September 11, 2023

TO:       Members of the Faculty

FROM:     Jill Dolan, Dean of the College
          Gene Jarrett, Dean of the Faculty
          Rod Priestley, Dean of the Graduate School

RE:       Religious Observances, Fall Term 2023

Throughout the year, students might ask faculty for permission to reschedule academic obligations so that they may observe one or more religious holidays. We ask faculty to honor such requests and to work with students to plan the most effective ways for them to make up their work.

For example, an undergraduate or graduate student might review a classmate’s notes (if you permit); see you during your office hours; write a short essay on assigned readings; or complete an assignment that you consider fair and equivalent. The ability of students to practice their faith should not compromise their ability to remain in good academic standing.

We realize many faculty might also observe one or more holidays. Please let your students know if you plan to reschedule one of your class meetings to accommodate your own observances. And students should of course be as gracious with your religious needs as we encourage you to be with theirs.

You can find a list of religious holidays on the Office of Religious Life website.

Faculty should know that students who observe the Jewish holidays in a traditional way are unable to write or use a computer or complete assignments on Shabbat and other holidays. Their observance restricts them from doing any work at all from sunset on the first night of the holiday through nightfall on the last night. The holidays that end on Friday at nightfall go directly into the Sabbath observance.

Additionally, observant Muslim students are expected to pray individually five times a day, on a specific schedule, as well as weekly in a group session on Friday afternoons. While there is some flexibility in the daily prayers, so that they can usually be accommodated around regular class meetings, the weekly group prayer session on Fridays from 1:15 to 2:00 p.m. in Murray-Dodge Hall requires attendance on a fixed schedule.
Because the Friday prayer session overlaps with 12:30 and 1:30 classes, it would be helpful if Muslim undergraduate students who request rescheduling could enroll in classes, precepts, drill sections, and labs that meet at times other than Friday afternoon.

Since most of this scheduling happens with the faculty members in charge of these courses, rather than through the Registrar’s office, we want to alert you to expect to receive some requests for rescheduling from observant Muslim students. We hope you’ll do everything you can to accommodate them.

If you need information about other religious holidays students might bring to your attention, please contact the Office of Religious Life. You may also contact the Dean of Religious Life and the Chapel, Dr. Alison Boden, directly at aboden@princeton.edu or at 609-258-6244.

And, of course, feel free to contact Jill in the Office of the Dean of the College at jsdolan@Princeton.edu or 609-258-3040 for matters related to undergraduate teaching or Rod in the Office of the Dean of the Graduate School at graddean@princeton.edu or 609-258-3030 for matters related to graduate student teaching, if you have questions or concerns about teaching and religious observances.

Thanks very much for your help. We hope your semester will be rich and rewarding.

Our best,

cc: Alison Boden, Dean of the Office of Religious Life and the Chapel
    Kathleen Deignan, Acting Dean of Undergraduate Students
    W. Rochelle Calhoun, Vice President for Campus Life
    Emily Shandley, Registrar
    Residential College Deans and Assistant Deans of Studies
    Academic Department Program Managers