

Holy Days and Cultural Observances 2024-2025 Academic Year

As a diverse community, Wittenberg strives to recognize spiritually and culturally significant days throughout the academic year that may be observed by our faculty, staff and students. Some holy days include fasting, attendance at religious services, and community events for adherents. Our community is mindful that such observances may lead students to miss class or faculty/staff to need time away from work. Please work with students who need to miss class as a result of their faith practices. We invite questions for clarity and learning, which can be directed to Pastor Tracy or Suzanne Smailes. Blessings as you celebrate in the coming year!

Locations and Opportunities for Worship and Reflection:

Weekday Chapel: weekly calendar: Every Tues & Thurs at 12:00-12:20 pm (Weaver Chapel). Per University policy, classes and meetings should not be scheduled during chapel time.

Evening Chapel: Sundays from 4:30-5:30 pm in Weaver Chapel. A time of reflection, prayer and song.

Interfaith Prayer and Meditation Room: Located on the second floor of the library, this space is available for personal meditation, reflection, prayer and religious practices. A sink is available and the space is marked to identify the East wall for prayer and observance.

Meditation Space: The activity room in Weaver Chapel offers space for prayer, meditation and personal reflection. A more intimate space within Weaver Chapel for reflection and mediation.

Religious and Secular Observances throughout 2024-2025 academic year

Jewish - Holy Days: October 2024

The Jewish High Holy days encompass the ten days from the beginning of Rosh Hashanah (the Jewish New Year) and the end of Yom Kippur (Jewish Day of Atonement): observant students, faculty and staff might fast, attend synagogue, refrain from work/classes, request re-scheduling of exams.

Rosh Hashanah: Wed Oct 2nd-Fri Oct 4th (sundown to sundown)

Yom Kippur: Fri Oct 11th-Sat Oct 12th (sundown to sundown)

Sukkot (Feast of Tabernacles or Feast of Booths) celebrates the gathering of the Fall harvest. The holiday has also come to commemorate the 40 years of Jewish wandering in the desert after the giving of the Torah.

Sukkot: Wed Oct 16th-Wed Oct 23rd (sundown to sundown)

Simchat Torah celebrates when the yearly cycle of Torah reading is completed and the next cycle is begun.

Simchat Torah: Thurs Oct 24th-Fri Oct 25th (sundown to sundown)

Hindu - Festival of Lights - Diwali: Oct-Nove 2024

Families light their homes and gather for feasts. The Springfield community often has an observance available to attend.

Diwali: Thurs Oct 31st-Fri Nov 1st

American Secular - Thanksgiving: November 2024

A traditional harvest festival and time to give thanks for the year's blessings. Family and friends gather for a large meal of traditional foods and time together.

Thanksgiving: Thur Nov 28 (University closed 11/28-/11/29)

Jewish - Hanukkah (Festival of Lights): December 2024-Jan 2025

Commemoration of rededication of the Second Temple of Jerusalem. Celebrated through the lighting of candles on the evening of each night for 8 nights.

Hanukkah: Wed Dec 25th-Thur Jan 2nd (sundown to sundown)

Christian - Advent & Christmas: December 2024

A time of preparation and reflection (Advent) followed by the commemoration of the birth of Jesus. Christians believe Jesus is the Son of God, who came into the world to redeem and unite.

Advent: Sun Dec 1-Tues Dec 24

Christmas Eve: Tues Dec 24

Christmas Day: Wed Dec 25

(University is shut down 12/21-1/1)

Commonwealth Secular - Boxing Day: December 2024

Traditionally a day when wealthy people gave boxes of food to those in poverty, today's traditions include time with family, meals and celebrations.

Boxing day: Thur Dec 26

Orthodox Christian – Christmas: January 2025

Celebrated per the Julian calendar, Orthodox Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus, who adherents believe is the Son of God.

Orthodox Christmas: Sat Jan 7

Southeast Asia - Lunar New Year: January-February 2025

Dating back over 4,000 years, the Lunar New Year bids farewell to winter and welcomes a new season. Chinese Chunjie, Vietnamese Tet, Korean Solnal, it is also called the Spring Festival. It begins with the first new moon of the lunar calendar and ends with the Lantern Festival on the first full moon of the

lunar calendar, 15 days later. Traditionally, New Year's Eve and New Year's Day are reserved for family celebrations, including ceremonies honoring ancestors. Being with family is important. Traditionally Chinese people eat no animal products the 1st and 15th days during this time.

Lunar New Year: Wed Jan 29th

Lantern Festival: Wed Feb 15th

Christian - Lent, Holy Week & Easter: March-April 2025

Beginning with Ash Wednesday (a somber day of repentance and imposition of ashes to remember the mortality of humans), Lent is a time of reflection, prayer, fasting and repentance for Christians. Holy Week commemorates the final week of Jesus' life, culminating on Good Friday (the day Jesus was crucified). Easter, the holiest day in the Christian calendar, celebrates the resurrection of Jesus and the power of death being defeated.

Ash Wednesday: Wed March 5th (Worship Service & Imposition of Ashes, Weaver Chapel 12:00pm)

Holy Week: Sun April 13th-Sat April 19th (University closed April 18th)

Easter: Sun April 20th

Muslim – Ramadan: Feb-March 2025

Ramadan is the holiest period of the Islamic year, commemorating Muhammad's reception of the divine revelation recorded in the Qur'an. Observed with strict fasting from sunrise to sundown of both water and food for the whole month. An iftar, or the meal to break the fast, begins with prayer at sundown. Observant students can request sundown meal pickup in Post 95 through Weaver Chapel/Pastor Tracy.

First evening of Ramadan: Fri Feb 28th (fasting begins the next day)

Eid al-Fitr: Sun March 30th (fasting ends at sundown)

Jewish – Purim: March 2025

Purim: Synagogues hold plays and festivals to commemorate the defeat of Haman's plot to massacre the Jews recorded in the Book of Esther.

Purim: Thurs March 13th-Fri March 14th (sundown to sundown)

Jewish – Passover: April 2025

Passover commemorates the liberation of the Israelites from Egyptian slavery. Students may want to be home with family, especially for the first two nights (4/22-4/23). Temple Sholom holds a Second Night

Seder; students should call Temple Sholom well in advance for details. Weaver Chapel can assist in connecting students.

Passover: Sat April 12th-Sunday April 20th (sundown to sundown)

Jewish - Yom HaShoah: April 2025

Yom HaShoah, Day of Remembrance of the Holocaust

Yom HaShoah: Wed April 23rd (sundown) lasting up to 3 days

Muslim - Eid al-Adha: June 2025

Eid al-Adha, commemorating the willingness of Abraham to sacrifice his son; is the climax of the hajj pilgrimage for those in Mecca at the time.

Eid al-Adha: Fri June 6th-Sat June 7th (sundown to sundown)

American Secular – Juneteenth: June 2025

The oldest known celebration marking the end of slavery in the US (specifically Texas, 1865 after the Civil War had ended). Juneteenth is also known as “Freedom Day” and is celebrated by community festivals, celebrating Black culture, historical remembrance, and a ritual of “pouring of the libations” to connect oneself with ancestors by pouring a liquid offering.

Juneteenth: Thurs June 19

Muslim - Al-Hijra / Muharram: June 2025

Al-Hijra / Muharram celebrates the Islamic New Year. Muharram is the name of the first month of the Islamic New Year. Observed with special prayers, some Muslims extend special devotions through lunar month.

Al-Hijra / Muharram: Thurs June 26th-Fri June 27th (sundown-sundown)

Muslim – Ashura: July 2025

Ashura is observed for one or two days by Muslims through fasting and prayer. With different practices depending on Sunni or Shi’ite tradition and interpretation, it can mark the deeds of the Prophet Moses in freeing the Israelites in Egypt and/or martyrdom of Imam Hussein (the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad) and his family.

Ashura: Sat July 5th-Sun July 6th (sundown to sundown)