

June 2005

TO: Faculty colleagues

Office of Religious Life

Rabbi Susan Laemmle, Ph.D.
Dean

FROM: Rabbi Susan Laemmle, Ph.D., Dean of Religious Life



RE: New version of memo on Religious Holy Days & Occasions

During my nine years as Dean of Religious Life, our office has been sending you a memo on Religious Holy Days and Occasions. We also produced a colorful annual brochure with information on student religious groups. This year for the first time, we've combined the two publications into the enclosed *Religious and Spiritual Life at USC: a Multi-Faith Calendar and Directory*.

We sincerely hope that faculty, staff, and especially our students find the *Calendar and Directory* engaging and useful. Like the Holy Days memo of previous years and in the interests of multi-faith understanding, it points to an extensive, although not comprehensive, array of sacred and special occasions observed during the months when classes are in session. This includes ones that are unlikely to impact students' class participation.

Please note that for the 2005-2006 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. As it turns out, Ramadan, the Muslim holy month of fasting, begins on the same days as Rosh Hashanah; for the subsequent month, 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 planning your syllabus, I recommend that you do not schedule an exam on a major holy day or plan 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 at ext. 06110 or Laemmle@usc.edu if you have questions, when doubtful cases arise, 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