

Narrative- Elise Fiannaca

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ISAT 252

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Going into this class, I honestly did not know what to expect. I asked one of my teammates majoring in intelligence analysis how ISAT 252 was for her and she answered with it was fine and that she gained a lot of experience in coding in the class. Therefore, my goal out of the class was to be comfortable in coding to put on my resume that I am able to use python. Thus, my expectation was to gain enough knowledge in coding to apply it in the future if needed. What I actually did in this class was a lot of research. I realized from the first project that I am not the strongest coder in my group; I was placed in a group full of ISAT majors who all had a clear understanding of how to code and the work necessary to excel in it. The days of work I had for this class consisted of hours going on stack overflow, Zooms with my tutor discussing the basics of coding, completing my personal website on github, and completing assignments on solo learn. I immediately came to the conclusion that I did not have proper foundational knowledge going into this class, while it seemed like everyone else did.

(<https://stackoverflow.com>, <https://www.sololearn.com>, <https://github.com/fiannaec/fiannaec.github.io>). The reason why I struggled so much in this class is because most of my work competed was researching basic information about how python works. For example, the spaces, periods, and quotation marks used in python must be placed in a specific way in order for the program to run. So, what may have taken some people 30 minutes, would be a week's work for me because I would not be able to figure out the specific part of my code that is causing the entire system to break down.

Furthermore, I know I worked very hard in this class, having weekly tutor sessions Monday nights after my lacrosse practice in order to come into my weekly Wednesday meeting prepared. I would estimate spending about 3-4 hours a week for this class. The time varied because there was a part of me saying why spend time researching when it is not tangible work for you to show off? And I struggled. The beginning of the semester I was averaging about 30 minutes a day looking at code, researching tutorials, scrolling through youtube videos, just to be the best in my group. This motivation and determination changed as my hours of hard work did not result in anything tangible. I began to burn out. My goal of being able to apply python code changed to having a goal every week and completing that goal. I had to make it very simple for myself because I began getting overwhelmed with the amount of work it would take me to be where I want to be. I am a very competitive person, so attending group meetings with everyone succeeding made me very happy for them, while at the same time I would feel worse because I felt like I was not meeting the standard I had for myself. Being a competitive person also means I want to be successful, and I felt I was not doing that. While attending the group meetings was sometimes embarrassing for me from the lack of tangible work I could bring forth, you made me feel a lot better about the small accomplishments I would make weekly (so thank you). You

made me feel like it was normal, and that I should not immediately count myself out, which kept my mind in your class (so thank you again). My burnout towards the end was also because I have not experienced a full spring semester on campus yet while being in season. I was so consumed with traveling and playing, that sometimes I lost sight of this class and did not know how to prioritize it. It was already on the back burner, so adding lacrosse into the equation did not make the situation better.

On the other hand, there were small successes that I had throughout the semester. For example, I am really proud of the tic tac toe game I developed on my terminal (Elises-MacBook-Air:fiannaec.github.io elisefiannaca\$). In addition, I am proud of my personal website that I created (<https://github.com/fiannaec/fiannaec.github.io>). More specifically, I am proud of my personal website because it began as a vision, into a very basic website, into adding pictures, making those pictures into a more organized set up. I am really proud because I feel like coding is something where there is always room for improvement. My project is a clear example how if a person does not give up on their work, and continues to improve it, it can be a success.

In addition, I am really proud of my tic tac toe game because it brought me out of the coding slump I was in; making two weeks of work competitive among my group was exactly what I needed to refocus myself. This new goal excited me because it seemed like everyone was starting with a clean slate to start this project. For once, I felt like I was on the same playing field as everyone else, so I felt more compelled to complete work in this class. To summarize, my work ethic for this class was inconsistent based on my motivation for the week (which I am not too proud of). I strive for consistency, so that was also a battle. In other words, I felt that I failed in the area of consistency because I allowed my emotions to get in the way of my work ethic for the class.

Although facing some failures throughout the semester in this class, it allows me to use this class as a learning experience. I now know that I have to plan out weekly goals for my work, and divide into blocked out time each day. Having a schedule blocking out mandatory time to code would allow me to not overthink my emotions, and just put my head down and get to work. I have also realized that having a class without mandatory work is a challenge for me; I am someone who sees work in Canvas for my other classes and plans ahead to knock them out days in advance in order for my athletic schedule to be as stress free as possible. Therefore, not having mandatory work for this class made me prioritize my other classes above this one. I do not want to say that, but I am being fully transparent. I see an assignment (a mandatory one) for another class, and I am immediately drawn towards it because it is something tangible I can cross off my to do list; it is difficult feeling accomplished/ good after researching for this class because I feel that all of that work is resulting in nothing. The plans I have for the future to learn from this is to block out mandatory time in order to complete the work that I set up for myself.

JMUs' Mission Statement is to produce "educated and enlightened citizens who lead meaningful and productive lives." Even though my progress in this class was not where I would have wanted to be, I can confidently say that I do feel more educated after this class. For example, I have learned how specific code has to be in order for a computer to understand

because computers are flat out stupid. In addition, I have learned how to use a terminal to write code to result in something like a website on github. I have learned about the extra effort and work that I would have to put in in order to be successful in this course; I am more enlightened on how I see myself in the future as someone who writes code. I know it will not be easy. And I know that I may take me more time than others and now I am more aware of that.

The activities this semester have detached me from my idea of what I wanted in the future. For example, I spent a good amount of time working with sololearn, a website that teaches the absolute basics of python code. By the end of this class I thought I would be writing code no problem (which was pretty naive of me) but it was a reality check on where I actually am as a student in my track to achieving a computer information systems minor. Once I heard from my COB 204 professor that having computer information systems as a minor automatically appeals to companies so much more than not having it, I knew I had to be someone with it. As I have said before, I am extremely competitive, so having an extra edge on everyone else is exactly what I wanted. However, signing up for this minor I did not realize the amount of work I would have had to do to achieve my goal of finishing with it. Now I have a better grasp on the amount of effort this is going to take for me to finish strong in this minor.

Lastly, I feel like the grade you should report to the registrar is an A because not a week went by where I was not thinking about this class and doing work for it. Even with my lack of motivation and increase in frustration, I still took the time to divulge in something I knew I was not the strongest in (which is challenging because I pride myself in being the best- if I am not, I out work everyone to become the best). Through the struggle, I never gave up, so I think that in itself is deserving of an A.