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Seminar: American Multinational Corporations: Increased Power, Decreased Accountability? (October 2011)

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JACK & MAE
NATHANSON CENTRE
ON TRANSNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS, CRIME AND SECURITY

Presents

AMERICAN MULTINATIONAL CORPORATIONS:
INCREASED POWER, DECREASED ACCOUNTABILITY?

a talk by

Cynthia A. Williams
University of Illinois College of Law

Date/time: Thursday, October 20, 2011 / 12:30 – 2:30 pm

**Location: Ignat Kaneff Building, Room 2003
Osgoode Hall Law School**

In this Seminar, Professor Cynthia Williams will discuss two recent legal developments that have important implications for corporate responsibility by U.S. multinational companies. The first development, the Supreme Court's opinion in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*, 558 U.S. ____ (2010), recognizes a constitutional right under the First Amendment for companies (and unions) to use treasury funds to financially support a broad range of electioneering activities, including direct advocacy for or against candidates in federal primaries or general elections. Prior to *Citizens United* such advocacy was limited to corporate or union Political Action Committees ("PACs"), to which shareholders, employees or union members had specifically contributed to advance such advocacy. The second development, the opinion by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit in *Kiobel v. Royal Dutch Shell*, 621 F.3d 111 (2d Cir. 2010), denied the existence of corporate liability for violations of international human rights. If the rationale of this decision is applied in other circuits it would virtually eliminate companies' legal accountability for egregious international human rights violations. Examined together, Professor Williams will argue, these developments increase the already considerable political power of U.S. companies at home, even as they reduce the risk of companies' legal accountability for their actions abroad.

Prof. Cynthia Williams, Professor of Law at the University of Illinois College of Law. From 2007-2009 she was the inaugural Osler Chair in Business Law at Osgoode Hall Law School. Professor Williams writes in the areas of securities law, corporate law, corporate responsibility, comparative corporate governance and regulatory theory, most often in interdisciplinary collaborations.