

Resilience Through Teaching Innovations

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Abstract: Lebanon is a land of turbulences that have many times turned violent: A civil war that lasted 15 years (1975-1990), major attacks/invasions by foreign powers (1982, 1996, 2006), car bombs targeting civilians, assassinations of major political figures (most prominent is Prime Minister Rafic Hariri in 2005), and most recently (2019) a social unrest that began on October 17 and is still ongoing. Yet at times of peace Lebanon has always risen above all the challenges. The capital city of Beirut in particular has, at various points in time, witnessed huge reconstruction projects in order to live up to its 1960's reputation as the Switzerland or Paris of the Middle East.

The education sector in Lebanon has been affected by the turbulences and has experienced ups and downs. Prior to the civil war, Beirut was also known as the University (and the hospital) of the Middle East. The most famous of its institutions are the American University of Beirut, Beirut College for Women (now called the Lebanese American University), and French university Universite Saint Joseph. These institutions had no choice but to be resilient and overcome the challenges of being in an unstable place, and to focus on their missions of providing an excellent education through liberal arts curricula.

In this talk I will walk you through a brief history of modern Lebanon, followed by a summary of my contributions to the learning process especially in differential equations. I will highlight my latest experiment of teaching an inquiry oriented differential equations course that was developed by Professor Chris Rasmussen and a number of his colleagues.