

The University of Alabama at Birmingham

**2010
Ethnic, Religious and Federal
Holidays**



UAB

The Office for Equity and Diversity

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JANUARY

Diversity in the Workforce Month
National Blood Donor Month

1 st	New Year's Day ° Gantan-sai (Shinto New Year)	Georgian Calendar
1 st	Feast of Saint Basil (Commemorates the Death of St. Basil)	Orthodox Christian
4 th	Al Hijra (New Year)	Islam
5 th	Guru Gobindh Singh's Birthday	Sikh
6 th	Epiphany/Three Kings Day (Celebrates the 3 Kings Visit to Baby Jesus)	Christian
6 th	Festival of the Three Kings/Dia de los Reyes (Celebrate the Visit of the Magi)	Hispanic Christian
7 th	Nativity of Jesus Christ (Account of the Birth of Jesus of Nazareth)	Christian/Orthodox
14 th	Maghi (Commemorates the Martyrdom of the "Forty Immortals)	Sikh
14 th	Makar Sankranti (Festival that Signifies the Beginning of the Harvest Season)	Hindu
17 th	Blessing of the Animals	Hispanic Christian
17 th	World Religion Day	Bahá'í
18 th	Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday Observed	United States
20 th	Vasant Panchami (Festival Celebrating the Goddess Saraswati)	Hindu
20 th	Saraswati Puja (Festival Celebrating the Goddess of Knowledge, Music and Art)	Islam
24 th	Triodion Begins (Lenten Period)	Orthodox
30 th	Mahayana New Year	Buddhist
29 th (Sunset)	Tu B'Shevat (Celebration of the Coming of Spring – the day that Trees Come of Age)	Jewish

FEBRUARY



Black History Month
American Heart Month

1 st	National Freedom Day	United States
2 nd	Groundhog's Day (if the Groundhog sees his Shadow, Six more Weeks of Winter)	United States
3 rd	Setsubun Sai (Celebration of the Change of Seasons with the Coming of Spring)	Shinto
7 th	Meatfare Sunday (Last Day for Eating Meat before the Great Lent)	Orthodox Christian
12 th	Maha Shivaratri (Festival Celebrated at the Waning Moon of the Month of Maagha)	Hindu
14 th	Chinese/Vietnamese New Year (Year of the Tiger)	Confucian/Daoist/Buddhist
14 th	St. Valentine's Day (Day on which Lovers Express their Love for Each Other)	Christian
15 th	Lent Begins (Clean Monday)	Orthodox Christian
15 th	Parinirvana (Festival marking the Anniversary of Buddha's Death - Nirvana Day)	Buddhist
15 th	President's Day (Honors great American Presidents born in February)	United States
16 th	Shrove Tuesday (Fat Tuesday - day preceding Lent)	Christian
16 th	Mardi Gras (the final day of Carnival; 3-Day Period before the Beginning of Lent)	Christian
17 th	Ash Wednesday (Lent Begins -40 Day Period of Fasting and Praying before Easter)	Christian
19-26 th	Brotherhood/Sisterhood Week	
26 th	Mawlid al-Nabi (Mohammed's Birthday)	Islam
26-3/1	Ayyam-I-Ha (Intercalary Day in the Bahá'í calendar)	Bahá'í
28 th	Holi (Celebrates Spring and commemorates various events in Hindu Mythology)	Hindu
*27 th -28 th	Purim (Deliverance of the Jewish People)	Jewish

* nightfall

MARCH



National Women's History Month

Irish-American and Greek-American Heritage Month

American Red Cross Month

1 st	Holi (Festival of Colors)	Hindu
1 st	Hola Mohalla (Lunar New Year)	Sikh
17 th	St. Patrick's Day	Christian
20 th	Vernal (Spring) Equinox	
21 st	Naw Ruz (Bahá'í New Year)	Bahá'í
24 th	Ramanavami (Celebration of the Birth of Rama)	Hindu
25 th	Feast of Annunciation of the Virgin Mary	Christian
28 th	Palm Sunday (Triumphal Entry of Jesus into Jerusalem)	Christian/Orthodox
29 th	Mahavir Jayanti - festival honoring Lord Mahavira on the founder's birthday	Jain
30 th	Magha Puja Day (Homage to Lord Buddha)	Buddhist
30 th	National Doctor's Day	United States
29 th -4/6*	Pesach (Passover) Starts (Exodus of the Jews from Egypt)	Jewish

*nightfall)

APRIL



Holocaust Remembrance Month

Celebrate Diversity Month

National Autism Awareness Month

2 nd	Good Friday (Commemorates the Crucifixion of Jesus)	Christian
4 th	Easter (Celebrates the Resurrection of Jesus from the Dead)	Christian
*6 th	Pesach (Passover) Ends (Exodus of the Jews from Egypt)	Jewish
8 th	Hana Matsuri - Celebration of Buddha's Birth	Buddhist
11 th	Yom HaSho'ah (Holocaust Remembrance Day)	Jewish
14 th	Baisakhi /Vaisakhi (Ancient Harvest Festival and Marks the Beginning of a New Solar Year)	Sikh/Hindu
16 th	Emancipation Day (Anniversary of Signing the Compensated Emancipation Act)	United States
19 th	Israel's Independence Day	Jewish
21 st	Ridvan Begins (12 Days) (Bahá'u'lláh's Prophethood)	Bahá'í
22 nd	Earth Day (Promotes Environmental Awareness)	United Nations
28 ^t -5/1	Theravadin New Year	Buddhist
28 th	Armenian Martyr's Day	Armenia, U.S.
29 th	Ninth Day of Ridvan (Celebration of the arrival of Baha'u'llah at a sacred garden)	Bahá'í

*nightfall

MAY



Asian Pacific American Heritage Month

Jewish American Heritage Month

National Cancer Research Month

1 st	May Day – (Celebration of the coming of Spring)	United States, Canada
2 nd	Lag Baomer (holiday celebrated on the 33 rd day of the counting of the Omer)	Jewish
5 th	Cinco de Mayo (Mexican Victory over French Army in 1862)	Mexican
6 th	National Day of Prayer	Interfaith USA
9 th	Mother's Day (Honors Mothers throughout the World)	International
12 th	Jerusalem Day (Commemorates the Reunification of Jerusalem)	Israeli
13 th	Ascension Day (Jesus Bodily Ascended to Heaven)	Christian
15 th	Armed Forces Day	United States
*18 th -20 th	Shavuot (Feast of Weeks)	Jewish
23 rd	Declaration of the Bab	Bahá'í
23 rd	Pentecost (Descent of the Holy Spirit)	Christian
27 th	Wesak /Buddha Day (Birth, Enlightenment and Death of Buddha)	Buddhist
29 th	Ascension of Baha'u'llah (Founder of the Bahá'í Faith)	Bahá'í
30 th	Trinity Sunday (Meditation on God as Three in One))	Christian
31 st	Memorial Day (commemorates veterans who have died in military service to their country)	United States
*nightfall		

JUNE



Gay and Lesbian Pride Month

Older Americans Month

National Safety Month

3 rd	Corpus Christi (Celebration in Recognition of the Eucharist)	Catholic Christian
5 th	World Environment Day	United Nations
14 th	Flag Day (commemorates the adoption of the flag of the United States)	United States
16 th	Martyrdom Day of Guru Arjan Dev Sahib (5 th of the 10 Gurus of Sikhism)	Sikh
19 th	Juneteenth (Abolishment of Slavery in Texas)	United States
20 th	Father's Day (Honors Fathers throughout the World)	United States
21 st	Summer Solstice (longest day of the year)	
21 st	First Nations Day (recognition of the aboriginal peoples in Canada)	Canadian Native People
24 th	Nativity of St. John the Baptist (celebrates the birthday of Jesus' cousin)	Christian
24 th	Rath Yatra (Festival Commemorates Lord Jagannath with a Procession of Chariots)	Hindu
27 th	Martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum Smith	Latter Day Saints
29 th	Tammuz – An Important Jewish Fast Day	Jewish

JULY



National Recreation and Parks Month
Celebrate Freedom Month
Mental Illness Awareness Month

1 st	Canada Day	Canadian National Day
4 th	Independence Day	U.S. National Holiday
8-9 th	Lailat al Miraj (Recalls Journey of Muhammad)	Islam
9 th	Martyrdom of the Bab (Anniversary of the Bab's Execution in 1850)	Bahá'í
14 th	Bastille Day (French National Holiday)	France
*19 th -20 th	Tisha B'Av (Annual Fast Day)	Jewish
23 rd	Guru Har Krishen Birthday	Sikh
24 th	Pioneer Day (Day of Deliverance – Latter Day Saints Pioneers Arrive in Salt Lake)	Mormon
25 th	St. James the Great Day (Disciple of Jesus)	Christian
26 th	Asalha Puja (Honors Buddha's 1 st Sermon)	Buddhist
26 th	Lailat al Bara'a (Night of Repentance)	Islam

*nightfall

AUGUST

EEOC

Equal Opportunity Month
National Immunization Awareness Month

1 st	Lammas (Festival of the 1 st Wheat Harvest)	Christian
6 th	Transfiguration of the Lord	Orthodox
11 th	Ramadan Begins (30 days) (Month of Fasting)	Islam
14 th	Krishna Janmashtami (Celebrates Birth of Krishna)	Hindu
15 th	Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary	Catholic, Christian
24 th	Raksha Bandhan (Celebrates Brothers & Sisters)	Hindu
29 th	Beheading of John the Baptist	Christian

SEPTEMBER



Hispanic Heritage Month

National Preparedness Month

1 st	Ecclesiastical Year Begins	Orthodox Christina
2 nd	Krishna Janmashtami (Commemoration of the birth of Krishna)	Hindu
3 rd	Quds Day (Last Friday of Ramadan -Expresses Solidarity with the Palestinian people)	Islam
6 th	Lailat al Kadr (The Night of Destiny)	Islam
6 th	Labor Day (Working Person's Holiday)	United States
9 th	Eid al-Fitr (Ramadan ends – Festival of Breaking the Fast)	Islam
*8 th -10 th	Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year)	Jewish
11 th	Ganesh Chaturthi (Celebration of the birth of Ganesh – God of Wisdom)	Hindu
16 th	16 de Septiembre (Mexican Independence Day)	Mexico
12 th	Paryushana –Parva (8 day Festival Signifying Human Emergence into a New World)	Jain
17 th	Constitution Day (Recognizes the Ratification of the U.S. Constitution)	United States
17 th	Citizenship Day (Recognizes those who have become U.S. citizens)	United States
*17 th -18 th	Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement)	Jewish
19 th	San Gennaro Day (Martyr Saint)	Italian, American
23 rd	Autumnal Equinox	
*22 nd -29 th	Sukkoth (Feast of Tabernacles – 7 Days)	Jewish
*30 th -1 st	Simchat Torah (Celebrates the Reading of the Law)	Jewish
*nightfall		

OCTOBER



ODEP
Office of Disability
Employment Policy

German-American, Italian-American and Polish-American Month, Disability Employment Awareness Month

National Breast Cancer Awareness Month

4 th	St. Francis Day (recognition of service to people & appreciation of the natural world)	Catholic Christian
8-16 th	Navaratri (Festival of the Divine Mother)	Hindu
9 th	Birthday of Guru Ram Das , Fourth of the Sikh Gurus	Sikh
11 th	Thanksgiving	Interfaith-Canada
11 th	Columbus Day Observance	United States
17 th	Dussehra (Dasera) 10 day celebration of Lord Rama's Victory over Evil Ravana	Hindu, Jain
20 th	Birth of the Bab (Birth of Siyyid Ali-Muhammad)	Bahá'í
24 th	United Nations Day	Worldwide
31 st	Reformation Day/All Hallows Eve	Protestant, Lutheran

NOVEMBER



National American Indian and Alaska Native Heritage Month

National Alzheimer's Disease Month

1 st	All Saints Day (Honors All Saints who do not have Their own Special Feast Day)	Christian
5 th	Diwali (Deepavali) (Festival of Lights)	Hindu, Jain, Sikh
11 th	Veterans Day (Armistice Day)	National Holiday
12 th	Bahá'u'lláh's Birthday (Founder of the Bahá'í Faith)	Bahá'í
14 th	Waqf al Arafa (Observance Day when Pilgrims Pray for Forgiveness and Mercy)	Islam
16 th	Eid al-Adha (Festival of Sacrifice)	Islam
21 st	Guru Nanak Birthday	Sikh
24 th	Martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib	Sikh
25-28 th	Hajj (Pilgrimage to Mecca)	Islam
25 th	Thanksgiving Day	National Holiday
26 th	Day of the Covenant (The Greatest Festival)	Bahá'í
27 th	Eid-al-Adha (Feast of Sacrifice)	Muslim
28 th	First Sunday of Advent (Celebrates Coming of Jesus)	Christian
30 th	Saint Andrew's Day (Coming of Christianity to area now known as Scotland)	Christian

DECEMBER



Universal Human Rights Month

National Drunk and Drugged Driving Prevention Month

National Stress Management Month

*1 st -9 th	Hanukkah (Chanukah) Festival of Lights	Jewish
6 th	St. Nicholas Day (Celebrates Christian Saint & Bishop)	Christian
6 th -Jan. 4 th	Al Hijra/Muharram (First Month of the Islam year)	Islam
7 th	Hijra (The emigration of Muhammad and his followers to Medina in 615 c.e.)	Islam
8 th	Bodhi Day (Rohatsu) (Buddha's Enlightenment)	Buddhist
8 th	Immaculate Conception of Mary	Roman Catholic
12 th	Festival of Our Lady of Guadalupe	Roman Catholic
15 th	Ashura (Holiday Mourning for the Martyrdom of Husayn ibn Ali)	Islam
21 st	Winter Solstice	
25 th	Christmas (Celebrates the Birth of Jesus)	Christian
26 th	Boxing Day (Giving of Gifts to the Less Fortunate)	Canada, United Kingdom
26 th	Kwanzaa - 7 days (Honors African Heritage)	African/Interfaith
31 st	Watch Night (Occasion to Thank God for Bringing People Safely Through the Year)	Christian

*sunset

Sources: Various religious and ethnic internet sites.

Note: This listing is not exhaustive and some dates may vary due to differences in the type of calendars referenced. Many Holy Days begin at sundown the day before the date listed. Regional customs, group preference or moon sightings may also cause a variation of the date.

Major World Religions

According to Infoplease.com, there are twelve classical world religions—those religions most often included in history of world religion surveys and studied in world religions classes: Baha'i, Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Judaism, Shinto, Sikhism, Taoism, and Zoroastrianism. Below are overviews of nine of these classical religions.



Buddhism - 560 to 490 BCE

Buddhism developed out of the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama who, in 535 BCE, reached enlightenment and assumed the title Buddha. He promoted 'The Middle Way' as the path to enlightenment rather than the extremes of mortification of the flesh or hedonism. Long after his death the Buddha's teachings were written down. This collection is called the Tripitaka. Buddhists believe in reincarnation and that one must go through cycles of birth, life, and death. After many such cycles, if a person releases their attachment to desire and the self, they can attain Nirvana. In general, Buddhists do not believe in any type of God, the need for a savior, prayer, or eternal life after death. However, since the time of the Buddha, Buddhism has integrated many regional religious rituals, beliefs and customs into it as it has spread throughout Asia, so that this generalization is no longer true for all Buddhists. This has occurred with little conflict due to the philosophical nature of Buddhism.



Christianity - 30+ CE

Christianity started out as a breakaway sect of Judaism nearly 2000 years ago. Jesus, the son of the Virgin Mary and her husband Joseph, but conceived through the Holy Spirit, was bothered by some of the practices within his native Jewish faith and began preaching a different message of God and religion. During his travels he was joined by twelve disciples who followed him in his journeys and learned from him. He performed many miracles during this time and related many of his teachings in the form of parables. Among his best known sayings are to "love thy neighbor" and "turn the other cheek." At one point he revealed that he was the Son of God sent to Earth to save humanity from our sins. This he did by being crucified on the cross for his teachings. He then rose from the dead and appeared to his disciples and told them to go forth and spread his message. Since Christianity and Judaism share the same history up to the time of Jesus Christ, they are very similar in many of their core beliefs. There are two primary differences. One is that Christians believe in original sin and that Jesus died in our place to save us from that sin. The other is that Jesus was fully human and fully God and as the Son of God is part of the Holy Trinity: God the Father, His Son, and the Holy Spirit. All Christians believe in heaven and that those who sincerely repent their sins before God will be saved and join Him in heaven. Belief in hell and satan varies among groups and individuals. There are a multitude of forms of Christianity which have developed either because of disagreements on dogma, adaptation to different cultures, or simply personal taste. For this reason there can be a great difference between the various forms of Christianity they may seem like different religions to some people.



Hinduism - 4000 to 2500 BCE*

The origins of Hinduism can be traced to the Indus Valley civilization sometime between 4000 and 2500 BCE. Though believed by many to be a polytheistic religion, the basis of Hinduism is the belief in the unity of everything. This totality is called Brahman. The purpose of life is to realize that we are part of God and by doing so we can leave this plane of existence and rejoin with God. This enlightenment can only be achieved by going through cycles of birth, life and death known as samsara. One's progress towards enlightenment is measured by his karma. This is the accumulation of all one's good and bad deeds and this determines the person's next reincarnation. Selfless acts and thoughts as well as devotion to God help one to be reborn at a higher level. Bad acts and thoughts will cause one to be born at a lower level, as a person or even an animal. Hindus follow a strict caste system which determines the standing of each person. The caste one is born into is the result of the karma from their previous life. Only members of the highest caste, the Brahmins, may perform the Hindu religious rituals and hold positions of authority within the temples.



Islam - 622 CE

Islam was founded in 622 CE by Muhammad the Prophet, in Makkah (also spelled Mecca). Though it is the youngest of the world's great religions, Muslims do not view it as a new religion. They believe that it is the same faith taught by the prophets, Abraham, David, Moses and Jesus. The role of Muhammad as the last prophet was to formalize and clarify the faith and purify it by removing ideas which were added in error. The two sacred texts of Islam are the Qur'an, which are the words of Allah 'the One True God' as given to Muhammad, and the Hadith, which is a collection of Muhammad's sayings. The duties of all Muslims are known as the Five Pillars of Islam and are: (1) Recite the shahadah at least once.; (2) Perform the salat (prayer) 5 times a day while facing the Kaaba in Makkah; (3) Donate regularly to charity via the zakat, a 2.5% charity tax, and through additional donations to the needy; (4) Fast during the month of Ramadan, the month that Muhammad received the Qur'an from Allah and (5) Make pilgrimage to Makkah at least once in life, if economically and physically possible. Muslims follow a strict monotheism with one creator who is just, omnipotent and merciful. They also believe in Satan who drives people to sin, and that all unbelievers and sinners will spend eternity in Hell. Muslims who sincerely repent and submit to God will return to a state of sinlessness and go to Paradise after death. Alcohol, drugs, and gambling should be avoided and they reject racism. They respect the earlier prophets, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, but regard the concept of the divinity of Jesus as blasphemous and do not believe that he was executed on the cross.



Jainism - 420 BCE

The founder of the Jain community was Vardhamana, the last Jina in a series of 24 who lived in East India. He attained enlightenment after 13 years of deprivation and committed the act of *saṅkhya*, fasting to death, in 420 BCE. Jainism has many similarities to Hinduism and Buddhism which developed in the same part of the world. They believe in karma and reincarnation as do Hindus but they believe that enlightenment and liberation from this cycle can only be achieved through asceticism. Jains follow fruititarianism. This is the practice of only eating that which will not kill the plant or animal from which it is taken. They also practice *ahimsa*, non-violence, because any act of violence against a living thing creates negative karma which will adversely affect one's next life.



Judaism - 2000 BCE

Judaism, Christianity, Islam and the Baha'i faith all originated with a divine covenant between the God of the ancient Israelites and Abraham around 2000 BCE. The next leader of the Israelites, Moses, led his people out of captivity in Egypt and received the Law from God. Joshua later led them into the promised land where Samuel established the Israelite kingdom with Saul as its first king. King David established Jerusalem and King Solomon built the first temple there. In 70 CE the temple was destroyed and the Jews were scattered throughout the world until 1948 when the state of Israel was formed. Jews believe in one creator who alone is to be worshipped as absolute ruler of the universe. He monitors people's activities and rewards good deeds and punishes evil. The Torah was revealed to Moses by God and cannot be changed though God does communicate with the Jewish people through prophets. Jews believe in the inherent goodness of the world and its inhabitants as creations of God and do not require a savior to save them from original sin. They believe they are God's chosen people and that the Messiah will arrive in the future, gather them into Israel, there will be a general resurrection of the dead, and the Jerusalem Temple destroyed in 70 CE will be rebuilt.



Shinto - 500+ BCE

Shinto is an ancient Japanese religion, closely tied to nature, which recognizes the existence of various "Kami", nature deities. The first two deities, Izanagi and Izanami, gave birth to the Japanese islands and their children became the deities of the various Japanese clans. One of their daughters, Amaterasu (Sun Goddess), is the ancestress of the Imperial Family and is regarded as the chief deity. All the Kami are benign and serve only to sustain and protect. They are not seen as separate from humanity due to sin because humanity is "Kami's Child." Followers of Shinto desire peace and believe all human life is sacred. They revere "musuhi", the Kami's creative and harmonizing powers, and aspire to have "makoto", sincerity or true heart. Morality is based upon that which is of benefit to the group. There are "Four Affirmations" in Shinto: (1) Tradition and family: the family is the main mechanism by which traditions are preserved; (2) Love of nature: nature is sacred and natural objects are to be worshipped as sacred spirits; (3) Physical cleanliness: they must take baths, wash their hands, and rinse their mouth often and (4) "Matsuri"- festival which honors the spirits.



Taoism - 440 CE

Taoism was founded by Lao-Tse, a contemporary of Confucius in China. Taoism began as a combination of psychology and philosophy which Lao-Tse hoped would help end the constant feudal warfare and other conflicts of his time. His writings, the *Tao-te-Ching*, describe the nature of life, the way to peace and how a ruler should lead his life. Taoism became a religion in 440 CE when it was adopted as a state religion. Tao, roughly translated as *path*, is a force which flows through all life and is the first cause of everything. The goal of everyone is to become one with the Tao. Tai Chi, a technique of exercise using slow deliberate movements, is used to balance the flow of energy or "chi" within the body. People should develop virtue and seek compassion, moderation and humility. One should plan any action in advance and achieve it through minimal action. Yin (dark side) and Yang (light side) symbolize pairs of opposites which are seen through the universe, such as good and evil, light and dark, male and female. The impact of human civilization upsets the balance of Yin and Yang. Taoists believe that people are by nature, good, and that one should be kind to others simply because such treatment will probably be reciprocated.



Zoroastrianism - 1000 BCE

Zoroastrianism was founded by Zarathushtra (Zoroaster) in Persia which followed an aboriginal polytheistic religion at the time. He preached what may have been the first monotheism with a single supreme god, Ahura Mazda. Zoroastrians believe in the dualism of good and evil as either a cosmic one between Ahura Mazda and an evil spirit of violence and death, Angra Mainyu, or as an ethical dualism within the human consciousness. The Zoroastrian holy book is called the Avesta which includes the teachings of Zarathushtra written in a series of five hymns called the Gathas. They are abstract sacred poetry directed towards the worship of the One God, understanding of righteousness and cosmic order, promotion of social justice, and individual choice between good and evil. The rest of the Avesta was written at a later date and deals with rituals, practice of worship, and other traditions of the faith. Zoroastrians worship through prayers and symbolic ceremonies that are conducted before a sacred fire which symbolizes their God. They dedicate their lives to a three-fold path represented by their motto: "Good thoughts, good words, good deeds." The faith does not generally accept converts but this is disputed by some members.