

RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATIONS AND CLASS ATTENDANCE

The University honors and respects students' rights to observe sincerely held religious beliefs or practices and provides an educational environment in which all students are free from harassment and discrimination based on religion consistent with the requirements of federal, state and local law. As part of this commitment, the University provides reasonable accommodations for students' sincerely held religious beliefs or practices unless the University determines that such an accommodation would fundamentally alter the curriculum or academic program. Faculty are asked to be responsive to requests when students contact them IN ADVANCE to request such an excused absence. Students are responsible for completing assignments given during their absence, but should be given an opportunity to make up work missed because of religious observance.

Once a student has registered for a class, the student is expected to examine the course syllabus for potential conflicts with holy days and to notify the instructor by the end of the first week of classes of any conflicts that may require an absence (including any required additional preparation/travel time). The student is also expected to remind the faculty member in advance of the missed class, and to make arrangements in advance (with the faculty member) to make up any missed work or in-class material within a reasonable amount of time. The student is to be trusted that he/she will observe the holy day as promised; no proof will be expected.

Examples of reasonable accommodations for student absences might include: rescheduling of an exam or giving a make-up exam for the student in question; altering the time of a student's presentation; allowing extra-credit assignments to substitute for missed class work or arranging for an increased flexibility in assignment due dates; releasing a graduate assistant from teaching or research responsibilities, etc. The student must be given the opportunity to do appropriate make-up work that is equivalent and intrinsically no more difficult than the original exam or assignment. Faculty should keep in mind that religion is a deeply personal and private matter and should make every attempt to respect the privacy of the student when making accommodations (for example, it is not appropriate to announce to the class that a student is doing a presentation or making up an exam at a later date because of their religious observance).

If a student and course instructor cannot agree on an accommodation, the student may bring the matter to the Department Chair for a decision. Additional resources in resolving disagreements over accommodations include the Office of Cultural and Spiritual Life, and the Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity. If there is still no agreement, the student may bring the matter to the school or college dean's office, where a final decision will be made. Students who believe they have been discriminated against on the basis of religion by the denial of a requested religious accommodation may contact the Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity to learn about filing a discrimination complaint.