

Ramadan 2020
Information Sheet for the Columbia University Community
(Updated in light of COVID-19)

Background

Ramadan is a spiritual month for Muslims that is marked by special observations such as fasting and nightly prayer.

This year in the New York area, Ramadan begins at sunset on Thursday, April 23 and ends at sunset on Saturday, May 23. Observation of the start and end dates may vary by one day depending on different locations and on different schools of thought within the Islamic tradition. The majority of Muslims in America will be observing Ramadan this year on the aforementioned dates. Ramadan is on a lunar calendar and moves up 11 days each year.

Many practicing Muslims observe fasting and additional Taraweeh prayers during Ramadan. Fasting is typically observed by abstaining from food and water from dawn to sunset and is considered mandatory by many Muslims throughout the month of Ramadan. Taraweeh prayers last for approximately two hours every night during Ramadan and are generally considered to be highly recommended rather than mandatory.

For Administration and Faculty

- As noted, Ramadan will begin on Thursday, April 23, will continue through study days, finals, and Commencement, and will end on May 23.
- In light of our virtual campus, coordination of Ramadan observance and accommodation will need to take into account the various time zones in which students are living.
- Students observing the fast may ask for a 15 minute break during class to pray and eat a snack if their class coincides with sunset in their time zone.
- Due to fasting practices, Muslim students may opt to request religious accommodations for final exams, an hour before dawn, two hours before sunset, and an hour after sunset based on the time zone they are in.
- Amina Darwish (a.darwish@columbia.edu), Columbia's Muslim Life Coordinator, is available to assist faculty who receive requests for accommodations.
- Students who are still on campus can take campus meals to-go to break their fast, and can be encouraged to take additional food at that time for the predawn meal. Dawn in New York on April 23 is 4:41 AM and will be a minute or two earlier every day thereafter.

For Students

- Students seeking religious accommodations for their observation of Ramadan should contact their professors as soon as possible. When requesting accommodations, students should take care to clarify the time zone(s) related to their accommodation requests.
- For questions about Ramadan or religious accommodations, please contact Columbia's Muslim Life Coordinator Amina Darwish at a.darwish@columbia.edu.

Programming

Muslim Life at Columbia is offering online programming throughout the month. Students can join Zoom gatherings to break the fast together at sunset daily, listen to Quran recitations at 10 PM daily, hangout after midnight on Mondays and Thursdays, and watch cooking demonstrations at 3 PM on Sundays. All advertised timings are based on New York City Eastern Standard Time. Please check <https://msa.studentgroups.columbia.edu/content/programs> for all Ramadan programming