



Scott Bennett

SPA300 – Civic Engagement: Conversation, Culture, Community

Christian Practice in the Higher Education Classroom is described as incorporating instructional spiritual practices into one's course for the purpose of cultivating Godly reflection and practice in academic life.

Christian Practice:

Compassion - Empathy - Face-to-face Connection

The practices we engage in are **compassion** and **empathy** for the other. Students are required to keep a journal during the semester. The activity is to meet a migrant (either in San Diego or Tijuana) and learn about their story through an interview. As the students meet migrants and hear their stories, they continue to use creative means to engage the practices of compassion and empathy during the semester, such as writing a poem as a journal entry, creating a drawing, etc. It is up to the students if they decide to go beyond the minimum requirements to engage more in advocacy work or pursue a deeper connection/relationship with the migrant. As a final requirement, students write a reflection on their own lives and how their experience is different from the life of the migrant with whom they made a relationship, and how practicing compassion and empathy helped them change their perspectives.

Overall, students learned about migrants and the current situation with immigration not only on the U.S.-Mexico border, but throughout the world. We spent time considering and implementing the Christian practices of empathy and compassion, and we also learned how to focus on others. I had students write reflections on the experience as part of the final exam, and I checked the journal entries that they made for the project. It was gratifying to see such great connections and comments about the people, and also some of the photos that the students included in their journals.



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