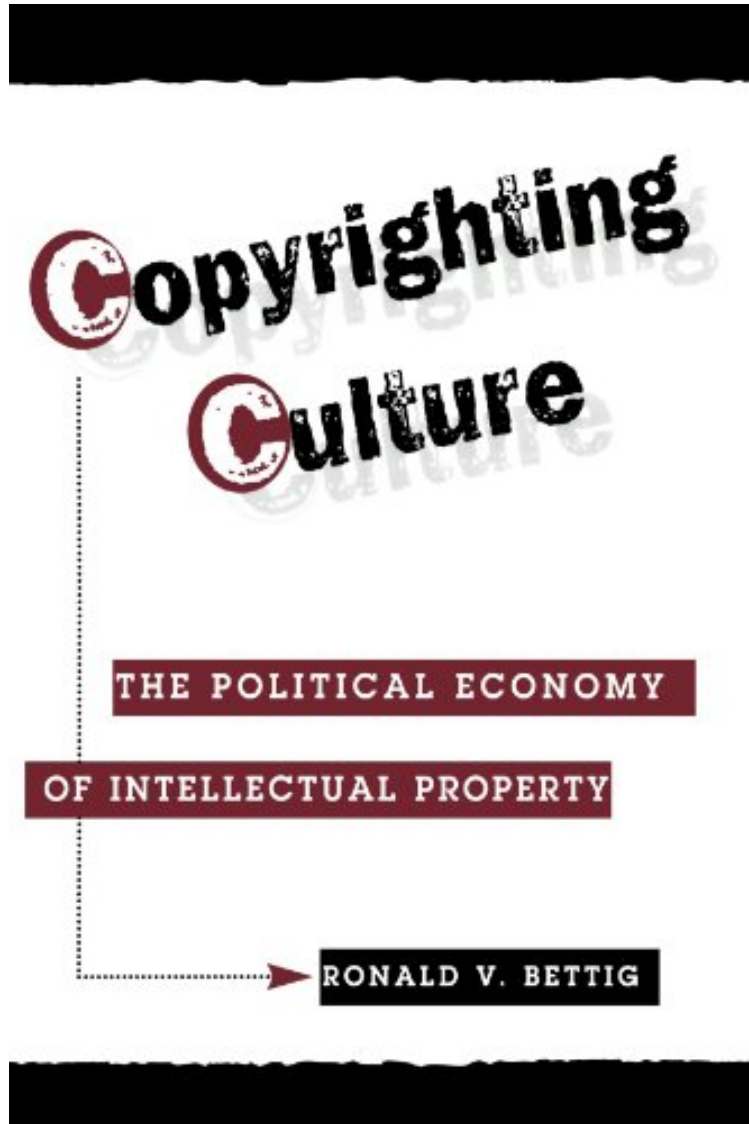


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Copyrighting Culture: The Political Economy Of Intellectual Property (Critical Studies in Communication in the Cultural Industries)

Ronald V. Bettig

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2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. How Copyright Law Really Works By doomsdayer520 In the field of political economy one looks at the real-world effects of laws and regulations, how they are applied, and who applies them. Here Ronald Bettig applies this type of analysis to the specific areas of copyright law and intellectual property, in which there is not just the letter of the law, but also the concentration of power and control that vested interests can achieve through the application of that law. The exercising of copyright law is usually accompanied by rhetoric about compensating the creators of original content. However, look closely and you'll find that legal actions are often enacted by large corporations, who have gained control of the copyrights for creative work, in order to preserve their own profitability. Another issue is the public domain and free marketplace of ideas that are guaranteed by the constitution, but are increasingly restricted by power grabs from corporations. For example, the amount of time before a copyrighted work enters the public domain has been miraculously increased by lawmakers every time Mickey Mouse was about to graduate from the clutches of Disney. Bettig illustrates cases in cable television and home taping in which the media firms used heavy-handed applications of copyright law, as well as big-money lawyers, to control or crush technologies that might have damaged their profitability, all under facetious claims of protecting creativity. Through Bettig's specific focus on copyright law here, you will see how the letter of the law doesn't always come to pass when the two sides of a legal battle have vastly different amounts of money and political power. Also, watch for a future edition of this book in which Bettig could apply this analysis to the fascinating realm of music file sharing. After reading this edition you won't be surprised that downloading an MP3 file creates far deeper issues than a loss of a sale for a musical artist. [~doomsdayer520~]

Launching into a complete analysis of copyright law in our capitalistic and hegemonistic political system, Ronald Bettig uncovers the power of the wealthy few to expand their fortunes through the ownership and manipulation of intellectual property. Beginning with a critical interpretation of copyright history in the United States, Bettig goes on to explore such crucial issues as the videocassette recorder and the control of copyrights, the invention of cable television and the first challenge to the filmed entertainment copyright system, the politics and economics of intellectual property as seen from both the neoclassical economists' and the radical political economists' points of view, and methods of resisting existing laws. Beautifully written and well argued, this book provides a long, clear look at how capitalism and capitalists seize and control culture through the ownership of copyrights, thus perpetuating their own ideologies and economic superiority.

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