Can I show a Feature film, Documentary, or YouTube clip in class?

The Copyright Act permits showing an audiovisual work such as a DVD or video as long as the work is not an infringing copy or the person responsible for the showing has no reasonable grounds to believe it is an infringing copy.

Faculty can show audiovisual works in their classroom for educational purposes that is:

- purchased or rented from a retail store
- borrowed from the library
- a copy borrowed from a friend
- a YouTube video

Showing movies from subscription services (ie Netflix) in the classroom is governed by the terms of the agreement between the subscriber and the subscription service. If the agreement provides that use is limited to “personal” or “household” use, for example, then classroom use is not permitted under the agreement. There have been cases where instructors have successfully received permission to show a specific film by contacting the subscription company.

It should be noted that showing Netflix or another streaming service in class is a gray area, but instructors should be cautious when using these personal streaming accounts because IP addresses are tracked by these companies.

Faculty cannot copy an audiovisual work at home and then show it in the classroom. This would be considered an infringing copy.