Frequently Asked Questions on the Use of Video and Film

Q: Would I be able to digitize and stream a DVD I own in Blackboard for my students to view?

A: No. It is illegal to reformat media to enable streaming of its content. Proper licensing must be obtained if you wish to stream any form of media on a website or course management system.

Q: May I show in my class a film I have rented from Netflix, Blockbuster, or Redbox?

A: DVDs from a rental service are labeled "Home Use Only", indicating a licensing agreement with the copyright holder. Nevertheless, use of such tapes is considered fair use in face-to-face teaching situations. Items marked "Home Use Only" may also be placed on reserve at the Library Services Desk and viewed in the Preview Room if they are used strictly for instructional purposes and NOT for entertainment.

Q: Is it legal to make a copy of a rental film in order to use it again later?

A: No, that would infringe on the right licensed to the rental agency.

Q: Queuing and changing DVDs to show short sections can be awkward in class. May I edit together portions of videos?

A: It depends. If you are using very brief clips from several videos (NOT off-air tapes) and they are for a one-time use, this would probably be permissible under fair use. If you are using several segments from the same video and/or expect to use it in subsequent semesters, then permission would need to be obtained.

Q: May an auditorium or other large space be used to show a film labeled "Home Use Only" to a class or several sections of a course?

A: Yes, so long as the presentation is not open to the public or the college community at large AND is part of the syllabus. Presentation for entertainment purposes requires permission or a license.

Q: How does the "face-to-face" instruction requirement affect the practice of placing films on reserve and assigning them to students?

A: Since the instructor is not present there is much debate regarding this issue. Bentley University takes the position that students who are required to view films that are assigned or recommended as supplemental material for a specific course or to complete an assignment may do so in the Preview Room.

Q: This film/video is out of print and deteriorating rapidly, may we make a copy?

A: Yes. The Digital Millennium Copyright Act of 1998 allows libraries to make up to three copies of video and print materials for archival purposes.