

Ramadan 2021

Information Sheet for the Columbia University Community

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 Monday, April 12 and ends at sunset on Wednesday, May 12. 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 Monday, April 12 and end on Wednesday May 12 which will coincide with the last week of classes in the spring semester and continue through study days, finals, Commencement, and the first week and a half of the summer semester.
- 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.
- Tessa McGowan (tjm2180@columbia.edu), Columbia's Religious 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 12 is 5:03 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 Religious Life Coordinator Tessa McGowan at tjm2180@columbia.edu.

Programming

Muslim Life at Columbia is offering online programming throughout the month. Students can join Zoom gatherings or watch Quran recitations every night. 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

Dining

Students who are on the Columbia meal plan can pick up to-go meals before iftar and suhoor time. Dining halls are currently operating with limited hours, and students are encouraged to pick up meals in advance. Dining Halls close on the last day of finals, April 23rd, and will reopen on May 3rd when the summer semester begins.

For any students who are on a meal plan and who are in quarantine or isolation, meals are delivered at 12pm and 5pm daily. Breakfast is delivered with Dinner. For students who are fasting, one delivery will be made each day at 5pm with the two break-fast meals.