



Dear Faculty and Staff:

SMU is rooted in the Christian tradition of Methodism and celebrates religious belief and practice that nourish the life of the mind and spirit. Throughout the Fall semester, many religions observe holy days that bring their communities of faith together. As the new academic year begins, we remind you of the University's religious observance policy and religious holy days taking place in the Fall semester.

Students who need to miss class for religious observance are expected to notify faculty in advance of their absence and make up any missed work. While students are expected to notify faculty at the beginning of the term if they will need an adjustment to assignment dates or exams, we encourage faculty to work with students in the weeks prior to holidays to make proper arrangements for accessing course materials and making up missed work in a timely manner.

Faculty should anticipate requests from students observing the following holy days:

- **Judaism**
 - High Holy Days
 - **Rosh Hashanah** begins at sunset on Friday, September 15, and ends at nightfall on Sunday, September 17. No work is permitted.
 - **Yom Kippur** begins at sunset on Sunday, September 24, and ends at nightfall on Monday, September 25. No work is permitted.
 - You should anticipate requests to miss class on Yom Kippur, Monday, September 25th.
 - Both holidays include religious services that run throughout the holidays.
 - Although Rosh Hashanah this year falls on the weekend, please keep in mind that observant students will not do work or travel over the holiday.
 - **Sukkot/Simchat Torah** begins at sunset on Friday, September 29, and ends at nightfall on Sunday, October 8.
 - Work is not permitted September 30-October 1. Given that this is a weekend, you may not receive requests for absences, but observant students will not do work on these days.
 - Work is also not permitted October 6, 7, and 8. These dates coincide with Fall Break, and observant students will not do work on these days.
 - Throughout the week, observant students will participate in religious gatherings on and off campus. See Hillel at SMU for programming at the SMU Sukkah.

- **Hanukkah** begins at sunset on December 7 and ends at nightfall on December 15. There is no prohibition on work during Hanukkah, and students should be able to take exams as scheduled.
- **Islam**
 - **Mawlid an Nabi** begins at sunset on Tuesday, September 26, and ends at sunset on Wednesday, September 27.
 - Mawlid an Nabi celebrates the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him.)
 - There is no prohibition on work, but students may request excused absences to attend services.
- **Hinduism**
 - **Janmashtami** is September 6-7, 2023 (Tuesday and Wednesday.)
 - Janmashtami is a Hindu festival celebrating the birth of Krishna.
 - Hindus celebrate by fasting, singing, praying together, preparing and sharing special food, night vigils, and visiting temples.
 - **Dussehra (Dasera)** is Tuesday, October 24, 2023.
 - Dussehra is a Hindu festival celebrating the victory of good over evil after the nine days of Navratri and marks the beginning of preparation for Diwali.
 - **Diwali** is Sunday, November 12, 2023, for some Hindus and Thursday, November 23 for others.
 - Diwali is the Hindu festival of lights and a celebration of the victory of good over evil.
- **Christianity**
 - **Christmas**
 - Most Western Christian traditions celebrate Christmas on December 25.
 - Orthodox (Eastern) Christians celebrate Christmas on January 7.
 - Students should not need to miss class given that January 7, 2024, is a Sunday and the University's Winter Break schedule.

Thank you for your commitment to support holistic student growth that nurtures the mind, body, and spirit. Each religious tradition is diverse, and the summary above does not speak to every variation you may encounter. If you have questions or need additional information, please contact the [Rev. Lisa Garvin](#), Chaplain and Minister to the University, or the Office of the Chaplain and Religious Life at chaplain@smu.edu.



Lisa Garvin, Chaplain and Minister to the University



Sheri Kunovich, Associate Provost for Student Academic Engagement and Success

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