

Interviewer: Alright, this is \*\*\* interviewing—

Interviewee: \*\*\*.

Interviewer: Would you say your last name?

Interviewee: \*\*\*.

Interviewer: \*\*\*. March 29 [...]. How do you describe yourself as a writer?

Interviewee: I would say I'm very formulaic, which I didn't used to be, but this semester I'm taking a lot of writing courses, and I feel like for each assignment I make two sets of outlines, and then I go about it. My major is in BCN [Biopsychology, Cognition, and Neuroscience], so a lot of the things are research-type of writing.

Interviewer: Alright. What role does writing have then in your academic life that way or your personal life, either way?

Interviewee: What do you mean—role? Just how often or—

Interviewer: Yeah, I guess. I mean, does it feel like something that you do a lot or just a little bit? Does it feel really important for what you're doing right now, or maybe it supports something else that's really important?

Interviewee: I think recently I've been writing a lot for classes, and I don't really care much for it. It's very just, like I said, formula writing, but I journal every day, and I sometimes update a blog.

Interviewer: Yeah, I have that experience, too. [Laughter]. How would you describe yourself as a writer when you came to the University of Michigan?

Interviewee: Very high school, which you realize is not actually how you have to write an essay, so very—I guess just young and immature and—

Interviewer: Right.

Interviewee: - narrow scope, I would say—what I thought writing was.

Interviewer: Alright. Would you say that you've grown as a writer since you came here?

Interviewee: I think so.

Interviewer: What can you attribute that growth to? What do you think has caused that or fed it?

Interviewee: I think the biggest thing is peer review, when older peers will look over my writing, and they notice things that I constantly do. Like I used to have really long sentences—elaborate—and they're like, "No, you can just say this in—you can break it up, and it sounds so much better." Things like that have, I feel, shaped my writing.

Interviewer: Alright. What are your goals for yourself as a writer?

Interviewee: To just get my message across. [Laughter]

Interviewer: Good. [Laughter]. That's a good goal. Anything specific about your writing that you're looking to improve or expand or alter?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: Alright. Thinking across your writing experiences at the university, what do you think it means to write well?

Interviewee: I feel like at the university, writing well is writing how your professor or GSI wants you to write. [Laughter]

Interviewer: How do you find that out?

Interviewee: I think my freshman year, my GSI and I really—I don't think we matched on writing styles, and so it was pretty difficult. Everything I wrote, I didn't do very well, and I felt like basically I had to go in to meet with her and then do it how she wanted me to do it, but this year I feel like my GSI and I match a lot more, so I don't need a lot of that additional putting in her input. It's like I do, and I turn it in, and then it's okay. I dunno.

Interviewer: Alright. Which first year [inaudible 04:48] requirement course did you take?

Interviewee: [English course]. [English course].

Interviewer: Oh, okay. What were your experiences like in that course? Or what were they, I guess?

Interviewee: I really didn't like it, and I didn't realize that the topic that was on CTools [learning management system]—it wasn't that topic. I can't remember exactly, but I remember going in thinking it would be something, and then it was about food, and I don't really care much to read about food. I like other types of literature, and having to read that on top of the writing was kind of tedious.

Interviewer: What effect do you think that experience had on you as a writer?

Interviewee: It made me not wanna take another English course here [laughter], which is pretty sad cuz I loved English in high school, or I just liked reading a lot, I think, and

writing analysis type of essays. That's why I took [English course] cuz I heard it was reading and writing.

Interviewer: Right. I would have thought so, too.

Interviewee: Yeah, it made me not wanna take another English class. [Laughter].

Interviewer: Was there anything you recovered from that course that you think was still useful to you or was it pretty much a wash?

Interviewee: Yeah, I don't remember that class.

Interviewer: Alright. What is your concentration? I think you told me, but could you tell me—

Interviewee: BCN.

Interviewer: Uh-huh. What is that?

Interviewee: Biopsych [biopsychology], cognition and neuroscience.

Interviewer: Oh, okay. Have you had an opportunity to do writing in your concentration courses?

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: What kinds? What's that like?

Interviewee: A lot of science-based, like experimental writing, and research-based.

Interviewer: Do you write up your own experiments that you do, or are you given data that then you write into—

Interviewee: Both. I've done a good amount of finding articles and research topics that have already been studied and writing either an analysis of that or conducting my own study—a small one—and writing about that.

Interviewer: What effect have those experiences had on you as a writer, do you think?

Interviewee: Writing isn't really that bad for me anymore. Yeah, I don't mind. I have to write a lot this semester, but I really don't mind.

Interviewer: Alright. Do you feel confident about writing in your concentration?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: You get that. It sounds like you do. You have that system down. You know how to approach it now. What experiences in and out the classroom have had an effect on your writing?

Interviewee: I'm not really sure.

Interviewee: I guess another way to think about it: What kinds of activities do you think have shaped you as a writer? Do you feel like you've got a particular identity as a writer, and what kinds of activities have contributed to that identity?

Interviewee: I think, for me, church—my religion. A lot of times I read the Bible and write about it, and that's usually what my blog is about—are the things that I get out of that. People read it, and I feel like that's—I guess that's shaped me. [Laughter]

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah, I would say so. Yeah, can you say more about that. That's fascinating. [Laughter]

Interviewee: I think I like to use analogies a lot for everyday things that will stick out to me, that's like, "Oh, it reflects what I just read in the Bible in this way," or something. I dunno how to describe it. [Laughter]

Interviewer: That kind of leads into my next question. If I use the term "reflective writing," what does that mean to you?

Interviewee: Just writing about things that you come across or after thinking about what's happened or reflecting. [Laughter]

Interviewer: Right. [Laughter] Have you used reflective writing in your own writing?

Interviewee: Yeah. I would say.

Interviewer: Any reflective writing in your courses, or mostly just the personal writing that you do?

Interviewee: There have been some reflective writing, like in my culture classes or things like that. I would go to shows or culture shows, things like that, and then they would ask—or watch a movie, things like that—and they would ask for a reflective paper on it.

Interviewer: Okay. What have your experiences of working with other writers in your courses been?

Interviewee: Like my classmates?

Interviewer: Yeah. Have you done workshopping or peer review or those kinds of things? What have those been like? How have they been structured?

Interviewee: I don't think I've had a structured peer review yet, but I do just on my own time with friends that are in the same class or things like that. We'll switch each other's papers and read it over.

Interviewer: Okay. Is that a habit that you brought from high school or when did you start, I guess, adopting that strategy?

Interviewee: Probably recent, like this year, when I realized I have a heavy load of writing courses, and I'm like, "Oh, my gosh, I haven't taken one since freshman year." Just since then I realized how helpful it is to get an outside opinion on my writing.

Interviewer: Okay. If you were gonna give someone advice about writing, what are some of the things they should think about as they begin writing a paper?

Interviewee: To outline. [Laughter]. I would say outline is really important, and a thesis—just something central that you'll always come back to. Yeah, I think that's— [laughter]

Interviewer: Alright. It sounds like you value, too, that peer review, or having somebody else look at yours. You mentioned it several times.

Interviewee: Oh, yeah.

Interviewer: Have you had any experiences with New Media writing—like writing for blogs—well, you have a little bit with the blog—or websites, using sound or video, or even PowerPoint presentations?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: Not in your classes? You haven't had presentations—

Interviewee: I've had presentations, but I feel like it's not really writing reflective.

Interviewer: It's not New Media somehow?

Interviewee: No. [Laughter]

Interviewer: You talked a little bit about your blog. What prompted you to start the blog, I guess? Is that something you did totally on your own or—

Interviewee: Yeah, I did it on my own, but then I realized other people like blogging, too, and I just started following it, but it was actually a part of a blog. It was easier to write on the computer, like faster, to write my thoughts.

Interviewer: Alright. But you haven't had to do a blog for class or contribute to a—

Interviewee: Actually, we have.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: My [Psychology 400 level course]. It's special topics, and it's about mind [inaudible 12:57]—things like that. There're lots of different ways to rack up points, I guess, and some of them are post blog posts or writing in forums or writing responses to other people's. Every week we read a book, and we have to write a memo on it. They pick from those memos some that they wanna upload into a forum, and from that forum, you can respond to other students—their thoughts on what we just did for the past week. That's very New Media, I think.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Yeah. [Laughter]

Interviewer: Sounds cool. What effect has those experiences had on you as a writer?

Interviewee: I feel like it's really been helping me shape my reflective processes. Like when I see something or read something, I'm more thoughtful about it, instead of just like it's there and then whatever. [Laughter]

Interviewer: What do you think makes you more thoughtful about it?

Interviewee: Well, the fact that I'm forced to—like, I'm gonna have to write something about it. Yeah. [Laughter]

Interviewer: Alright. You've been uploading pieces of writing to the study archive on CTools [learning management system]. Right?

Interviewee: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: How's that process been going for you?

Interviewee: It's been fine, but last year I didn't really have many writing courses, so it was real difficult. I grabbed a piece from my lab, which I conducted my own experiment and then wrote about what—yeah, I hadn't had that many writing-intensive courses, so I didn't have much to upload.

Interviewer: And this semester?

Interviewee: This semester, I have a lot. [Laughter]

Interviewer: Alright. What pieces did you choose for the archive, and why did you choose them? Can you talk a little about that?

Interviewee: There is one for freshman year, and then one for every semester—a couple of them every semester—something like that.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: I just chose—well, for the past I just chose the writing that I had cuz there was so little. That was as much as I could submit.

Interviewer: Right. And this semester, what are you thinking? You may have some up, or you may not have some up yet, but what are you thinking about your process for choosing?

Interviewee: I wanted to definitely put all the writing from my research method course cuz we're gonna be conducting our own survey experiment and writing about that. Then also from my psych [psychology] class. We do—it's more like open-ended, more reflective, more about our beliefs—that kind of essays. I'll put that up.

Interviewer: That'll be an interesting balance. Right? The methodology and then something more personal. Alright. Any other comments that you wanna make about writing or your process or what's made you into the writer you are?

Interviewee: Not really. [Laughter] I think the biggest thing that really helped is just peers cuz I haven't gotten much feedback from the GSIs or the professors that I've had here, so I feel like I haven't gotten much out of—like turning in an assignment.

This past semester, too, we have to turn in a draft for every assignment, and we got it back, but I feel like it doesn't shape me as a writer. It just shapes that piece that I did at that moment, but overall I think the thing that helps me the most is when people give me feedback on my writing or about my writing style or things like that.

Interviewer: What do you feel is different, or what do you see as the difference between the feedback GSIs are giving you and the feedback that your peers give you?

Interviewee: I think the GSIs are more like, "You need to fix—" Like, "Something's wrong with this sentence," or like "The data here is wrong," or something like that, but other people—there's this one person who always ask to check over mine, and she's noticed a pattern in my run-on sentences, repetition of certain words that's too much. Things like that—writing style-wise.

I feel like they help me more with that because they don't always know the content of why I'm writing. They're not in the classes with me, so they're not gonna be like, "Oh, this part is wrong, or this." It's like, "Does this flow well? Does this sound—" Like that.

Interviewer: Right. That makes sense. Alright. Well, thank you so much.

Interviewee: Thank you. It was fun.

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