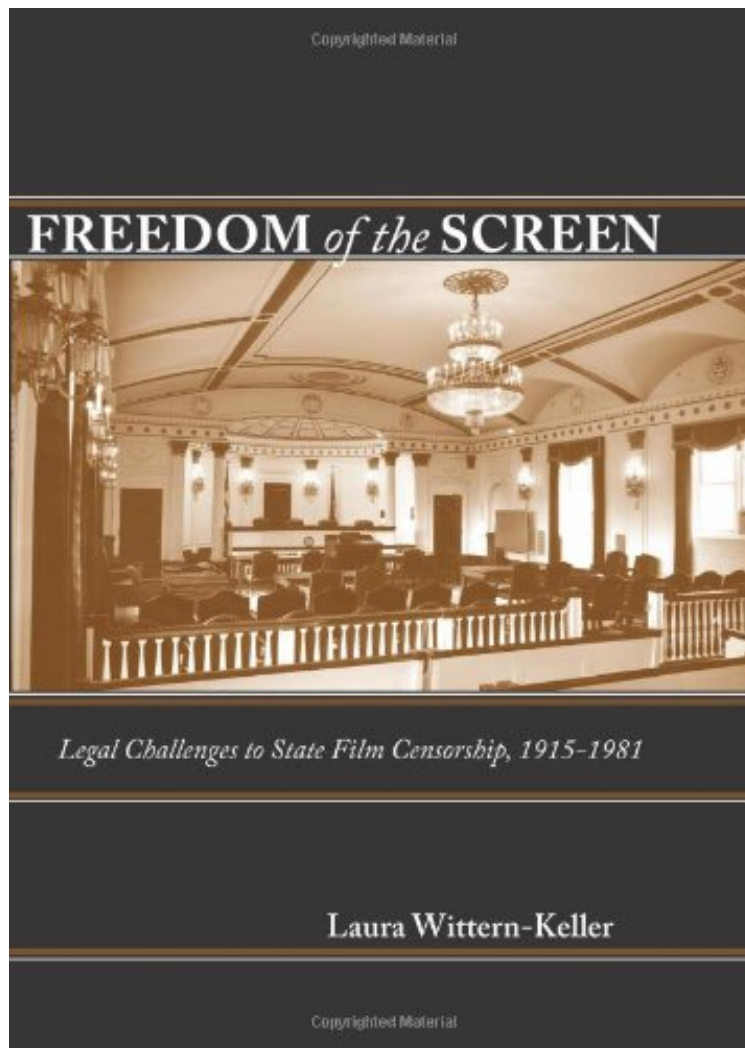


[Pdf free] Freedom of the Screen: Legal Challenges to State Film Censorship, 1915-1981

Freedom of the Screen: Legal Challenges to State Film Censorship, 1915-1981

Laura Wittern-Keller

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Laura Wittern-Keller : Freedom of the Screen: Legal Challenges to State Film Censorship, 1915-1981 before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Freedom of the Screen: Legal Challenges to State Film Censorship, 1915-1981:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. I loved this book almost as soon as I opened itBy R. J. RyanI loved this book almost as soon as I opened it. For my part, Laura Wittern-Keller did something different with the history of film and the cinema. That is to say, she chose a particular topic and then went on to give me (her reader) exactly what I wanted to learn. It's a great book on its topic, but more than that, it's a great read. If you're interested in film and

cinema and don't have a copy of this work on your bookshelves, you really are missing something special. How can you be a movie buff without knowing how difficult it sometimes was to get even a few frames past the censor? Great stuff, Laura.

At the turn of the twentieth century, the proliferation of movies attracted not only the attention of audiences across America but also the apprehensive eyes of government officials and special interest groups concerned about the messages disseminated by the silver screen. Between 1907 and 1926, seven states—New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Virginia, Kansas, Maryland, and Massachusetts—and more than one hundred cities authorized censors to suppress all images and messages considered inappropriate for American audiences. Movie studios, hoping to avoid problems with state censors, worrying that censorship might be extended to the federal level, and facing increased pressure from religious groups, also jumped into the censoring business, restraining content through the adoption of the self-censoring Production Code, also known as the Hays code. But some industry outsiders, independent distributors who believed that movies deserved the free speech protections of the First Amendment, brought legal challenges to censorship at the state and local levels. *Freedom of the Screen* chronicles both the evolution of judicial attitudes toward film restriction and the plight of the individuals who fought for the right to deliver provocative and relevant movies to American audiences. The path to cinematic freedom was marked with both achievements and roadblocks, from the establishment of the Production Code Administration, which effectively eradicated political films after 1934, to the landmark cases over films such as *The Miracle* (1948), *La ronde* (1950), and *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1955) that paved the way for increased freedom of expression. As the fight against censorship progressed case by case through state courts and the U.S. Supreme Court, legal authorities and the public responded, growing increasingly sympathetic toward artistic freedom. Because a small, unorganized group of independent film distributors and exhibitors in mid-twentieth-century America fought back against what they believed was the unconstitutional prior restraint of motion pictures, film after 1965 was able to follow a new path, maturing into an artistic medium for the communication of ideas, however controversial. Government censors would no longer control the content of America's movie screens. Laura Wittern-Keller's use of previously unexplored archival material and interviews with key figures earned her the researcher of the year award from the New York State Board of Regents and the New York State Archives Partnership Trust. Her exhaustive work is the first to discuss more than five decades of film censorship battles that rose from state and local courtrooms to become issues of national debate and significance. A compendium of judicial action in the film industry, *Freedom of the Screen* is a tribute to those who fought for the constitutional right of free expression and paved the way for the variety of films that appear in cinemas today.

"This fascinating study helps us to understand the way American society evolved from general acceptance of movie censorship to a strong rejection of it." The author shows how Americans began to recognize that filmmakers, like the creators of books and newspapers, ought to enjoy the right of free speech under terms of the First Amendment. Wittern-Keller's well-researched investigation of the fight against censorship makes an important contribution to U.S. social, legal, and political history. "Robert Brent Toplin" "The author's research is prodigious and fills a significant gap in the field. All who are engaged in this field will have to incorporate her findings into their stories of movie censorship. . . This reference is needed and will be much appreciated for decades to come. A heroic effort." Francis C. Couvares "Wittern-Keller coolly investigates the tension between individual rights and government restraint in the history of American film." Choice "Wittern-Keller's book is a welcome addition to the scholarship on movie censorship, fills a significant, an important gap in the literature, and will be the baseline reference work on the history of state censorship." *Journal of American History* About the Author Laura Wittern-Keller is visiting assistant professor of history and public policy at the University at Albany (SUNY) and the recipient of the New York State Archives Award for Excellence in Research. She also lives in Wilmington, North Carolina, with her husband.