



Dear Faculty/Staff Colleagues:

SMU is rooted in the Christian tradition of Methodism and celebrates religious belief and practice that nourish the life of the mind and spirit. Throughout the Fall semester many religions observe holy days that bring the community of faith together. As the new academic year begins, we remind you of the University's religious observance policy and religious holy days taking place in the Fall semester.

Students who need to miss class for religious observance are expected to notify faculty of their absence within the first two weeks of the semester and are required to make up any missed work. While students are expected to notify faculty at the beginning of the term, we encourage faculty to work with students in the weeks prior to holidays to make proper arrangements for accessing course materials and making up missed work in a timely manner.

You should anticipate requests from students observing the following holy days:

- **Hinduism**

- **Janmashtami** is Monday, August 26.
 - Janmashtami is a Hindu festival celebrating the birth of Krishna.
 - Hindus celebrate by fasting, singing, praying together, preparing and sharing special food, night vigils and visiting temples.
- **Dussehra (Dasera)** is Saturday, October 12.
 - Dussehra is a Hindu festival celebrating the victory of good over evil after the nine days of Navratri, and marks the beginning of preparation for Diwali.
- **Diwali** is Friday, November 1. Some people will observe on October 31.
 - Diwali is the Hindu festival of lights and a celebration of victory of good over evil.

- **Islam:**
 - **Mawlid an Nabi** begins at sunset on Sunday, September 15 and ends at sunset on Wednesday, September 27.
 - **Mawlid an Nabi** celebrates the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).
 - There is no prohibition on work. But, students may request excused absence to attend services.

- **Judaism:**
 - **High Holidays**
 - **Rosh Hashannah** begins at sunset on Wednesday, October 2 and ends at nightfall on Friday, October 4. No work is permitted.
 - **Yom Kippur** begins at sunset on Friday, October 11 and ends at nightfall on Saturday, October 12. No work is permitted.
 - You should anticipate requests to miss class for Rosh Hashannah services on Thursday and Friday, October 3-4.
 - Both holidays include religious services that run throughout the holidays.
 - Although Yom Kippur this year falls on the weekend, please keep in mind that observant students will not do work or travel over the holiday.
 - **Sukkoth/Simchat Torah** begins at sunset on Wednesday, October 16 and ends at nightfall on Friday, October 25.
 - Work is not permitted October 17-18 or October 22-25 (beginning at sunset on October 21). You should anticipate requests to miss class on these dates.
 - Throughout the week, observant students will participate in religious gatherings on and off campus. See Hillel at SMU for programming at the SMU Sukkah.
 - **Hannukah** begins at sunset on December 25 and ends at nightfall on January 2. There is no prohibition on work during Hannukah and student will be away for Winter Break.

- **Christianity:**
 - **Christmas**
 - Most Western Christian traditions celebrate Christmas on December 25.
 - Orthodox (Eastern) Christians celebrate Christmas on January 7.

- If you are teaching in January Intersession, you may have students request absence on January 7.

Thank you for your commitment to support holistic student growth that nurtures the mind, body and spirit. Each religious tradition is diverse, and the summary above does not speak to every variation you may encounter. If you have questions or need additional information, please contact the [Rev. Lisa Garvin](#), Chaplain and Minister to the University or the Office of the Chaplain and Religious Life at chaplain@smu.edu.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lisa Garvin". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name "Lisa" and last name "Garvin" clearly legible.

Rev. Lisa Garvin

Chaplain and Minister to the University

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sheri Kunovich". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name "Sheri" and last name "Kunovich" clearly legible.

Associate Provost for Student Academic Engagement and Success