

To: Department Chairs
From: Elizabeth Stone, Chair
Undergraduate Curriculum Committee of the Arts and Sciences Faculty Senate
Re: Film and Video Policy
Date: March 1999

The Curriculum Committee has been receiving more and more proposals for new courses which specify a degree of film or video use in addition to lectures. These are not always "film" courses, per se, but are often courses in various disciplines that incorporate some film or video viewing. In some cases, we have been concerned that the type of film/video presentation was functioning as a passive substitution for more active pedagogical strategies. We have also questioned the increased use of documentaries prepared for a general audience (videotaped from the television); these are inappropriate to college-level courses in which a degree of background knowledge is expected. As a result of these concerns, I am writing to ask your assistance in ensuring that courses that incorporate the use of film and video do so in accordance with University policies and that they meet for the requisite number of hours.

University policy says that films and videos should be integrated into the work of a course and should not merely serve to take the place of conventional instruction. The instructor should prepare students for the viewing with a verbal introduction and appropriate reading assignments and follow up the viewing with evaluation and critiques either written or oral. The instructor should be present during the viewing in order to respond to student questions. Films and videos which do not require student preparation—those intended for a general audience—are not appropriate for college credit.

University policy also requires that the showing of films and videos be justified by the academic needs of the course. A film or video that does not adequately justify the time students must spend viewing it should not be viewed in class but may be required or suggested as supplemental to the course; however, courses that require students to view films or videos outside of classtime should note this in the description of the course.

Finally, class time devoted to viewing films or videos is considered laboratory time. According to the S.U.N.Y. guidelines on the relationship of contact hours to credits, two class hours of laboratory, **if significant outside preparation is required**, are equivalent to one contact hour. Essentially, a three-credit course in which an hour's worth of films, videos or clips are viewed in class every week must involve at least 110 minutes of lecture/recitation and at least 110 minutes of laboratory per week. If students are required to view films or videos outside of classtime, such time does not earn academic credit.

If an instructor plans to use video for more than 20% of the contact hours of a lecture/recitation course over the course of the semester, (about 8 and 1/2 contact hours for a three-credit course), the department should note this when submitting course scheduling forms for the coming semester to the College of Arts and Sciences.