




June 2008

TO: Faculty colleagues
FROM: Varun Soni, Dean of Religious Life 
RE: Religiously excused absences & the Multi-Faith Calendar

Office of Religious Life

Varun Soni
Dean

Now in its fourth year, the enclosed *Religious and Spiritual Life at USC: a Multi-Faith Calendar and Directory* has found a welcome home on campus. We hope you continue to find it engaging and useful. The *Calendar-Directory* goes out by mail to incoming students, and it will also be available at their summer orientations and in various campus settings. Please let us know if you want more copies.

In the interests of multi-faith understanding, the calendar portion features an extensive array of sacred and special occasions observed during the months when classes are in session. This includes many that are unlikely to directly impact students' class participation.

Please note that for the 2008-2009 academic year, the Jewish holy days of Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Sukkot in the fall (and Passover in the spring) are most likely to present a clear conflict with academic demands; indeed, this will be a challenging year for many Jews on campus, as all these holy days fall during the week. Please also note that Ramadan, the Muslim holy month of fasting, begins at sundown on September 1st; for the month of September, Muslim students may need accommodation during late afternoon classes as they break their daily fast.

I remind you of the University's policy that grants students excused absences from class for observance of religious holy days. We ask you to be responsive to requests by enabling students who contact you in advance to make up work missed because of religious observance. In laying out your syllabus, I recommend that you avoid scheduling an exam on a major holy day (including Good Friday, which became an issue in some classes this past year) or planning something that cannot be made up afterwards. Keep in mind that some holy days require additional time for preparation or travel before and/or after the actual observance.

Please contact me or the Associate Dean when doubtful cases arise, if you have questions, or if you have suggestions for next year's calendar. A listing of holy days and occasions also appears on the Religious Life website, which is at www.usc.edu/religiouslife.

Let me add that the second half of the Multi-Faith Calendar and Directory provides contact information for the 40 religious directors and the 80 student religious groups that make USC a rich and vibrant spiritual environment. You may want to consult it when referring students and others.

University of
Southern California
Los Angeles,
California 90089-0751
Tel: 213 740 6110
Fax: 213 740 0254