

la Compassion
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THE DEPARTMENT OF FRENCH & ITALIAN
GRADUATE STUDENT WORKSHOP

WITH
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A discussion of the introduction
to her most recent book,
*Compassion's Edge: Fellow-Feeling and its
Limits in Early Modern France.*

**For a PDF of the text please email
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Compassion's Edge examines the language of fellow-feeling—pity, compassion, and charitable care—that flourished in France in the period from the Edict of Nantes in 1598, which established some degree of religious toleration, to the official breakdown of that toleration with the Revocation of the Edict in 1685. This is not, however, a story about compassion overcoming difference but one of compassion reinforcing division: the seventeenth-century texts of fellow-feeling led not to communal concerns but to paralysis, misreading, and isolation. Early modern fellow-feeling drew distinctions, policed its borders, and far from reaching out to others, kept the other at arm's length. Investigating the affective undertow of religious toleration, *Compassion's Edge* provides a robust corrective to today's hope that fellow-feeling draws us inexorably and usefully together.

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