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# Hollywood Westerns And American Myth: The Importance Of Howard Hawks And John Ford For Political Philosophy (Castle Lectures Series)



## Synopsis

In this pathbreaking book one of America's most distinguished philosophers brilliantly explores the status and authority of law and the nature of political allegiance through close readings of three classic Hollywood Westerns: Howard Hawks' *Red River* and John Ford's *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* and *The Searchers*. Robert Pippin treats these films as sophisticated mythic accounts of a key moment in American history: its second founding, or the western expansion. His central question concerns how these films explore classical problems in political psychology, especially how the virtues of a commercial republic gained some hold on individuals at a time when the heroic and martial virtues were so important. Westerns, Pippin shows, raise central questions about the difference between private violence and revenge and the state's claim to a legitimate monopoly on violence, and they show how these claims come to be experienced and accepted or rejected. Pippin's account of the best Hollywood Westerns brings this genre into the center of the tradition of political thought, and his readings raise questions about political psychology and the political passions that have been neglected in contemporary political thought in favor of a limited concern with the question of legitimacy.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Let me say straightaway that it is a very thoughtful, observant book, well worth the time for any reader who takes Hawks, Ford, and the Western seriously. "The New Republic" "This book is an important read in both form and substance for all cultural historians." "D.P. Franklin, Choice "A

trenchant and illuminating study of three great Westerns and a convincing case for their importance both to political psychology and to our own self-understanding as American citizens." C. D. C. Reeve, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill "Robert Pippin's study of three great Westerns is a fine meditation on the place of heroism in democracy and the ambiguous relationship between legend and history in the making of heroes. It can stand with the best recent books on the Western as a genre, but it is driven by a thought all its own: the difficulty of the search for order, and the elusive possibility of an American politics." David Bromwich, Yale University "Pippin's marvelous book is a more than worthy successor to the classic essays on the Western by Andr  Bazin and Robert Warshaw. This volume is remarkable for its clarity and depth of argument." George Wilson, University of Southern California

Robert B. Pippin is the Evelyn Stefansson Nef Distinguished Service Professor in the John U. Nef Committee on Social Thought, the Department of Philosophy, and the College at the University of Chicago.

I read this for my philosophy class strangely enough. The other book that we had to read was a bit more of a traditional philosophy book, and honestly, a bit dry. This one was much more engaging. The critiques are well thought out and easy to read. I didn't expect to like this book, but it was much better than I expected it to be.

Great history

Very interesting and insightful treatment of the films in the title and also other related films. This is well written and cogently argued analysis, for the most part. I learned a lot by reading and re-reading it. My only complaint is that at times the treatment of "The Searchers" seemed a little far afield, moving into over-analysis that to me, exceeded the support offered. But, this was a thoroughly enjoyable book that I recommend to anyone interested in American mythology, the movies, and the directors treated in this volume.

The Kindle version lacks the movie stills that the author discusses. A lame refusal by the Publisher to exercise "Fair Use Rights."

Well, Robert Pippin does a pretty thorough job of analyzing three major Westerns that came out of

Hollywood, Howard Hawks' "Red River", a kind of "Mutiny on the Bounty

As a much-published historian of Western films and a biographer of John Wayne, I bought this book expecting to see how John Wayne's impact on modern GOP imagery. The author makes a good, indeed provocative, thesis statement, then lapses into large-scale critiques of the movies without showing their impact on modern politics. Great concept, weak execution.

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