

CHARTER FOR COMPASSION

The principle of compassion lies at the heart of all religious, ethical, and spiritual traditions, calling us always to treat all others as we wish to be treated ourselves. Compassion impels us to work tirelessly to alleviate the suffering of our fellow creatures, to dethrone ourselves from the center of our world and put another there, and to honor the inviolable sanctity of every single human being, treating everybody, without exception, with absolute justice, equity, and respect. It is also necessary in both public and private life to refrain consistently and empathically from inflicting pain. To act or speak violently out of spite, chauvinism, or self-interest, to impoverish, exploit or deny basic rights to anybody, and to incite hatred by denigrating others—even our enemies—is a denial of our common humanity. We in this class acknowledge that we have failed to live compassionately to some degree.

We therefore pledge to do all that we can, knowing we'll fail on occasion, to restore compassion to the center of our lives (at least in this course and during this quarter) and attempt to engage with our colleagues in this course with compassion. This means we will work to think first of others, their benefit, their well-being, and their learning, knowing that others are compassionately working for our benefit. We will strive to see our interdependence and interconnectedness, and labor for one another.

The following specific actions and behaviors we pledge to do in order to encourage and adopt a compassionate stance toward our colleagues in this class:

Overall

- Act toward and speak to others as you would want them to do for you if the roles were reversed
- Take responsibility for the effects of your words and actions on others, even when your intentions were not to cause them harm

Listening

- Listen attentively and intently (with intention to understand) first,
- using eye contact, and forming an opinion after you fully understand their point of view
- Be open minded toward others' ideas and understanding of their backgrounds
- Pay attention to your body Language (try not to be defensive)
- When you're uncomfortable, speak up and tell others, so they know

Responding

- Mindfully respond to others' ideas (acknowledge someone's ideas before presenting your own)

- Vocally affirm that you respect and empathize with those around you
- Use a calm and collected tone of voice; be careful with your word choice; avoid aggressive language, and don't use harsh words
- Encourage compliments and be nice to others
- Aim to educate