Questions of inevitable and derivative human dependency have been central to the Feminist Legal Theory Project for much of its thirty years of existence. Theories of dependency reveal the limitations that attend the relationship between dichotomies such as private/public, market/family, and care/work, which largely define what are public as contrasted with private responsibilities and what constitutes autonomy, self-sufficiency, and liberty. Feminists have long critiqued these dichotomies as enshrining inequality and obscuring both the social benefits and burdens of caretaking.

This workshop will connect institutional and human vulnerability in the context of work, family, neoliberalism and the new information age. It will consider the implications for critical theory of large-scale changes in the structure of wage labor and employment that place an ideal of stable self-sufficiency beyond the reach of many. The manufacturing era was characterized by the rise of the large firm (which achieved a measure of insulation from market forces), the countervailing force of unions, and the spread of secure employment paying a “family wage.” In contrast, the new information age and its attending forces of globalization and technological change have produced a deepened volatility for companies and workers alike and created a broad series of effects and risks at the intersection of the changing firm and the changing family.

Globalization and other forms of neoliberal restructuring facilitate increasingly rapid movement of materials, labor, and financing among different countries, allowing greater circumvention of national and regional regulations. The deregulation of financial systems intensifies pressure to focus on short-term measures of success and increases the influence of powerful and nimble actors. Technological changes reduce the need for labor. Such transformations initiate less investment in employees and fewer structures that protect against the discriminatory treatment of workers. Corporate organization is more fluid, as companies more quickly dissolve and reconstitute themselves. The result is greater instability in employment tenure, greater income inequality, and less reliable benefits.

### Vulnerability and Resilience Background

**Reading at:** [http://web.gs.emory.edu/vulnerability](http://web.gs.emory.edu/vulnerability)

**Workshop Contacts:** Martha Albertson Fineman, mlfinem@emory.edu; June Carbone, jcarbone@umn.edu

**Submissions Procedure:**

Email a proposal of several paragraphs as a Word or PDF document by July 13, 2015 to Rachel Ezrol, rezrol@emory.edu

Decisions will be made August 3, 2015 and working paper drafts will be due September 28, 2015 so they can be duplicated and distributed prior to the Workshop.

**Workshop Details:**

The Workshop begins Friday at 4PM in Gambrell 575 at Emory Law School. Dinner will follow Friday’s session. Panels continue on Saturday from 9 AM to 5PM; breakfast and lunch will be provided.

### Issues For Discussion May Include:

This workshop will use vulnerability theory to explore the implications of the changing structure of employment and business organizations in the new information age. In considering these changes, we ask:

- What kind of legal subject is the business organization?
- Are there relevant distinctions among business and corporate forms in regard to understanding both vulnerability and resilience?
- What, if any, should be the role of international and transnational organizations in a neoliberal era? What is their role in building both human and institutional resilience?
- Is corporate philanthropy an adequate response to the retraction of state regulation? What forms of resilience should be regulated and which should be left to the ‘free market’?
- How might a conception of the vulnerable subject help our analysis of the changing nature of the firm? What relationships does it bring into relief?
- How have discussions about market vulnerability shifted over time?
- What forms of resilience are available for institutions to respond to new economic realities?
- How are business organizations vulnerable? How does this differ from the family?
- How does the changing structure of employment and business organization affect possibilities for transformation and reform of the family?
- What role should the responsive state take in directing shifting flows of capital and care?
- How does the changing relationship between employment and the family, and particularly the disappearance of the “sole breadwinner,” affect our understanding of the family and its role in caretaking and dependency?
- How does the Supreme Court’s willingness to assign rights to corporate persons (*Citizen's United, Hobby Lobby*), affect workers, customers and communities? The relationship between public and private arenas?
- Will Airbnb and Uber be the new model for the employment relationships of the future?