

Religious, Cultural & Ethnic Holidays & Days of Observance

October 2019

This handout is to call your attention to just some of the many nationally and internationally recognized and/or celebrated diverse days of observance and religious/ethnic holidays that fall within the month of October 2019. We invite you to share it with the students, staff, and faculty you work with across campus. For more information, feel free to visit the Multicultural Resource Calendar located on the Office of Student Life's Mosaic Center website:

http://www.diversityresources.com/aa_gsr/index.php?key=adCaO2Shix6u

Thank you,

The Mosaic: Center for Culture and Diversity, Interfaith Center, and Queer Student Lounge Staff

October 6 - Hindu : Durga Puja

Dussehra, which means "the tenth day," is celebrated at the culmination of the "nine nights" festival of Asuj Navratras. Celebrated with feasting and rejoicing, it commemorates Rama's victory over Ravana and honors the goddess Durga. This festival is also known as Vijay Dasami.

October 8 - Hindu : Dussehra:

Also known as Dasara or Vijayadasami, Dassehra means "the tenth day." It's celebrated at the culmination of the "nine nights" festival of Asuj Navratras. Celebrated with feasting and rejoicing, it commemorates Rama's victory over Ravana and honors the goddess Durga. This festival is also known as Vijay Dasami.

October 8 - Jewish : Yom Kippur begins at sundown

Yom Kippur, also known as the Day of Atonement, is the holiest day of the year in Judaism. Its central themes are atonement and repentance. Jewish people traditionally observe this holy day with an approximate 25-hour period of fasting and intensive prayer, often spending most of the day in synagogue services.

October 9 - Jewish : Yom Kippur

The ten days from Rosh Hashanah to Yom Kippur are known as the Days of Awe or the Days of Repentance. During this time Jews are to remind themselves of their sins and seek forgiveness for their wrongdoings. Wrongdoing against God can be forgiven by God, but wrongdoing against others can be forgiven only by the person wronged. Because sin corrupts not only the person who commits it, but the entire community as well, all sins are confessed by the whole

congregation. The last service of Yom Kippur, the Closing, occurs as the sun begins to set. Initially, the "closing" pertained to the gates of the Temple. The deeper meaning, however, is that the Book of Life is sealed for the ensuing year. Thus, freed from sin by repentance and sealed in the Book of Life, the worshippers turn from the past to the future.

Recognizing the Festival/Holiday: Many Jews observe Yom Kippur, the holiest Jewish holiday, by taking no food or water from sundown the day before through sundown the following day. It is also common for Jews not to work on the night before and the day of Yom Kippur. Appropriate greetings include "May you be sealed in the book of life for a good year" and "Good yuntef."

October 12 - Brazil : Our Lady Aparecida

October 13 - Brazil : Círio de Nazaré:

One of the largest Catholic processions in the world, Círio de Nazaré draws nearly two million pilgrims from around the country to join the procession that winds through the city of Belém following the statue of Our Lady of Nazaré on its way to the Nazaré Basilica, where the statue is venerated for fifteen days. Celebrated annually on the second Sunday of October, the festival is a time for feasting and exchanging gifts.

October 13 - Jewish : Sukkot begins at sundown

October 13 - Samoa : White Sunday:

On White Sunday, Samoans celebrate and give thanks for their children, who dress in their finest white garments and attend church services, dance to worship music, and perform skits and dramas enacting Biblical stories. In Samoan, the holiday is called Lotu-a-Tamaiti or Prayer for Children.

October 14 - 20 - Jewish: Sukkot

Sukkot, which is a holiday that lasts seven days, is named for the huts that are erected and hung with fruits and vegetables to recall the temporary field dwellings that Hebrew farmers traditionally used during harvest time. Sukkot's end, also known as Hoshanah Rabbah, is followed by Sh'mini Atzeret, which celebrates the end of the holiday season that began with Rosh Hashanah. The next holiday is Simchat Torah, which commemorates the reading of the last part of the Torah and the beginning of the first part, to start the cycle of scriptural readings for the new year.

Recognizing the Festival/Holiday: Many observant Jews build a sukkot, a three-sided wooden hut with a ceiling, which is decorated with fall fruits and vegetables, as well as Jewish artifacts,

such as the menorah. Meals are eaten in the sukkot and religious services are also held there. Giving someone something to decorate a sukkot is an appropriate gift.

October 17 - Hindu : Karva Chauth

On this day, married Hindu women observe a fast and pray for the well-being, prosperity, and longevity of their husbands. On the eve of Karva Chauth, women buy new clothes, bangles, and mehndi, or henna, in preparation for the festival. Before dawn the next morning, they bathe, dress in their beautiful new clothes, and offer the first prayers for the long life of their husband. They partake of sargi, a meal of grains, sweets, and fruits provided by their mother-in-law, and drink lots of water. Then for the remainder of the day, women keep the nirjal vrat, or fast, abstaining from food and water until moonrise. Women decorate their palms and feet with mehndi, and gather in late afternoon to perform a puja, praying to Shiva and Parvati for the well-being and long life of their husbands. They gather around a karva, or earthen pot, a symbol of peace and prosperity, while the story of Karva Chauth is recited. When the moon is finally sighted, women offer prayers to the moon seven times for their husband's and family's welfare. Then, their husbands offer a sip of water and the fast comes to an end. The first Karva Chauth of a new bride is especially important. The wedding day outfits are worn again, and the mothers of newly wed girls give baya, containing sweets, almonds, and gifts, to the parents of their new son-in-law. Karva Chauth was originally a festival celebrating the relationship between a bride and her "god-sister," a woman appointed by a new bride's in-laws to be her lifelong friend and confidante. This custom existed back in the days before telephones and trains, when young brides would go to live with their in-laws in remote villages, out of touch with family and friends. On Karva Chauth, the bride and her "god-sister" would exchange karvas that were decorated and filled with bangles and ribbons, homemade candy and sweets, mehndi, and small items of clothing.

October 19 - Islamic : Arbaeen begins at sundown

October 19 - Jewish : Hoshana Rabbah begins at sundown

October 20 - Baha'i : Birthday of the Bab:

This date marks the birthday of the Bab (1819-1850), who is honored by the Baha'is as the one who announced that the messenger of God would soon appear. Born Siyyid Ali Muhammad in Shiraz, Iran, his title in Arabic means "The Gate." The Bab was the forerunner of Baha'u'llah, the prophet-founder of the Baha'i faith. On this day Baha'is throughout the world suspend work and come together for prayer and festivities.

October 20 - Islamic : Arbaeen

This marks the end of the traditional 40-day mourning period following Ashura, the anniversary of the martyrdom of Hussein ibn Ali, grandson of Islam's prophet Muhammad and third Imam of the Shi'a Muslims. For Shi'a Muslims, Arbaeen is a day of commemoration and pilgrimage to the shrine of Hussein at Karbala.

October 20 - Jewish : Hoshana Rabbah

Hosanna Rabbah, from the Aramaic meaning "Great Hoshanah," is the seventh and last day of Sukkoth. It is known as the day of the final sealing of judgment, which began on Rosh Hashanah.

October 20 - Jewish : Shemini Atzeret begins at sundown

October 21 - Jewish : Shemini Atzeret

Shemini Atzeret celebrates the end of the holiday season that began with Rosh Hashanah. In Israel, Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah are both observed on this day. (See entry for Sukkoth.) This two-day holiday ends the following day at nightfall.

October 21 - Jewish : Simchat Torah begins at sundown

October 22 - Jewish : Simchat Torah:

Simchat Torah commemorates the reading of the last part of the Torah and the beginning of the first part, to start the cycle of scriptural readings for the new year. (See entry for Sukkoth.)

October 27 - Hindu : Diwali

This is one of the most important festivals of the year for Hindus. It lasts for five days and combines a number of festivals to celebrate different gods and goddesses and events in their lives as described in Hindu tradition. The day before Diwali is spent cleaning the house, shopping, and decorating with flowers. A design is painted in white in front of the door of the house to bring good luck. Lamps are lit for the entire five days beside roads and streams, along edges of roofs, and on window sills to enable Lakshmi, the Hindu goddess of prosperity, to find her way to every home. For Jains, Diwali is celebrated as the day that Mahavira attained Nirvana.

Recognizing the Festival/Holiday: Since Diwali is a "festival of lights," candles are an appropriate gift. In addition, sweets, dried fruits, cakes, or cookies called diyas made in the shape of the oil lamps used to decorate the walkways of one's house might be given. Keep in mind that Hindus neither eat meat nor drink alcoholic beverages. Appropriate greetings for all Hindu holidays include "God bless you with prosperity and happiness" or "I wish you happiness and prosperity."

October 27 - Sikh : Bandi Chhor Divas

The second most important Sikh festival after Vaisakhi, Bandi Chhor Divas (Day of Liberation) celebrates the release from prison of the Sixth Guru, Guru Hargobind Ji, along with 52 other princes, in October 1619. Upon his release, Guru Hargobind Ji arrived in Amritsar during the Diwali festival; thereafter his liberation was always associated with Diwali.

October 28 - Jain : New Year

The Jain New Year, or Veer Samvat, begins the day after the festival of Diwali and is a time of joyful celebration.

October 19 - Islamic : Arbaeen begins at sundown

October 31 - Pagan and Wiccan : Samhain (sow-in):

Samhain, the most important of the Sabbats, marks the end of the third and final harvest in the Wheel of the Year. It is a time to remember the dead and to celebrate the cycle of life. Since the new Celtic year began at dusk on October 31, the Night of Samhain (Oidhche Shamhna), or November Eve, was the most important part of the ancient Celtic holiday. The fruits of the harvest were gathered for a feast and each village had a great bonfire to ward off evil spirits. Upon these communal bonfires (originally tine cnámh, or "bonfires") would be cast the bones of cattle, and village families would light their hearths from the common flame. Oidhche Shamhna was a holy time when it was believed that the veil between the mortal world and the otherworld was at its thinnest during the gap in time between the old and new years. During this time, people would perform rituals to contact their ancestors in the otherworld. It was thought that the spirits of the dead would revisit their earthly homes, so food and drink were left out for them. Turnips carved with spirit guardians were set outside people's doors to protect them from unfriendly spirits, while young people, dressed in disguises, pretended to be the returning dead or spirits from the otherworld. Since it was believed that this break in time loosened the structure of society, people flouted convention and played tricks on one another. Divination rituals were also performed because the veil between present and future was then at its most transparent. The newly established Christian religion found many of the Celtic beliefs to be compatible with their own, such as the belief in the importance of family and showing respect for the dead. Christians incorporated Pagan customs into their holidays so that those who converted to Christianity could continue to celebrate their old festivals. Samhain was given a Christian blessing in A.D. 837, at which time November 1 was designated the Feast of All Saints, or Hallow Tide, and Oidhche Shamhna became Hallow E'en.