Semester Retrospective

Marc Inouye

At the start of the semester I had very little understanding on how Python worked and the differences it had from Java. After the first sprint I found that this wasn’t something we were going to learn during class hours and that I would have to do outside of class on my own. The first week was just me and a few of my team members just either learning the basics of Python or having the one or two that were familiar with it teach the rest of the team. Once everyone was more or less on the same page we started work on the sprint. Each preceding sprint I learned something new about Python and where to find the resources to interpret them. Both Stack Overflow and the Python docs helped immensely when trying to understand why someone would use a certain function from a module.

One of the biggest challenges my team faced during the sprints was importing modules that we had made. There always seemed to be some kind of file path error that we would have to resolve each time we tried to import a difference module. It wasn’t until sprint 5 or 6 that we completely restructured our directory in order to simplify this process. Separating the packages from the java files gave us one line to use whenever we needed to add something else.

Unit testing was the most important thing that I believe we learned this semester. Until this class I didn’t know anything about it and now after having used it I don’t know how you would keep your code working without it. The hardest part for me will always be writing the tests before writing the functions. It came down to us not understanding what we wanted from the function before writing it. In most cases I would start writing the function and as it was coming together, I would have a better idea of what I wanted from it.

Something I had to unlearn from Computer Science 1 and 2 was commenting. I was in the bad habit of giving my variables ambiguous names and commenting next to them what they were/did. After taking out comments I was forced to rename almost all of my variables so that I could understand how my code functioned. Docstrings still somewhat elude me in the sense that they seem to be the same as comments but are ok to use. Another thing that came up more than expected was repeating code. Refactoring became a large project for every member when we found that there were so many repeats and even some unit tests had to be redone with separate functions.

Things that worked that I will continue doing is constant communication with my team members. We were very lucky that almost everyone had the 2 hours before class free to have our bi-weekly meetings. Even with those 4 hours every week it never felt like enough. Often times a supplementary Discord meeting was needed during the weekend because between Wed and Mon there was something that would come up.