Ramadan 2021 at UCSF

This academic Spring Quarter, many Muslims at UCSF will abstain from food and drink for 16+ hours a day during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan. Here’s how you can support them as an ally and help promote a more inclusive campus community:

**What is Ramadan?**

Ramadan is the month of fasting and worship observed by Muslims around the world. During Ramadan, many Muslims abstain from food and drink (including water) from **dawn to sunset**. Muslims consider fasting in Ramadan one of the pillars of their faith. Muslims typically eat a meal before dawn, and then break the fast immediately after sunset with a meal called **iftar**. A few hours after the meal, some Muslims will also attend congregational prayers until midnight or 1 am.

**When is it?**

Ramadan begins and ends with the sighting of the new moon. In 2021, the month is projected to fall between April 13th and May 13th, give or take a day. The longest day of fasting this year lasts from 4:30 am to 7:45 pm – or **15.25 hours**.

**How does this affect our learning community?**

An estimated 250,000 Muslims in the Bay Area will endeavor to balance their work and academic obligations with religious observation and spiritual engagement, like fasting and evening prayers. With long days, rigorous schedules, and limited time to rest at night, Ramadan is often an intense experience. By the time a late afternoon class rolls around, a fasting student may not have eaten or drunk water for over 12 hours!

**Common student concerns during Ramadan:** conflicts with **iftar** time, taking tests while fasting during low-energy parts of the day, and instructors’ awareness of what the month entails.

**What can faculty do?**

**Acclimate:** Let students know you are aware that some in the class may be fasting for Ramadan. Signaling awareness goes a long way to making students feel comfortable asking for accommodations in a national climate of Islamophobia.

**Accommodate:** Students have different thresholds – some prefer to take tests or exams earlier in the day while others are better prepared after breaking their fast. Faculty and students should work together to find the best solution in each instance. If additional support is needed, the UCSF Office of the Ombuds can facilitate: https://ombuds.ucsf.edu/

**Resources:** The Muslim Student Association at UCSF at https://www.facebook.com/groups/msa.ucsf and **MSA@ucsf.edu** and UCSF Spiritual Care Services spiritualcareservices@ucsf.edu can offer support and resources for honoring Ramadan.

**Support:** Non-Muslim students and faculty are invited to learn and support inclusive community by attending an open **iftar**, such as the one offered by SF Interfaith Council on April 21: https://www.sfinterfaithcouncil.org/. We also encourage **all** members of the UCSF community to **educate and advocate to counter Islamophobia**; more resources here: https://ing.org/on-islamophobia/ and https://diversity.ucsf.edu/

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