

When I first read the course description for this class, I was expecting to have to sit through a boring GenEd class about problem solving techniques. When I learned that there were no grades or set rules for the course, I thought it was a joke. I thought that I would not learn much in a course that did not enforce grades or an attendance policy. I figured I would not do much work for the course and that I would not care much about the topics in the class because my other classes would take priority. Needless to say, all of my expectations were proven very wrong very soon.

There were many aspects of this class that I really enjoyed. One thing that I really loved about this course was how relevant and life-changing the books were that we read. Positivity definitely had the most impact on my life. The research that was presented in the book and the suggestions for improvement really had a huge effect in my life. One line that I will never forget was one that Morgan brought up at an incredible time. It was a typical Friday morning as we were discussing the chapter we had just read the night before. We were only on chapter three or four when he brought up a quote from chapter nine. This quote reads,

“Life always gives us exactly the teacher we need at every moment. This includes every mosquito, every misfortune, every red light, every traffic jam, every obnoxious supervisor (or employee), every illness, every loss, every moment of joy or depression, every addiction, every piece of garbage, every breath.”

-Charlotte Joko Beck (pg. 158)

When Morgan read this quotation to the class, I could not help but think how much truth and value it held. At the time, I was dealing with a very stressful obstacle in my life. Not only was I trying to adjust to the new college lifestyle and being away from home, but I was also dealing with the hardship of watching my father suffer from a very aggressive form of prostate cancer, and unfortunately, he passed away the Tuesday morning following this Friday morning class period. When we were assigned the reading of the book Positivity, my first thoughts were quite similar to the main point of this quote. I remember thinking how blessed I was to be enrolled in such an easy-going class and to be reading all about how to stay positive and the benefits of doing so. The quote was perfectly exemplified with my own life. There was a reason that Morgan chose to assign this book first, even if he didn't know it. There was a reason that I read every chapter and wrote journal entries on them. There was a reason why I was placed in this class to read this book and this very crucial time in my life. This book was the perfect teacher at the perfect time. It was the exact teacher that I needed in order to keep my sanity while dealing with the hardest situation I have ever dealt with. Ever since that day, this has been one of my absolute favorite quotations because it is nothing short of being completely accurate. I could not believe that Morgan had represented this exact quote at the most perfect moment in my life and it has been so influential ever since then.

Because of this traumatic event that I have had to face this semester, many of my goals dealt with coping with the loss of my father. I made goals to meditate a lot, a habit that I enjoyably learned in GISAT, and to exercise more frequently. I also made goals like writing a journal for my father and taking nature walks outside just to feel his presence around me and enjoy the little things that he would want me to enjoy. Some of my other goals included things

like being more positive while others were things like catching up with all of my missed assignments. I really liked the program that we did with generating five weekly goals. I usually accomplished most of my goals for the week and it always made me feel proud of doing so. The program also helped me to keep myself in line and to maintain an ambitious attitude while still enjoying things in my life. I still set up goals for myself and things that I would like to get accomplished by certain times. It helps me to stay focused and remember the things that I need or want to do. By writing down these goals, it motivates me even more to actually achieve them so I can cross them off of my list and feel good that I accomplished everything I wanted to. Some of the evidence that I have that I did indeed accomplish my goals are things like journal entries and a more positive and relaxed personality. Overall, I really liked having to set goals for myself and it really set me up with a good foundation for good habit making throughout my college career.

This class has been so influential on my life. I have learned so many things that I never even thought possible. All of the research and arguments that we have been exposed to have really opened my eyes to second guess even the most commonly used processes or procedures. I never would have thought that grades could be so detrimental because they are so widely used and they have become so “normal” to us that I never even would have thought twice about the practice. However, with all of the evidence that we have been given, I have become fully aware of how harmful grades really are to us. This class has taught me how to really utilize my intrinsic motivation and how important it is to value this intrinsic motivation rather than to value rewards and extrinsic motivators. Thanks to this class, I have a new mindset on the way I accomplish tasks and rather than focusing on the rewards, I do them because they interest me and I want to

accomplish these things. I have also learned a lot about how to manage and to strengthen my self-control. I have become much more driven to get things done after reading Willpower. Of course, as I have previously mentioned, I have also learned a plethora of ways to increase my positivity and to cope with stressors that will arise in my life. All of the different things that this course has taught me are things that will stick with me for the rest of my life. In most of my classes, I learn what I need to learn to get a good grade on my test and once the class is over I forget a majority of what I had been taught the entire duration of the class. This class, however, is the complete opposite to that habit. This class has taught me how to think on a deeper level. It has showed me so many new and more positive ways to live my life and to achieve things that I want to achieve. Every aspect of this class will be used throughout my lifetime in various ways and situations. I am so delighted that I enrolled in this GISAT 160 course and I am so thankful for having the pleasure and honor of having the professor, Morgan Benton. This class most definitely would not have been nearly as influential and powerful nor would I have learned so much in such a short amount of time if it was not for Morgan, and for that, I am so thankful.

ISAT 252 Reflections

Brandon Walraven

May 2014


I came into the semester expecting to get a lot out of this class. I had always considered programming and the technical aspects of computers a necessary evil. Whenever I faced a problem or challenge in this area I usually reacted to it with frustration over the lost time I could have spent playing the game, researching topic X, or whatever else I was doing. In the fall I took an ARC GIS class with Paul Rittenhouse, excellent professor, and he really triggered my interest in knowing more about programming languages and other technical issues to improve my GIS skills. So coming into this semester I was pretty excited to learn almost anything, although I didn't have any specific goals.

At the beginning I set goals to master setting up a development environment, documenting code, all of the basic programming skills, and the basics of javascript, PHP, CSS, HTML, and python. Perhaps a little ambitious. I also wanted to create my own story map in ESRI online, utilizing HTML and CSS. But the most important goal for me was to start building an accurate range calculating and route planning app for electric vehicle owners. This was an idea I had come up with after playing with electric vehicle charging stations and buffers in ARC GIS, and I had pitched the idea to my friend Chiedo as a partnership.

While working through the semester I curtailed my goals to reflect my interest in the EV app project. Which searching for a suitable way to account for the effect of topography on vehicle range I discovered that Google has an API that allows you to combine elevation data with route planning, perfect for what we needed. Utilizing that resource was a no brainer, and the api was designed for use with Javascript so that is what I focused most of my energy. Although Chiedo is building the app it is important to me to be able to understand exactly how it works and even be able to make edits myself. During the first month of the semester things were starting to move. Chiedo and I had worked out what we wanted the app to do and brought in a designer and business savvy friend who were interested in the project as well

Unfortunately I have had several things interrupt my semester that were out of my control. My girlfriend has ulcerative colitis and she had a bad flare up at the beginning of this semester, which degraded her health to the point where I had to take care of her nearly every day and eventually take her into the hospital. She had to be admitted to a hospital in NOVA and was in bad shape for several weeks, both mentally and physically, and I ended up traveling to NOVA almost every weekend to support her. Right as her condition started improving a friend of mine at JMU was diagnosed with bipolar disorder and had a strong allergic reaction to his medication. At this point he was considering suicide, and as one of his closest friends I had to support him until he could be placed on a medication he could tolerate. Right as things started to stabilize with him I broke my arm in a snowboarding accident and had to miss two weeks of class. When I was able to return I found myself woefully behind on my capstone project, all my classes, and my internship at Virginia Clean Cities. I ended up having to withdraw from one class and receive extensions for my internship and honor's thesis.

After returning from the mental roller coaster that was the first two thirds of my semester I was able to start establishing a routine and make some progress towards my semester goals, however there were definitely things that I could have done better. I should have been more open about what I was going through instead of just dropping of the face of the earth at times this semester. When faced with situations like that my initial reaction is to just internalize everything and work through it on my own. In hindsight I would have been able to accomplish a lot more if I had come in to talk to you after returning from my injury and laying out a suitable course for the rest of the semester. Part of the deal with a course like this is that it allows you to indulge your best and worst tendencies, and this was something I could have handled better. I would definitely consider this as an extracurricular lesson that I am taking away from the class, and this semester in general.



After returning from my injury I focused on Javascript in codecademy and have accomplished if then decisions, functions, for loops, while loops, arrays, and objects. Chiedo and I met for our first coding session last Saturday and spent a solid day working through the google api. He was able to enable the route planning features and we developed a system that we think should provide accurate route planning based on charger location. After we can get that model working we will layer in topography, roadtype, and charger level to determine the fastest routes for electric vehicle drivers.

Ultimately I didn't accomplish nearly as much as I would have liked with this class. I have started making good progress with Javascript. And I did not get the chance to touch any PHP or python. Chiedo and I had planned on starting our coding sessions during spring break but we were delayed because of my arm and his busy work schedule.

Morgan, I find your approach to the class refreshing. I really love what you're trying to accomplish and I hope you keep refining and improving it. I've can see the differences from when I started taking the class my junior year. I think allowing us to choose what languages we focus on is really beneficial. Visual Basic may be a great learning language but it seems from my experience with javascript that it is pretty easy to bypass and learn more advanced languages with relative ease. After being at JMU for five years I've taken plenty of classes where I've had to learn things that I knew were irrelevant to my interests. And even though I didn't complete as much as I would have liked, I feel that everything I did was valuable for me.

The great thing about running your class this way is that during the semester I started to feel my motives about the class change. I stopped viewing my goals in the course as something that I had to fulfill to justify my grade at this interview, and started to see it as a need to meet my own standards. Once I realized this I really understood why you run the class this way. I've realized during my time at JMU that what makes a lot of the effective people I've met successful is their ability to learn and experiment outside of the established classroom, and starting Saturday I will be responsible for continuing to learn on my own. I'm glad that I've had the experience of teaching myself something that I thought would be difficult so that now that I'm about to graduate I can continue with self-education. In this way I do feel more enlightened than before I took the class. I've always believed in self-education, and I feel most people would agree that it very beneficial, but I certainly do feel more empowered now than before taking the class.

Although I've have had a difficult semester I know that I could have accomplished more. I feel that my efforts have earned a B based on what I was able to accomplish given my situation. Chiedo and I plan to keep working on the app until it is completed, and I plan to continue learning JS until I feel I have mastered it. Overall I have a very positive feeling walking away from the class. I started from seeing JS as a tool but through the tutorials I've come to enjoy programming for the problem solving opportunity it presents and the potential it has for building life enhancing products.

THE WHOLE THING

This paper only slightly reminds me of an entry essay on a college application.

My draw to be impressive is incredible. But what I've learned from this class is being impressive isn't going to give me what I want, nor give you what you want. This want relationship between student and teacher has always been the same. They want what they want and you may or may not want the same things, which is more or less usual. You may enjoy the material, you may hate it, you may not see the point or really understand when you would ever use this or that in the real world, you may learn a different way, you may flourish thrive in said class, you may love it all. What is the percentage of those individuals who fall into those categories and who has the advantage? The traditional education system is geared toward one kind of learner and if you can't learn that way then you're out of luck. There is a lack individuality in the current methods of teaching. The wants and demands of our previous teachers and professors has been ingrained there has always been a consistency of requirements, completions, tests, and grades.

But in room 337 there was none of it. IT WAS ALL OPTIONAL.

There was this crazy feeling of freedom but insane terror. Firstly I was terrified of the content itself. I just switched into ISAT this semester after tremendous debate and one of my first classes is computer programing, I'm mostly technologically inept. I'm a slow typer, I still have no clue how to use my smartphone, I lacked most skills with web navigation and usually use my computer for googling, essays and music. But then I looked at the bright side, I could learn however I wanted at my own pace with material I knew I was going to struggle with and was thinking how awesome this could be. But then it went back to; this was way out of my comfort zone both in content and structure. I mean first of all I have won "World's Greatest Procrastinator" since my junior year of high school. A lack of accountability had me looking around asking where is my deadline and how close can I come to it before I can hand it in a minute before its due. But there were no deadlines. Coming off of 13 years of traditional learning I knew what to expect, how the classes would be taught, what teachers wanted to hear, and how to answer a multiple choice question. This class was unexpected. I was now in charge. I was the driver, I was in full control of all adventures, all outcomes. I had the power and I think that was what was most challenging. I have never had the power before and it was hard to take that on. The concept of the class is wonderful. You are your own driving force and you get to explore what you want. It is ideal but the fact that the way the current teaching system is the opposite made the transition to becoming "that" kind of student "the driver" was a really difficult undertaking. If I were to change anything it would not be to get rid of the ideal but provide a transitional period of incrementally less and less accountability. So say you have the first half of the course have a due date every Friday and have a certain amount of code academy done by then each week but for the second half provide the freedom given to us originally. That is just an example but I believe that incremental change is sustainable change.

Lets get back to the semester adventure.

The goal setting began with an end goal idea of building an app and later selling it to become a millionaire (I had big plans). Then, there were the first two goals of

completing javascript code academy and working cohesively in a group to build this app. Another goal was to use my communication skills and background with the social sciences to bring a different element to the team and help give a different perspective into the work we were going to be doing. But over time these goals seemed less attainable and there was a movement away from javascript and into html. Our group had decided that we were going to build an html page first then if we had time move into adapting that code into javascript and ultimately a phone app. The evolution of group dynamic, including myself, from member participation, availability, and level of knowledge of each computer language were definite factors when it came to attaining certain goals. I continued to maintain my communication goal throughout the semester and really attempted to communicate as much as possible. By the end of the course my goals changed to; to really understand html and css and attempt to build something. Every course is a growing process and my goals are a prime example of that

Success. I think I saw my first success on the second day of class when we were brainstorming project ideas and I felt like a large contributor in creativity. I felt like my creativity and ability to explain ideas helped my team come up with the idea to build a decision maker app. My first success with actually programming was learning how to link a picture to a website. I do not know why I was so enthused with that accomplishment at the time but I distinctly remember being in the library and doing a victory high five with myself. I classify this as a success now because that was one of the first times I felt successful with a programming language it was the first time I thought I could teach that to someone else and felt like I was learning. The next success came when I was in the part of html code academy that gave you the opportunity to build a project that has to do with linking pictures to other websites how ever you wanted and creating a webpage incorporating css. I had used this as my first kind of test for myself and didn't look at the hints the entire time and built a page that linked pictures of different animals to an associative web page that had facts about the animal you would click on. This made me feel as if I am not that terrible at this and I am learning skills that can be applied in an interesting way. I made the success of completing the html and css code academy. What I believe to be the greatest success that honestly surprised me is the amount of understanding I had in what groups were talking about when they presented their code. I was a little taken back that some of the stuff i had been learning or some of the stuff I had seen on the internet i understood in context with other group projects. It was a success because i realized I had learned a lot more than I thought I did.

Failures. To begin balance seems to be a continual issue in my life. I like to do a lot of things. I love being involved, seizing every opportunity to do something interesting or adventurous, having fun, putting things off, and I crave experiences. I play rugby, I have a girlfriend, I am in college, I have friends, family, homework and commitments. Balance is necessary for production and my juggling skills are subpar. I definitely struggle with knowing when I am committing too much effort to one part of my life over others. This semester, especially, taking 17 credits threw me off . As I mentioned earlier I just entered the ISAT major a very different realm from my previous Social Justice major the courses were different and challenging and 252 was put on the back burner on several different occasions. This caused a sort of domino effect to occur. My first failure was javascript. We, my partner Joe and I, had originally picked javascript as the language that we were going to learn but it soon proved really difficult for me to understand and keep

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up with. Joe is really intelligent and really has a knack and work ethic when it comes to learning programming. I really didn't have that same passion nor the understanding and I fell behind where he excelled. We both were at two different levels and our other member Michael seemed to know a lot but was waiting until we caught up. This difference in level and difficulty to apply what we had learned in java made us switch to html. Java was a failure to me because I gave up on it where I wish I had put more time and had more patience with it. The domino effect continued after the difference in skill level became prominent to miscommunications on who was coming to class when and what had been done on the project and what hadn't. From there Joe really began to take on all the responsibility and I felt really inept in helping him. The group dynamic became not a good one and there was a lack of communication and distribution on tasks or need for assistance. These failures have really taught me to address an issue early and establish an open line of communication that is continually maintained. During the period that this class was on the back burner my communication lacked and was a contributor to this failure. Balance is sure to be the hardest to correct but for the future establishing goals for myself weekly and holding myself accountable in some way will help in maintaining balance within my life. I have learned that I have a responsibility within a group and within my life to balance and maintain my own end of things. It is my responsibility to not drop the ball or drop off on a project and I need to keep myself accountable throughout the course of time not at the end.

Oh the education and enlightenment. There was a lot of learning. Amongst the bigger things, I believe I have finally mastered the art of copy and paste. Kidding but seriously I have discovered a lot of tricks and short cuts. I feel as though I am now able to manipulate the Internet to gain the information I need in order to program. The ability to pull what I want from a website and have confidence in its navigation is definitely something I learned within this course. But in the big picture of what I want to pursue it did prove that this isn't my pathway. I feel as though the computer skills I have gained are a positive contribution to what I have to offer and I am sure there is potential that I could use programming in a future endeavor but IKM is not something I feel was made for me. Taking this course just further proved my desire to work with the environment and work outdoors. The knowledge and solidification of what I have wanted to do has been a long-winded process of major changes and in depth talks with the ones who know me best. I have been undecided, Geology, Earth Science, Social Justice and this semester ISAT and I feel I finally have the right fit. The realization has been tremendous and as I take more and more courses I hope to continue to refine my focus while gaining as much knowledge from all of the other areas part of this major as well. In another way I felt as if I gained more perspective on something that was so normal and unchanging that it was not really something I concerned myself with. From the beginning I felt this perspective enlightenment. After showing us that video of the British kid rapping about education I learned about the structure of the education system and what there was to question about it. This new perspective and way of thought brought more knowledge to the forefront of my mind and made me think. Free education does not necessarily mean freedom within education and a 28,000-tuition bill doesn't always give you that freedom either but within this class there was. This was a new perspective on learning a different thought process on its structure and what has the potential to work within society and give the most

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people the advantage. These new ideas and skills that I now grasp I hope to use in my pursuit of my dreams.

The person who is open to learning and others perspectives, the person who seeks more knowledge and doesn't settle in what they already know will be the most intelligent. That is the person I strive to be.

B. I really hope that this essay shows how much I absorbed from this course experience. I believe that there was considerable success and failure. Out of all of the classes I took this semester this made me think about the thought process of learning and how I learn the most and I do believe I am more self aware and in a better position for success in the future.

THIS IS THE GUY
WHO "BROKE" CYOG

Greg Frattaroli

ISAT 252

Dr. Benton

4/29/15

Reflection Narrative Essay

Dr. Benton,

I would like to preface this paper by saying if I were to answer some of these questions that you wish to talk about it would be both a waste of your time and an insult to you. I plan to write about my experiences this semester as they pertain to my decision in being delinquent from class for the semester as well as how it has impacted my life. I will also try to answer as many of your questions that I can.

Coming into this class I was under the impression that it was going to be a class with a relatively light work-load. I was excited about signing up for it for that reason along with my interest in programming at the time. I had recently completed CIS 221: Principles of Programming and had applied to pick-up CIS as a minor. I wanted to take a programming course that has a different perspective than those offered through the College of Business. I expected to learn a different style of coding while not being over exerted because I knew my major was still going to be Business Management.

At the beginning of the semester I received the information that I was not going to accepted into the CIS minor. I had also applied for a study abroad trip that would supplement 3 different minor courses that would allow me to graduate on-time which I was accepted to, pending my acceptance of the CIS minor. When I found out I did not get into the CIS program I was upset, to say the least. Not only was something I had enjoyed stripped from me, I was also denied an opportunity of a lifetime to study abroad in Sweden. With the decision being final and not having enough time left in school to reapply to the minor, I was out of options. I needed to continue on the path I had planned out in order to graduate on time in May 2016 without a minor. I had multiple friends taking your course that were excited to be there as well. For the reasons of maintaining my graduation plan and staying in-touch with my friends, I continued the course.

I began this course by maintaining attendance while setting lofty goals for myself. After listening to you lecture and go over your course policies I maintained the belief you were the most interesting professor I have ever had. In my years of being a student, I have never had a professor openly express their disgust with the grading system. While I agree and disagree with different aspects of your ideology I, without a doubt, respect them.

Unfortunately, I also abused them. Upon giving us the option to grade ourselves or be graded by merit, I chose to grade myself. While you may think that I was dead set on choosing this option based on my actions this semester (and I couldn't blame you) I will say that was not the case. I had a lengthy debate within my own head about which policy to choose. I knew that if I picked the merit based grading system it would be more work, but it would also force myself to learn more. I took the easy way out and chose the opposite. So with that my goals took a downward spiral. Me and you had a lengthy discussion over e-mail, which I should have had with you in person, about the remainder of my time in your course. You explained to me the importance of learning for oneself and tried to influence me to make the honorable decision. Beyond looking at this decision from my eyes you led me to look through the eyes of an ISAT major that requires this course to graduate. I was selfish and continued in this class to better my GPA. I figured that through asking for an A at the end of the class and doing a minimal amount of work I would be able to focus my time on my major courses in which I am enrolled in four, currently. Despite this being dishonorable and small-minded I did not make any changes to my decision because at the time I was so worried about my GPA and receiving an internship this summer as well as a job when I exit college. I quickly learned that while my decision made the most economic sense it made no common sense. Ideally I should take a class to learn, but instead I find myself taking classes that will help me look better on paper to a recruiter. With doing this I think I am hurting myself. I believe that one of two things can happen when you commit unrighteous acts; you can either feel guilty or you can feel nothing. By feeling guilty hopefully the person would act on the guilt and not commit that act again while the person feeling nothing will not think twice before committing the act again. I felt guilty, selfish, disrespectful, but none of it was enough to dissuade me from my thinking or make me come back to class. Even once you offered an olive branch after Spring Break and tried to bring me back to make up for the first part of the semester I took the cowardly way out and did not even respond to your e-mail. I was comfortable in my fake reality I had dreamed up and did not want to face the embarrassment of coming back to class. For those reasons, among others, I continued my delinquency.

Since I am a young adult who is paying for college, you would not think I would need a truant officer to get me to class. Nonetheless, you tried to get me to return and I did not listen and I appreciate that.

I wasted a spot in your class that may have been used by someone who needs it. I wasted your time that you spent designing course work for your students. I abused your policies. I disrespected your hard work and I added negative energy in your life that was otherwise unnecessary. For all of these things and more, I apologize.

I will say that I was able to achieve excellent marks in my other courses. I currently have A's in all but one class where I am at a B+. In that course I wish to raise it to be able to fulfill this semester with straight A's.

Back to the questions you raised for this paper, I want to say that I will use this experience to live my life more morally correct in the future, but I am fearful of lying to myself. The path I am currently going down is not one that I am proud of, but it is one that gets results. I feel more educated about my business knowledge and was able to land multiple internships this summer. I am not sure if I feel more enlightened. I think the right phrase would be more in-touch with my inner self. It has been a constant battle between right and wrong and in most cases wrong prevails with the right choice in the background saying, "Don't worry! You'll get em next time!". This continues to happen and there will need to be a point where I have to put my foot down and begin to change. This semester would have been a perfect time for that, but it was not.

I feel that I have found more of what I want to do with life for the future. I know that I want to work for a consulting company to better my knowledge of the business world. After being in the workforce for many years I plan to start my own business that can positively impact the world. An idea of mine includes making a broccoli sprout health based drink that can reduce the effects of autism as well as eradicate the cancer causing carcinogens within the lungs by up to 60%. You need to make a certain amount of money in order to live comfortably and that's something that I have had the benefit of not worrying about due to my father's hard work. I wish to follow in his footsteps and make sure my family is economically sound, but after that I believe it is important to better the world that we live in. While I don't currently have the means to do this on a large scale I will try to tailor my business life to making this world a better place as well as doing little things to make the lives of those around me more enjoyable.

This course style worked well for the reason that it benefited my other classes, but very much deterred me from doing work within your class. I felt that by me receiving the same grade, regardless of my attendance, I could focus more on my other classes that I deemed more important. If I were to take this class again I would recommend that you make attendance mandatory with a set number of absences. This would have motivated me to come to class more often, but since I could receive the same grade by not coming to class, I took that route.

I would like it if you would report the grade of an A to the registrar. This will help increase my GPA to help me receive more consideration when applying for higher profile jobs after graduation.

What I Have Learned this Semester

It would be dishonest to say I learned a lot in this class. I rarely attended and fell in to the trap of not having motivation to go once I understood the "choose your grade policy". I do however not want you to think I am a bad student or a bad person. I had an extremely difficult semester both academically as well as psychologically and physically. After the first week of class (in which I attended) I suffered an injury that put me into a very bad place for quite some time. It would be a lie and dishonest to answer many of the questions presented on your rubric, so instead, I will tell you about the roller coaster ride of the semester I have had.

I do not want this to become a pity felt essay with constant complaining or what not, I would rather have this essay serve as one of the only times I could get all of my thoughts and reflections that I have had over the course of this semester out loud. During the first week of the semester I fell attempting a backflip on skis (I'm a competitive freestyle skier) off a terrain park jump and suffered numerous injuries. I fractured 2 vertebrae in my back, tore my ACL, fractured my ankle, tore my meniscus, tore my peck-muscle, tore some other muscle in my knee, and got a concussion off a single fall (I have a video and it was bad). This was pretty devastating to be honest by putting me in a state of depression and did not put myself in the mindset for school. I missed your class for the next week, while attending my classes only where attendance was necessary, with the mindset of "I really just don't care because of the no-attendance policy".

I took this class because I needed an elective to graduate and somebody told me you were an extremely interesting professor and I heard it was an easy A. I actually had no idea it was a "choose your grade policy" and liked the fact I could get an A to help my struggling Business GPA. I have never taken such a free spirited class and looking back at it I wish I could have experienced it. I know this is such a business mindset, but it reached a point in the semester when I had a lot of my major classes were filling up with work and I did not feel like it was necessary to put the time into a class that I knew I could get a good grade in.

As I said I did not learn a lot about computer programming or writing code this semester, but I did learn a lot this semester. I learned a lot about the business world, completing so many long and intensive projects, but most importantly I learned a lot about myself. I learned to compose myself in a positive way without letting my emotions get to me, something I have really struggled with in the past. I also learned that I do not want to go the same path that many of my peers are going into in the business world. I realized my true passions in life. I took a lot of time this semester to hone in on the skills I have that relate to the exact career I want in life. One thing about me is the things that motivate me are a little unconventional. I love nature, adventure, and most importantly fishing. I have learned that I can achieve almost anything I put my mind to. With these qualities I have learned that I want to become a helicopter pilot as well as becoming a fishing guide on top of that. May seem like an impossible feat to some, but I know I can achieve this and excel at it.

This summer I will continue my career as a manager at a Marina in Northern Massachusetts. Here I will give tasks to other employees all in hopes to keep one of the state's largest Marina's running smoothly. On top of that, on my days off, I will be working as a deckhand on commercial and charter fishing boats chasing Giant Bluefin Tuna. There is nothing I enjoy more than chumming in fish, watching humpback whales breach next to my boat, all in hopes of successfully landing one of these fish. Ever heard of the show Wicked Tuna on National Geographic Channel? These will be the guys I will start to work with this summer as I master this unique craft. Some of these fish can sell for \$20,000 at market. I will also begin my path of becoming a helicopter pilot by attending introductory flight school programs, something I have always wanted to but have been held back by what is expected for somebody with my major. During this semester I have done extensive research on the species and will continue the path of becoming a better Tuna Fisherman, something that I have already been doing my entire life with my family.

My career choice will not involve a ton of money, but most importantly it makes me incredibly happy. I do not love computers and can't say that I am good with them but I am really excited to continue the right path that I am heading on to accomplish the things I want to in life. I am very good with people. Love teaching people new things and enjoy serving to them, much like a charter fisherman. I have fished my whole life and know that I can be the best of the best. When it comes to computers, well I would much rather read the delicate rivers of Virginia and see how oxygen levels, insect hatches, and temperature affect how fish feed on my free time. Honing in on a skill and passion for me is what I find most important in life.

One thing I am extremely happy for this semester is the progress I have made with the relationship with my family. I have made great strides in improving communication with the people I love. In the past I have kept most of my feelings to myself, but now I can have much more honest and open relationship with my parents. I regret not having this relationship with the past and feel so much better about myself for it. Everyday I talk to my parents, and I love that. I used to take it for granted and now I love hearing what they say because they truly support me in every thing I do. I look up to my dad so much and I regret more than anything taking his love and support for granted in the past.

Another issue I've had this year was with dealing with some roommates I do not get along with. Although it has been miserable at times not getting along with 8 guys in the same house, I have learned so much about myself. When 7 of your roommates think your "weird" because you would rather go fly fishing, hike, write music, ski instead of get drunk and play video games, it gets to you sometimes. But hey, there is absolutely nothing in this world I would rather do and I have learned not to surround myself with people that are unwelcoming or extremely "cliquey" like they are. I have learned to deal with tough times about this and not to let single minded judgmental jerks get inside your head. If anything this has only made me stronger, a common theme for this essay.

In school I have learned extremely valuable knowledge that I believe will help me so much later in life. I have successfully completed entrepreneurial ventures along with how to write official documents and memos. I have learned the ins and outs of international business along with the philosophies behind decision-

making and motivation. I know that these business classes will greatly help in the line of work I want to be in. Does this relate to fishing or being a pilot? Not so much, but it gives me a distinct advantage to some of these guys, a unique mindset that gets you to think outside the box. You don't have to have a business mindset to catch Giant Tuna, but you have to have a business mindset to make a successful and comfortable living from it.

One issue I have is to be motivated in things I do not think is interesting. I excel in things I love and admit that I do not do well with things I dislike. This was part of my problem with this class this semester. Without interest in the subject I found it extremely difficult to come and participate in this class. Although I respect your grading system I can't say I agree with it. I believe it works extremely well for the kids that care. If I loved computers and writing code I would show up everyday to expand my knowledge. I will admit I took the class for the wrong reasons but I would have been much more motivated to learn if there had been a more conventional grading system in the class. I don't think it is right that people should receive the same grade for completing unequal amounts of work, but I absolutely respect this and will take full advantage of this policy when I ask for an A.

I believe you should only offer this class for ISAT majors. ISAT majors have a different mindset when it comes to this grading and material. Business majors are all about results so first thing on their mind is grades. I am completely guilty of this. I have gotten very little out of this class but will receive an A, a very unique situation that I never thought I would find myself with. If you could only get kids who were ISAT or more specifically computer oriented ISAT majors, I believe you should only offer this class to them. I do not think it is fair to have my spot taken up by someone who cares a lot more than I do. It is not fair to you or the kids who actually care. If there was a class with your grading system about fish and their environment, it would take no grade for me to go, and I guess that is exactly what you are going for with this system.

I would like to leave you with this about me. I am not a bad person for choosing an A in this class. I am simply abiding by your policy and that is the grade I want you to report to the registrar. I also do not want you to think I am a dishonest person. It would be a lie for myself to tell you about all the things I have learned in your class besides the history of computers. It would be dishonest for me to write this essay on this class because I have not learned a lot in it. I also do not want you to think any of my struggles I have had this semester are justification for not showing up. Sure I had a plethora of injuries, struggles with my personal life, and questioning of who I am, but that is by no means the only reason I didn't show up. I do not want you to think I am a bad person for not showing up. I'm sure there are kids every semester that choose the route I do and I'm sure you could see why and respect this decision much like I respect you. There is a lot of values for good grades these days and sometimes an easy A is too hard to pass up. I have absolutely full respect for you and do not expect you to really remember me at all, I do not deserve that. Hopefully someday in the future you will see me on TV catching Giant Tuna, on ski movies shredding down massive glaciers in Alaska, or 1,000 feet above the earth in flying a helicopter.