

School of Theology and Ministry
CMI 4020 Compassionate Ministry in Local Context
3 Units- Spring 2026



Meeting days/times: Tuesday and Thursdays 1:30-2:45 pm

Meeting location: Evans 121

Instructor title and name:	Prof. Jennifer Guerra Aldana
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Office location and hours:	Smee 210- Tuesday and Thursday 10am-1pm
TA	Kendra Hudson

PLNU Mission: To Teach ~ To Shape ~ To Send

Point Loma Nazarene University exists to provide higher education in a vital Christian community where minds are engaged and challenged, character is modeled and formed, and service is an expression of faith. Being of Wesleyan heritage, we strive to be a learning community where grace is foundational, truth is pursued, and holiness is a way of life.

Foundational Explorations Mission

PLNU provides a foundational course of study in the liberal arts informed by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In keeping with the Wesleyan tradition, the curriculum equips students with a broad range of knowledge and skills within and across disciplines to enrich major study, lifelong learning, and vocational service as Christ-like participants in the world’s diverse societies and culture.

Course Description

Students will be immersed and examine how the church engages in works of mercy and devotion in a community-based intercultural context. Students will learn how to analyze congregational and community demographics, understand sociological dynamics and employ theological reflection in ministry.

Course Learning Outcomes

1. Students will reflect on narratives from various Christian leaders, communities, and organizations.
2. Students will examine local neighborhoods to understand community assets, concerns, and needs.
3. Students will evaluate the theological understandings and trajectories of various proposals and practices of compassionate and intercultural Christian ministry.

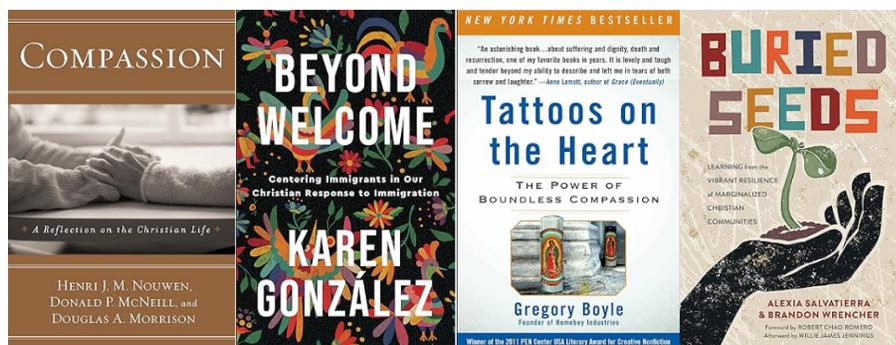
Land, Labor, and Life Acknowledgement

As students and scholars at PLNU, we acknowledge our presence on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of the [Kumeyaay Diegueño Indian Tribe](#). May we be good guests to the people, the stories, the wisdom, the fruits of the land, and dwell with one another with peace.

Course Philosophy

Learning is a communal and collaborative process. Therefore, I hope we can co-construct an environment of rich conversation and critical engagement. I expect students to engage deeply with the readings, come ready to have meaningful conversations and engage the content with curiosity and effort. *I believe in active learning.* I recognize that I will ask you to engage in theological reflection and conversation in this course that may feel beyond your level of expertise or comfort— embrace it! Lean in, take risks, and give your best effort. As your professor, I commit to providing feedback and being a partner in learning. *The best learning happens when we are stretched beyond what we know or are comfortable with but not to the point of becoming overwhelmed.* Communication will be critical; the more you choose to share, the better I can partner with and support you.

Required Texts and Recommended Study Resources



- **Compassion: A Reflection on the Christian Life** by Henri Nouwen, Donald McNeill & Douglas Morrison, Doubleday Publishing Group/ ISBN: 0-385-18957/ 1982
- **Beyond Welcome: Centering Immigrants in Our Christian Response to Immigration** by Karen González, Brazos Press / ISBN: 978-1-58743-560-7 / 2022
- **Tattoos on the Heart: The Power of Boundless Compassion** by Gregory Boyle, Simon and Schuster / ISBN: 978-1-4391-5315-4 / 2010
- **Buried Seeds: Learning from the Vibrant Resilience of Marginalized Christian Communities** by Alexia Salvatierra & Brandon Wrencher / ISBN: 978-1-5409-6464-9 / 2022
- *Additional readings and electronic resources as assigned via Canvas*

Lomabooks Instructions:

This course is part of our course material delivery program, **LomaBooks**. The bookstore will provide each student with a convenient package containing all required physical materials; all digitally delivered materials will be integrated into Canvas. You should have received an email from the bookstore confirming the list of materials that will be provided for each of your courses and asking you to select how you would like to receive any printed components (in-store pick-up or home delivery). If you have not done so already, please confirm your fulfillment preference so the bookstore can prepare your materials. For more information about **LomaBooks**, please go: [HERE](#)

Course Credit Hour Information

In the interest of providing sufficient time to accomplish the stated Course Learning Outcomes, this class meets the PLNU credit hour policy for a 3-unit class delivered over 15 weeks. It is anticipated that

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students will spend a minimum of 37.5 participation hours per credit hour on their coursework. For this course, students will spend an estimated 120 total hours meeting the course learning outcomes.

Assessment and Grading

Grades will be based on the following:

<p>Assignments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reading Reports (170) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 10 points each, 17 total ● Inclusion Marginalization Ecosystem (50) ● Lecture Reflection (50) ● Snapshot of Compassion Project (330) ● Compassion Praxis Final (400) ● TOTAL POSSIBLE POINTS = 1,000 	<p>Grading Scale:</p> <p>A=93-100% A-=92-90% B+=87-89% B=83-86% B-=80-82% C+=77-79% C=73-76% C-=70-72% D+=67-69% D=63-66% D-=60-62% F=0-59%</p>
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Final Examination Policy

Successful completion of this class requires taking the final examination on its scheduled day. The final examination schedule is posted on the [Class Schedules](#) site. If you find yourself scheduled for three (3) or more final examinations on the same day, you are authorized to contact each professor to arrange a different time for one of those exams. However, unless you have three (3) or more exams on the same day, no requests for alternative final examinations will be granted.

Content Warning

I acknowledge that each of you comes to PLNU with your own unique life experiences. This contributes to the way you perceive various types of information. All of the class content, including that which may be intellectually or emotionally challenging, has been intentionally curated to achieve the learning goals for this course. If you encounter a topic that is intellectually challenging for you, it can manifest in feelings of discomfort and upset. In response, I encourage you to talk to me or your friends or family about it. Class topics are discussed for the sole purpose of expanding your intellectual engagement, and I will support you throughout your learning in this course.

Incompletes and Late Assignments

All assignments are to be submitted/turned in by the beginning of the class session when they are due—including assignments posted in Canvas. Late assignments will only be accepted if the professor has been notified in advance and will receive a 10% deduction per day they are late. Extensions may be granted case-by-case. Assignments turned in five days after the due date will not be accepted. Incompletes will only be assigned in extremely unusual circumstances.

Spiritual Care

Please be aware that PLNU strives to be a place where you grow as whole persons. To this end, we provide resources for our students to encounter God and grow in their Christian faith. If students have questions, a desire to meet with the chaplain or have prayer requests you can contact your professor or the [Office of Spiritual Life and Formation](#).

State Authorization

State authorization is a formal determination by a state that Point Loma Nazarene University is approved to conduct activities regulated by that state. In certain states outside California, Point Loma Nazarene University is not authorized to enroll online (distance education) students. If a student moves to another state after admission to the program and/or enrollment in an online course, continuation within the program and/or course will depend on whether Point Loma Nazarene University is authorized to offer distance education courses in that state. It is the student’s responsibility to notify the institution of any change in his or her physical location. Refer to the map on [State Authorization](#) to view which states allow online (distance education) outside of California.

PLNU Copyright Policy

Point Loma Nazarene University, as a non-profit educational institution, is entitled by law to use materials protected by the US Copyright Act for classroom education. Any use of those materials outside the class may violate the law.

PLNU Academic Honesty Policy

Students should demonstrate academic honesty by doing original work and by giving appropriate credit to the ideas of others. Academic dishonesty is the act of presenting information, ideas, and/or concepts as one’s own when in reality they are the results of another person’s creativity and effort. A faculty member who believes a situation involving academic dishonesty has been detected may assign a failing grade for that assignment or examination, or, depending on the seriousness of the offense, for the course. Faculty should follow and students may appeal using the procedure in the university Catalog. See [Academic Policies](#) for definitions of kinds of academic dishonesty and for further policy information.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy

This class requires personal reflection and theological discernment. Neither of these tasks requires AI. You are allowed to use Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Gemini Pro 1.5, GrammarlyGo, Perplexity, etc) to generate ideas, but you are not allowed to use AI tools to generate content (text, video, audio, images) that will end up in any work submitted to be graded for this course. If you have any doubts about using AI, please gain permission from the instructor.

PLNU Academic Accommodations Policy

PLNU is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all its programs, services, and activities. Students with disabilities may request course-related accommodations by contacting the Educational Access Center (EAC), located in the Bond Academic Center (EAC@pointloma.edu or 619-849-2486). Once a student’s eligibility for an accommodation has been determined, the EAC will issue an academic accommodation plan (“AP”) to all faculty who teach courses in which the student is enrolled each semester.

PLNU highly recommends that students **speak with their professors during the first two weeks** of each semester/term about the implementation of their AP in that particular course and/or if they do not wish to utilize some or all of the elements of their AP in that course.

Students who need accommodations for a disability should contact the EAC as early as possible (i.e., ideally before the beginning of the semester) to assure appropriate accommodations can be provided. It is the student’s responsibility to make the first contact with the EAC.

Language and Belonging

Point Loma Nazarene University faculty are committed to helping create a safe and hospitable learning

environment for all students. As Christian scholars, we are keenly aware of the power of language and believe in treating others with dignity. As such, it is important that our language be equitable, inclusive, and prejudice-free. Inclusive/Bias-free language is the standard outlined by all major academic style guides, including MLA, APA, and Chicago, and it is the expected norm in university-level work. Good writing and speaking do not use unsubstantiated or irrelevant generalizations about personal qualities such as age, disability, economic class, ethnicity, marital status, parentage, political or religious beliefs, race, gender, sex, or sexual orientation. Inclusive language also avoids stereotypes or terminology that demeans persons or groups based on age, disability, class, ethnicity, gender, race, language, or national origin. Respectful use of language is essential when referring to those outside of the religious and lifestyle commitments of those in the PLNU community. By working toward precision and clarity of language, we mark ourselves as serious and respectful scholars and model the Christ-like quality of hospitality. You may report an incident(s) using the [Bias Incident Reporting Form](#).

Inclusive Language

The School of Theology and Christian Ministry is committed to the equality of women and men. Recognizing that people have often used the English language in ways that imply the exclusion or inferiority of women, the school urges students, faculty, and staff to avoid sexist language in public discourse, in classroom discussion, and in their writings. *Thus, terms like “man” or “mankind” or the pronoun “he,” should not be used to refer to all humans. Instead “humanity,” “humans,” and “he or she” better acknowledge women as full persons.* Papers submitted with exclusive language will receive a point deduction (minor, but an incentive to be attentive).

Sexual Misconduct and Discrimination

In support of a safe learning environment, if you (or someone you know) have experienced any form of sexual discrimination or misconduct, including sexual assault, dating or domestic violence, or stalking, know that accommodations and resources are available through the Title IX Office at pointloma.edu/Title-IX. Please be aware that under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, faculty and staff are required to disclose information about such misconduct to the Title IX Office. If you wish to speak to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting responsibility, you can contact Counseling Services at counselingservices@pointloma.edu or find a list of campus pastors at pointloma.edu/title-ix.

PLNU Attendance and Participation Policy

Regular and punctual attendance at all class sessions is essential to optimum academic achievement. If the student is absent for more than 10 percent of class sessions, the faculty member will issue a written warning of de-enrollment. If the absences exceed 20 percent, the student may be de-enrolled without notice until the university withdrawal date or, after that date, receive an “F” grade. **Absences**-Since the class meets weekly it is imperative that you attend. 2 or more absences will result in a 50% grade reduction, and 3 or more will result in de-enrollment or failing the course. Note on participation: For a learning community to be enriching, everyone must come on time and be present for conversation and reflection. To earn the highest grade for participation, come on time, come prepared, and bring your whole self to the discussion.

Come to the (literal, virtual, and metaphorical) table with the humility and readiness to learn from your peers, share with your peers, and challenge your peers when appropriate. Rather than simply finding a way to talk a lot, focus your concern on doing your part to promote meaningful course dialogue regarding the reading and classroom activities.

Loma Writing Center

The Loma Writing Center exists to help all members of the PLNU community cultivate transferable writing skills to engage their academic, professional, personal, and spiritual communities. We work toward this goal by conducting one-on-one consultation sessions, supporting writing education across the PLNU community, and participating in ongoing writing center research. Getting feedback from the Loma Writing Center while you're in the process of working on an assignment is a great way to improve the quality of your writing and develop as a writer. You are encouraged to talk with a trained writing consultant about getting started on an assignment, organizing your ideas, finding and citing sources, revising, editing for grammar and polishing final drafts, and more. For information about how to make in-person or online appointments, see [Loma Writing Center webpage](#) or visit the Loma Writer Center on the first floor of the Ryan Library, room 221.

Course Schedule and Assignments:

Week & Topic	Class Meeting	Class Content	Read & Do Before Class
WEEK 1 Course Introduction	Jan. 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Introduction to Course: Purpose & Syllabus ● Sentipensar 	Buy textbooks
	Jan. 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Community Learning Agreements ● Introduction to Practices 	
<i>What is Compassion?</i>			
WEEK 2 Compassionate God	Jan. 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● God-with-us ● Servant God 	Read <u>Compassion</u> Ch. 1-2 and submit reading report
	Jan. 22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Obedient God 	Read <u>Compassion</u> Ch. 3 and submit reading report
WEEK 3 Biblical Frameworks	Jan. 27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Introduction to “Snapshots of Compassion” Pair Presentations 	Asynchronous Class
	Jan. 29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reading the Bible from the Margins Greatest ● Commandments and Parables 	Read <u>Beyond Welcome</u> Part 2 and submit reading report
<i>Compassion is...Solidarity with the Margins</i>			
WEEK 4 Relationship to Margins	Feb. 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Power, Control, and Dominance 	Jigsaw Reading on <u>Compassion</u> Group 1: Ch. 4 Group 2: Ch. 5 Group 3: Ch. 6 and submit reading report
	Feb. 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Visit All Souls Point Loma: 	

		Loaves and Fishes	
WEEK 5 Migration and Movement	Feb. 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language • Myths • The Samaritan 	Read <u>Beyond Welcome</u> Part 1 and submit reading report
	Feb. 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit St. Lukes: Worship and Inclusion 	
WEEK 6 Creation Care	Feb. 17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Futility of Utility 	Inclusion & Marginality Ecosystem DUE Read <u>Beyond Welcome</u> Part 3 and submit reading report
	Feb. 19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indigenous ways of knowing 	Jigsaw Reading on <u>Shalom and the Community of Creation</u> Group 1: Ch. 2 Group 2: Ch. 3 Group 3: Ch. 4 and submit reading report
WEEK 7 Group Project Work Week	Feb. 24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Snapshot of Compassion Project Research Day 	
	Feb. 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Snapshot of Compassion Project Workday 	
WEEK 8 Intersectional Conversations	Mar. 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disability Theology 	Read <u>My Body is Not a Prayer Request</u> Ch. 9-10 (posted on Canvas) and submit reading report
	Mar. 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit Normal Heights United: Intersectional Community Involvement 	
Spring Break: March 9-13			
<i>Compassion is...peacemaking</i>			
WEEK 10 Peacemaking	Mar. 17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to Peacemaking 	Read <u>Buried Seeds</u> Ch. 1-3 and submit reading report.
	Mar. 19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failures of peacekeeping 	Read <u>Buried Seeds</u> Ch. 5-6 and La Fuente Ministries and submit reading report.
WEEK 11 Wiley Lectures	Mar. 23-26	Wiley Lectures @ Crill Performance Hall Series Title: "Theology at the Intersection of All That Is: Creation, Ecology, Gender, and Hope" Lecture 1: March 23 11:00-11:50 am "Creation: Cosmos, Connection, Creativity" Lecture 2: March 23 1:30-2:20 pm "Ecology: What's Coming?"	

		Lecture 3: March 24 9:30-10:10 am “Gender: Tangles of Sex, Bodies, Politics” Lecture 4: March 25 8:30-9:20 am “Hope: Embracing Planetude”	
WEEK 12 Prophetic imagination	Mar. 31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guest Speaker: Jamie Gates 	Read <u>Buried Seeds</u> Ch. 7-8 and submit reading report. Wiley Lecture Reflection
Easter Break: April 2-6			
WEEK 13 Snapshots of Compassion Presentations	Apr. 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Snapshots of Compassion Presentations Part 1 	Read <u>Tattoos on the Heart</u> , Intro-Ch. 1 and submit reading report
	Apr. 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Snapshots of Compassion Presentations Part 2 	Read <u>Tattoos on the Heart</u> , Ch. 2 and submit reading report
<i>Compassion is...a lifestyle</i>			
WEEK 14 Glocal Imagination	Apr. 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Snapshots of Compassion Presentations Part 3 	Read <u>Tattoos on the Heart</u> , Ch. 3-4 and submit reading report
	Apr. 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit Mid City Church of the Nazarene 	
WEEK 15 Compassion for Self	Apr. 21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compassion for Self 	Read <u>Tattoos on the Heart</u> , Ch. 5 and submit reading report
	Apr. 23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practices that sustain self-compassion 	Read <u>Tattoos on the Heart</u> , Ch. 6-7 and submit reading report
WEEK 16 The Compassionate Way	Apr. 28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Life of Solidarity 	Read <u>Tattoos on the Heart</u> , Ch. 8-9 and submit reading report
	Apr. 30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patience, Prayer, Action 	Read <u>Compassion</u> Part 3 and submit reading report.
FINAL	Praxis of Compassion		

Assignment Description

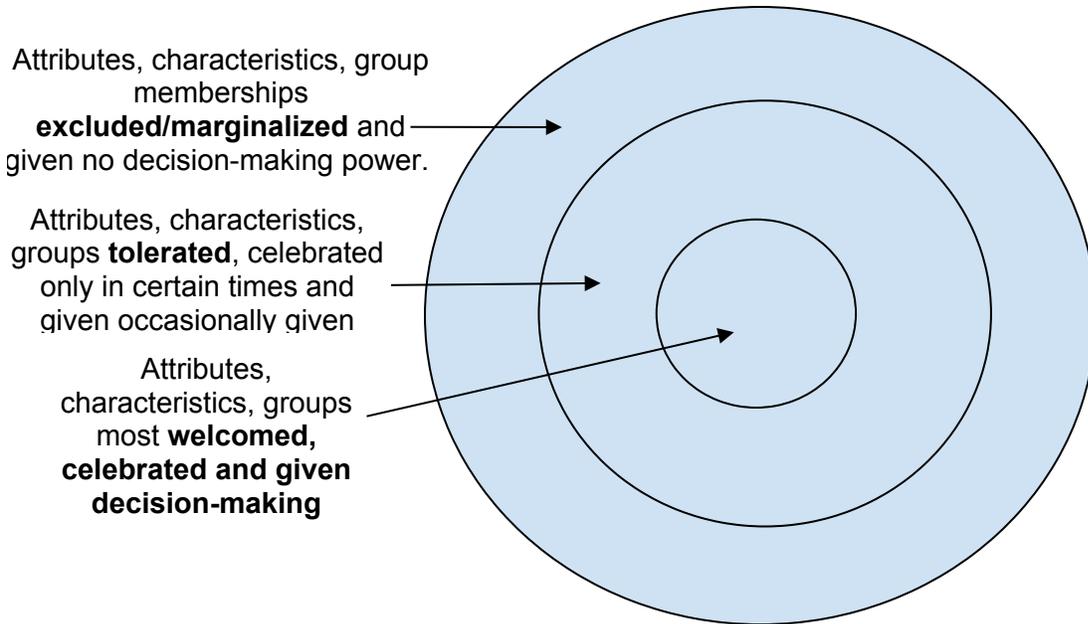
Reading Reports

Students are expected to turn in a reading report to canvas by the beginning of every class. Reports are to be filled out using the template provided.

Inclusion & Marginality Ecosystem

Students will reflect on their lives and communities and thoughtfully identify who is at their community's margins. Reflecting on the [wheel of power and privilege](#), students will create an ecosystem of inclusion and margins that display their communities' norms of inclusion and marginality.

Example:



In a 4-page, double-spaced paper, students will reflect on the following questions:

1. Who have you identified at the margins of your community?
2. How did it feel to name and identify the various groups?
3. What newfound awareness are you walking away from this exercise?

Lecture Reflection

Attend two of the sessions and respond to the following questions in a 2-page double spaced reflection paper

- a. Note which two lectures you attended.
- b. What were the main arguments presented?
- c. What stood out to you the most?
- d. What lingering questions do you have?

Snapshots of Compassion: Group Ministry Engagement Project

The *Snapshots of Compassion* Group Project invites students to collaboratively explore how Christian compassion is discerned and embodied within a **San Diego–area ministry or organization**. Through **interview, service participation, theological reflection, and group presentation**, students will examine real-world practices of compassionate and neighborhood-based ministry while engaging course readings and theological frameworks.

All findings, reflections, and analysis will be presented collectively in a single group presentation.

Part 1: Ministry Identification & Contextual Framing (Group Responsibility)

As a group, identify one San Diego–area Christian ministry or organization engaged in compassionate, justice-oriented, or neighborhood-based ministry.

Your group should be prepared to explain:

- The ministry’s mission, history, and community context
- The population(s) served
- How compassion is expressed or prioritized in the ministry’s work
- Why this ministry connects to course theme

Part 2: Leadership Interview (Group Research Component)

Your group will contact one ministry leader and conduct a semi-structured interview.

Interview Focus Areas: How the leader and ministry discern and practice faithful, compassionate ministry, the benefits and challenges of the ministry’s work and lessons learned and recommendations for others interested in community-based ministry. Submit interview questions and transcript

Interview insights should be woven throughout the group presentation.

Part 3: Service Participation (Group Engagement Component)

Each group member must volunteer with the ministry at least two times during the semester.

Students should pay attention to:

How compassion is embodied in daily practices, interpersonal, cultural, or systemic dynamics; connections between theology and practice and points of tension, limitation, or challenge

Part 4: Group Presentation

The group will deliver a 15 minute in-class presentation that integrates:

- Ministry context and community setting
- Key themes from the leadership interview
- Insights from service participation
- Engagement with at least 3 assigned course readings

The presentation must:

- Clearly explain the ministry’s work
- Make a theologically grounded argument for how the ministry embodies Christian compassion
- Identify strengths, challenges, and ethical tensions
- Demonstrate collective reflection and analysis

Presentations should balance story, theology, and critical reflection, not simply report experiences.

Praxis of Compassion Final Reflection

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This final writing project invites students to critically synthesize their learning from the *Snapshots of Compassion* Group Project and the course as a whole. Drawing on the ministry case study, leadership interview, service participation, class discussions, and course readings, students will develop a theologically grounded analysis of compassionate Christian ministry in a specific local context. This assignment moves beyond description or reflection to require theological argumentation, critical evaluation, and integration.

Students will write a substantive theological essay that answers the following guiding question: How does the ministry examined in the Snapshots of Compassion project illuminate both the possibilities and limits of compassionate Christian ministry, and what theological commitments should guide such work moving forward?

Required Sections

1. Ministry Context & Case Study Summary (2 pages)

Briefly introduce the ministry studied in the group project, including:

- Its mission and community context
- The population(s) served
- The ministry’s stated or implicit understanding of compassion

This section should be concise and analytical, not a re-telling of the group presentation.

2. Leadership Narrative & Discernment of Compassion (2 pages)

Drawing on the leadership interview:

- Analyze how compassion is discerned, practiced, and sustained
- Identify key theological or ethical commitments shaping leadership decisions
- Attend to tensions, challenges, or contradictions named by the leader

Engage course readings to interpret—not simply report—the leader’s narrative.

3. Embodied Practice & Community Engagement (2 pages)

Using insights from service participation:

- Analyze how compassion is embodied in concrete practices
- Examine interpersonal, cultural, or systemic dynamics at work
- Reflect on how the ministry engages community assets, not only needs

This section should demonstrate awareness of power, positionality, and context.

4. Theological Evaluation & Critical Analysis (4 pages)

This is the core analytical section of the paper. Students must:

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- Articulate a clear theological framework for compassion (e.g., incarnation, justice, hospitality, solidarity, liberation, reconciliation)
- Evaluate how well the ministry aligns with this framework
- Identify strengths, limitations, and ethical tensions
- Discuss risks such as paternalism, burnout, saviorism, or cultural blindness

5. Implications for Compassionate Ministry (2 page)

Conclude by addressing:

- What this case study reveals about compassionate Christian ministry more broadly
- Key theological commitments future ministry leaders should hold
- How this project has shaped your understanding of faithful ministry in diverse contexts

Requirements

- 12-page, double-spaced paper
- Minimum 8 total sources