As we approach the end of this semester—and alas, the end of Composing Digital Media— I think I can confidently say that this class has challenged me in ways that no other class has before. And this HTML/CSS/web design unit project is no exception. With the visual and audio units, I only had to focus on learning one program while creating a readable, understandable, clean product. Yet with this particular unit, I had to learn two completely new computer-programming languages, use them to design my own visually appealing website, and pitch out a final project idea to the rest of the class. But I never said I did not enjoy this challenge. I made it my mission to follow along with the given tutorials, find other tutorials on YouTube that share more advanced steps, and work to create a web page I can confidently display to my colleagues. So in reflecting on the process of creating the website, I would say my initial goal was to make sure it was detailed and readable while also containing some elements that make it stand out from other examples.

To begin, I will discuss my HTML use. Most of what I learned comes from the “Interneting is Hard” tutorial you provided for us to complete outside of class. Walking through the steps and actively creating a basic, simple web page using this tutorial truly helped me and made me feel more confident going into this project. The “Basic Web Pages” and “Links and Images” chapters are what I focused on. Here I learned the overall layout of an HTML page, including but not limited to the <!DOCTYPE html> starter, the head, the title, the body, divs, headings, paragraphs, ordered lists, unordered lists, a drop down selection list, strong (bold) words, em (italic) words, and links. Using these HTML elements, I aligned all of the material in a clean way and made sure there was contrast in text and image size. The HTML also includes my content layer, where I clearly state the final desired result/what I want to produce, include at least one relevant image, explain why I am pitching what I am pitching, and name sub-tasks that make up the project. I worked to make sure all of my content was organized and flowed nicely on the webpage, so my audience (aka the class) would understand my pitch and be drawn into my ideas of a Pitt social media campaign. My motivation behind these HTML elements was simplicity but also adding in fun, aspirational elements like the links to Pitt social media sites to show how hard I worked at learning this new, challenging language.

The CSS layer was a different story. After I opened my style.css folder on Text Wrangler, I honestly did not know where to begin. So I took to the Web Design in 4 Minutes tutorial by Jeremy Thomas in order to style my already written HTML content using CSS rules. Here, I learned to do things like center while setting a limit of characters per line to enhance readability, edit the font family of the text on the page, fix spacing both around and within my content so nothing looks “broken,” and make the text, headings, and background prettier colors so they are more appealing to the eye. Yet I wanted a little more “umph” for my site, as Pitt and social media are two important topics to me. So I took to YouTube and found myself writing additions like borders/distinct background colors for the links to Pitt’s social media pages, making this unordered list horizontal, and creating padding around my two images. Though all of this CSS was written, it was not appearing on my webpage. In class, I had to learn how to link HTML to CSS using the very simple, much easier to follow than expected line “<link rel="stylesheet" type= "text/css" href="style.css">”. Then I was on my way to finalizing everything and presenting a product to the class. Though it may not seem like much, I am really proud of my efforts and my genuine curiosity in this language.

Overall, my project meets the criteria and exceeds it with the addition of links and my attempt at some advanced CSS tricks. I learned a lot about web design, but there is still so much more to improve on. This entire process was a lot of trial and error, which was definitely frustrating at points. But I kept trying new techniques from tutorials and from what my group mates/peers in class explained, and the more I tested out different elements the more I understood both languages. I would say I am much better versed in HTML (the information/content layer) than CSS (the design layer), but maybe one day I will have the time to sit down and become somewhat fluent in both.

Works Cited

Tutorials on YouTube for HTML and CSS (by dragonore2009)

* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TfDDFuWOk5A>
* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WsFhiGBvCdE>
* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e0T-76vHmCQ>

<https://internetingishard.com/html-and-css/>

<http://jgthms.com/web-design-in-4-minutes/>

Picture of the Cathedral of Learning from @pittadmissions, the University of Pittsburgh’s official Instagram account

Fair use case: Instagram is open to all public domain and is easily accessible by anyone who has a smart phone or a computer. This account is a public account, so anyone can use its content in his or her own way. For example, Instagram users often “regram” pictures, meaning they literally take someone else’s picture and upload it to their own page. If people can regram, I can take a picture from this account and put it on my website that I created for academic reasons at the University of Pittsburgh itself.

<https://www.instagram.com/p/BatruP_HXcu/?hl=en&taken-by=pittadmissions>

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