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Empire Triumphant: Race, Religion And Rebellion in the Star Wars Films

By Jr. Kevin J. Wetmore



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George Lucas's first Star Wars trilogy shows the influences of its era; Cold War tension is evident in its theme of rebellion against totalitarianism. Recent entries in the Star Wars saga—*The Phantom Menace* (1999) and *Attack of the Clones* (2002)—are much more concerned with evil corporations, terrorists, and the corruption of the political process. Each film is influenced by the times in which it was released, but also by cultural subtexts and by other films that had direct and indirect effects on Lucas as writer, producer, and director. This work focuses on all six *Star Wars* films. The first topic of this multifaceted examination is how the films use the language of colonialism ("The" Rebellion, "The" Empire) to emphasize the idea of imperialism. Next the author looks at how Asian influences—including religious undertones from Taoism and Buddhism and the works of Kurosawa and other Asian filmmakers—provide a subtext for much of the action. Next the discussion turns to the representation of people of color in the *Star Wars* universe, and how other ethnicities are represented overall, particularly through the literalization of the word "aliens." These topics of discussion provide for penetrating conclusions about Lucas's films and how they represent race, religion, and rebellion.



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About the Author

Kevin J. Wetmore, Jr., is a professor in the Theater Arts department at Loyola Marymount University. He is also the author of *The Athenian Sun in an African Sky* (2002) and *Black Dionysus* (2003). He lives in Los Angeles, California.

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