

Statement from the Dean of Faculty Regarding Religious Holidays

Cornell University is committed to supporting students who wish to practice their religious beliefs. Students are being advised to discuss religious absences with their instructors well in advance of the religious holiday so that arrangements for making up work can be resolved before the absence. *I encourage you to announce at the beginning of the semester all activities which, if missed, would require make up work.*

The New York State Legislature (since July 1, 1992) requires *all* institutions (public and private) of higher education not to discriminate against students for their religious beliefs. Accordingly, the pertinent parts of Sections 3 and 4 of the law state:

“3. It shall be the responsibility of the faculty and of the administrative officials of each institution of higher education to make available to each student who is absent from school, because of his or her religious beliefs, an equivalent opportunity to . . . make up any examination, study or work requirements which he or she may have missed because of such absence on any particular day or days. . . .

“4. If . . . classes, examinations, study or work requirements are held on Friday after four o’clock post meridian or on Saturday, similar or makeup classes, examinations, study or work requirements . . . shall be made available on other days, where it is possible and practicable to do so. . . .”

Cornell as an institution, and we as faculty members, have an obligation to comply with the laws of New York State. The language of the law is vague, and particular situations may need interpretation. You may contact this office should you have any questions or seek further clarification. The list of holidays attached was compiled with the help of Cornell United Religious Work, and you also may contact them to answer any questions you may have about the holidays.

Thank you for your cooperation in carrying out this responsibility.

August 2008