Call for Papers:  
An Uncomfortable Conversation  

Religious Visions in the Family: Images and Aspirations for Equality --- At Emory School of Law, May 11 & 12, 2007

The Feminism and Legal Theory Project will host an Uncomfortable Conversation focused on comparing a variety of religious approaches to the structuring of appropriate authority within families, as well as in “private” life more generally. We are particularly interested in how religious visions of the family complement or compete with secular and “rights” based notions of gender equality and an ideally egalitarian family. To the extent that religions envision the household, and within it, the relationship between husband and wife, as embodying important religious truths about divine order as well as human nature, what role does equality play in visions of family governance? How do religious conceptions of equality amidst difference, such as equal respect or equal regard, compare with feminist visions?

The objective is for conscientious critical investigations of religion and its interaction with evolving aspirations in regard to gender and family relations. To that end, we particularly welcome proposals that “take a stand” and presenters who are not reluctant to stake out a position.

Question to be considered might include:

- What are the various religious traditions concerning equality between women and men and within families? How do notions of difference and complementarity feature?
- How have those religious doctrines concerning intimacy and family issues changed over time and what has precipitated those changes?
- Conversely, when change has been slow in coming, what factors, structures and beliefs impede adaptation by religions to “new” patterns of behavior and systems of values?
- How do secular and religious systems of belief about gender, intimacy, and family complement and/or compete with each other?
- What is the interaction of religion and secular equality norms in countries other than the western nations?
- Is religion a threat to feminist aspirations for women and children? Is feminism a “threat” to religion and religious values? How have religious feminists envisioned the family and models of family governance?
- How does religion reinforce or undermine nation states’ efforts toward equality? For example, how have constitutional guarantees of sex equality meshed with constitutional protections of family life and religious freedom?
- What can we learn from a comparison of feminist and religious “family values”?
- What would a religious/feminist vision of equality entail?
- How can feminists work with/challenge the contentious contemporary debates and appeals to family values that directly undermine feminist objectives?
- How can we avoid caricature and reductive treatment of both religious and feminist beliefs?
- What are the prospects for family stability under current religious paradigms?
- What are the effects of various religious traditions on reproductive rights?