

## **Decoding Media**

Tuesdays & Thursdays 1:30 - 2:50  
PCA 307

**Fall 2014**

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### **Course Overview:**           Why Decoding?

Media technologies are designed to do a lot with very little effort. This creates a problem of abundance for artists trying to use these technologies in creative ways. One can relatively quickly pull images off the internet and project them huge onstage, but what does it mean?

Decoding is the term I'm using to help you keep control of your process and create meaningful (not just dazzling) imagery for the stage. The entire theatrical process can be considered as a series of decodings and re-encodings, first decoding the text (by the creative team), re-encoding (the design) and finally decoding by the audience.

This class is designed to give students a solid foundation in contemporary media skills while simultaneously providing the historical context of the fascinating evolution of media technologies, all toward the goal of creating vital media designs for dramatic storytelling. The class covers technical basics for using media technology on stage, from shooting with small cameras and editing in widely available programs to the presentation via a variety of methods.

### **Learning Objectives** - By the end of this class students will have:

- Learned how to analyze a script structurally and create visual methods of highlighting these dramatic structures.
- Developed methods of effective collaboration; communicating ideas verbally, visually and in written documentation
- Developed a creative design process, involving analysis, research, exploration, questioning, problem solving and implementation of a successful design idea.
- Understand the collaboration process between the director and the design team
- Developed a critical design eye, and personal aesthetic toward the use of media on stage.
- Gained insightful perspective on the various uses of media technologies in contemporary society.

### **Course Requirements:**

**Media Logbook: (5%)**

**Script Breakdowns (20% - 10% each Eumenides/Phedra's Love)**

**Project #1 Design/Paperwork/Presentation: (20%)**

**Project #2 Design/Paperwork/Presentation: (20%)**

**Reading Discussions & Active and informed classroom participation: (35%)**

## Tuesday Aug 26<sup>th</sup> -

LECTURE: Goals & Expectations for Class;  
What is Video? Why talk of “De-Coding?”

READINGS: (for discussion next class):  
The Medium is the Massage: Marshall McLuhan & Quentin Fiore.

ASSIGNMENT:

- **COLLECT MEDIA OBJECTS:** Due next Class Thursday Aug 28<sup>th</sup>  
Please collect a selection of media imagery related to what you consider to be contemporary MYTHS & RITUALS that you find interesting for viewing & discussion.
- **MEDIA LOGBOOK:** DUE: NEXT WEEK – TUESDAY SEPT 2<sup>nd</sup>  
Use a small notebook (or phone app) to keep a list of the different photographic / screen based imagery you see each day for the next week.  
Please do this EVERY DAY (every hour?) and don't try to fake it, the results will be more interesting:  
**Categorize them as below (or come up with your own terms):**  
Media Format: Print, TV, Web, smart device, TV/movie on the web  
Pedigree: news, entertainment, Advertising, 2nd hand ad (link from social media),  
Perceived purpose: Sell something, inform, humorous, serious,  
Subverted intent? i.e.. Is your reaction the opposite of the perceived intent of the imagery

## Thursday Aug 28<sup>th</sup> –

SCREENING/DISCUSSION: Student Media Objects/ McLuhan

READINGS: (for discussion next class):  
Lev Manovich: What is New Media, Prolog & CH 1- What is New Media  
from The Language of New Media (2001)

## Tuesday Sept 2<sup>nd</sup> -

DISCUSSION: Student media logbooks – review results

READING DISCUSSION: Manovich – New Media & the Evolution of Technologies

READINGS - (for discussion next class):  
Greek Theater Performance: (Introduction & Ch1: Myth & Ch2: Ritual) [47 pages!]  
WATCH: Greek Theater Video (30 min) – Link on Blackboard

## Thursday Sept 4<sup>th</sup> -

SCREENING & DISCUSSION: Ancient & Contemporary Myths & Rituals

READINGS: - (for discussion next class):  
Greek Theater Performance: (Ch3: Politics & Ch5: Space) [30 pages]

ASSIGNMENT: Study the Lynda Online Tutorials:  
Photoshop CS6 – Chapter 7: Photoshop Interface Examples  
Chapter 9: Digital Image Essentials

## Tuesday Sept 9<sup>th</sup> -

READING DISCUSSION: Athenian “Golden Age”

LECTURE: Parallels between Greek theater's function & today's Media Culture

READINGS (for discussion NEXT CLASS Thursday Sept 11):  
Roland Barthes – Mythologies. (*The World of Wrestling, Romans in Films, Soap Powders and Detergents, The Poor & the Proletariat, The Face of Garbo, and Einstein's Brain*).

### Thursday Sept 11<sup>th</sup>

SCREENING & DISCUSSION: Barthes: Meaning in Images

READINGS: (for discussion next class)

The Eumenides by Aeschylus

Reading the Image - from Theater as Sign System

ASSIGNMENT: Study the Lynda Online Tutorials:

Photoshop CS6 – Chapter 11: Working with Layers

Chapter 12: Selections and Layer Masks

### Tuesday Sept 16<sup>th</sup> - Script Analysis/Structural Analysis

LECTURE & DISCUSSION: *The Eumenides* / TASS: Stage Images

ASSIGNMENT:

- **Create a script breakdown and structural analysis** of *The Eumenides*.  
(see handout for more detailed information).

**DUE NEXT WEEK: TUESDAY SEPT 23<sup>rd</sup>**

### Thursday Sept 18<sup>th</sup> -

TECH DEMO: “Video as Chorus” - Small Cameras & “Live” video onstage.  
Digital Images – Photoshop discussion

### Tuesday Sept 23<sup>rd</sup> - Script Breakdown & Analysis Due

PRESENTATIONS: Script Breakdowns – 5 min each

DISCUSSION: Decoding - Script Analysis / Re-Encoding – Stage Pictures & Space

PRESENTATION: Professional Research Examples – (aka: “mood boards”)

ASSIGNMENT:

- **Create a “mood-board” for *The Eumenides*.**

Create a “mood-board” that elaborates how this world looks, feels and functions—think BIG!  
(I’d prefer this to be in an electronic form with some video assets – PDF, Blog etc.).

You should be able to answer these questions:

How does the media function in this world?

How do the characters use the media?

How does the media reinforce (or cut against?) the structure, plot, characters and/or action of the play?

### Thursday Sept 25<sup>th</sup> -

TECHNICAL DEMO - Video Playback High & Low \_ Powerpoint is your friend!

DISCUSSION: Video compression – Editing vs. Playback codecs

ASSIGNMENT: Lynda Tutorials: **Premiere pro:** [Relevant chapters listed in handout]

### Tuesday Sept 30<sup>th</sup> - “Media World” Visual Research Due

STUDENT PRESENTATIONS / CRITIQUE : 5 min presentation / 5 min discussion

Students present their visual research and worlds for *The Eumenides*.

Class offers feedback.

ASSIGNMENT:

- **Continue working through Premiere Tutorials:**

- **Media Design Proposal:** Create a set with the provided elements (see handout), and combine this with your research (and class feedback) to develop a final proposal for the use of media in *The Eumenides*.

### **Thursday Oct 2<sup>nd</sup>**

- TECHNICAL DEMO: • CUE – SHEETS – Exciting Stuff  
• What's a Foot Lambert? & Projection Optics / RP vs. FP screens

### **Tuesday Oct 7<sup>th</sup>** - Media Design Proposal Due

STUDENT PRESENTATIONS / CRITIQUE : 5 min presentation / 5 min discussion  
Students present their final Media Design Proposals for The Eumenides.  
Class offers feedback.

ASSIGNMENT: Produce a **Cue-sheet** listing where and when each video element is used in your design.

**ALSO:** Translate your theoretical media design into a functioning cue to cue, create at least 5 consecutive cues from your design and load them into powerpoint so you can present them in order. These should be edited videos as close a possible to a finished cue. Extra credit for projecting the cues onto a model or drawing of the set.

### **Thursday Oct 9<sup>th</sup>** –

WORKSHOP: Cue Sheets & the Tech Process – Integrating Stage Management

### **Tuesday October 14<sup>th</sup>** — **PROJECT #1 DUE - GROUP A**

**Group A:** Hand in your Cue Sheets for the entire show and Present at least 5 consecutive cues (in the program of your choice) for your version of The Eumenides!

### **Thursday Oct 16<sup>th</sup>** – **PROJECT #1 DUE - GROUP B**

**Group B:** Hand in your Cue Sheets for the entire show and Present at least 5 consecutive cues (in the program of your choice) for your version of The Eumenides!

READINGS: Play #2 - *Phaedra's Love* by Sarah Kane

### **Tuesday October 21<sup>st</sup>** Play #2 - ***Phaedra's Love***

***In Class Reading of Play & Discussion of Themes***

READINGS (for discussion next TUESDAY 28<sup>th</sup>):

*Postdramatic Theater* (excerpts)– Hans-Thies Lehmann

WATCH: Online Tutorials in Millumin ([www.millumin.com](http://www.millumin.com))

### **Thursday Oct 23<sup>rd</sup>**– **Millumin Workshop**

- Working the interface / Making video loops

ASSIGNMENT: Build a 3 screen installation in Millumin – you can use your imagery from The Eumenides, or new imagery. SEE HANDOUT FOR MORE INFO.

**DUE NEXT THURSDAY OCT 30TH**

### **Tuesday October 28<sup>th</sup>** –

DISCUSSION: Kane's *Phaedra* / Postdramatic theater – experimental narrative

WORK ASSIGNMENT: *Combined Analysis & Visual Research*

Create both a text analysis and then a “media-world” (visual research) for *Phaedra's Love*. **DUE NEXT TUESDAY NOV 4<sup>TH</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup>**

**Thursday Oct 30<sup>th</sup>** – View 3-Screen Installations using Pico Projectors  
Millumin Workshop 2  
• Playing with Pico Projectors

**Tuesday November 4<sup>th</sup>** – Play #2 – Analysis & Visual Research Due - **GROUP B**

STUDENT PRESENTATIONS / CRITIQUE : 10 min presentation / 10 min discussion  
Students present their text analysis as well as their visual research and worlds for  
Phaedra's Love. Class offers feedback.

**Thursday Nov 6<sup>th</sup>** – Play #2 – Analysis & Visual Research Due – **GROUP A**

STUDENT PRESENTATIONS / CRITIQUE : 10 min presentation / 10 min discussion  
Students present their text analysis as well as their visual research and worlds for  
Phaedra's Love. Class offers feedback.

ASSIGNMENT: Watch Lynda Tutorials on Adobe Illustrator  
(see handout for details of chapters to watch)

**Tuesday November 11<sup>th</sup>** - **Adobe Illustrator Workshop**

ASSIGNMENT: Create a groundplan for your version Phaedra's love in Illustrator

**Thursday Nov 13<sup>th</sup>** – **Adobe Illustrator Workshop**

ASSIGNMENT: Continue watching Lynda Tutorials on Adobe Illustrator

WORK ASSIGNMENT: **Media Design Proposal**

Create a Media Design Proposal: for Phaedra's Love  
Use Illustrator and Millumin

**Tuesday Nov 18<sup>th</sup>** Design Presentations - **GROUP A**

STUDENT PRESENTATIONS / CRITIQUE : 10 min presentation / 10 min discussion  
Students present their Media Design Proposals for Phaedra's Love.  
Class offers feedback.

**Thursday Nov 20<sup>th</sup>** Design Presentations - **GROUP B**

STUDENT PRESENTATIONS / CRITIQUE : 10 min presentation / 10 min discussion  
Students present their Media Design Proposals for Phaedra's Love.  
Class offers feedback.

ASSIGNMENT: **FINAL PROJECTS:**  
**CUE SHEETS & at least 5 consecutive Cues for Phaedra's love**

**Tuesday Nov 25<sup>th</sup>** - **WORK PERIOD – Buffer class**

**Thursday Nov 27<sup>th</sup>** **No Class Thanksgiving**

**Tuesday December 2<sup>nd</sup>** - Play #2 – Final Presentations **GROUP B**

**Group A:** Hand in your CUE SHEETS for the entire show and PRESENT at least 5  
consecutive cues for your version of *Phaedra's Love!*

**Tuesday Dec 4<sup>th</sup>** - Play #2 - Final Presentations **GROUP A**

**Group B:** Hand in your CUE SHEETS for the entire show and PRESENT at least 5  
consecutive cues for your version of *Phaedra's Love!*

**Attendance:** All students are expected to come to class on time and prepared. One unexcused absence will be allowed, any subsequent absences will result in a drop of ½ a letter grade. Attendance will be taken 15 minutes after class time begins.

## GRADES

The University Undergraduate Grading Standard is as follows:

|   |     |              |
|---|-----|--------------|
| A | 4.0 | Excellent    |
| B | 3.0 | Good         |
| C | 2.0 | Satisfactory |
| D | 1.0 | Passing      |
| R | 0.0 | Fail         |

Graduates may receive +/-

Undergraduates may not receive +/- for the final grade.

## GRADES

The School of Drama has adopted the policy of giving letter grades in most courses. Mid-term and final grades are available to students on-line. To conform to the Privacy Act (see below), the School makes grades available to students, and not to parents. It is the responsibility of the student, not that of the University or the School, to keep parents informed. You can opt, through Student Information Online (SIO) to allow parents access to your academic records.

The University does not use a plus or minus system for undergraduates. Midterm grades will allow “plus/minus” designations for the purpose of instructor/student evaluations.

The University undergraduate student Grading Standard is as follows:

### Grade Quality Points

|   |     |                            |
|---|-----|----------------------------|
| A | 4.0 | Excellent                  |
| B | 3.0 | Good                       |
| C | 2.0 | Satisfactory               |
| D | 1.0 | Passing                    |
| R | 0.0 | Failure                    |
| X | 0.0 | Conditional Failure        |
| P |     | Non-Factorable Passing     |
| N |     | Non-Factorable Not Passing |
| O |     | Non-Factorable Audit       |
| W |     | Non-Factorable Withdrawal  |
| I |     | Non-Factorable Incomplete  |

This grading standard is for all students classified as seeking an undergraduate degree and special students taking undergraduate courses.

Grades in the School of Drama measure your progress toward mastery in your field. Expectations of progress a level of the curriculum. In addition, the School of Drama expects its students to maintain a “B” average in their major area. Faculty consider specific factors in determining grades. Individual rubrics and requirements are made available on a course-specific basis. The following are areas of competency the School of Drama evaluates on a school wide basis: artistic and professional aptitude and potential, skills mastery, professional conduct and engagement, innovation and positive collaboration.

## **INCOMPLETES**

An “incomplete” is granted exclusively at the discretion of the course instructor. Once the decision has been made to grant a grade of “incomplete,” it is your responsibility as a student to arrange a deadline for work completion with the instructor. University policy dictates that any “incomplete” grade will automatically be changed to the default grade entered by the course professor by the end of the following semester if the coursework is not completed.

## **CONFERENCES AND CRITIQUES**

Conferences and critiques are held at the end of each semester and upon request. Evaluations for many courses will be written at the end of each semester. Please pay careful attention to what is written. If anything is unclear, make sure to discuss the evaluation with your instructor.

## **HONORS**

University Honors are given to those students who have completed four years of training within the School of Drama with an overall grade point average of 3.50 and above. These honors are automatic and based solely on QPA.

College Honors will be given upon graduation if the student has a QPA average of 3.30 and has achieved artistic excellence, professional promise and/or innovation and entrepreneurship.

Dean’s List In order to qualify, a student must have a semester average in the top 30% of the School and have carried a full-time load of at least 36 units. An incomplete grade or missing grade disqualifies a student from the Dean’s list.

## **THE PRIVACY ACT**

The following is a quote from the “Buckley Amendment” to the *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974*:

“Whenever a student has attained eighteen years of age, or is attending an institution of post secondary education, the rights accorded to and the consent required of the parent of the student shall there after only be accorded to and required of the eligible student.” In effect, the law provides for:

- inspection of all records by a student.
- the opportunity, through a hearing, to challenge the contents of the records.
- the permission of the student for release of the records.
- maintenance of a record of all persons, including the student, who inspect the file.

As a result of this law, the Registrar's office sends parents copies of grade reports only during the freshman year. The School of Drama does not send any copies of notices to parents. All notices, evaluations or action letters are sent directly to the student. The full university interpretation of the policy is available in the Registrar's Office, Warner Hall 201.

## **ACADEMIC ACTIONS**

You will be informed during a private conference if you are making inadequate progress towards your degree, which may result in an academic action. If you do not progress within a reasonable amount of time, a further academic action may be taken. The decision to impose an academic action is first initiated by the School of Drama, and then presented at the end of the semester to the Academic Actions Committee of the College Council for confirmation. The academic actions listed below do not follow a particular sequence; any of the actions may be appropriately imposed at any time upon recommendation of the School of Drama and confirmation by the Academic Actions Committee.

### *WARNING*

Intention of the Action: A warning is intended to notify the student of unsatisfactory performance and to suggest that the student take steps to determine and correct the cause of the difficulty. It indicates a moderate concern on the side of the faculty for problems that are considered circumstantial and can be promptly rectified by the students. A student may be issued a warning for failure to maintain professional standards in a required course; or insufficient evidence of serious application to the professional standards of the School of Drama; or one or more grades of "C" or below in the student's major area of study.

Warning action is intended to notify the student of unsatisfactory performance, and to suggest that the student take steps to determine and correct the cause of the difficulty.

### *PROBATION*

Intention of the Action: Probation is intended to notify the student of severe and/or continuous performance issues and to suggest that immediate steps are taken to correct the cause of the difficulty. Probation may be imposed for a more severe academic problem; *i.e.* a student currently on an action who receives a grade of "C" or below, or a student not currently on an action who receives more than one "C" in his/her major area of study. A student on probation may be required to achieve a specified quality grade point average and improve scholastic and/or artistic standing to an acceptable level in order to be removed from the action. Unless significant progress is made the action will remain, could escalate to Final Probation, Suspension or Drop from the School of Drama.

### *FINAL PROBATION*

Intention of the Action: Final probation is intended to notify the student of significantly poor performance issues and continued failure to meet the professional standards of the School. It indicates significant concern on the side of the faculty on the ability of a student to rectify the causes of the problems. For a student on Final Probation, in the next semester in residence, the student must receive no incomplete grades and no grades less than a C. If expectations are not met, the student may continue on Final Probation, or depending on individual performance issues, the action could escalate to Suspension or Drop from the School of Drama.



### *SCHOOL SUSPENSION*

For poor performance or for personal problems that create an impediment to professional achievement in the School of Drama, a student may be suspended from the School of Drama. A student is suspended from the School of Drama, but not the university, when it is deemed in the best interest of the student to allow continuation of study outside of the School of Drama during the period of the suspension. The student is not permitted to take courses in the School of Drama for a period to be determined by this faculty action, but will be readmitted at the end of the period of Departmental Suspension specified by the faculty after the condition of the Departmental Suspension is satisfied. It is imposed if the student is not making significant progress towards his/her degree; or following a significantly poor semester (or previous semester(s)) during which the student was on academic action; or if faculty feel that a student with the potential for success needs to address the issues impeding

his/her academic achievement while taking classes in another department at Carnegie Mellon.

### *DROP FROM THE SCHOOL OF DRAMA*

This is an action imposed by the School of Drama in the case of any student whose progress in the professional training offered is considered insufficient to warrant continuing in the current professional field of study in this college. This action is taken when a student is lacking an essential requirement for the profession, but whose general scholastic ability, habits, and character justify an opportunity in some other field of education. This action terminates the student's enrollment in the School of Drama, but is not intended to prejudice admission to another school or college of the university, or to another institution.

This academic action allows the student three choices:

1. Transfer to another Carnegie Mellon University department/school. A student must contact that school or department.
2. Request for Transitional Student status in the College of Fine Arts for one semester. A student must make an appointment with Carnegie Mellon Resource Advising Center (CMARC) to discuss this.
3. Withdraw from Carnegie Mellon University. An application for Withdrawal form is available at [www.cmu.edu/hub](http://www.cmu.edu/hub). We strongly encourage contact with CMARC ([www.cmu.edu/CMARC](http://www.cmu.edu/CMARC)) to determine what is the student's best course of action.

### *WITHDRAWAL OR LEAVE OF ABSENCE*

A student who withdraws or takes a leave of absence from the university, at any time up to and including the last day of classes and excluding the final examination period, does so with the understanding that no grades will be recorded for the semester. In some cases the student's department or school may choose to state the time at which or the conditions under which the student may be permitted to return. Withdrawal or voluntary leave of absence requires that a student file a Withdrawal/Leave of Absence form with the HUB, after securing the appropriate signature approvals. Return from withdrawal or voluntary leave of absence requires department or school approval through a Request for Return from Leave of Absence form. ([www.cmu.edu/hub](http://www.cmu.edu/hub))

Students should keep the following in mind when considering a Withdrawal/Leave of Absence:

- The training process is such that it is not possible for students to take only a semester away from the School (unless on an agreed internship, or semester abroad).
- Students are encouraged to take a Leave of Absence if they feel the need to take a break from the intense training experienced during their studies.
- Students in good standing in all courses and on no academic action when taking the leave will be reinstated into the School at the level of training they were about to take when requesting the leave of absence.
- Students in poor standing or on academic action who request a leave of absence will be required to re-audition and/or interview when the leave is up before being permitted to re-enter the School. Students who, due to illness or personal problems, need to take a Leave of Absence during a semester will be discussed on an individual basis. A student might be asked to repeat the incomplete semester's study or, if the academic progress is excellent, be allowed to return and continue with their class.

#### APPEAL PROCEDURE

Students are free to appeal all actions through a letter to the Dean of the College of Fine Arts and copied to the Head of the School of Drama.