Teaching Fair Use: Role-playing scenarios

Working in pairs, take turns playing the role of the person teaching fair use and the person seeking information about fair use. Be prepared to discuss your practice teaching with the group.

Scenario 1: Graduate Student Instructor (GSI) teaching fair use to Undergraduate
Undergraduate is taking a course on documentary film, with GSI as the course head. For the final project, Undergraduate is making a short biographical film about her roommate, who has given her permission to make the film. The roommate leads a choral group on campus, and Undergraduate would like to include footage from the choral group’s rehearsals. Undergraduate would also like to include footage of her roommate’s conversation with another friend, captured while they watched House of Cards together. Finally, Undergraduate would like to include a shot in which she pans the camera over her roommate’s bedroom wall, on which several posters and a few printed snapshots hang. Undergraduate asks GSI if this is OK.

Scenario 2: Advisor teaching fair use to Graduate Student
Graduate Student is an art historian studying Georgia O’Keeffe’s wardrobe. To study her clothing choices over the course of her lifetime, Graduate Student will need many photographs of her. He anticipates finding these photographs in a variety of locations: in historical photograph collections online, in digitized or microfilmed historical newspapers, and in physical format in various archives and museums. Some of these photographs are of O’Keeffe alone. Others are photographs of groups that include her. Graduate Student would like to keep a digital copy of each photograph, so that he can refer to it later. He anticipates including some of the photographs in his dissertation. He plans to publish a monograph based on the dissertation after he has completed his degree. Graduate Student asks Advisor how to handle the copyright issues here.

Scenario 3: Graduate Student Instructor (GSI) teaching fair use to Course Head
Course Head and GSI are teaching a survey course on marine biology. Course Head would like to scan three articles from an encyclopedia of marine life and a chapter from Rachel Carson’s The Sea Around Us, all of which are assigned reading for the course. She then plans to post the scanned copies on the course’s password-protected website. Access to the course website is limited to Course Head, GSI, enrolled students, and registered auditors. Course Head knows asks GSI if he thinks this will be OK.

Scenario 4: History Librarian teaching fair use to Special Collections Librarian
The library has recently received a bequest from a history professor, a set of oral histories about the founding of NATO collected in the 1950s and 1960s. The professor collected the oral histories herself, initially recording them in shorthand and then transcribing them into longhand. As part of the bequest, the professor transferred to the library any copyrights she had in the collection. No permission has been sought or granted from the individuals who told their histories to the professor. Special Collections Librarian would like to digitize the collection, both for preservation purposes and to provide access to the collection on your library’s website. He asks History Librarian if this will be OK.

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