

In response, Stone offers an articulate and passionate defense of his artistic vision. Disavowing once and for all the mantle of “cinematic historian,” Stone declares himself first and foremost a storyteller—a dramatist and mythmaker who deliberately refashions historical facts in pursuit of higher truths. The undeniable centerpiece of this artistic manifesto is Stone’s fascinating commentary on the making and meanings of *JFK*, the film that reopened a case that many thought finally closed.

A provocative and timely reexamination of a great American artist, *Oliver Stone’s USA* will also reignite public debate over the relationship between history and art as well as the artist’s responsibility to his audience.

**Robert Brent Toplin** is professor of history at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington and editor of film reviews for the *Journal of American History*. Among his other books is *History by Hollywood: The Use and Abuse of the American Past*.

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“A sterling volume of thoughtful essays about and by America’s most controversial filmmaker. If Stone’s artistic objective has been to compel us to rethink landmark events such as JFK’s assassination and the Vietnam War, then this work offers concrete testimony to his creative success.”

DOUGLAS BRINKLEY, author of *The American Heritage History of the United States*

“In our media age, movies are the mirrors in which we see ourselves reflected and Oliver Stone is the most influential director of our time—rivaled only by Ken Burns as a visual historian and interpreter of American culture. And nothing less than an understanding of the meaning of America is at stake in this vibrant and challenging exchange between Stone and his critics.”

PETER C. ROLLINS, editor of *Film & History*

“Stone emerges from this remarkable volume not as the cynical opportunist he is often made out to be but as a figure of integrity eager to defend his work against all comers, including professional historians, on grounds of principle. . . . It’s bound to enliven the debate over the uses of the fictional in the validation of the historical.”

ROBERT CARRINGER, author of *The Making of Citizen Kane* and *The Magnificent Ambersons: A Reconstruction*

“A brilliant and provocative work, which I recommend highly.”

JEANINE D. BASINGER, author of *The American Cinema* and *Silent Stars*

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# TOPLIN Oliver Stone’s USA and Controversy



# Oliver Stone’s USA

## Film, History, and Controversy

Edited by  
**Robert Brent Toplin**

With Commentary by  
**Oliver Stone**



**Challenging audiences** and leaving critics in disarray, the films of Oliver Stone have compelled viewers to reexamine many of their most revered beliefs about America’s past. Like no other filmmaker, Stone has left an indelible mark on public opinion and political life, even as he has generated enormous controversy and debate among those who take issue with his dramatic use of history.

This book brings Stone face-to-face with some of his most thoughtful critics and supporters and allows Stone himself ample room to respond to their views. These writers critique Stone’s most contested films to show how they may distort, amplify, or transcend the historical realities they appear to depict. Their essays—on *Salvador*, *Platoon*, *Wall Street*, *Born on the Fourth of July*, *The Doors*, *JFK*, *Heaven and Earth*, *Natural Born Killers*, and *Nixon*—enlarge our understanding of Stone’s films, while also giving us a fuller appreciation of the filmmaker as artist and intellectual.