CALL FOR PAPERS
Masking and Manipulating Vulnerability

March 18th-19th, 2011

Emory University School of Law, Atlanta, Georgia

This workshop is the most recent in a series examining the theoretical possibilities inherent in the concepts of vulnerability and resilience. The experience or realization of vulnerability can provoke compassion, empathy, and solidarity. It can also evoke fear, violence, and disgust.

In this session we want to examine how our understandings and experiences of human vulnerability can be and have been exploited economically, culturally, and politically under the guise of protecting perceived at-risk groups or institutions. Aggressive military policies, social welfare restrictions, and invasive economic restructuring have been justified in the name of mitigating national, gendered, or global perils.

The designation of an individual or group as vulnerable is often viewed as stigmatizing and deserving of a marginalized or diminished social status. Fear of vulnerability, as well as the fear of being labeled "vulnerable," can render individuals and institutions susceptible to manipulation and accepting of authoritarian regimes of control or subordination.

Vulnerability when assigned as characteristic of only some groups in society (e.g. children, the elderly, the poor) also can inspire protectionist policies that ignore the voice, desires, and material circumstances of the targeted population.

We invite proposals from scholars in all of disciplines in which the concept of vulnerability may be relevant.

WORKSHOP CONTACTS:

Martha L. A. Fineman, Emory University School of Law, *mfineman@law.emory.edu*
Katie E. Oliviero, Postdoctoral Fellow, Emory School of Law, *koliviero@emory.edu*

SUBMISSIONS PROCEDURE:
Please email a paper proposal of at least 400-600 words by Monday, January 17th to:
mfineman@law.emory.edu and *koliviero@emory.edu*

It may be helpful in drafting your proposal to explore the Vulnerability and the Human Condition website:
www.emory.edu/vulnerability
The section on resources includes several VHC publications and definitions.

Decisions will be made by January 28th. Working paper drafts will be due March 1st, so they can be duplicated and distributed prior to the Workshop.

WORKSHOP DETAILS:

The Workshop begins Friday at 4PM in room 575 of Emory Law School, followed by dinner in the Hunter Atrium. The Law School is located at 1301 Clifton Road, Atlanta, GA.

Presentations and panels continue on Saturday from 9:30 AM to approximately 5PM. Lunch will be provided.

POSSIBLE QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER INCLUDE:
**What images of vulnerability are found in politics, law, public policy, and/or culture?
**What is the relationship between vulnerability and concepts such as weakness and harm?
**What is the nature and power of the discourse and ideology whereby human vulnerability has been constructed as both avoidable and stigmatizing?
**What the relationship between vulnerability and liberal political theory?
**Do feminist formulations of victimization and agency – or their caricatures - contribute to the construction of vulnerability as stigma and weakness?
**How is vulnerability articulated differently when it is perceived to be attached the powerful in society?
**Would unmasking the vulnerability of the rich and powerful provoke empathy or disgust (or both)?
**Is there a difference between vulnerability perceived as "risk" verses as a threat?
**How is the experience or perception of human, institutional, or state vulnerabilities appropriated to advance dominant ideologies or institutions?
**In what ways can state or institutional responses to vulnerability aggravate, complicate, or compound the very vulnerability to which they are responding?
**Who is harmed by dominant and stigmatized conceptions of human vulnerability? How?
**Who is benefited from such conceptions? How?
**Can the realization of universal vulnerability be mobilized for progressive purposes? If so, how?
**What are examples of the manipulation of vulnerability toward privileged or inappropriate ends?
**What is the danger in using the discourse of vulnerability?
**What are the positive possibilities in using the discourse of vulnerability?