



Cinema Censorship & the Law

Jeremy Geltzer

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In the beginning film was not speech. In 1915, as *The Birth of a Nation* was stampeding across America, the U.S. Supreme Court looked at motion pictures and ruled that the medium was “a business pure and simple.” Movies were an amusement, an attraction, a penny-arcade diversion for children. The Mutual decision gave municipal censors, regional regulators, and self-appointed morality police the upper hand. Motion pictures producers, distributors, and exhibitor had to fight for free speech. By 1952 the Supreme Court was convinced to reverse its four-decade precedent and proclaim the freedom of the screen. But with the decline of state censorship new problems arose, pornography, profanity, and increasingly extreme content. *Cinema, Censorship & the Law* charts the progression of movies toward greater First Amendment protections. Enhanced with insightful introductions that provide context and background information, the casebook is a necessity for legal scholars on media issues, filmmakers desiring a glimpse at a hidden history of the medium, and individuals interested in the limits of free expression.

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