
CALL FOR PAPERS

A Workshop on the Environment and Vulnerability: The Anthropocene in the Time of Trump

April 14-15, 2017

Emory University School of Law, Atlanta, GA

Environmental issues are often discussed in terms of vulnerability, resilience, and human dependency. However, the focus of current vulnerability discourse in the environmental regime has largely been on geographic positioning and scientific inquiry. This workshop will extend that perspective to encompass human vulnerability as a central component of the political description of harm and the basis for compelling both national and international responses. Humanity's complete dependence on the environment arises from our embodiment. But we are also dependent on political and legal structures that are themselves vulnerable to capture, manipulation, misunderstanding, and corruption. With the entry into force of the 2015 Paris Agreement on Climate Change, for example, nationally determined contributions of states to reduce greenhouse gas emissions underlines the role that states and institutions must continue to play in responding to the greatest environmental threat of the 21st century. Yet the history thus far, is that action by states has not been sufficient to develop the resilient and low-impact redesign needed. Other institutions and individuals must also play a part in mustering the political will to protect the environment that results in state action. How can the recognition of both individual human and systemic institutional vulnerabilities be integrated into a compelling narrative of environmental ethics?

With this question at the fore, this workshop will consider the roles played by national and international legal and political frameworks as well as by neoliberalism in shaping our approach to the environment. It will build on the insights of vulnerability theory and other critical theories to assess the proliferation of market-based approaches to environmental problems, and examine how forces of globalization and technology can create a 'false' sense of invulnerability for industrial societies. The premises of adaptation and mitigation, while important, also need to be examined.

Globalization and other forms of neoliberal socio-economic restructuring committed to expanding markets, increased production, and consumption have tended to facilitate human exploitation of environmental resources and minimize our response to environmental threats. Market-based approaches intensify the pressure to focus on short-term measures of success and increase the influence of powerful and nimble corporate actors that lie outside the reach of international law and who often work to impede the creation of potential regulatory solutions. While some international development has enriched local economies, it has also drained value from local economies and provided revenue for elites, which too often evolve into kleptocracies.

Issues For Discussion May Include:

- How can we effectively discuss environmental vulnerability and resilience?
- How would that discussion differ from and/or relate to discussions of human vulnerability and resilience?
- What is the right balance of state vs. market responses for addressing environmental issues?
- What is the role of concepts like "risk management" and insurance in environmental discourse?
- In what ways do questions of (neo) colonization, debt relief, variable impact and distinctions drawn between conceptions of the Global South and Global North impede or advance progress in addressing environmental issues?

Issues For Discussion May Include: (CONT.)

- How do we define “justice” and with who or what are we concerned when the issues relate to the environment?
- Can a focus on human vulnerability and the introduction of a “vulnerable subject” entitled to an appropriately responsive and responsible state help reshape our analysis of the changing nature of the relationship between human beings and the environment? Why or why not?
- How can we think of the environment as a vulnerable subject?
- What are some of the barriers to government action to address human vulnerability? What are reasons for government inaction?
- How can we engage with local, state and federal government to coalesce the will to solve problems practically and transcend political partisanship?
- How can we engage with each other to create the shared context that will reveal commonalities and options for consensus-based policy development?
- What has been the role of international and transnational business and corporate organizations operating within our neoliberal era in initiating, perpetuating, and responding to environmental crises? How has the economic vision of ‘limitless growth’ been used? What should the role of global organizations in the wake of threats like climate change, biodiversity loss and air pollution?
- How have discussions about environmental vulnerability and human vulnerability shifted over time?

Vulnerability and Resilience Background Reading at: <http://web.gs.emory.edu/vulnerability>

Submissions Procedure:

Email a proposal of several paragraphs as a Word or PDF document by **January 27, 2017** to Rachel Ezrol, rezrol@emory.edu.

Decisions will be made by **February 10, 2017** and working paper drafts will be due **March 24, 2017** so they can be duplicated and distributed prior to the Workshop.

Workshop Details:

The Workshop begins Friday, April 14 at 4PM at Emory University School of Law. Dinner follows Friday’s session. Panels continue on Saturday, April 15 from 9 AM to 5 PM; breakfast and lunch will be provided.

The workshop is being convened by:

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