Thanksgiving Break

Remember that there are no classes November 23 and 24 for the Thanksgiving holiday! The ELI will be closed from Wednesday, November 22 at 1:00 pm to Sunday, November 26. Classes will be held as normal on Monday, November 27. Have a great break!

What is Thanksgiving?

In the US, Thanksgiving is a national holiday celebrated on the fourth Thursday of November. According to Wikipedia.org, scholars and historians seem to disagree on the origin of the first Thanksgiving. Some say that the first Thanksgiving in the US took place in 1565 when the Spaniards first landed in what is now Florida. There is evidence that they had a feast and celebration to give thanks for their safe arrival in the New World. Others trace the first official Thanksgiving to the Virginia Colony in 1619 because they had an official document declaring a “day of thanksgiving to God.” While both of these Thanksgiving celebrations may have occurred earlier, it is the Pilgrims Thanksgiving harvest celebration in Plymouth, Massachusetts, in 1621 that is usually recognized as the source of our current Thanksgiving holiday. While this is the Thanksgiving celebration that most people associate with our current Thanksgiving, there is also some disagreement as to exactly what the Pilgrims were actually celebrating. Some historians say the Pilgrims were giving thanks to God because they had recently suffered a drought, prayed for rain, and then it finally rained. Others say that this Thanksgiving feast was actually held by the Native Americans and that the Pilgrims were only guests. They believe that the Native Americans were sharing their food with the Pilgrims because the Pilgrims did not produce a plentiful harvest due to bad weather. While these events may all be true, the story most commonly associated with Thanksgiving is that the Pilgrims were having a feast and celebration as part of their harvest festival to give thanks for their bountiful crops. It all seems so complex! The story of the first thanksgiving that is commonly taught to children in the US is in some ways a mix of all of these stories. The story goes that the Pilgrims were celebrating their harvest feast to give thanks to God for the food that they had. As an act of kindness, the Pilgrims invited the Native Americans to their Thanksgiving feast. For this reason, fall fruits and vegetables, the cornucopia (or “horn of plenty”), Pilgrims and Indians (who are more correctly referred to as Native Americans) are all symbols of Thanksgiving.

In the early history of the US there were many official days of “thanksgiving.” It wasn’t until 1789 that our first president, George Washington, declared Thanksgiving as a national holiday for the US. It was Abraham Lincoln (our 16th president), however, who in the middle of the Civil War declared the last Thursday of November as a national holiday to give thanks for all the blessings the US had in spite of the Civil War. From that date on, Thanksgiving was celebrated as a national holiday on the last Thursday of November. An interesting bit of trivia is that this was actually changed again in 1939 by President Franklin D. Roosevelt when November happened to have five Thursdays that year. He declared that instead of being the last Thursday of November it would be the fourth Thursday of November. In 1941, President Roosevelt passed a bill stating this, for the first time in US history making Thanksgiving a matter of federal law.

Whatever the history of Thanksgiving, whether it’s a legal holiday or not, I’m sure we all agree that it’s nice to take a break and give thanks for all of the blessings and good fortune that we have. Happy Thanksgiving!

Clean Out Your Locker

Please remove everything from your lockers and take off the lock by December 8. After December 8, we will prepare the lockers for the spring term. You will have a chance to register for a locker again in January. Be sure to take your lunch boxes or any other items you may have in the ELI kitchen refrigerator or cabinets by December 8 as well.

Items left in the rooms after this term will be thrown away or donated to charity. Please check "lost and found" in the Main Office before December 8, too, for any books, notebooks, gloves, etc. that you may have lost.

Happy Thanksgiving!

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What is Black Friday?
Black Friday is the Friday after Thanksgiving in the US, and consequently the first day of the Christmas shopping season. The term “Black Friday” was first used in 1966 by the Police Department in Philadelphia to describe the headaches caused by all of the traffic caused by holiday shoppers. They used the word “black” as a reference to the headaches caused by “Black Tuesday,” the date of the big US stock market crash in 1929. Some people say that store employees began using the term “Black Friday” to refer to the dirty floors caused by all of the shoppers on the day after Thanksgiving. However, by the 1980s there was yet another theory for the development of the term “Black Friday.” The media began to report that retailers operated at a financial loss for most of the year and made their profits during the holiday shopping season, which begins the day after Thanksgiving. In accounting, when financial losses are written down they were traditionally written in red ink. When profits were written down in the accounting books, they were traditionally written in black ink. So, on the day after Thanksgiving retailers are “in the black.” While this theory may not be entirely true, it should be pointed out that most retailers do make a profit throughout the year, however many report that their profits from the holiday season exceed their profits from the rest of the year.

Retailers aren’t the only ones who care about Black Friday: shoppers do, too! To trigger excitement for the holiday season, many retailers offer huge sales on Black Friday. These sales are often so good that shoppers will wait in line all night just for the chance to walk in the store! How good are these sales? See for yourself. On Thursday, go to a store and buy a newspaper. You’ll see lots of special sales inserts from all the big retailers. You’ll also notice that many stores will open early — some as early as 2 am! You need to get to the stores early though. As mentioned, some people wait in line all night in the cold and snow for these deals, and stores often have very limited quantities of the sale merchandise. The best and most accurate information about Black Friday sales is in the newspapers on Thanksgiving Day, but if you just can’t wait until Thursday to see if anyone has laptops on sale for $299 or 12 MP digital cameras for $99, you can almost always find the advertisements online in advance. For a list of sites with Black Friday and Cyber Monday sales, visit www.blackfriday.com, www.theblackfriday.com, or www.cybermonday.com.

Cyber Monday
You probably have heard about the shopping madness that takes place on Black Friday, but did you know there’s another major shopping day after Thanksgiving? It’s called “Cyber Monday,” and it takes place the Monday after Thanksgiving. Cyber Monday was created to encourage people to shop online. On Cyber Monday, retailers are known to give significant discounts if customers purchase their merchandise online. Businesses all over the world participate in Cyber Monday, including ones located in Japan, Germany, and Argentina. If you want to take advantage of the deals after Thanksgiving, but don’t want to go outside the crowded malls, you should try to shop online on Cyber Monday.

Thanksgiving Dinner & Black Friday Shopping with Global Ties!
Global Ties is hosting a Thanksgiving dinner with the Vice Provost and Dean of Students, Kenyon Bonner on Wednesday, November 22 from 5:00 – 7:00 pm. They’ll be serving a delicious Thanksgiving dinner, and there will be chances to win prizes! Tickets are free for Pitt students, but you can buy tickets for the other members of your family as well. Tickets for children are $10 and $30 for those ages 13 and up. Tickets can be purchased today, November 21 from 9 am – 2:30 pm at the William Pitt Union Ticket Office. If you have any questions, contact kyoungahlee@pitt.edu.

Global Ties is also holding a Black Friday event! Global Ties will be taking a group to Tanger Outlets from Thursday night at 10:15 pm until 4:45 pm on Friday morning. This will give you around 4 hours of shopping! Transportation is provided, so you don’t have to worry about driving. The event is free, but you will need to bring money if you’d like to buy anything at the outlets. You must sign up before 2:30 pm today, November 21.

Small Business Saturday
Everyone now knows about Black Friday and Cyber Monday, but a new movement is developing called “Small Business Saturday.” The Saturday after Thanksgiving is dedicated as a day for individuals to shop at “mom and pop” stores. These stores get their name because they are typically small family-owned businesses. These businesses need your support more than the large national and international chains do. If you’ve never participated in Small Business Saturday, you should!

First Day of Spring 2018 Term
Please remember that if you are planning to study at the ELI next term, the first day of official attendance is Friday, January 12, 2018. If you arrive at the ELI after the first day of official attendance, you will be counted absent for each day that you miss. If you cannot arrive by Friday, January 19, you will need to wait until the next semester to attend the ELI. Please see Stacy if you cannot arrive by January 19.

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