

Zeena Zakharia

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Religion, Critical Praxis, and Peacebuilding: Observations from a Shi'i School in Lebanon

This talk draws on observations from an Islamic school in Lebanon to consider how educators in schools with explicit faith-based missions teach in ways that promote critical reflection, peacebuilding, and human rights in the context of violent political conflict. Even as the historically divisive, sectarian development of the Lebanese school system makes the practice of such pedagogy counter-intuitive, some faith-based schools and their teachers have been actively engaged with students in critical inquiry about religion, conflict, inequality and rights. Through critical reflection and action, or praxis, students actively negotiate their positions on social, political, and economic issues, developing their ideas, capacities, and related skills and tools for social action. The talk draws specifically on data collected from a year of ethnographic study at a Shi'i school in Lebanon, but illustrates broader principles for, and tensions around, the possibility of peacebuilding through faith-based engagement in conflict and crisis-affected contexts.