Religious Accommodation at Chapman University

Chapman University is affiliated with and holds historic ties with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), and more recently with the United Church of Christ. Chapman’s covenants with these denominations stress the importance of the intentional integration of spirituality and reason into students’ lives and into the life of the university. As such, Chapman University does not establish one religion for all to follow; rather Chapman University highly values the unique spiritual life of each person within the community and incorporates spirituality as one of its four pillars of education, as promoted through the work and presence of the Fish Interfaith Center. The academic calendar at Chapman University is designed to avoid conflicts with observed holidays, including July 4, Memorial Day, Thanksgiving, New Year’s Day, and Christmas. As the diversity of religions represented on this campus increases, we seek to uphold what we believe is an important part of each person’s life, that members of our community may practice freedom of religion. Consistent with our commitment of creating an academic community that is respectful of and welcoming to persons of differing backgrounds, we believe that every reasonable effort should be made to allow members of the university community to fulfill their obligations to the university without jeopardizing the fulfillment of their sincerely held religious obligations.

In particular:

- Faculty should provide course syllabi at the beginning of each term that specifies dates of exams and due dates of assignments. It is the responsibility of students to review these syllabi as soon they are distributed, as well as final examination schedules (within the first three weeks of the semester) and to consult the faculty member promptly regarding any possible conflicts with major religious holidays where those holidays are scheduled in advance and where those holidays constitute the fulfillment of their sincerely held religious beliefs. Upon the timely request of one or more students, faculty members should, whenever possible, accommodate the student(s) using reasonable means, such as rescheduling exams and assignment deadlines that fall on major religious observances and holidays.

- Students should not be penalized for class absences because of major religious holidays. Students should notify the faculty member of conflicts due to religious holidays well in advance of any anticipated absence, if the specific date is known ahead of time. If asked, the student should provide accurate information about the obligations entailed in the observance of that particular holiday.

- Faculty should be permitted to reschedule class meetings or make other arrangements for a class session, if the scheduled session conflicts with their observance of a major religious holiday. It is recommended that faculty give appropriate advance notice to both students and
the department chairperson or dean. Faculty may discuss with department chairs when scheduling courses, and consider teaching at another time if regular conflicts with the faculty observing religious holidays appear.

Questions regarding major religious holidays and the sincere practice of religious observances may be directed to the Office of the Dean of the Wallace All Faiths Chapel. A calendar with major religious holidays may be found on the Fish Interfaith Center website. We hope and expect that accommodations based upon religion can be handled by informal discussions among students, faculty, and administrators, when necessary. Chapman University’s Harassment and Discrimination Policy reflects our commitment to providing an environment which is free of any form of harassment and discrimination, including that based upon religion. We recommend reasonable accommodations so that our administration, faculty and students may practice sincerely held religious beliefs by observing major religious holidays.