

Michael Garcia
ISAT348
12/12/2015

Coming into the class this semester, I really did not know what to expect at first. By the class title, “The Multimedia Industry”, I thought we were going to explore developing media projects like videos and things of that nature. After reading the syllabus, the class structure came clearer to me. Personally, I agree with you and do not think that is a sufficient class title for this course. After going over the material we were going to cover, I had my mind set that the class was geared towards web development. I was excited to experience having a class with you because I had not had you as professor before.

After reviewing the concepts, I set a lot of goals for myself. Firstly, I wanted to make sure I improved my HTML and CSS skills. I feel as if this is a valuable skill to have especially I decided that I wanted to gear my future as a developer. Secondly, I wanted to expose myself to as many languages, technologies, and tools as possible. There were a lot of concepts on the syllabus that I did not feel I had a lot of knowledge in. Lastly, I wanted to learn as many professional skills as I could. This was very important to me because it is great to better yourself as a coder, but even better if you can combine skills such as learning how to debug a program, how to work in a development environment, how to follow guidelines and standards, and learning how to manage and set up hosting accounts.

As I went through the semester, I geared a lot of goals of what I truly enjoyed doing. There was so much material that I wanted to learn but I knew I probably would not be able to touch on everything. I knew I really wanted to get better at web development. In the beginning of the semester, I dedicated a lot of time learning the syntax and semantics of HTML to write clean and meaningful code. I started with learning the basics of HTML and revisiting topics I already had knowledge on to make sure they were grasped. After I completed the basics of HTML and CSS basics badge, I begin the HTML semantics module. I wanted to create a web page that also utilized CSS. I took some extra time looking at more materials available online on how to integrate both CSS and HTML to work simultaneously with each other. The next step was figuring out what I wanted to create. Being a senior student looking for jobs, I thought it would be fitting for me to make a resume using HTML and CSS. This would help me focus on building my resume while also bettering myself as an HTML and CSS developer. I explored a bunch of templates online to help me get started. Once I found the one I wanted to use, I created my resume and I was able to add my own creativity and style by using the skills I had learned from the modules. After I completed this assignment, I tried to gear some of my focus back to mobile development. I had been taking an online class throughout the semester and I was really intrigued by it. Once I found out I could create labs for the class, I decided to make a Swift badge. I felt like it would be really cool to share some of my skills and experience with the class. My hope was for some classmates to complete the badge and hopefully enjoy it as much as I do. Aside from web and mobile development things I had done, I wanted to learn other useful skills such as PHP, SQL, command line, agile development, JavaScript, JQuery, and how to launch and host a website. I completed all of these badges which offered a boatload of information and exposed me to some new material.

In order to be successful in the course, I started things early in the week so I could properly manage when I could work on the modules I wanted to complete. I had a big course load so I had to use good time management skills to get tasks done. Aside from the extensive material that was given in the modules, I used websites such as stackoverflow.com for specific coding questions and I used udemy.com for the site where I was taking the Swift course. I also found the GitHub community useful because there are a lot of generous people who share code to help out fellow coders who are having issues.

I feel that some areas I definitely could have approached differently. For instance, I started the mid level CSS and made a lot of good progress on it. After I hit a wall, I kind of just stopped working on it and went onto the next thing. I regret doing this, because I put in tons of time on this assignment. If I would have just stayed determined to finishing it, I am sure I would of. I think I found myself getting frustrated and instead of pushing through it, I kind of just stopped working on it. I regret this a lot because that doesn't reflect the type of student I am. I usually always am determined to fix my mistakes and finish everything that I start. I plan on finishing it on my own time just because it has bothered me ever since I stopped. It was definitely a learning experience that I will take with me in the future. In the work world, I know I can't approach assignments like this because you are expected to finish everything you are asked.

If I had to pick one course where I feel like I learned the most amount of information, I would probably say it was this one. There was just so many opportunities to learn tons of different concepts and material. The other thing I really enjoyed was how flexible you were. You gave us the freedom to pick the topics we really enjoyed and were intrigued to learn about. This wasn't just a web development class; it was the full 360 experience of learning what it takes to be a developer.

This course made me feel very accomplished. I completed so many modules where I learned a lot of different concepts. But for me it wasn't really about the points, it was more what I took out of the course. In the beginning of the semester I dedicated myself to work hard and learn as much as I could. I can honestly say that I did that and I am proud of myself for that.

Coming into the semester, I had my mind set on being a developer or a network engineer. Although these are very different from one another, I was passionate about both. I am concentrating in both IKM and Telecom so I have both backgrounds. After receiving an offer from Cisco and CSRA in November, I knew I would have to make the decision. Cisco would be working as a network engineer and CSRA would be as a developer on an applications team. When I ended up choosing Cisco, I knew I would be geared more towards the networking future at least for the time being. Saying this, I know I will use some of the skills I learned this semester in my job. They are very big in Python there, so there will be a chance for me to do some scripting while I am at Cisco. The company allows their employees to move around departments as well. In a couple years, if I decide being a developer is my true passion I can always make the change or go elsewhere. I am very appreciative for classes like this because it contributes to my future. Aside from working, I am also developing a mobile application for my senior capstone. All the development and professional skills I have learned in ISAT348 has made my capstone go more smoothly. I have used skills such as debugging code, working in a development team environment, and open-source culture and communication.

I enjoyed how the course was structured. It allowed me to do my work on my own time and I didn't feel pressured to deliver everything at a specific deadline. Saying this, it also made you manage your time wisely. A lot of the badges required a lot of time and if you didn't start early and space out your workload it was hard to complete them. As I mentioned earlier, I really liked how diverse this course was. We were exposed to so many different languages and tools. We were given the freedom to learn what we were passionate about and then apply it to cool projects. I also liked how class sessions worked. There wasn't really a lecture. Once you arrived to class, you could just do your work without anyone bothering you. If we had any questions or issues, you were always there to help.

If I were to take this course again, I would recommend you do it the same way. The point system works well because it requires students to truly earn their grade. If you didn't have points that means you really didn't do any work. It is a rewarding system that not only allows you to get a grade but also learn a lot, especially if you put in the time. The one thing I would suggest is to do a bi-weekly point check. This would allow students to know where they stand and where they should be to earn a good grade at that point and time. There were times in the semester where points weren't submitted yet and I didn't really know how many I had. If there was a point checkup where all the points were updated, it would have been easier to know where you stood. I also think there should be a mandatory group assignment for everyone to complete. I think we learned a lot of how to work in professional atmosphere and also about agile development. It would have been cool to implement that this semester. Although, there were a few badges to work in groups and also the project, I feel like if it was made mandatory students would branch out and not just try and work by themselves. I think working in teams is such a valuable skill to have especially when you go into the work world and you have to communicate and get work done with a group of people. I think an assignment on agile development where we could utilize doing sprints and scrum meetings in real time would be a really cool feature you could add to this class.

I would like for you to report a letter grade of an "A" for me. I request this because I put in a ton of time and effort in this course. Not only did I complete a ton of the badges, but I also made the class a new badge because I truly wanted them to have the same experience I had with Swift programming. I was very passionate about the work I completed and made sure I delivered "A" work. For instance, for the HTML Semantics badge, I spent numerous hours to try and deliver a great website. I utilized CSS when I didn't even need to because I wanted the site to look very presentable. I felt like all the work I submitted was above and beyond. Although I did not earn points for this, throughout the course I was enrolled in an online Swift programming class. The class has 206 lectures and contains 29 hours of video lecture (The Complete iOS 9 Developer Course on udemy.com). This was another example of me trying to learn new things. You stressed that you wanted us to learn new things but still have fun doing it. This class has taught me a lot and I have really enjoyed it. I am enrolled in 19 credits this semester, along with working on a senior capstone presentation, and I still put countless hours into this course. I did not want to make it an excuse and when the semester started, so I committed myself to this class from day one. I also tried to make an effort to help anyone I could. Whenever someone had questions about anything I wanted to try and help regardless if I knew the answer right away or if I was busy myself. Lastly, when I attended class it wasn't just for the one point. When I was in

class, I was very productive and worked on completing but more importantly learning as many things as possible.

Again, thank you for an awesome semester!

→ Do debrief for all badges

Gregory Baker

ISAT 348

Closing Narrative

12/13/15

→ More proactive about starting

→ Make people talk to each other

Having taken a class with you before and knowing the general class structure coming in the first day and finding out the class was modified to a points accumulation scenario was a surprise. After reading further on the first days of class and seeing that there was an option to opt into a "choose your own grade" scenario I felt that it was very fair as well as an interesting challenge. I had used this system the previous semester with Dr. Radziwill and felt it had worked very well for me and helped me gain a lot from the course. I had a good feeling that I could accomplish enough work early on in the course to opt into the "choose your own grade" route with 40 points by sometime in October. It did put me under some pressure however because looking at the 150 points required for an A as there were too few assignments at the beginning of the semester to complete this. I think the drive to get 40 points early on was a positive motivator for me because I could get a lot of work done early in the semester before my other classes started to become more demanding. This semester I was mostly taking classes that involved a semester long project leading up to a big presentation or report so this class fell right into place with that by allowing me to work early and then focus on my projects during these last weeks.

Getting started I completed some of the early badges like HTML/CSS, Sublime, and PHP which boosted my points total early on. I really enjoyed the Sublime Text tutorial used in this course. While I learned about Sublime in previous semesters this new set of videos was so much more comprehensive and taught me many more uses for the program than I previously known. Since watching the tutorial I have been able to apply my use of that program to several other projects even outside of this class.

One topic in the class I definitely struggled in was learning the use of Git and Github. I believe part way through the semester some class members submitted the badge and were denied. At the time I was also working on that badge and had spent more time learning it than what was predicted with the 2 hours for 2 points estimate. I really wanted to learn how to use Git because it was an incredibly useful and interesting tool for me but I felt as if I was spending extra time on it with no benefit. While it was frustrating I do think my time working with Github was well spent as I gained a better understanding for how it functions and have successfully stored some projects and made some commits to others' projects. I do think it would be helpful if the Git tutorial were turned into a one or two class lesson which would help with others who had a similar dilemma as I did. After this point I wanted to wrap my 40 points up so I could then go on to focus on topics I wanted to learn without having to worry about a deadline. With that in mind

I worked with Andrew Funkhouser to create a Javascript badge which had previously not been available. We both worked on the Javascript tutorials in Codecademy and Lynda to try to determine which was better for leaving Javascript. While working with Lynda worked fairly well it was hard to provide proof for a badge so we opted to use the Codecademy in our write up. I felt I gained valuable knowledge of Javascript while at the same time completing my 40 point goal to opt into the choose your own grade route. Once I confirmed this I felt as though I could dedicate the rest of my class time to working on projects I wanted to such as Github without worrying about whether or not I would get it done by the deadline.

At this point I went back and spent some more time with Github and helped commit some changes to a small project Mickey Harding was working on. This helped boost my confidence in working with this program. After that I had a desire to learn some Python because I thought it would be useful for later classes and I had had little experience with it up until this point. I also began working on some R projects with Mickey as well because we were both enrolled in Dr. Radziwill's class and used that program for many of her assignments. We helped each other on projects during this time, mine was using IMDB data to make an interactive infograph in Powerpoint while Mickey worked with some code that would pull sentiment data from Twitter. It was a great experience being able to collaborate back and forth on projects like that.

One of my highest points of the semester however came shortly after when I was contacted by a friend named James at UVA for some help with a project he was working on. To give a brief background on James he is a writing major at UVA and one of the busiest people I know. In addition to finishing school this semester he also helps run an independent record label, manages a small band, and helps book shows and other great events in the music scene. By this point he has slowly built up a sort of "brand" for himself. He came to me and asked me to help him create a twitter bot that would help him have more of a presence on twitter and help spread the word. He found a basic tutorial on how to get it up and running but lacked technical knowledge to make it work. It was mostly Python code to get it up and running and used a Heroku component to schedule how often the bot would tweet. When this request came out of nowhere I was instantly excited. I was able to combine my knowledge I had been gaining in Python with the data scrapping skills I used helping Mickey make her Twitter project work. For the project I set some specifications for tweet intervals and James's account data with Python and used knowledge of how the Twitter API worked to link his current account to the new bot account. Heroku was what proved to be the newest and more challenging experience for me on this project because I had never worked with it prior to this. After some brief research online I learned how to schedule the python app hourly. After this from the guide's recommendation set it with a random number generator that would allow the app to tweet if it generated the correct

number. This helped prevent it from spamming by tweeting every hour and to make it less predictable.

This project gave me a great sense of accomplishment because I felt as though I had skills I could offer someone else and produce something interesting from what I learned in two of my classes this semester. I also enjoyed being able independently work on a project like that which was not at all related to an assignment I was given in school but rather I was giving help to a friend. I think I was able to work in this way and accomplish these tasks due to the way the course was set up. By allowing me to work early and then not have to worry over my grade later I was able to then spend my free time on these other projects I had a desire to complete. I think the points accumulation system combined with the choose your own grade is a good balance between encouraging and motivating students to work on new concepts and learning foundations while still allowing time for independent projects.

While I did make my 40 points by the cut off I felt as though the badges still did not always have a good correlation between points and time spent simply because even though an activity can be projected to take X number of hours there is still much opportunity for it to take a student longer if it is a subject they have little or no prior knowledge of. I explained my Github situation for this and I experienced this feeling when working with Javascript as well. While it is understandable that this can happen it is also discouraging feeling like you are working hard on trying to learn a topic to earn points but you simply aren't progressing. I'm not sure how to recommend fixing this in the class but maybe either adjusting the points for assignments on the points required for each grade level would be helpful. Overall, I feel as though this course format worked very well for me in allowing a balance of structured and independent learning. I feel as though I achieved my initial goals for the class by completing my 40 points on time and then was able to create my own new goal midway through the semester and feel accomplished about that as well.

Due to the knowledge I gained in the course as well as feeling like I accomplished both of my goals I would like to ask you to report an A to the registrar. I am signed up to take ISAT 440 with you next semester and I am very interested to see how it goes. I'm excited to have an open discussion type class again as I find sharing ideas in that way to be a great way to learn. Thank you for your time spent in this class this semester and have a good winter break. I look forward to our class next semester.

Amanda Presgraves
ISAT348
12/15/15
Morgan Benton

Throughout the semester, my focus and attention has certainly shifted in accordance to my projects, interests and goals. At the start of the semester, my current food truck project had hit a halt. In the midst of building back momentum, I remained eager to learn and grow. To keep busy, I dove into the unfamiliar depths of computers – coding, programming, technology, and design – all in hopes to take my understanding to a new level.

The importance of understanding what is going on behind the screen hadn't been a new idea to me – this originally came about two summers ago while recovering from double hip surgery. Bed-ridden for months I was determined to take that time I would have otherwise spent occupied with athletics and activities, and channel that abundant energy toward expanding my skills in activities I could do immobile – confined to the computer, books and my own brain. This is where Morgan Benton first introduced me to the world of technology.

Morgan and I first met during a study abroad trip to the Philippines in May 2014, where he served as the assistant professor. Five weeks in the Philippines immersed in a world only previously unimaginable, allowing me to see beyond my once limited scope of the possibilities and passions. This trip was an incomparable experience that ignited the desire to engage in work beyond myself. There was more that gave life meaning. The opportunities are endless – why settle with the easy way out? Creating my own practicum experience in the Philippines, seeking out an internship in the Silicon Valley (exploring the technology realm even though I was there for physical therapy), landing myself a job with a food start-up – not only allowing me to get by financially, but providing me invaluable business knowledge, computer/technology challenging experiences, and leadership exposure to take back to my own projects - I found that my most meaningful experiences were those outside of the classroom and teaching myself. It was after my experiences this summer I realized how I would benefit from being able to understand more about technology.

When enrolling in the course I envisioned being “all-in” with understanding computers – I'd leave creating some life-changing app, designing websites, and being able to take my newfound computer education and exploit the knowledge from my field. I imagined collaborating with students and learning from others while being able to hopefully teach others something as well. While I fell short of this achieving these, I feel like the particular goals and stages of my other project required certain actions and effort. While others may have not been fully engaged in the classroom, I'm just as guilty for the reason that didn't happen – I was absorbed in my own agenda and the hustle to stay up with meetings, progress, and catapulting the project. Initially, I was 100% invested solely in the coding – most of all, grasping the concept of HTML/CSS. I couldn't maximize the opportunity to work with students in the class. I also feel like everyone in the class (including myself) was always so caught up in their own life and not talking

The first part of the semester was devoted to coding and exploring this new area. I accomplished 56% of Codacademy, and while it doesn't seem like much, it was a big step. I am 100% certain I

wouldn't have absorbed as much content and value had I been in a structured classroom setting. This realization occurred late October while I was home for the weekend taking a GRE. At home, it is rare to spend much time with my family due to our busy schedules, and when we are together my quiet brothers keep to themselves in their room. When learning my younger brother Will, a senior in high school, was also taking a computer programming course, this was gave me the chance to make conversation – and turned into a test of my new knowledge! Speaking on what I was learning as he opened up about his class wasn't only an experience where I surprised myself with what I knew – but I was *sharing* what I had learned! Will and I compared our progress and our experiences. It was through this conversation that we both realized how ineffective, uninteresting, and shallow his learning experience was to mine. His mindless worksheets, and redundant questions, once compared to how I was learning, seemed wasteful and lacked meaning. I briefly introduced him to the simple resource of Codeacademy and the idea behind the course I was taking – my brother shows minimal emotion and doesn't speak much, but you could sense the interest and curiosity once he engaged in learning on his own...later that night over his shoulder I saw him playing around with it.

It made me wonder – where would I be had I been introduced to the resources such as those Benton shows us in class and through this course? What if I was offered the support and guidance to question, explore and learn before this class, with out the parameters or the grading system and standards of others?

Perhaps without the experience of courses that discouraged me from learning, I wouldn't value the path I can take now? With out the comparison, I wouldn't understand how I learn best. However, I can't help but wonder how I can change this and optimize the learning of others so they can enjoy learning and maximize their lives.

As an intrinsically motivated individual, the value of a letter grade has the power to alter your focus and diminish your internal drive and quench for knowledge, answers, and opportunities. When the focus is on getting by in a class and not diving into passions (which ultimately, I've learned can be developed in any subject when given the chance to make it meaningful), our motivation and potential for learning something unique and impactful is compromised.

Just as the typical classroom style inhibits my learning and potential, I understand the style that works for me isn't optimal for everyone. I don't argue that one way is the best, but without the access to other methods through this class, would I have learned that. Neither would others. I feel that my prior experiences were shallow and unfulfilled – had I approached it differently it could have offered greater value.

My experiences constantly remind me why I arrived at the idea of launching this Food Truck. However, the purpose bringing me to ISAT348 wasn't initially to pursue the Food Truck. Sure, I could benefit from learning about technology to elevate my understanding that I could certainly apply in that setting, but it was having brief experiences with the technology side (that I realized I needed to develop), which allowed me to see the possibilities. I somehow ended up with the job of handling the computer-y side of a clean eating food delivery start-up in San Francisco over the summer. It occurred to me how critical it is to have an understanding of this aspect of business. I spent countless, frustrating but rewarding hours messing up and learning to grasp the broad range

of responsibilities from website design to the meal assignment algorithms. The intrinsic desire and value I saw in the area brought meaning to the opportunity provided by the course.

While I failed to complete my coding proficiency it allowed me to skim the surface - further understanding this mindset outside of my field, the philosophy, better grasping the entire picture/. It allowed be skills to be able to address technology and be more educated. Before I can go off and collaborate with other students, I need to first understand their perspective and what they are talking about in order to contribute. This simple understanding allows me freedom to expand my passions and reach new audiences. I wanted to be introduced to all the possibilities behind technology to allow me to know all that can happen and excite that in others to dream bigger and dare more. Then crash course and exposure allowed that. In hindsight was in my best interest, and catapult me to accepting a much grander challenge. I shouldn't consider this lack of completion to be a "failure". This is a perfect example of how the education system as molded me...I see not completing coding as a failure because a 56% isn't a passing letter grade...but instead I need to see that the meaning was behind other pursuits that were better worth my time; places where I could make a lasting impact.

As the semester advanced, I developed a clearer understanding behind the barriers I was facing with the food truck project, Fueled. It took time and reframing for it to hit me - while these barriers brought me to engage in something new like coding, it paralleled with the emphasis of the whole reason seeking out classes like this. The halt was important in reaffirming why I work so hard to have this project come to fruition.

The evolution of the food truck project is a testament to not only the meaningful education experience students value and *desire*, but as the semester continued, it emphasizes the importance of opportunities such as this course to allow me the chance to pursue an educational experience that not only enriches myself, but furthermore, can one day fill this void in students. By creating an opportunity that provides a chance for others to create a learning experience more meaningful than what is behind a textbook, they achieve a real world application by working with others to make a difference.

The journey of Fueled was inspired by a desire to improve the lives of individuals through establishing healthier eating patters and improving education, all while fueling them to be the productive and mindful citizens JMU hopes to grow. This not only happens through the means of supporting local businesses but by engaging students spanning all disciplines as they use their education to design and experiment; creating something by capitalizing on the resources and collaboration of and students surrounding them. This is an utterly unutilized opportunity. The process of developing this allowed me to further understand the disciplines and perspectives outside my own in order to better understand others.

What I realized was this isn't only a barrier that affects me, but after speaking with many students they hit the same halt to their aspiration. Not only is this influencing me but after meeting with many faculty on campus I continue to hear the same message - every faculty expresses genuine interest and a shared excitement in the possibilities Fueled offers to the university and beyond, however it doesn't fit in a place that is necessarily valued to be spending their time. How could an opportunity that provides real-world experience for students, an outlet

for professors to work in areas of their most unique expertise and a project for both parties to explore and influence others with their knowledge and through a hands-on experience much bigger and purposeful than classroom knowledge - the opportunity that JMU sells students on providing - not be coming to fruition? We wonder why we don't see these projects happening, or have the chance to be a part of courses where we create our fate, - JMU wants to be the national model for engagement but until this is valued and this opportunity for professors to put in the time and truly offer the best of themselves, their experience and ignite the true reason they are here to build these future leaders, these projects will never come to fruition and we are limiting the scope of what these students can become and provide for the world as well as what every faculty member can offer. There are much bigger dreams and ideas students are waiting to produce - ideas that would blow away any campus and ignite a future for better education across the nation - however we are prevented from doing so by not truly giving that chance and for these incredible professors and faculty on campus to provide the adequate help, and offer the mentorship and time to students to pursue these impactful possibilities. Morgan was always available to not only our class but also students outside of it. Morgan continues to offer his assistance to students – as he was the catalyst to building the team working on the share riding app idea of a fellow Industrial Design peer. Morgan offered up his assistance and encourages us to seek a project, a presentation to educate the class, create modules/opportunities for other classmates, and hooked students up who could mutually benefit each other.

Research, service, and scholarship are all important for professors to engage in to provide students with the most educational experience, but until the time is allocated and emphasis is placed on creating student initiated, innovative, collaborative projects we are limiting the potential of the university and holding students back from graduating JMU with something much greater than an education but ability to experience, create, and build something that changes the world.

The experience I've had through Morgan's class allowed me the time and guidance to reach out to these professionals and brilliant minds on this campus. The Harrisonburg and JMU community has provided me value far beyond the lessons I've received in the typical classroom. Being on a campus is the optimal opportunity to engage with professionals all around us - you will never find that anywhere else. Why aren't people taking advantage of this? I've learned more though these conversations and my process then I have my three previous years at JMU - and I had thought those were great....it can be even better! That is what makes JMU different, and it's unfortunate we aren't valuing this aspect enough to make it available for the faculty to promote and engage in projects such as my own, just as Morgan has.

Getting the chance to work on my project independently has enriched not only my experience but also that of others. As I continue seeking learning opportunities outside of the classroom my passion for education and value of knowledge grows immensely. "Learning" has the boring, structured, and standard connotation associating it to the parameters of a classroom, assigned and uninterested books, and regurgitated, imposed opinions of a teacher. To me learning has become something obtained from immersing myself in the unfamiliar and absorbing everything without judgment. Learning is surrounding myself with others with values and perspectives different from my own, who can question my own thinking and introduce me to areas I would have never thought to explore. Learning isn't painful or tiresome -it is rejuvenating and enriching.

If we confine ourselves to the classroom our of preferred disciplines we are gipping ourselves of an entire world that we can both offer ourselves to and use to bring meaning into our own lives. What I loved best about the course Morgan provided us was the opportunity to grow and focus on areas that allowed us to do more meaningful and productive work. Nothing is more irritating than taking courses where I feel like I am doing it because of a grade and not because it is helping me grow, become more educated or giving me an experience that will benefit me and thus others.

I refuse to mindlessly fill out worksheet and please others for the sake of grade. Students want to engage in work with meaning. This world wasn't advanced by summoning to the standards and demands of others, but rather questioning and challenging the rules of society and ourselves. I refuse to enroll in a course that for an easy A, and get by whether was my freshman year or as a senior. Why do we make it so difficult for students to have these opportunities? We are trained to settle with the norm. Ironically, these opportunities our education system is providing is unintentionally putting up the barriers to our potential – and we wonder why we struggle in becoming a national model and fulfilling our strategic plan?

I continue to apply the surface level coding through the newsletters I created during my internship and maintain weekly, as well as my occasional articles I publish. The long lines of gibberish, symbols and numbers no long scare me. That says a lot. My reading and curiously allowed me to explore on my own the resources I was provided and introduced to; I could then apply it in clubs and organizations. I can't bring myself to assigning a specific grade to this course. I don't like to put a number on my experience - it is more than a quantitative experience. I understand how it can be a good standard of placement but it's subjective. I could never give myself a 100% because to me, that would mean mastery, but to others it is just that they did everything they were suppose to. This is why grades are frustrating and shouldn't be the standard for our achievements, goals and progress. Instead, allowing the chance to talk through and reflect on our experiences is the chance to wrap up the semester and tie my experience together – not a grade.

On a side note: I loved the mediation. Looking back that was the time where I had clarity and focus that spilled over to other areas of my life

December 16, 2015
Mickey Harding
ISAT 348 Final Essay
Morgan Benton

Coming into this class, I was filled with renewed self-motivation after a long summer away from JMU. Over the summer, I had called every restaurant in Harrisonburg I could think of and asked them what their happy hour special was (since it isn't listed online for at least half of the establishments). This actually took me quite a long time, but I had the intention of creating a "Harrisonburg Happy Hours" website once the semester started for this class.

So once the fall semester began and the new points system was in place, I decided to first work on my badges so that I can achieve the "choose your own grade" so that Greg and I could spend as much time as we wanted on the happy hours website. I realized that the badges took me longer to complete than the listed number of hours for each one, but I still managed to hit the 40 point deadline. Once I hit the deadline, I began working with HTML/CSS and PHP to play around with my website. It was actually so cool to create things such as a "Submit your contributions" button that would send every submission of a new special to my email, and I was also very intrigued by the website designing aspect. Some nights I would sit down to work on my project before bed, and once I got started with the design and researching new ideas on stackoverflow.com, I would look at the clock and realize it was 2:00 am! For some reason, once someone is immersed in this type of work, it seems like time flies by.

Midway through the semester, I had job interviews on campus. Ultimately, I chose to accept my offer to work at Accenture next year! This is relevant because once I realized I would be working for Accenture, I was told that my job description somewhat involves me in both the technical and non-technical sides of the company. This means that I am the "middle man" that isn't a "master coder" but still understands the technology behind it so that I can interpret and explain it in terms that non-technical people can understand. I also learned that Accenture has numerous types of training that employees are allowed to take part in, especially in learning about certain program languages to help us be more informed, aware, and knowledgeable about whatever certain project we are working on. So this made me think; I realized that I wanted to learn as much as I could *now* about programming languages that would benefit me in my new job, so that I feel ahead of the game and as prepared as possible.

Along with the fact that a lot of my peers were telling me the happy hours website might not be allowed to be up and running because I may need documented permission

from each and every restaurant, I decided to take a halt on my website and look at programming languages that were mainly utilized for data analysis. So even though I finished codeacademy for HTML/CSS and PHP, I decided to turn my attention to R. As you know, Dr. Radziwill is a huge advocate for R, and I also have a close friend that works with data analytics mostly with R too. So with the help of ISAT 344, and my R-savvy friend, I decided that furthering my knowledge in this language would be most beneficial to me. So I started a code school R tutorial to help me familiarize even more with the language, and I'm very glad I did.

I feel I was successful in this class because when my interests changed (due to my Accenture job), I was able to switch up what I was learning to match my new interests. That is what I really love about being able to have the freedom to work on the projects that we want. In terms of failures, I do feel that since I did not finish my "Harrisonburg Happy Hours" website, it can be deemed as a failure. But I also feel like although the project wasn't completed, it taught me so much about HTML/CSS and PHP regardless. Plus, I coded this project in RStudio! Since I split my time up between two projects, my website and my R tutorials, I feel that I would have benefitted from having more time to extend my learning in R even further (which I still am going to do!).

In accordance to JMU's Mission Statement to produce "educated and enlightened citizens who lead meaningful and productive lives," I believe that my experiences in this class have left me more enlightened and educated than when it first began. My new job gave me motivation to immerse myself in programming in terms of data analytics, which opened me up to a whole new world of knowledge that I wouldn't have known as well otherwise. It also showed me how fast technology is moving and improving faster than it ever has, and its vast presence in our life today.

Throughout this class, I realized that computer science is a *huge* part of our world today, and that it is going to be a huge part of my life in the near future. I can never know too much about programming in my new job, and I am glad this class helped me to begin immersing myself in the languages that I specifically want to learn about.

For this class, I do think the points/badge system is a great way to have structured freedom, because it allows us to choose what we want to learn, but we have guidelines on *how* to learn it when a lot of people don't even know where to start. I do feel, however, that the points system should be modified. I think the large number of points due at the end of the semester was quite steep, especially for those (such as me) who takes 16 hours to complete an 8 point badge. I feel that this steep points deadline may have caused some students to not put their full and honest effort into some

badges, because they felt they had an enormous amount of work to finish before the deadline. I do really like the layout of the badges website though, and I think it is a very helpful tool for us as students to have. One other suggestion I have is to perhaps teach a small lesson at the beginning of every week that corresponds to a certain badge, so that students will get an introduction to that topic and be able to pursue it for the rest of that week, or 2 weeks, depending how many points the badge is worth. I also think it is a very good idea to make attendance count as 1 point per class!

I believe I deserve an A in this class. Although programming does overwhelm me at first, I feel like I put my best effort into the tasks I pursued, and I love that fact that I can continue my learning even after this class is over. I now feel entirely more comfortable with new languages, such as R, and more familiar with ones I already had learned, such as HTML/CSS and PHP. My “R-savvy” friend was also my tutor this year, twice a week, to help explain things to me that I wouldn’t have understood through just searching stackoverflow, etc. So along with getting help from those around me, and the work I put in on my own, I feel like I put very sufficient effort into this class. I love the fact that what I learned in this class will no doubt help me in my job next year, because that knowledge is immensely important to me. I’m excited to see what the future has in store for me, and to see how much this class will have prepared me for my future!