Joshua Kay

ISAT 252

Morgan Benton

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ISAT 252 Exit Interview

My goal coming into this semester was, first and foremost, to recover mentally and physically from gastroparesis. Last semester was challenging dealing with the mental and physical anguish of having a debilitating digestive problem and having no idea what was going on. Mentally it was tough because I was constantly researching what could be going on, going to doctor appointments, having tons of different tests done, and ultimately losing my health and the ability to spend time with friends and even my family. I know there are an insane amount of people who will go through much worse in their lifetime, but this was an obstacle that truly challenged me. I faced the immense anxiety and depression that came from self-isolation due to the physical toll and losing all my confidence as I went from a completely healthy one hundred and fifty pound, twenty-one-year-old to the worst health of my entire life and losing nearly thirty pounds in four months. I was unable to eat and function, and because of that, I felt lost. Though I usually hate using these types of cliches, there are truly no other words to describe it, and looking back, I’m sometimes amazed that I made it through it. I nearly passed out in every class every day from what I now know was malnutrition, but I was able to sit through the courses with immense anxiety, attempting to seem completely fine. I had teachers tell me I looked unwell, but I still downplayed it, knowing that I couldn’t fall further behind in school. Somehow going into winter break, I managed to finish three out of four of my classes, receiving two A’s and a B in what was definitely my most challenging semester yet. Finally, getting a diagnosis relieved a ton of the anxiety. Still, this semester is where I made all the progress of getting back to being myself and functioning as a person again. I’m no longer sleeping eighteen hours a day. I can also eat much more normally now and without the intense pain and nausea, though my diet will be indefinitely restricted from consuming fibrous vegetables, gluten, dairy, and nuts. All of this is thanks to my nutritionist and the supplement regimen she prescribed me. Even though none of this has to do with the class yet, this was undoubtedly my priority this semester because the biggest lesson I learned from all of this is how essential health is. Without it, everything else seemingly becomes worthless. Thankfully this class being online helped me a lot to have more time to focus on my health and get better each day.

As for ISAT 252, my ultimate goal was to dive into some programming and figure out if it is something that I enjoy and/or can see myself doing in the future, either for work or just to add a tool to my toolbox. During this semester, I completed the Sololearn Python Curriculum and then proceeded to follow a Coding With Russ Tutorial to make my own Space Invaders Program. I will post my SoloLearn certificate, GitHub link, and a link to the tutorial at the end of my narrative. Throughout the SoloLearn curriculum, I learned a lot of the basics of python but definitely struggled with some of the concepts. I feel most comfortable with if, then, else, elif, and print statements. However, I realize these are the absolute most basic statements. I know the second half of the program went over my head at times, but I’m confident that it will come back to me, and I will get better at it with more practice.

The Space Invaders Tutorial was a lot of fun, especially when I got to the end, and it actually worked. My girlfriend’s roommate, Lauren, is a computer science major, and she was able to help me problem solve some of the issues I was having downloading the assets and running the program. The game is entertaining, and I’m glad I chose the tutorial because it was so well laid out. Overall I would estimate that I spent an average of three to four hours per week outside of class working on SoloLearn and the tutorial. I was proud to accomplish so many small programming projects in the SoloLearn curriculum that I will be able to have on my GitHub and look back on. I’m also proud that with only a couple of weeks left, I was able to finish the Space Invaders tutorial because I was worried that the mere completion of SoloLearn was not going to feel like I had accomplished enough. I don’t feel like I ultimately failed at anything. However, there is always room for improvement, and I could definitely have improved my time management. Improving my time management would have also allowed me to repeat the lessons that I’m not as confident in, but now that I own the subscription, I can go back and repeat them this summer in my free time to brush up.

Learning Python this semester allowed me to learn more about myself and what I want to pursue. I have already talked with a company in Northern Virginia called Vision Point Systems about possibly taking their paid low-code internship course next winter. Python also tied in with my major much more than I thought. Philosophy and Symbolic Logic have proved to be in sync, especially with the “nand” and “nor” logic operations. I learned about the correlation this semester, and even though I still like philosophy more than the programming aspect, it really showed me the power of logic. Even though I am still sure that the philosophy major is right for me, I’m not giving up on coding at all. I know myself well enough to know that I’m always more passionate about things that I’m better at, and the things I’m better at come from me putting effort and practice into them. While critical thinking has always been my strong suit, which made me naturally better at philosophical thinking, I know coding takes more practice and memorization, which I can see myself diving deeper into in the near future once exams are finished. Overall, the CIS major will make me more competitive in the job world, but now I realize that that’s not all it has to offer because programming and databasing have a lot to offer and teach me. I’m always trying to build my toolbox, whether its in the auto shop learning about cars, in the bike shop learning about sales and bike mechanics, in the gym and kitchen researching health, or online learning about things like Jui Jitsu. Now I know that being on my computer, learning how to code and create is high on my list of things to add to my ever-growing skillset. I’d like to thank you for giving us so much freedom to grow and enlighten ourselves on our own with your inspiration and guidance. I quickly realized this semester would only be what I made of it, and because of that, I pushed harder as the time grew shorter for the opportunity to learn. I haven’t made up my mind whether or not I want to pursue coding as a line of work, but now that I have some experience with it, I can say that I see a lot of value in learning it, and I can see myself enjoying it more as I get better at it.

Finally, I would like to earn an A in this class for the semester. I know there are always things I can do to improve, but I feel that throughout this semester, I set goals that forced me to push myself and accomplished them in a timely manner. I am very proud of the work that I accomplished and the skills I picked up from completing the SoloLearn curriculum, as well as the GitHub portfolio that I have put together, including the Space Invaders game. My biggest fault was completing SoloLearn a couple of weeks later than I expected. My expectations were based on the first few modules that I moved through much faster than the later sections. This is mainly because I struggled more as the material got harder. However, I still completed the things I set out to do, and because of this, I hope to receive an A. Thank you so much for a great semester and for inspiring my interest in coding python, something that I hope to continue learning and getting better at.

GitHub Repository Links:

<https://github.com/Joshkay703/SoloLearnCodingProjects.git> (All SoloLearn Projects)

<https://github.com/Joshkay703/Space-Invaders-2022.git> (Space Invaders Project)

Coding With Russ - Space Invaders Tutorial Link:

Codingwithruss.com/pygame/invaders/initial-setup.html

