Developed in partnership with Larry Engel, Adjunct Professor of Film at the School of the Arts, the Deconstructor will aid film students in learning, understanding and applying the language used in film analysis. Dr. Engel created this new media tool to change the student role from a passive film viewer to an active critical thinker about the construction of a film scenes, which they will carry into their own work as filmmakers.

Students will view film scenes, dissect them into a series shots, then annotate each shot according to a standard film analysis template. They will be prompted to look at scene analysis with a set of criteria used to identify film elements, such as shot type, angle and camera movement -- criteria they will carry with them every time they watch a film and in their own work.

With the analysis of each shot students will build the visual score for each scene by layering and juxtaposing different variables across time. The graphing feature will aid them in identifying relationships and patterns among different film elements.

Professor Engel modeled the Deconstructor on the teaching of former Columbia Professor Stefan Sharff. According to Professor Engel, Sharff’s “approach to film grammar and syntax opened a way of seeing film that I hadn’t thought of before. This new tool is a way of continuing his work and helping students more easily collect data necessary to discuss and learn about film’s inherent grammatical underpinnings.”

The Deconstructor was first introduced to Professor Engel’s Analysis of Film Language class in the spring 2002 semester. It can be customized for use in any course that requires students to analyze motion graphics or photographic sequences.