



# **Visions of Empire: Political Imagery in Contemporary American Film (Washington Papers (Paperback))**

*Stephen Prince*

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*Visions of Empire* explores film's function as a medium of political communication, recognizing not just the propaganda film, but the various ways that conventional narrative films embody, question, or critique established social values underlying American attitudes toward historical, social, and political events. Stephen Prince discusses Hollywood film productions of the 1980s in terms of salient political issues of the period, including anxieties about declining U.S. military power, the wars in Central America and the prospects for U.S. intervention, the legacy of the Vietnam War, and urban decay. In analyzing these images and narratives, the author also describes and evaluates the cinematic styles available in the Hollywood tradition to filmmakers who address political issues.

Chapter 1 establishes the theoretical framework by considering features of the political landscape of the Reagan era. Theories about political representation and the place of ideology in film are also examined. Chapters 2 through 5 focus on the major cycles of political films. Chapter 2 examines the new Cold War films which played upon fears of the Soviet menace (*Rambo*, *Invasion USA*, *Red Dawn*, and *Top Gun*). Chapter 3 discusses the small group of films--*Under Fire*, *Salvador*, *El Norte* and others--that addressed the wars in Latin America and the ways they explained the origins of the conflicts and the U.S. role therein. Various histories and mythologies on film of the Vietnam War are examined in Chapter 4 as examples of the symbolic reconstruction of social memory. Chapter 5 looks at politicized science fiction films (*Blade Runner*, *Aliens*, *Robocop*, and *Total Recall*) offering critical commentaries on the pathologies of contemporary urban society and capitalism.

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