

Laura Wittern-Keller
Department of History
Social Science 145

updated August 2025

EDUCATION

University at Albany, PhD in U.S. History, December 2003

Dissertation: "Freedom of the Screen: Legal Challenges to State Film Censorship,"

Supervisors: Richard Hamm and Julian Zelizer

The Pennsylvania State University, MA in history, 1980

State University of New York at Albany, BA, magna cum laude in history, 1973

EDUCATIONAL EMPLOYMENT

2009—present	Lecturer, Department of History, University at Albany
2007-2009	Visiting Assistant Professor, Department of History, University at Albany
2004-2007	Visiting Assistant Professor, Department of History, UNC Wilmington
2001-2004	Instructor, Department of Communications, Castleton State College, Castleton, VT
1998-2001	Teaching Assistant, Department of History, University at Albany
1999-2000	Managing Editor, <i>Peace & Change: a Journal of Peace Research</i>

PUBLICATIONS

BOOKS

1. ***Freedom of the Screen: Legal Challenges to State Film Censorship, 1915-1981***. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, January 2008. Pp xi, 341.

Reviews: *Journal of American History*, 95, no. 3 (October 2008), 885-886;
The American Journal of Legal History, 50, No. 4 (October 2008), 469-470;
Journal of Popular Culture, 42, no.2 (April 2009), 394-396.

2. ***The Miracle Case: Film Censorship and the Supreme Court***, co-authored with Raymond J. Haberski Jr, Lawrence: Landmark Law Cases & American Society series, University Press of Kansas, October 2008.

December 2008 Book of the Month by the American Booksellers Foundation for Free Expression. [co-authors usually listed alphabetically. Wittern-Keller appears first at insistence of co-author, Haberski]

Reviews:

Film & History: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Film and Television Studies, Volume 39.1
(Spring 2009), pp. 101-103;
American Historical Review, 114, no.4 (October 2009), 1108-1109
Journal of American History, 96, no. 3 (December 2009), 871-872
Law and History Review, 28, no.1 (February 2010) 289-291
The Historian, 73, no. 1 (Spring 2011), 165-166
Journal of Church and State, 51, no. 2 (Spring 2009), 376-378.

BOOK CHAPTERS

1. "All the Power of the Law: Governmental Film Censorship." In *Silencing Cinema*, edited by Daniel Biltereyst and Roel Vande Winkel, 15-32. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013.

Reviews:

The Kelvingrove Review, 12, TKR 12:7
Choice, review #51-1382, 51, no.3 (November 2013)

2. "Controlling Content: Governmental Censorship, the Production Code, and the Ratings System." In *Hollywood and the Law*, edited by Paul McDonald, Emily Carmen, et al., 130-153. London: BFI/Palgrave, December 2015.
3. "Freedom of the Screen: Joseph Burstyn and *The Miracle*." *The Best of the New York Archives: Selections from the Magazine, 2001-2011*, SUNY Press, 2017.

ARTICLES

"Hugh Flick: the Enlightened Censor." *New York Archives* 16, no. 1 (2016): 16-19.

"The Censors Who Wouldn't Quit: the Slow Demise of the Maryland Board of Censors." *Maryland Historical Magazine* 110, no. 3 (2015): 371-399.

"Freedom of the Screen: Joseph Burstyn and *The Miracle*," *New York Archives Magazine*, 1, no. 4 (2002).

ENCYCLOPEDIA ENTRIES

"*INS v. Delgado*," *Encyclopedia of the Fourth Amendment*, CQ Press, 2013.

"*INS v. Lopez-Mendoza*." *Encyclopedia of the Fourth Amendment*, CQ Press, 2013.

"*Freedman v. Maryland*." *Encyclopedia of the First Amendment*, CQ Press, 2008. Available online at <https://mtsu.edu/first-amendment/article/349/freedman-v-maryland>

"The New York State Motion Picture Division," *Encyclopedia of New York State* (2004).

WEB PAGES DEVELOPED

“The History of Film Censorship,” hosted by FIRE, the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, <https://www.thefire.org/first-amendment-library/special-collections/timeline/the-history-of-film-censorship/>

“Movie Censorship,” <http://censoringmovies.com/>

Blog created for students, “An Engaged Professor,” <http://engagedprofessor.blogspot.com/>

BOOK REVIEWS

Lust on Trial: Censorship and the Rise of American Obscenity in the Age of Anthony Comstock by Amy Werbel. *New York History* 99, no. 34 (2018): 481-484. <https://muse.jhu.edu/> (accessed June 29, 2019).

Review of *Film Censorship: Regulating America’s Screen* by Sheri Chinen Biesen, *Journal of American History*, December 2019.

Review of *You Can’t Air That* by David S. Silverman. *Historical Journal of Film, Radio, and Television* 30, no. 2 (2010): 275–276.

Review of *Banned in Kansas* by Gerald R. Butters. *Journal of American History* 95, no. 3 (2008): 884-885.

Review of *Transforming America* documentary. *Journal of American History* 92, no. 3 (2005): 1082-84.

H-Net Book review, *American Catholic Lay Movements and Trans-Atlantic Social Reform in the Progressive Period* by Deirdre Moloney.
<http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=8900>

Review of *The Cinema of Generation X* by Peter Hanson. *Film and History* 33, no.2 (2003): 89-90.

WORK IN PROGRESS

“Get Out and Stay Out: Deportations for Ideological Reasons in the Early Cold War” (research ongoing)

“Banned in Boston and everywhere in Massachusetts: How the Bay State Controlled Movie Content in the Mid-Twentieth Century”

This article will correct the incorrect information about Massachusetts’ censoring in every book or article written about governmental censors.

OTHER SCHOLARLY ACTIVITY

Consultancies:

Historical consultant and on-camera interviewee in the documentary on the Maryland Board of Censorship, *Sickies Making Films: a History of Censoring Films in America*, produced by Robert A. Emmons, Rutgers University and Joe Tropea, Maryland Historical Society, released 2019 and available at <https://albany.kanopy.com/video/sickies-making-films>.

[Consultant to 2006 documentary](#), *This Film is Not Yet Rated*, directed by Kirby Dick. For more information, see http://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/this_film_is_not_yet Rated/ and <http://us.imdb.com/title/tt0493459/>

Broadcast Interviews

“So to Speak” podcast on movies and censors, FIRE (Foundation for Individual Rights in Education), released August 12, 2021.

<https://www.thefire.org/so-to-speak-podcast-alfred-hitchcock-and-hollywoods-production-code/>

WMHT-TV (PBS) segment on AHA!, A House for the Arts program, airdates October 7, 2020.

<https://perma.cc/TQ3W-L2DZ?type=image>

Video player at <https://www.pbs.org/video/aha-616-laura-wittern-keller-censorship-cinema-gq0qdo/>

Talking History segment, “The Miracle Case,” May 15, 2008.

<http://www.albany.edu/talkinghistory/arch2008jan-june.html>.

New Books in History podcast, April 4, 2008. <http://newbooksnetwork.com/laura-wittern-keller-freedom-of-the-screen-legal-challenges-to-film-censorship-1915-1981/>

WXVU, “Around Cincinnati” interview, September 2008

New Books in History podcast, November 7, 2008. <http://newbooksnetwork.com/laura-wittern-keller-the-miracle-case-film-censorship-and-the-supreme-court/>

GRANTS

2023-24 Hackman Research Residency, New York State Archives

2010-11 Research travel grant, Center for the United States and the Cold War, Tamiment Library, New York University.

2000-2002 Hackman Research Residencies, New York State Archives.

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS and COMMENT

“Banned in Boston: Histories of Artistic Censorship in New England,” Wellesley-Deerfield Symposium, Wellesley College, March 8, 2025 (invited paper presentation).

New York State Archives Online Speaker Series, December 13, 2022, “Censorship in Cinema: Zooming In,” available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MibCAFKQwPk>

Comment, “The Great Subway Race of 1967,” Researching New York November 2018 Conference, Albany, New York.

Chair and Comment, “From Slavery to Citizenship: African Americans in New York,” Researching New York 2016 Conference, Albany, New York, November 19, 2016.

Chair and Comment, “The Municipal Gaze,” Urban History Association Biennial Meeting, Chicago, IL, October 13, 2016.

Chair and Comment, “Place and Space of New York Politics,” Researching New York conference, Albany, NY, November 19, 2015.

“Indefinite Detention: Three Aliens Branded Security Risks in the Early Cold War Years” presented at University at Albany conference on immigration, April 21, 2014.

“Protecting ‘Weak and Immature Minds’: Movie Censorship and the American Legal Culture.” Delivered as part of the Opening Plenary Panel presentation at the International Association for Media History biennial meeting, University of Leicester, U.K., July 17, 2013.

Chair and Comment, “New Perspectives on Film Censorship,” Society for Cinema and Media Studies, Chicago, IL, March 6-10, 2013.

Chair and Comment, “Ending Life: of Towns and Murder,” Researching New York conference, Albany, NY, November 16, 2012.

“No Help from the First Amendment: The Deportation of a Non-Citizen Journalist during the Early Cold War,” presented at the Policy History Conference, June 3, 2010, Columbus, OH.

“Cinematic Liberty & the First Amendment,” panel presentation sponsored by the Freedom Forum at the Newseum, Washington, DC. September 2008 centered around the publication of Wittern-Keller and Haberski’s *The Miracle Case*.

“The Turning Point: the Supreme Court and Movie Freedom in the 1950s,” presented as part of panel discussion session “Shifting Boundaries: Public, Private, and Media Policy in the United States, Policy History Conference, St. Louis, MO, May30, 2008.

Participant, Roundtable on Movies and the 1960s: Organization of American Historians (OAH) annual conference, New York City, March 2008.

Area Chair and comment on two panels, “The City in the Documentary Tradition,” Film and History conference, Dallas, TX, November 2006.

“State Film Censors, the Catholic Church, and the ACLU in the Cold War,” Film, Television and the 1950s conference, Plymouth State University (NH), 7 October 2006.

“When the Supreme Court Speaks With Many Voices: The 1959 *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* Decision,” presented at annual meeting of the North Carolina Association of Historians, Chapel Hill, NC, March 17, 2006.

“Fighting For Freedom of the Screen: The Legal Battle over State Film Censorship, 1930-1965,” presented at the Organization of American Historians conference, Boston, MA, March 26, 2004.

“Bad Case/Good Case: *The Outlaw* and *The Miracle* as Legal Tests of New York’s Film Censorship,” presented at joint meeting of the Law and Society Association and the Canadian Law and Society Association, Vancouver, BC, June 2002.

“The End of Immorality in New York: *La Ronde* and the Narrowing of Censorship” presented at Researching New York: Perspectives on Empire State History, Albany, NY, November 2001.

“Bad Case/Good Case: *The Outlaw* and *The Miracle* as Legal Tests of Film Censorship,” presented at Researching New York: Perspectives on Empire State History, Albany, NY, November 2000.

OTHER PRESENTATIONS

“The Censor as Archivist/the Archivist as Censor: Hugh Flick and the Motion Picture Division,” keynote address, Capital District Archives Association Annual Meeting, October 10, 2019.

The Civil War in American Memory, Humanities Institute for Lifelong Learning six-week course, Delmar, New York, October to November, 2018.

Panel member, “Speaking Out on Campus,” Office of Diversity and Inclusion, March 1, 2018.

Campus Conversations in Standish, (The Supreme Court vs. the President: How the Court Decides the Constitutionality of Challenged Presidential Actions, October 4, 2017.
(<https://perma.cc/X2EU-9E4T>)

“The Movie that Shocked New York,” Humanities Institute for Lifelong Learning (HILL), March 31, 2016.

Invited Guest Lecture: The Ohio State University, “George Washington: Cincinnatus of the West,” April 12, 2015.

“From Roosevelt to Reagan: A Short History of American Liberalism,” Humanities Institute for Lifelong Learning six-week course, Delmar, New York, spring 2015.

“Fighting for Freedom of the Screen,” Capital District Humanist Society, March 9, 2014.

“Freedom of the Screen,” Albany Torch Club, May 4, 2014.

“What Were Those Justices Thinking? The Last Fifty Years at the Supreme Court,” Humanities Institute for Lifelong Learning six-week course, Delmar, New York, spring 2013.

“The Politics of Censorship,” keynote Constitution Day speech at Albertus Magnus College, New Haven, CT, September 2008.

“The Movie that Shocked New York,” invitational speech April 7, 2008, sponsored by the New York Archives Partnership Trust, University at Albany.

“Sandra Day O’Connor,” UNC Wilmington Pathways Great Women series, Wilmington, NC, April 2007.

“Above the Law/Beyond the Law/Upholding the Law: Abraham Lincoln as Commander in Chief,” Constitution Day, UNC Wilmington, 18 September 2006.

“72,000 Films: Under the Censors’ Scissors” keynote speech, Phi Alpha Theta annual banquet, UNC Wilmington, 11 April 2006.

“From Philadelphia to Baghdad: The Philadelphia Constitutional Convention, 1787,” Constitution Day presentation, UNC Wilmington, September 2005.

TEACHING

Teaching Fields

U.S. History, Legal and Constitutional, Urban History, Historical Methods, Twentieth Century Public Policy and Political, U.S. Civil War.

Courses Taught:

Undergraduate

AHIS 100 and 101

AHIS 101 fully online

AHIS 308: Division and Reunion

AHIS 315: Roosevelt to Reagan

AHIS 317: History of the American City I

AHIS 318: History of the American City II

AHIS 318 also as fully online course

AHIS 313: Constitutional History of the United States

AHIS 313 fully online asynchronous version as well as in-person

AHIS 328: Lawyers in American Society

AHIS 489z: Senior Capstone Seminar

In-person and asynchronous

THIS /TPOS 295: the American Constitution and the Supreme Court

THIS 208: The American Civil War and American Memory

AHIS 308: American Civil War

Graduate Courses:

AHIS 603/630: Readings in U.S. History

AHIS 609/631: Seminar in U.S. History

At Other Institutions

Media and Politics (Castleton State College)

Introduction to Historiography and Historical Methods (UNC Wilmington)

American Urban History (UNC Wilmington)

Graduate Examinations and Thesis Advising**Dissertation Committees**

Kevin Ingraham, 2014-2019

Mariah Adin, 2014

PhD Exams

Jessica Polmateer, 2024

Tim Carleton 2013

Jessica Anderson, 2011

MA Exams**Supervising:**

Jennifer Cole, 2008

Edward Moynihan, 2010

MA Exams Committee member:

Daniel Dimmock, 2009

Denise McGeen, 2009

Shannon Bohan, 2010

Laura Rarick, 2010

Sarah Schubert, 2010

Sheryl Hoffman, 2011

Jennifer Curtin, 2010

Gordon Roberts, 2012

Shannon Missick, 2014

Sarah Campbell, 2015

Honors Thesis supervision

Brianna Collora, 2023

Hannah Cast, 2020

Haley Cook, 2017

Shannon Missick, 2011

SERVICE**Departmental**

2015 History Department Graduation Keynote speaker

Faculty discussion leader for Phi Alpha Theta presentation of *Dr. Strangelove*, November 2, 2009.

University

Search Committee member, Faculty Technology Resources, Summer 2017

President's Awards for Teaching Excellence, Selection Committee member, 2017

Patricia Stocking Brown Award, Judge, Grenander Archives, 2017

Working Group on Contingent Faculty, 2016-17

Patricia Stocking Brown Award, Judge, Grenander Archives, 2016

President's Awards for Teaching Excellence, Selection Committee member, 2016

Invited panel participant, Effective Online Interactions Workshop, ITLAL,
September 30, 2014

Professional

Manuscript peer reviewer for
Oxford University Press
University of Mississippi Press
Yale University Press
University of Alabama Press
Routledge
University Press of Kansas
University Press of Kentucky

Community Outreach

HONORS & AWARDS

2012: University at Albany President's Award for Excellence in Teaching.

2008— co-authored book, *The Miracle Case*, named December Book of the Month by the American Booksellers Foundation for Free Expression.

2007 Researcher of the Year, Annual Archive Excellence in Research Award, awarded jointly by New York State Archives and the New York State Board of Regents

2009: Most influential professor, the University at Albany Honors College: Brittany Jolles

2005-2006 UNC Wilmington Lecturer of the Year.

2003 Distinguished Dissertation Award, University at Albany College of Arts & Sciences.

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS (current)

Urban History Association
Organization of American Historians

The American Society of Legal Writers
Historical Society of the Courts of the State of New York
Phi Alpha Theta, the national history honors society