

Diverse Perspectives On Curriculum & Pedagogy

2015-2016 Seminar Series

hosted by William E. Doll, Jr., Donna Trueit, William Pinar

October 9th

When Scriptures Hurt: Teaching Violent Sacred Texts

Ayesha Chaudhry | Radcliffe College & University of British Columbia

Friday, October 9th, 2015 | 12:30-2:00 p.m. | Scarfe Room 310

Sandwiches and informal conversation at noon | The lecture commences at 12:30 p.m.

In this talk, I will discuss a Qur'anic text (Q. 4:34) that has historically been used to justify domestic violence and continues to be used today to prevent the criminalization of domestic violence in several Muslim majority countries. Teaching such a text is a politically fraught endeavour, especially in a geopolitical context in which Islamophobia is a persistent problem. Nevertheless, avoiding such a topic is also out of the question. Given this, how does one navigate the insider/outsider divide in exploring such texts responsibly.

Ayesha S. Chaudhry is the Rita E. Hauser fellow at Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University. She is Associate Professor of Islamic studies and gender studies at the University of British Columbia (UBC). She is the author of *Domestic Violence and the Islamic Tradition: Ethics, Law, and the Muslim Discourse on Gender* (Oxford University Press, 2014). She has consulted on high-level national and international cases concerning human rights and religious pluralism and freedom, as well as on divorce cases involving Muslim-majority countries. At Radcliffe, Chaudhry is working on a project that constructs

a feminist Shari'a by re-imagining the narrative of 'Ā'isha, Muammad's youngest wife. Constructions of 'Ā'isha are central to justifying and supporting patriarchal Islamic laws, especially those regarding women's political and religious leadership, women's testimony, polygamy, child marriage and virginity testing, slander and corporal punishment for illicit sex, and domestic violence. Therefore, creating a feminist narrative of 'Ā'isha is necessary for Islamic legal reform. Chaudhry is examining premodern, patriarchal constructions of 'Ā'isha, investigating modern Muslim debates around these laws, and proposing strategies for reimagining 'Ā'isha to frame a narrative for a gender-equal Islamic law. Looking at major Muslim debates about gender through the lens of 'Ā'isha will provide a counter-narrative to conceptions of a patriarchal Islam.

Chaudhry earned her PhD in Middle East and Islamic studies from New York University and a collaborative MA in Near Eastern civilizations and women's studies from the University of Toronto. She is a contributor to the *Globe and Mail*. Chaudhry has been an Early Career Scholar at the Peter Wall Institute for Advanced Studies at UBC.

