

Movie Policy

Revised: 3/2020

This policy is intended for individuals or organizations wishing to show a film via DVD/VHS/streaming service publicly. When showing a film in the Union or the College campus-proper, a club/organization will be asked to provide proof that you have obtained permission (the ‘rights’) to show the material. This policy is designed to help explain why this is necessary, and the proper procedure to go about getting the permission needed.

Copyright Law

Copyright infringement is a serious offense under the law and is also the equivalent of stealing from a film distributor; see the Federal Copyright Act (Title 17 of the United States Code). While it is important to abide by the law, it is also important that your organization represents itself well by doing the right thing—getting permission to show the film. Penalties for copyright violations include criminal charges, lawsuits and fines up to \$150,000.

As an organization/club, the College counts on the club/organization to behave in a manner consistent with University policies, and state, local, and federal law. Should club/organization be caught breaking copyright law, the College and/or SGA would not provide any kind of protection from the group’s liability under the law.

Permission

Permission to show a film is necessary for the following:

- Any time a film is shown in the Union or any other public College space. This is any classroom, lounge, or common area at the College. These spaces are considered “public” spaces and showing the movie in these areas is the equivalent to showing them in a theater.
- Using publicity to invite the audience to the showing. This includes but is not limited to mass emails, letters, flyers, and web postings. Movie rentals are intended for private use, renting them does not provide clubs/organizations with the permission needed to have a public showing in which an audience is invited.
- If individuals are being charged admission for the showing or an event in conjunction with the showing. For example, charging for a lecture that will accompany the film. This would be true even if the film was showed at a house, or at another venue off campus.
- Permission is needed even if the film showing is for educational purposes. If the distributor has special permission for films shown for educational purposes, they will still need to give written confirmation needed to protect the event under the law, College and SGA/CSLI policy.

Permission to show a film might not be necessary for the following:

- If the club/organization is showing brief parts of a film. There are not set rules for what “brief” means in this context, but a general rule is that these snippets are OK when the event is free, when the snippet does not reveal key plot items to the film, when the length of the showing is not substantial, and when it doesn’t affect people’s likelihood of seeing the entire film.

- A department may already have permission to show the film. If the film is being shown in conjunction with an academic department, that department may already have permission. Check with the specific department to be sure. If permission is already granted, they will be able to show written proof of the fact.

Getting Permission

Getting permission for showing most films is fairly simple. For some rare or international films, it may require more work. Most “mainstream” films that are distributed for non-commercial use (which is what most campus showings would be) come from one of two main distributors, or you can search for the proper source:

- SWANK Motion Pictures, Incorporated: <http://www.swank.com> 1-800-876-5577
- Criterion: <http://www.criterionpic.com> 1-800-890-9494.
- Conduct a web search: A good place to start is www.imdb.com, the Internet Movie Database. Choose your film, go to the “Company Credits” and look up “Distribution.”
- **Need more help:** Contact the Director of the Center for Leadership and Involvement

What is a film distributor going to ask?

- Name, Contact information and the name of the organization/club
- How the film will be shown (i.e. advertise all over campus vs. to a small group, any fees associated with the event, what kind of venue the film will be shown in)
- If there is a charge, how the club/organization will pay for the rights to show the movie.
- Whether or not a copy of the film is needed

After obtaining the rights, you will receive a written record of the permission to show the film. This is commonly called a “confirmation.” If the club/organization is being charged, an invoice will follow this confirmation. Confirmations can come via the mail, or via email, and will have the film, the date(s) you have permission to show the film, the contact information of your representative from the distribution company, and the format you requested the film in and other pertinent information. If a distribution company is unable to provide a confirmation, they should send a letter or via e-mail that certifies that it the club/organization legally obtained the rights to show the film. This should be on letterhead with all contact information of the distributor available.