.

**Dates to Keep in Mind:**

- Friday, 9/1-Tuesday, 9/5: Eid al-Adha (begins and ends at sundown)
- Wednesday, 9/20-Friday, 9/22: Rosh Hashanah (begins and ends at sundown)
- Thursday, 9/21-Friday, 9/29: Navaratri (begins and ends at sundown)
- Friday, 9/29-Saturday, 9/30: Yom Kippur (begins and ends at sundown)
- Thursday, 10/19: Diwali
- Tuesday, 10/31: Samhain
- Wednesday, 11/1: All Saints Day
- Thursday, 11/2: All Souls Day (also known as Day of the Dead or Día de Muertos)
- Sunday, 12/3-Sunday, 12/24: Advent season (mostly observed on Sundays)
- Friday, 12/8: Bodhi Day
- Wednesday, 2/14: Ash Wednesday
- Thursday, 3/1: Holi
- Sunday, 3/25-Sunday, 4/1: Holy Week (Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Sunday)
- Friday, 3/30-Saturday 4/7: Passover (begins and ends at sundown; 1st 2 days are most important)
- Tuesday 5/15-Thursday 6/14: Ramadan
- Tuesday, 5/29 (United Nations date; actual celebration dates vary by country): Vesak

**Holy Day Descriptions:**

- **Eid al-Adha (Islam)**—Festival of Sacrifice; marks the end of Islamic Hajj, the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca. Muslim students may attend a local mosque for prayers in addition to their regular daily prayers.

- **Rosh Hashanah (Judaism)**—Jewish New Year, High Holy Day; Students may attend local services. We usually observe it on campus with a prayer service.

- **Navaratri (Hinduism)**—“nine nights” festival in honor of the goddess Durga, who defeated the evil buffalo demon, Mahishasura. It celebrates the divine feminine and the victory of good over evil through fasting, prayer rituals, and offerings.

- **Yom Kippur (Judaism)**—Day of Atonement, High Holy Day; the most important of the Jewish holidays; Observant Jews will likely attend services off-campus and may fast.

- **Diwali (Hinduism)**—Festival of lights; a celebration with fireworks and lighted candles and prayers to the Goddess of Wealth. As neither candles nor fireworks are permitted in living and study spaces, students are invited to the prayer room in the chapel to light a candle in observance. Students usually have a table display in Moody with information.
Samhain [pronounced SOW-en] (Paganism)—marks the coming of winter. It is more commonly recognized, by non-Pagans, as Halloween. This is a date that is often recognized as a time where the barriers between the physical world and the Otherworld (where the spirits of the departed dwell between lives) are at their thinnest. Pagans generally use this as a time of reflection and communion with departed loved ones.

All Saints Day (Christianity)—a Holy Day of Obligation in the Catholic Church, requiring Mass attendance and work restriction when possible. This Christian holiday is in remembrance of all the saints, both living and deceased.

All Souls Day (Christianity)—a day of prayer for those who have died; The Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed in the Catholic Church.

Advent (Christianity)—a 4-week season of preparation, celebrating the movement from darkness to light and anticipating the “coming” of Christmas.

Bodhi Day (Buddhism)—commemorates the Buddha reaching enlightenment; marked with meditation

Ash Wednesday (Christianity)—is the beginning of the season of Lent, which is the 40-day period leading up to Easter. Celebrants usually attend a service and receive ashes on their foreheads as a reminder that “from dust we came, and to dust we shall return”. It’s a season of fasting and mourning. Ashes will be offered at lunchtime in Moody, and at a service at 4:30pm in the Meditation Chapel on campus.

Holi (Hinduism)—is the Festival of Colors, and is celebrated with bonfires and colored powders to usher in spring. Our campus celebration is sponsored by Cultural and Community Engagement and ACCENT.

Holy Week (Christianity)—includes Palm/Passion Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday; commemorates Jesus’ last week, including his entry into Jerusalem his last meal with his disciples, his crucifixion, and resurrection. Each is usually marked with a service. We will have Good Friday and Easter services on campus.

Passover (Judaism)—This observance marks the salvation of the Hebrew people who escaped slavery as God led them on an exodus from Egypt. It’s marked by a storytelling Seder meal of symbolic foods. We usually have a Passover Seder on campus, date and time to be determined.

Ramadan (Islam)—one of the Five Pillars of Islam; month of fasting (dawn to sunset) and sacred time of prayer and charity; the Islamic calendar is lunar, so the festivals like Ramadan rotate through the seasons.

Vesak (Buddhism)—Also known as “Buddha’s Birthday”, but celebrates the birth, enlightenment, and death of the Buddha with special services, vegetarian diet, offering flowers and candles, and processions.

I encourage you to help our students make accommodations for their religious observances. There is a multi-faith prayer room in the chapel that is available for use during building hours (6am-midnight) for prayer and meditation for all students, faculty and staff. Our weekly interfaith Sanctuary gathering is on Tuesdays at 4:30pm in the Meditation Chapel, and we observe a number of religious holy days depending on student interest. Please let me know how I can support you and our students.

Blessings to you in your journey this year!

Rev. Jenny Call, university chaplain