

# The Basics

---

## Face to Face Classroom Use

If a film or video is shown in the classroom, restricted to an AU class with the instructor present, and is incorporated in the instruction, you do not need to seek licensing provided that you have a lawful copy of the film/video. (See 17 U.S.C. § 110(1) of the Copyright Act at [www.copyright.gov](http://www.copyright.gov))

## Workshops & Trainings

In most cases, public performance rights are required for open workshops or trainings where a film or video is screened. In some cases, clips may be used under the fair use provisions of copyright law. (See section 107 of the Copyright Act at [www.copyright.gov](http://www.copyright.gov))

## Group Screenings

In most cases, an open screening of a film or video will require a public performance license.

## Seeking Licensing

Documentaries in the library from the following distributors were purchased with public performance rights:

Bullfrog Films - [bullfrogfilms.com](http://bullfrogfilms.com)  
California Newsreel - [newsreel.org](http://newsreel.org)  
Cinemaguild - [Cinemaguild.com](http://Cinemaguild.com)  
Doc. Edu. Resources - [der.org](http://der.org)  
Filmmakers - [Filmmakers.com](http://Filmmakers.com)  
Icarus - [icarusfilms.com](http://icarusfilms.com)  
Women Make Movies - [wmm.com](http://wmm.com)

## Licensing Agents

The following are some of the principal public performance licensing agents for feature films. You can contact these licensing agents to arrange for public performance rights at a cost.

Criterion / Janus:  
[Criterionco.com](http://Criterionco.com)  
[Janusfilms.com](http://Janusfilms.com) (Foreign & American classics)

Filmmovement:  
[Filmmovement.com](http://Filmmovement.com) (Int'l film festival favorites)

(continued)

Kino:  
[Kino.com](http://Kino.com) (Classics and Indie releases)

New Yorker Films:  
[Newyorkerfilms.com](http://Newyorkerfilms.com) (Foreign & Indie releases)

Sony Classics  
[Mike.Dicerto@spe.sony.com](mailto:Mike.Dicerto@spe.sony.com)

Swank MP:  
[Swank.com](http://Swank.com) (Most Hollywood studio releases)

Zeitgeist Films:  
[Zeitgeistfilms.com](http://Zeitgeistfilms.com) (Foreign & Indie releases)

## Want more information?

Contact the Office of Campus life for event scheduling & permission to screen films/videos on campus:

<https://www.american.edu/ocl/>  
(202) 885-3310

Before an event is scheduled, campus departments and recognized student organizations will need to provide a description of any public video/film screenings that are to occur at the event. University Event Scheduling will determine whether the request for space requires proof of licensing before confirming space for the student.



## Contact: Media Services

Phone: 202-885-3250  
Email: [mediaservices@american.edu](mailto:mediaservices@american.edu)

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY  
**LIBRARY**

# A Guide to Showing Movies on Campus

---

American University Library  
4400 Massachusetts Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20016-8046  
202-885-3250  
[www.american.edu/library](http://www.american.edu/library)



# Film Showings at American University

---

Many departments and student organizations on the AU campus organize film events, i.e. public exhibitions of films, DVD's, video recordings. Creating events involving copyrighted material can involve program choices that put the university and/or the program planner at risk.

This guide is designed to help program planners and their advisors understand when to seek licensing for public film events.

Please call the University Center at 202-885-3939 if you have additional questions, or want to schedule an event.

## Frequently Asked Questions

---

### 1. Do I need to be concerned with copyright law if I want to schedule a public film/video event?

**Yes.** The U.S. Copyright Act (Title 17 of the United States Code) governs how copyrighted materials, such as films, may be used. Under copyright law, a copyright owner has the exclusive right to publicly display his/her work. Therefore, you must have the proper copyright authorization in order to publicly exhibit a film or video as an event.

### 2. Can I rent or purchase a video from Blockbuster, Hollywood Video, Netflix, et al. and show it in campus meeting rooms or classroom spaces?

**Generally, the answer is no.** Videos, regardless of format, rented or purchased from stores or on-line services are intended for "home use only." This means that neither the rental nor the purchase of films carries with it the right to show the film outside the home. The exception is for "face-to-face teaching" described in #4 below. Therefore, a public performance license must be obtained from the copyright owner or a licensing agent prior to publicly exhibiting the video.

### 3. Can I show videos from my recorded personal collection in campus meeting rooms, lounges, or classroom spaces?

See Answer to Question 2.

### 4. Can I show the entire film if it serves an educational/academic purpose?

Regardless of whether the film serves an educational/academic purpose, you generally need permission or a license to publicly screen a film/video in its entirety. Permission or a license isn't necessary if a professor shows a movie in the course of "face-to-face teaching" activities, in a classroom or similar place devoted to instruction, provided that (i) the professor is present during the screening; (ii) the film is used in the context of a discrete class session; and (iii) the copy of the film being shown is a lawful copy. See 17 U.S.C. § 110(1). This "face-to-face teaching" exemption encompasses instructional activities relating to a wide variety of subjects, but it does not include performances for recreation or entertainment purposes, even if there is cultural value or academic appeal.

### 5. Can I use short clips of films for events?

Under certain conditions, the use of short clips of a film/video may be permissible under the fair use provisions of the copyright law. Some of the considerations in applying fair use include the length of the excerpt; the purpose of the use (i.e. educational vs. commercial or for profit); the nature of the copyrighted work and the potential impact the use may have upon the potential market for or present value of the work. In general, the short clips of film used for the purposes of educational discussion should be brief and should not constitute more than a small portion of the film from which they are extracted. (See 17 U.S.C. § 107 at [www.copyright.gov](http://www.copyright.gov).) Any use of short clips of films/videos must be vetted through University Event Scheduling by filling out a questionnaire. (See link on back panel)

### 6. Can we show videos if we hold a discussion afterwards?

**Yes, but** only if the event meets the fair use criteria cited in question 5, or "face to face teaching" exemption outlined in Question 4 or you have obtained the appropriate licenses or permissions.

### 7. Can I show any film from the AU Library in a public showing?

**Generally, the answer is no.** The library's feature film collections are not purchased with public performance rights. However, the library does purchase public performance rights for some documentaries. Contact the Media Librarian @x3257 for questions about rights to any videos in the collection.

### 8. How do I obtain a license to show films publicly?

A license to show videos publicly may be obtained from a variety of sources. The copyright owner of a film is generally listed in the credits of the film.

- The film's website may contain the basic information needed for this purpose.
- Most film production companies authorize this through specific, affiliated distribution companies. (See back panel for more info)

