

CJ McDonald

Reflection 1

The first two weeks have been challenging but productive. I entered the clinic concerned that I might not fit or be able to complete the requirements. With each session, that uncertainty has shifted to measured confidence that I can finish the program and leave with knowledge I can apply in client and team settings. I have also been reminded that growth often feels uncomfortable at the start, and that insight alone has helped me approach each class with a clearer mindset.

A significant takeaway has been the relevance of design thinking to cybersecurity practice. I had encountered the term in prior cyber cohorts, but hearing Dr. Baki explain the framework and guide us through structured exercises helped the concepts translate into action. I did not expect a cybersecurity course to include improv activities, yet they served a clear purpose: the “Yes, and” technique expands idea generation, reduces premature judgment, and creates a constructive path toward solution refinement. The design brief was new to me as well. Initially, I viewed it as an overcomplicated brainstorming document. After using “Yes, and” and repeatedly returning to the core problem, I saw how the brief aligns the problem statement, stakeholders, constraints, and success criteria before resources are committed.

I have begun applying “Yes, and” in everyday conversations by intentionally limiting my use of “but.” Building this habit is difficult, but it has already improved how I listen, respond, and collaborate. I notice less defensiveness and more openness in discussions, which is valuable in client-facing work where requirements are often expressed informally. Overall, I have enjoyed the Cybersecurity Clinic more than expected. No two sessions have been alike, and the thoughtful design of each class has kept me engaged while pushing me to develop both technical judgment and interpersonal effectiveness.