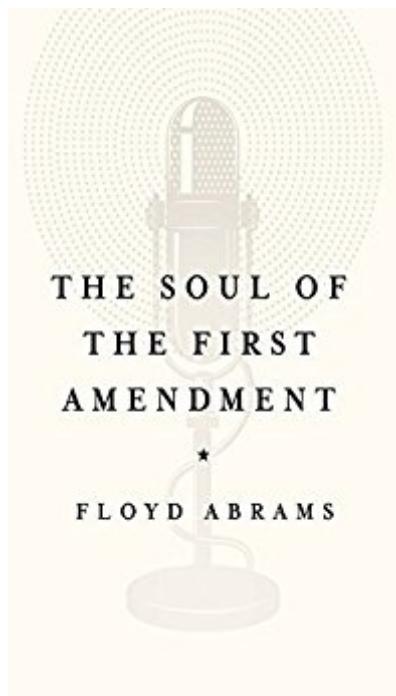


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The Soul Of The First Amendment: Why Freedom Of Speech Matters



Synopsis

A lively and controversial overview by the nation's most celebrated First Amendment lawyer of the unique protections for freedom of speech in America. The right of Americans to voice their beliefs without government approval or oversight is protected under what may well be the most honored and least understood addendum to the US Constitution—the First Amendment. Floyd Abrams, a noted lawyer and award-winning legal scholar specializing in First Amendment issues, examines the degree to which American law protects free speech more often, more intensely, and more controversially than is the case anywhere else in the world, including democratic nations such as Canada and England. In this lively, powerful, and provocative work, the author addresses legal issues from the adoption of the Bill of Rights through recent cases such as Citizens United. He also examines the repeated conflicts between claims of free speech and those of national security occasioned by the publication of classified material such as was contained in the Pentagon Papers and was made public by WikiLeaks and Edward Snowden.

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Customer Reviews

"Justice William O. Douglas, in 1973, stated that 'the struggle for liberty has been a struggle against Government. The essential scheme of our Constitution and Bill of Rights was to take Government off the backs of people.'" Floyd Abrams has argued important speech cases in the Supreme Court, and provides a deep and loving look at our speech rights in *The Soul of the First Amendment: Why Freedom of Speech Matters*. It is a short but powerful book on the history of the Amendment and jurisprudence surrounding it. The smart kids sitting up front already know the controversy surrounding inclusion of a Bill of Rights. Jefferson, in France, was appalled at its omission. Others were not on board: "Noah Webster, tongue deeply in cheek, suggested that if a list of inalienable rights were to be added to the Constitution, it should include a clause stating that 'every body shall, in good weather, hunt on his own land, and catch fish in rivers that are public property . . . [and] that Congress shall never restrain any inhabitant of America from eating and drinking, at seasonable times, or prevent his lying on his left side, in a long winter's night.'" Madison was won over, and the nation got its most enforceable protections against government. A great reminder of its importance. Five stars.

I live in a small New England town, where the Annual Town Meeting is still the centerpiece of local government. One year I brought some Russian (formerly Soviet) generals to observe. When I asked them for their reactions, the first response was, "It was interesting to see so many ordinary people speaking their minds without fear." This book - in a blessedly few number of pages with great narrative flow...describes the history of the First Amendment and how free speech /free press came to be a defining characteristic of American life only in the last half of the 20th century and early part of the 20th century. That historical narrative then becomes useful background for a very thought provoking discussion of the cases (Snowden, Wikileaks, and the publication thereof) that test the limits of free speech. There is no discussion of the "free speech on college campus" issue, but I'm guessing that's the sequel. Overall, a very worthwhile and interesting book on its own topic and in understanding what makes the U.S. different.

Abrams is an easy read by someone who has long been involved in First Amendment law. The book speaks to the mind, heart and soul of the First Amendment. The major case holdings and dissents are woven in a tale that helps readers understand the development of First Amendment

law. If you just read the cases mentioned in this six part story, you will know much more about the importance the Founders placed in speech, publishing and the like. There is a nice index but not many citations to cases, so you might heed a lawyer to help you find the decisions.

Short and sweet summary of the case for an expansive view of the First Amendment. Abrams makes a convincing case that the federal and state governments are all too prone to pare away freedom of speech in pursuit of other objectives.

This is an excellent book, written in a way that appeals to a general audience and provides a synoptic overview of the history of American attitudes towards freedom of speech. I hope to use it in one of my college classes in the spring.

I'm not writing a book review, except to state that Abrams knows his subject well and has well-thought-out arguments.

Outstanding work Review of cases includes a review of history Great read for anyone Who wants to understand an important part of the US Constitution

Interesting argument for a liberal from a First Amendment expert.

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