

Reflection:

Introduction

Now that I am approaching the end of my senior year at Old Dominion University it is a good time to reflect on my experience within the Cybersecurity program. Completing the Cybersecurity program and studying at ODU has been an incredible experience. The courses I took expanded my world view, taught me valuable writing and communication skills, and built a strong technical foundation. While taking SOC 201 Introduction to Sociology and PHIL 355E Cybersecurity Ethics I was forced to think critically about the world and the impact cybersecurity and technology has on society. The Cybersecurity program requires students to take several writing intensive courses such as IDS 300W Interdisciplinary Theory and Concepts, CYSE 406 Cyber Law, and POLS 495 Cyberwar. These courses greatly improved my writing and research skills. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, were the many cybersecurity technical foundation courses I took. Some of which include CS 462 Cybersecurity Foundations, CYSE 280 Microsoft Server, CYSE 270 Linux Systems for Cybersecurity, IT 495 Red Hat System Administration II. Through these courses I learned about Windows systems, Linux systems, and many cybersecurity tools and techniques.

Program Reflection

There were many valuable learning experiences I had during my time at ODU. One that was particularly impactful was the requirement for students to complete an internship and accompanying course. I was fortunate to be part of a partnership between Virginia universities and the Virginia Department of Elections. Wherein students worked as interns providing cybersecurity support to local election offices. As interns we directly supported local offices in writing cybersecurity policies and implementing network security features. The accompanying internship course had me write reflection journals along the way. The internship I completed was a valuable experience. One where I not only learned more about the cyber field, but got to work in a professional environment, preparing me for my future career.

While I had many great learning experiences there were also challenges. I was a student through the COVID 19 pandemic. Having courses transition to online was an obstacle I had to overcome. As a student I felt that I learned better in a classroom environment. To be successful I had to become more organized and a better note taker. I had to become more organized to prioritize assignments and study time. Without having lectures, I needed to learn how to better take notes from written material and study them. Challenges like these made me a better learner and more rounded student.

Overcoming obstacles and having great learning experiences is what I think going to university is about. My courses and experiences at ODU built on top of one another forming a large foundation of knowledge. For example, taking Linux classes early in my academic career prepared me for the later cybersecurity courses where knowledge of Linux was expected. Overall, throughout my time at ODU each course prepared me more for what was to come.

IDS 493 Reflection

During my senior year at ODU, I took IDS 493 Electronic Portfolio Project, a Cybersecurity program requirement. This course requires students to build an ePortfolio website. This website would serve as a portfolio for students showcasing projects, coursework, and assignments completed during their time at university. During IDS 493 we learned about accessibility and design layouts for websites. In taking this course I was required to really reflect on the classes I had taken and the work we did. I then created a page in my portfolio for each class, describing the content of the course and displaying some of the assignments we completed. This was an iterative process, building out the website one piece at a time, until it was a complete portfolio.

Reflecting on my time at ODU was a rewarding experience. However, the most valuable or interesting concept I will take away from IDS 493 is website accessibility. This is something I had not considered much before taking this course but will now think about often. I was surprised when I used a screen reader on my ePortfolio by how much the layout of the content affects how it is presented through a reader. It also opened my eyes to how important descriptions of images are for accessibility. Without them the screen reader will not distinguish between images and text on the page.

For my ePortfolio I think I did a good job with accessibility. After using the screen reader, I made sure that all of the images were clear, and the layout of the pages was understandable. That aside I think I did a particularly good job of staying “on brand”. In my mind that is holding to the core of what I want my portfolio to be, a professional look at myself. I tried not to get lost in the artistry of the webpage because I felt it distracted from the content. The content being my coursework and assignments. If one’s eyes were browsing the page that is where I want them to be drawn. To get an idea of this I would point one to my skills page or any of the course pages.

One of the challenging aspects of IDS 493 was first designing the portfolio and then finding content to fill it with. To find content (assignments and projects to embed in the portfolio) I had to search through old files on my computer and cloud drives. Locating assignments which I felt were a good representation of the course. For the design of the page, I watched many videos about layout and color of web pages before deciding on what I wanted for mine. However, if I had to identify one aspect of my portfolio which I could improve on with time it would be the design. I think I could improve on how the pages flow, directing the user to view the content I think is most valuable.

Conclusion

My experience in the Cybersecurity program at ODU has been a remarkable journey that has prepared me for my future career. The interdisciplinary approach of the program allowed me to draw connections between various courses and gain a better understanding of the field. The technical foundation courses provided me with valuable technical skills, while the writing-intensive courses improved my communication and research abilities. The internship requirement was a crucial part of my learning, as it provided me with practical experience in a professional environment. Taking IDS 493 Electronic Portfolio Project allowed me to reflect on my academic journey and create a portfolio that showcases my skills and coursework. In addition, it taught me about website accessibility, a concept that I had not considered much before. Overall, my experience at ODU has prepared me to be an interdisciplinary thinker in the field of cybersecurity. Interdisciplinary thinking is critical in cybersecurity as it requires a diverse range of skills and knowledge to tackle complex cyber threats. By drawing on insights

from various fields, cybersecurity professionals can develop more effective strategies to address legal, ethical, and social considerations, and promote collaboration and communication for better defense mechanisms. Now that I am graduating from ODU in May of 2023 I am preparing to start my future career. I recently accepted a position at Fiserv, a financial technology company.