

**School of Performing Arts Theatrical Weapons Use Policy**  
**8/15/17**

The Virginia Tech Student Code of Conduct states that Virginia Tech prohibits,

“Unauthorized possession, storage, or control of firearms, weapons, on university property, including storing weapons in vehicles on campus as well as in the residence halls. Furthermore, ammunition cannot be stored in any residence halls on campus. (Note: Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets weapons are governed by the Virginia Administrative Codes. Please refer to 8VAC105-20.)

Weapons: Firearms are defined as any gun, rifle, pistol, or handgun designed to fire any projectile including but not limited to bullets, pellets, or shots, regardless of the propellant used. Ammunition is defined as any material intended for use in a firearm, capable of being projected by a weapon and/or makes the weapon operational. Other weapons are defined as any instrument of combat or any object not designed as an instrument of combat but carried for the purpose of inflicting or threatening bodily injury. Examples include but are not limited to knives with blades longer than 4 inches, razors, metal knuckles, blackjacks, hatchets, bows and arrows, nun chukkas, foils, stun weapons, or any explosive or incendiary device. Possession of realistic replicas of weapons on campus is prohibited. Stun weapons is defined as any device that emits a momentary or pulsed output, which is electrical, audible, optical or electromagnetic in nature and which is designed to temporarily incapacitate a person. Students who store weapons in residence hall rooms, who brandish weapons, or who use a weapon in a reckless manner may face disciplinary action, which may include suspension or dismissal from the university. Students who store ammunition in the residence halls will face disciplinary action. Exceptions to possessing weapons may be made in the case of university functions or activities and for educational exhibitions or displays. Exceptions must be approved by the Vice President for Administrative Services, in consultation with appropriate university offices. This policy does not prohibit the possession of firearms by persons, such as law enforcement officers, who are authorized by law to do so in the performance of their duties. A weapons storage program is available. The storage program applies to the weapon and ammunition. Ammunition that will not be stored includes Air Soft projectiles, Nerf gun projectiles, and CO2 Cartridges. Interested persons should contact the Virginia Tech Police (Southgate Center, 231-6411.)”

Theatrical Prop Weapons are often used on theatre and film rehearsal and performance spaces or sets. The Actors’ Equity Association (AEA), Screen Actors’ Guild (SAG-AFTRA), and International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE) unions -- among others -- have published guidelines surrounding the procurement and handling of theatrical prop weapons for stage and screen. In an effort to abide by Virginia Tech regulations and meet theatre and film professional standards, The School of Performing Arts faculty and staff is committed to enforcing the following guidelines designed to ensure the safety of our students, faculty, and surrounding community.

Theatrical Prop Weapons may include anything that looks like a weapon (eg. swords, guns, knives, spears, nun chucks, throwing stars etc..) or that functions as a weapon in a theatrical or cinematic scene (eg. personal protection “mace,” rope to strangle, objects used to strike or to bind someone, etc...).

Students are prohibited from using anything that even possibly resembles a theatrical or pedestrian weapon without first obtaining specific permission from Associate Professor Cara Rawlings. This includes all prop weapons used in scene rehearsals in or out of class, in directing scenes, cinema projects, and all other activities related to work in and around the School of Performing Arts. Students may not even bring items that could be perceived as a weapon to campus without first contacting Professor Rawlings. If you are in doubt about whether or not a particular prop could be perceived as or used as a weapon, contact Professor Rawlings.

Please be aware that only safe, theatrical stage prop weapons will be considered permissible by Professor Rawlings for rehearsal, stage, or cinema use (i.e. – No knives from your kitchen that have been dulled, Airsoft weapons, or other BB guns will be considered). Neither Professor Rawlings nor the Department of Theatre and Cinema will provide you with weapons from props storage or otherwise.

Once students have obtained official permission to use a theatrical prop weapon in a given circumstance, every effort must be made to ensure a safe and secure rehearsal, film, or production environment. Weapons must always be stored in a locked, secure case to which only stage management, production management, or the person responsible for oversight of the project holds the key. Signage stating that Theatrical Prop Firearms or Weapons are in use must be posted at every entrance to the rehearsal/filming space. All windows to the rehearsal space should be covered as much as possible. Appropriate storage and handling and protocol must be followed at all times. Failure to abide by this policy will not only result in disciplinary action at the departmental level, but may also result in investigation and/or prosecution by law enforcement.

Weapons using blank rounds may only be used in official performances sponsored by the School of Performing Arts and overseen by qualified faculty and/or sanctioned guest artists. All blank fire theatrical prop weapons will be vetted by Virginia Tech Police. Virginia Tech Police should be notified well in advance about the details of when, where, and how blank shots are to take place. Blank fire will not be incorporated into the production until Technical Rehearsals when a qualified professional will oversee the introduction of blank fire and define all necessary off-stage protocol during a focused staging rehearsal. Again, appropriate signage must be posted at all entrances to the building or space where blank fire is taking place. It may be necessary to notify campus police at the top of each performance and again prior to firing, or to post campus police officers outside the space to ensure passers-by are not unduly alarmed.

Professor Cara Rawlings: [crawlings@vt.edu](mailto:crawlings@vt.edu), (540)231-1136, 309 Henderson Hall, Virginia Tech