



Guidelines for Inter Holiday Observances

To: ESF Campus Community

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CC: David H. Newman, Ph.D., Interim Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

Date: August, 2021

Re: ESF Guidelines for Interfaith Holiday Observance

ESF respects the religious diversity of our community and recognizes the importance of religious holy days and observances in the lives of our community members. ESF strives to be an inclusive community in all aspects of curricular and co-curricular life. To that end, we encourage decision-makers to be cognizant of major religious and cultural observances when planning courses and campus events, and to be sensitive to potential conflicts. Faculty members are expected to make reasonable efforts to accommodate the sincerely held religious beliefs, practices, and observances of students unless the accommodation creates undue hardship on ESF.

[ESF's guidelines pertaining to interfaith holiday observances](#) are as follows:

- Annually, ESF officials will make available online a schedule of religious holidays. This will be developed through consulting with local faith and non-faith communities and the online resource Interfaith Calendar (<http://www.interfaith-calendar.org/>), which lists commonly observed religious holidays as a reference to aid in planning courses, assignments, and events. Those interested in a calendar that can be subscribed to for reminders should see the Harvard Divinity School: <https://hds.harvard.edu/life-at-hds/religious-and-spiritual-life/multifaith-calendar>. Click [here](#) to view a list of holy days and holidays listed by Syracuse University.
- ESF encourages all curricular and co-curricular planners to be cognizant of major religious and cultural observances when planning major campus events in order to be sensitive to potential conflict.
- Please refer to the official syllabus template at <http://www.esf.edu/acadgov/iqas/> as approved by the Academic Governance Committee on Instructional Quality and Academic Standards. Faculty members are strongly encouraged to include in syllabi and to announce at the beginning of the semester the following:
 - Faculty should provide students who give the required notice of and are absent for observance of a religious holiday reasonable opportunity to complete academic responsibilities in the original or alternative form without penalty, unless doing so **would interfere unreasonably** with the academic integrity of the course. For questions about academic integrity, please consult the [Code of Student Conduct](#), or contact Coordinator of Student Conduct in the Office of Student Affairs. In situations where students feel reasonable accommodations weren't made, the [academic grievance process](#) should be followed.

- Students should notify faculty in writing or via email during the first two weeks of the semester of their intention to be absent from class for religious observance.

Syracuse University has a feature in their MySlice system enabling students to notify SU faculty of their intention to observe various important religious holidays during the semester (found in the main MySlice page under “Student Services” in the Enrollment” section). If you are taking a Syracuse University course, you must use this system to notify SU instructors *during the first two weeks* of class if you anticipate being absent from a Syracuse University class or wish to receive other consideration if observing a religious holiday interferes with your opportunity to fully participate in the activities of the class.

Please note that this system **DOES NOT WORK** for ESF courses, it *only* works for SU courses. In the past, ESF students have occasionally entered requests into the SU system with the intent of notifying their ESF instructors about planned observance of religious holidays. These requests **will not be received by your ESF instructor!** For ESF courses, you must contact your instructor directly to request an excused absence from any regularly scheduled ESF classroom, lab, or studio activities. You must make this request during the first two weeks of classes, just as you would using the SU system.

ESF wishes to respect each student’s right to freedom of religious expression, and your right to observe religious holidays under state law; this is reflected by ESF College policy and clearly outlined in the ESF College catalog. **For ESF courses**, ESF students are not required to follow any specific campus-wide notification procedure. We do, however, ask that faculty and students continue to abide by College policy and NYS law, and that faculty members include specific notification procedures which comply with these policies in your course syllabi for students to follow should they desire to observe religious holidays.

Considerations for ESF sponsored events, regardless of whether or not they potentially in conflict with a Religious Holiday:

All ESF-sponsored events must maintain safe practices in food preparation and storage, and compliance with applicable NYS Department of Health regulations. See <http://www.ongov.net/health/env/food-protection.html> and John Wasiel, ESF’s Environmental Health & Safety Officer, for guidance. In addition, please consider:

- You are strongly encouraged to offer gluten free, vegetarian, and vegan offerings (which could meet Kosher and Halal guidelines) at ESF-sponsored events. Both diets have periods when additional restrictions apply (e.g., Passover, Ramadan).
- Kosher dietary restrictions refer to the dietary guidelines of Jewish law, and **these apply daily throughout the year**. Restrictions include: pork, shellfish (fish is allowed), and mixing meat with dairy.
- Halal dietary restrictions refer to the foods prohibited according to Islamic dietary law throughout the year. Restrictions include alcohol and pork.
- Depending on level of observance, vegan options might be unacceptable because of potential cross contamination. In those instances, options would need to be secured from a kosher caterer or use individually packaged certified items.