Reflective Narrative ISAT 252

When I first signed up to take ISAT 252, I thought to myself how it would be an easy and required course I could get out of the way. Coming from the CS major into ISAT I knew I already had many programming skills to assist in taking 252 and wasn’t worried about how difficult the course would be. I knew that the beginning of the semester would be slow as I already had previous knowledge on a lot of information from CS 101, 149, 159, and 227. I honestly had no idea how the course would be taught or if it would be similar to the CS major courses which did bring some anxiety but was also interesting to see how different majors taught the same subject. Knowing I would most likely have previous knowledge on certain topics within the class, I kept an open mind as I knew I would still learn different approaches to problem solving topics I already knew. My main learning goal I set for myself was to make sure I knew what the code meant and how it worked. This was relatively easy as I had already spent a year and a half coding within the CS major. One goal or even a rule I tried to follow was to code using different programming languages such as python or java script.

I was able to complete code4your.life assignments relatively quickly outside of class and estimate I spent only a few hours on each assignment. Once again with my experience, I knew how to correctly ask questions about coding problems and how to find answers much easier than someone who had never taken a programming course before. Not relating to course work, I created a few programs for my physics labs that aided in quicker completion and table generations for data values that took up a considerable amount of time compared to the normal assignments for this course I was completing rather quickly. If I needed help or was stuck on a problem I would just ask google for help. Since most of my questions were rather complicated and not on basic programming, I didn’t use websites such as codingbat for help and rather places like stack overflow or docs.oracle to look up information on certain methods I was using.

Throughout the course of the semester I stuck with mainly java as I had so much experience with it already. I wrote a few programs using python, however, found it much more difficult to complete tasks without spending serious amounts of time and effort on them with most of my time and effort being dedicated to physics and networking labs. I decided to continue programming with java as I understood it better than python, however, I was still able to understand python code and how it worked. I made sure to follow alongside lectures such as the arabic to roman numeral convertor and ensured I understood how everything worked together. I also was easily able to create a python and java version of fizzbuzz within 30 minutes. One thing I wish I had more practice with, and experience is with testing. Everyone has different environments and I felt that after I had followed along in lectures and tutorials, testing was still being rather difficult. I knew how testing worked as I’ve used it before in 149 and 159, however, it was never a strength of mine and I believe I have failed to address that issue during this semester. The question that was asked in the beginning of the semester about if I enjoyed programming and if I could be a good programmer was a question that was already answered for me prior to enrolling in the course. Having taken the previous CS courses as mentioned earlier, I was well aware I was an okay programmer. To answer the first part of the question, I would say I have mixed feelings about programming. When everything works like it should life is great, yet, when it takes hours or even days to trouble shoot a problem, I feel like I want to just quit the assignment I’m working on. I enjoy smaller assignments and project but not large multi-week assignments that use multiple classes which confuses me easily and I find to be less fun in completing. During the first week of classes when this question was asked in class, Allison and I just looked at each other and smiled since we both had been in the CS major and knew what was in store for us. I will say the overall experience in this class has been very desirable. The course was kept interesting by sometimes deviating from our normal programming topics but still showing relevant information pertaining to the ISAT major. I feel that JMU’s mission statement accurately reflects the progress of this course and the material I have learned. I certainly feel more educated and enlightened after taking this course. I feel that a good professor shares their experiences with their students and maintains an interesting class. I think this helped a lot while taking this course as I was more focused and actually wanted to come to class so find out what new things I would learn each class. Unfortunately I feel that after courses were moved online my desire and motivation for all my classes dropped significantly. I still made myself attend almost all of my classes with the exception of a few. I even took a few days break from classes and doing work and was much more relaxed and clear minded after doing so. With so much information pertaining to covid-19 at the time it was very stressful on myself to keep up with school work and having other worries constantly about the virus and my own safety and the small break I gave myself helped tremendously. I also feel that the activities this semester allowed myself to see how much work or coding I could complete within a set time. This also showed myself how easily it was to become burnt out and a reminder to set time aside to relax and cooldown from coding and completing different assignments.

I feel that I deserve an A for the final grade for this course. I attended almost every class in-person and online. I know how hard the transition from in person to online classes are and couldn’t believe that only 5-10 people would show up out of the 70ish total enrollees. I also tried answering questions in class but also left some go unanswered as I thought it would be beneficial for others to answer and learn. This goes back to the part where I had previous experience of programming and felt that I didn’t want to be a “know it all”, however, I am very aware I don’t know all the information pertaining to the course by heart by any means.