

Dear colleagues,

With the semester quickly approaching, I wanted to pass along some important religious observances that fall during the academic year for you to consider as you plan your programs.

Note that the list below is not exhaustive; it includes the holidays that have traditionally posed scheduling conflicts—though bear in mind that colleagues and students may request accommodations for holidays beyond those listed here.

If you or your students ever have questions about religious holidays or accommodations, please don't hesitate to refer them to me at o.goodrich@bowdoin.edu. You may also share with them the attached handout and/or reference the [Academic Calendar website](#).

For those of you I have not met since I began my role in June, I look forward to meeting you and working with you in the weeks and months ahead.

All the best,
+Oliver

Fall Semester

September 25-27, **Rosh Hashanah** (Judaism; *begins at sundown on Sept. 25 and concludes at sundown on Sept. 27*)

October 4-5, **Yom Kippur** (Judaism; *begins at sundown on Oct. 4 and concludes at sundown on Oct. 5*)

October 24, **Diwali** (Hinduism)

Spring Semester

January 22, **Lunar New Year** (Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism)

February 22, **Ash Wednesday** (Protestant Christianity & Catholicism)

March 8, **Holi** (Hinduism)

March 22-April 20, **Ramadan** (Islam; *dates approximate and may change +/- one day*)

April 5-13, **Passover** (Judaism; *begins at sundown on April 5 and concludes at sundown on April 13*)

April 7, **Good Friday** (Protestant Christianity & Catholicism)

April 9, **Easter** (Protestant Christianity & Catholicism; *Orthodox Christian Easter falls on April 16*)

April 21-22, **Eid al-Fitr** (Islam; *begins at sundown on April 21*)

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[Click here to schedule a meeting with me](#)



RACHEL LORD CENTER FOR **RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL LIFE**

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE ACCOMMODATIONS

Bowdoin College is committed to fostering a diverse and inclusive learning community. This commitment includes recognizing and honoring the wide variety of religious traditions practiced on our campus. Below is a summary of Bowdoin's religious observance policies along with some helpful tips and resources for students.

Faculty Expectations

Bowdoin faculty are governed by the Faculty Handbook, which sets the following policies for academic religious observance accommodations. "No student is required to take an examination or fulfill other scheduled course requirements on recognized religious holidays. Instructors are encouraged to avoid scheduling examinations on recognized major religious holidays. Students are expected to declare their intention to observe religious holidays at the beginning of the semester. A list of religious holidays will be provided each year in the Bowdoin College Catalogue and Academic Handbook." (from the 2022-2023 Faculty Handbook, §V.D.2)

Student Expectations

At the beginning of each semester, students should review the syllabus for every course and notice if any coursework deadlines conflict with any religious holidays they intend to observe. If students anticipate needing any academic religious observance accommodations, then they must notify their professors of their intentions at the beginning of the semester. Professors and students can then work together to determine a reasonable alternative arrangement for completing course requirements. Students, keep in mind that:

1. It is your responsibility to communicate your religious observance needs to your professor as early in the semester as possible. Faculty are not obligated to honor requests that are made later in the semester and/or at the last minute. See the reverse side for a sample email template you can use.
2. You are welcome and encouraged to propose an alternative arrangement for completing a course assignment that is impacted by your religious observance, but faculty are not obligated to honor your preferred accommodation. Remember that faculty must take into consideration many factors when making accommodations, including their schedule, the schedules of TAs or proctors, and their other academic obligations.

Additional Resources

If you need help, please ask! Students or faculty who have any questions about how to navigate religious accommodation needs are encouraged to consult with Oliver Goodrich, the Director of the Rachel Lord Center for Religious and Spiritual Life.

- In person: 30 College Street
- Email: o.goodrich@bowdoin.edu
- Phone: 207.208.2977



Sample Religious Accommodation Email Request

It can feel challenging to advocate for your religious observance needs. If you are unsure how to approach your professor to request accommodations, consider adapting the template below to make your request. If you have other questions or need additional support, please reach out to Oliver Goodrich, the Director of the Rachel Lord Center for Religious and Spiritual Life (o.goodrich@bowdoin.edu).

Subject: Religious Accommodation for [Course Name or Number]

Dear Professor [last name],

I am a student in [course name or number], and I would like to request your help with accommodating my religious observance needs. I understand that Bowdoin's policy for religious accommodations expects students to make such requests at the beginning of the semester, so I wanted to reach out to you as soon as possible.

I identify as an observing [religious tradition or identity], and on [date] I will be observing [name of religious holiday]. My observance of this holiday conflicts with [class attendance and/or name of assignment] that I see is listed on the syllabus. [Note: while you are not obligated to do so, you may find it helpful to explain the details of your religious observance, ie *As part of our observance we fast all day*; or *My tradition prohibits me from doing any work during the holiday*.]

I am requesting that we work together to explore how I can honor my commitments to both my religion and my coursework. One possible accommodation that I am proposing is [propose an alternative due date or arrangement]. I also recognize that you have to balance many factors in making accommodations, so I would also welcome any alternative accommodations that you have in mind.

I look forward to hearing from you. If it would be easier for us to talk in person, please let me know and I would be happy to stop by your office hours or speak by phone. Thank you in advance for working with me to accommodate my religious needs.

Sincerely,

[your name]



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