Doris Teichler Zallen is a Professor in the Department of Science and Technology in Society at Virginia Tech, where she has been a faculty member since 1983. Trained as a biologist (B.S., Brooklyn College; Ph.D., Harvard), she has dedicated much of her career to educating both student and public audiences on the controversial issues arising out of advances in science, medicine, and technology, a main goal being to provide individuals with the intellectual tools to confront these issues.

In her undergraduate and graduate teaching, Zallen has introduced bioethical components into science and humanities courses, and she has created new courses that deepen student experience with bioethical issues. Her “Science and the Public” course – one of only a very few service-learning courses that exist at the graduate level – received an Innovation Award from the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation.

Dr. Zallen has expanded the consideration of ethical, social, and policy issues to public audiences by founding and directing the award-winning Choices and Challenges forum project. For 20 years, through 22 forums, she created a unique public classroom for the consideration of such sensitive and demanding issues as end-of-life decisions, nuclear power, assisted reproduction, genetically modified foods, and “designer children”. The forums reached large on-site audiences and, in partnership with PBS, video audiences throughout the country.

Zallen’s research centers on the ethical and social issues raised by new advances in genetic medicine, especially genetic testing and human gene therapy. Among her publications are the books Does It Run in the Family? A Consumer’s Guide to DNA Testing for Genetic Disorders (1997) and To Test or Not to Test: A Guide to Genetic Screening and Risk (2008). Her books have earned critical acclaim and have had wide influence beyond the academy, in particular on medical professionals and on affected families in the general public.

Nationally, Zallen served with distinction on the NIH Recombinant DNA Advisory Committee (the "RAC") where she helped provide oversight of ground-breaking medical experiments involving human gene therapy. As chair of the RAC working group on informed consent, she wrote the federal guidelines, currently in force, which protect human subjects participating in gene-therapy experiments.

In 2007, Zallen received the Outstanding Faculty Award from the State Council of Higher Education in Virginia (SCHEV).