Religious, Cultural & Ethnic Holidays & Days of Observance

October 2018

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 2018. 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 1 - Jewish : Simchat Torah begins at sundown

October 1 - 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 2 - 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 10 - Hindu : Navratri begins:
This is one of the greatest Hindu festivals and honors the Goddess Durga, the warrior avatar of Goddess Shakti, who according to Hindu scriptures destroyed the demon Mahishasura after a battle lasting nine days and nights. It is one of two Hindu nine nights festivals, the other being Chaitra Navratri, which is celebrated in March or April. Asuj Navratri is celebrated with dancing, worshipping at temples, and recitation of sacred scriptures for nine days and nights, culminating on the tenth day with the festival of Dassehra. Since the festival dates are determined according to the lunar calendar, the length of the festival may vary from year to year.

October 12 - Brazil : Our Lady Aparecida

October 14 - 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 14 - 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 18 - Hindu : Durga Puja (Dussehra):**
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 19 - 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 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 27 - 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 28 - Armenia: Discovery of the Holy Cross:
This commemorates the discovery of the True Cross in 326 by Saint Helena, the mother of the Roman Emperor Constantine the Great, during a pilgrimage she made to Jerusalem.

October 30 - Islamic: Arbaeen begins at sundown

October 31 - Sweden: All Saints Eve:
Public holiday.

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 "bonefires") 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.

**October 31 - 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.