Overview of Media Censorship: A Timeline

1534  Martin Luther’s translation of the Bible into German is banned by the Catholic Church.
1535  Pope Paul IV places The Prince by former papal ambassador Niccolò Machiavelli on the List of Prohibited Books.
1600  Giordano Bruno is executed as a heretic by the Inquisition for defending the Copernican theories of the universe.
1633  Galileo is placed under house arrest for the rest of his life by the Inquisition for publishing Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems.
1798  US Congress passes the Sedition Act of 1798 punishing anyone who spoke or published “false, scandalous, and malicious” writings against the government.
1901  French police arrest the Marquis de Sade and seize copies of Justine suivi des Malheurs de l’Amour.
1903  Madame Bosvy is placed on the List of Prohibited Books.
1934  U.S. Congress passes the Comstock Act which makes the mailing of “obscene, lewd or lascivious books or other publications of indecent character” a crime.
1936  An Illinois trial jury finds the play, O’Malley, by James Joyce, obscene.
1937  U.S. Congress passes the Comstock Act forbidding spoken or printed criticism of the US government, Constitution, flag.
1938  Ulysses, by James Joyce, is burned by the US Department of the Post Office and banned in England.
1928  England bans Lady Chatterley’s Lover.
1933  German Nazi Propaganda Ministry oversees the burning of 20,000 books including those written by Albert Einstein and Sigmund Freud.
1933  A portrait by Diego Rivera for the Rockefeller Center in New York is destroyed because it contains a portrait of Vladimir Lenin.
1934  Regulation of the American film industry begins with the introduction of the Hays Code.
1941  U.S. Congress authorizes President Franklin D. Roosevelt to create the office of censorship.
1948  The final edition of the List of Prohibited Books is published.
1956  Irish government censors Edna O’Brien’s first novel as a slur on Irish womanhood. Her next six books were also banned.
1961  France publishes its unofficial list of banned books.

1962  France censors newspaper reports about demonstrations during the Algerian war.
1973  Copies of Kurt Vonnegut’s novel, Slaughterhouse Five, are burned on orders of the Drake High School North Dakota school board after a teacher orders those copies for class.
1977  Argentina imprisons the editor of the Buenos Aires newspaper La Opinion for three months without trial for criticizing the government.
1978  Monty Python’s movie, The Life of Brian, is banned in several cities in England, Ireland, the US, Norway, and several other countries.
1983  Chile bans the Martin Scorsese movie Last Temptation of Christ.
1989  Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, in Iran, issues a fatwa condemning writer Salman Rushdie to death for writing the novel The Satanic Verses.
1994  Saudi Arabia bans satellite television dishes.
2000  China begins censorship of foreign news websites, establishes a special Internet police force, and shuts down websites critical of the government.
2001  France orders Yahoo to cease selling Nazi memorabilia for auction.
2002  US government enacts the Children’s Internet Protection Act requiring public and school libraries receiving federal funds for Internet connections to install filters on computers.
2003  The Cincinnati Playhouse cancels a tour of a Glyn Distin play after protests by Cincinnati Muslims.
2004  Russia charges Vladimir Sorokin with pornography for a scene in his book depicting a sexual act between Stalin and Kruschev.
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2002  The Committee to Protect Journalists name the top ten countries to watch for reports of free press violation.
2004  Censorship of the Internet is banned in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Balmain, though not banned in Israel, it never received theatrical distribution.
2006  The Committee to Protect Journalists name the top ten most censored countries in the world, in order from 1 to 10 are: North Korea, Burma (Myanmar), Turkmenistan, Equatorial Guinea, Libya, Eritrea, Cuba, Uzbekistan, Syria, and Belarus.
2009  Iran institutes a series of efforts to censor use of the Internet.
2009  Organization of the Islamic Conference introduces a resolution, which the United Nations adopts, banning the defamation of religion.

In observance of the American Library Association’s BANNED BOOKS WEEK.