* What were your expectations coming into this class?
* What learning goals did you set for yourself?
* What did you actually do? List the tutorials and websites you used/visited. Estimate the amount of time you spent outside of class.
* How did your goals evolve over the course of the semester?
* In what ways did you feel you were successful?  Please refer to specific, concrete artifacts that would serve as evidence of your successes.
* In what areas do you feel you failed to achieve your goals?
* Please reflect on what you think you've learned from your failures, and what, if any, plans you have to address those issues in the future.
* JMU's Mission Statement is to produce "educated and enlightened citizens who lead meaningful and productive lives."  Do you feel more educated?  More enlightened?  Less so?
* How have your activities this semester contributed or detracted from your knowing yourself better and having a better grasp on what you want to do in the near or distant future?
* What grade would you like for me to report to the registrar for you, and why?

I did not really have many expectations coming into this class. In the past, coding was never something I had the exposure to. Therefore, it was never something that I felt compelled to learn on my own. I am, or was, a very classroom-oriented learner, and felt as though for me to properly learn information, it would be in a traditional classroom setting. My only experience with code before this class was ISAT 215, but even that was limited to writing exceedingly small arguments in the command line. However, I really enjoyed this class. It was challenging, but I love puzzles. I’m very goal oriented, so the gratification of solving something completely nullifies all the stress and annoyance that arises during the process. This meant that those errors in one line of code that took hours of my life were meaningless once I fixed it. Anna and I were lab partners in that class, and we would often work for hours on end to get our projects to work. Oftentimes, we would be the only people to finish certain projects. However, last semester was the period of time when I went through an identity crisis about what I was studying and who I was becoming. At this time, I met my new best friend Kriszten. She is an industrial design major and also one of the coolest people I have ever met. We were in an organization together called University Innovation Fellows. The organization is geared towards spreading design thinking to other non-STEAM majors on campus trough community outreach and other projects. Kris was the first artist I had ever met who worked in a science and technology context. We became friends quickly and I loved all her project stories about her creative projects that merged technology and art. At this point, she really encouraged me to explore the possibilities of taking art and design classes. I enjoyed telecommunications and networking, but I was scared of entering an extremely corporate and boring industry. Dr. Salib repeatedly mentioned the levels of professionalism expected of us. The whole experience felt like I was being indoctrinated into an emotionless industry that praised result rather than the worker’s feelings or workplace culture.

Therefor, by the time I entered this class I anticipated that I would like production systems much more. I had convinced myself that the only way to be creative was to be in an industry like manufacturing. I’m not quite sure why I thought that production systems would be any less corporate, but I recently realized it is not what I anticipated (but that is another reflection entirely). Therefor, my learning goals were basically: do the assignments, get the grade, go onto the next thing. Funny how it took a pandemic for me to reflect on how I have expected myself to learn. My learning style was completely reliant on other people give me things to solve or do. I’ve recently broken this cycle. I’ve realized that the only way for me to become who I want to be and learn what I want to learn is to do some of that on my own. School is more of a resource base rather than the foundation of my education. Since quarantine has begun, I’ve completely reshaped my way of learning to self-study complimented by interactions with my professors. Youtube videos, linkedin learning, and various other methods have given me exposure to the things I like and how to do them. Outside of class, I probably spend 5 hours a week, at-least, watching coding instruction or development adjacent topics. Development adjacent topics consist of web design, along with various other Adobe creative cloud applications. I completed an HTML course on LinkedIn Learning that was very helpful. I also followed tutorials by youtuber Dev Ed. His tutorials span things from website creation, but he also works with Adobe Creative Cloud. I’ve been experimenting with Adobe Photoshop and took another LinkedIn Learning course on Adobe Illustrator. I’ve completed many of the in-class coding projects that we were assigned. I chose to focus on JavaScript, but I have not practiced with this much since we transitioned online.

My goals transitioned greatly as I learned more about the industry. I explored a lot of the creative jobs within the software industry and found things I had never considered before. One job I found really interesting was UI/UX development. It combines art with front-end code and allows to create awesome interfaces. I had never fully considered UI/UX as interesting before this pandemic, but that kind of changed with one event. I was help my mom set up her Kindle with her library card and the UI was extremely confusing. It gave me an emotional connection to app interfaces as I’m not sure how my mom would’ve been able to set that up if I were not home. This sentiment again presented itself when I had to help my grandma connect to a family zoom call. Expanding access to these programs became less of a business concern, and more about happiness and connecting people with the things they love. I experimented with code in many different applications. I developed a development environment on my Nintendo Switch and got to code some visuals there. I watched videos about web development, art instillations, and various other applications of code in creative ways. Dr. York had told me code could be creative, but I don’t think I really ever considered it. Another barrier I had to my interests is that I have many different interests but this can also lead to me getting bored of things in preliminary stages of learning (I tell myself this is because I’m a gemini). However, I found that when I forced myself through the initial stages of learning, I became enamored with the things I was learning. I hated the basics of Illustrator, but once I knew them I have used Illustrator to do so many things.

I feel as though I was successful in terms of what this course is. It’s quite difficult to boil coding down into one introductory course. This is due to the multiple-applications of coding from machine learning, to statistical analysis, to creative applications like those mentioned previously. But in terms of what I was interested I think I did an appropriate survey. I learned programs that are industry standards such as Illustrator and Photoshop. I’m also going to start learning Dreamweaver after final exams. I also completed projects using Github, such as the photo glitching tool for my Creativity Seminar. I got a certificate for HTML coding from LinkedIn. I also got some exposure to Python, JS, and Processing. I also followed one of Dev Ed’s tutorials to build a music player (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2VJlzeEVL8A&t=7s>). Unfortunately, I built this on my PC which is not currently set up due to some home living rearrangements. I got to code some visual things on my Nintendo switch, which I cannot upload to Github.

My biggest failure was my learning style, which I think will change quite drastically following this extraordinary time. I’ve quickly realized that I have to be proficient at learning on my own and setting deadlines for myself. If I had realized this sooner, who knows what I could have accomplished! I wish I could have done more project-oriented learning instead of just following tutorials and getting a sense of the language. I found that my skills in Illustrator didn’t really set in until I began to work on projects.

I definitely feel more enlightened. I feel as though I’ve realized what a college education is as well as how to become a life-long learner. Coding has taught me principles of self-motivation that I have not been exposed to in any other class. Also, I’ve learned so much about what code really means to people outside of a STEAM context. I got to read so much about accessibility, activism, and ethics when coding. I found resources on making HTML more accessible for those using screen-readers. I learned how to make designs on websites and logos better suited to those with visual impairments. I’ve learned that ultimately it isn’t what you are coding, but who is benefitting from that code. What values are you placing in that code? There is a show called *Abstract* on Netflix where UI/UX designers talk about the implications of the things they design. How follower counts impact mental health, how infinite scroll causes addiction! One of the best examples I’ve seen in person was Chiedo John, from Generate Impact in Harrisonburg, VA. I got to tour his company as part of University Innovation Fellows. He talked about is intention to code, but realized as his business grew – was stuck with more administrative tasks. Chiedo, restructured his company so that he could contribute their work to non-profit companies and he took a place that allowed him to write more code. Chiedo is a great example of someone using computer code to generate positive changes in the world.

My activities this semester have made a tremendous difference in the things I wish to pursue in the future. It has given me a much greater understanding of the job opportunities in this field and what I would like to do in the future. I originally anticipated that I would concentrate in production systems, but now I feel as though I would rather concentrate in IKM. I’ve definitely realized that I want a career that is creative and allows for some self-expression. Every semester that I have been in college has caused such dramatic changes in the way I perceive the world, and this semester has been no different. I’ve gotten so much exposure to things I had never experienced before and that I would like to continue learning about. IKM provides such a great way for me to pair my love of science and technology with my love of art. I could see myself doing this as a career.