**RAMADAN 2023**
**March 23rd – April 21st**

Ramadan begins on the first Saturday of the Spring Quarter. The dates are based on the lunar year calendar; for different parts of the world, the dates are slightly different and depend on the sighting of the moon, which is notable for our students/colleagues who are abroad or have families abroad. You can read more about Ramadan and the observance of it [here](https://nam01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Furi.org%2Fkids%2Fworld-religions%2Fmuslim-beliefs&data=02%7C01%7CKatrina.Whitney%40cwu.edu%7C8616229d6623490a3c1808d7e64410e0%7Cf891d6c191d6444ba700d371910716c7%7C0%7C0%7C637231052322206615&sdata=rzPUFqMxK91K%2BNC6953%2FDDi%2F6ue4%2FPjd6POPTrH1SEY%3D&reserved=0).

The Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR – pronounce “care”) has [several free online guides](https://nam01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cair.com%2Fresources%2Fguides-to-muslim-religious-practices%2F&data=02%7C01%7CKatrina.Whitney%40cwu.edu%7C8616229d6623490a3c1808d7e64410e0%7Cf891d6c191d6444ba700d371910716c7%7C0%7C0%7C637231052322206615&sdata=eCpZbIoOwa4aRR85au1h%2Bk8aIWHK13osff2f2DMOeoQ%3D&reserved=0) to help non-Muslims understand religious practice, educators, employers, healthcare, law enforcement etc. WA State CAIR specific information can be found here. (<https://cairwa.org/>)

**Practices for Ramadan:**

During Ramadan, common practices include fasting, communal prayers, a study of the Qu’ran, engaging in volunteering and/or charitable giving (“giving alms”), and reflection on life’s blessings. This article “[things you need to know in 2020 about Ramadan](https://nam01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.thenational.ae%2Fuae%2Framadan-2020-everything-you-need-to-know-about-the-holy-month-in-the-uae-1.1006789&data=02%7C01%7CKatrina.Whitney%40cwu.edu%7C8616229d6623490a3c1808d7e64410e0%7Cf891d6c191d6444ba700d371910716c7%7C0%7C0%7C637231052322216610&sdata=5EM5Db9VW35yMa5XAJOKbcoUM2XUigEo3AGDcPEteRg%3D&reserved=0)” provides an overview (it is from the UAE, so not all practices may be familiar or practiced in the US).

Fasting is the most common way to observe Ramadan. Traditionally, this means no food or water is consumed during daylight hours. Folks will eat a meal before sunrise and after sunset. Notably in the Pacific Northwest because of our geography, it’s a longer day of fasting than in many other parts of the US, and in some cases, worldwide. Ramadan represents a time for community gathering, particularly during *iftar*(break fast). Many observe Ramadan by increasing their almsgiving– practices include volunteering, giving back to the community, and donating to charity.

[Muslim Holy Days & Observances](https://theguibordcenter.org/faiths/islam/muslim-holy-observances/)

Consider following #Ramadan on TikTok.

Check in with students and colleagues who are observing and ask:
*How is their Ramadan practice going? What has been an unexpected part of observing Ramadan during this time? What's challenging? What’s resonating with you?*

**Terminology:**

* **Islam:** refers to the religion (part of the 3 Abrahamic faith traditions who share belief in one god: Christianity, Judaism, Islam)
* **Muslim:** a follower of Islam (a person/people)
* **Iftar:** is the Arabic word for breaking fast during Ramadan. Depending on which branch of Islam, cultural or family traditions, folks break fast in different ways. For instance, some begin with prayer where others do not, some begin with symbolic foods such as dates, while others do not etc. In many communities, *iftar* is a community gathering and celebration each day.
* **Eid** (other cultures may not call it Eid): Eid in Arabic means “feast, festival, holiday.” Eid is a worldwide festival and celebration for Muslims. During the calendar year there are two Eid's that are celebrated by Muslims.
* **Eid ul Fitr**: “festival to break the fast”, is at the end of the holy month of Ramadan in which Muslims fast for a whole month.
* **Halal:** An Arabic term that means “permissible.” In terms of food, it means food that is permissible according to Islamic law. For a meat to be certified “halal,” it cannot be a forbidden cut (such as meat from hindquarters) or animal (such as pork).
* **Haram:** An Arabic term meaning "forbidden."
* **Sects of Islam:** Sunni and Shiite are the largest sects of Islam; there are smaller sects within each. Sunni Muslims accept that the first four caliphs were the successors to Muhammed, while Shiite Muslims believe that the caliph Ali and his descendants are the successors to Muhammed. Here's a short video on Sunni and Shia (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TDkIKeINPZE>) and an article on the difference in practices: (<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/mideast/what-are-differences-between-sunni-shiite-muslims-n489951>).

**Considerations:**

* **Energy levels:** Folks observing fasting may be tired during this time, since they're up early to eat and don't eat during the day, so their energy levels may be low.
	+ The first week tends to be especially hard as observing students adjust to the practice. Students observing tend to nap more as part of their way of navigating through the day.
	+ Students’ moods might change, or they might feel irritable or have trouble focusing on their assignments as they adjust. Try to offer flexibility around assignments and class attendance and suggest alternatives.
	+ If folks are looking for adaptations or accommodations, please ask what needs folks have and offer options and flexibility. In particular, for strenuous physical activity, consider excusing observing students from participating.
* **Fasting practice:** If someone isn't fasting on a particular day that does not mean they are or are not observing Ramadan but could be for any private personal reasons. Students may ask for varied accommodation throughout the period of Ramadan. Some folks pray before breaking fast, others may not.
	+ People who menstruate do not usually fast during their cycle, but that does not mean that they are not observing Ramadan.
	+ People who have underlying medical conditions may not observe fast, but that does not mean they are not observing Ramadan.
* **For events/gatherings:** Be mindful not to make comments about whether someone is or is not eating. Be mindful of the suggestion to “drink water.” Consider how food/drink is centered in any event/program you lead during this time. If you’re planning an event where people may be eating, consider how you might design your event so that individuals observing fasting don’t feel singled out or excluded for not eating or drinking
* **Global and U.S. Norms:** Islam is the third largest religion in the United States, after Christianity and Judaism, and Islam is currently the world’s second-largest religion. Despite its prevalence, Ellensburg currently does not have a mosque nor a Halal restaurant. Consider how we can advocate for more affirming spaces for Muslim students, staff, and faculty on campus. Checking in with folks about their Ramadan practice can feel meaningful and help folks feel seen.
* You can say "Ramadan Mubarak!" (pronounced moo-bar-ick), which means "Blessed Ramadan" in Arabic.

*Student facing language:*

**Religious, Faith and/or Spiritual Considerations**

During Spring Quarter, we recognize you may be observing spiritual, faith-based or religious practices including, but not limited to observances for holidays such as Passover, Ramadan and Easter. Please connect with me so that I am aware of any particular accommodations you may need during this time and I will work with you to make adaptations for your coursework.

*For Faculty*

Considerations will look different for synchronous versus asynchronous classes. Technology use may be a particular consideration; for instance, in conservative Jewish faith practice, use of technology is prohibited during the Sabbath, or general engagement; for instance, for many observing Ramadan, asynchronous classes are likely an asset as it allows students to do coursework outside the hours of fasting or at a time when they function most effectively or comfortably.