

[...]

Interviewer: Okay, so today is the 18th of April, 2014. This is \*\*\*, and I'm here with \*\*\*.

Interviewee: Mm-hmm.

[...]

Interviewer: That's impressive. We'll start with some, just basic, questions. Then, we'll talk about your writing experiences across the university.

Interviewee: Okay.

Interviewer: Then, we'll think about some of the minor requirements, in particular. Then, that's it.

Interviewee: All right.

Interviewer: Pretty straightforward stuff. The first question's broad. It's just, how would you describe yourself as a writer?

Interviewee: [Laughter] I would say I really am more formal than I think a lot of people are just because I've been doing—I'm a psych major, and a comp major, so I've been doing research papers, mostly, for my entire college career.

I'm really used to that formal, scholarly journal-type style. At the same time, I was able to be a little bit more creative with a writing minor. Because you just get so much—oh, you can really do whatever you want, which is cool. I got to take my background in doing research, and then changing my style a little bit to be a little bit more creative. That was cool. Yeah, definitely not the fiction-type writing person at all. Not really into short stories and that kind of thing, but more papers for a purpose, like research stuff.

Interviewer: When you say formal, you mean—what do you mean by formal?

Interviewee: [Laughter] More scholarly-type stuff and not like—I wouldn't—I don't really write things, like, yeah, creative pieces, like a short story. I've never really done that. Cuz I don't think [chuckle] I'm very good with that.

Interviewer: It's not your thing

Interviewee: Not really my thing, no.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: I am good at sounding good within a research paper, I think, is my strength.

Interviewer: That makes a lot of sense.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: When you started here at the University of Michigan as a freshman, how would you have described yourself as a writer at that point?

Interviewee: [chuckle] I had to look back at some of my old writing pieces for this capstone course. I used to think that I was a really good writer. More creative, I guess, because in high school, I got to do a lot of creative-type writing. I thought I was pretty good, and [chuckle] looked back and [chuckle] saw that I wasn't so good at all.

Interviewer: [chuckle]

Interviewee: Yeah. Cuz I had never had any experience with research writing, so totally different style and everything. I've definitely changed a lot.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. That's really interesting to me that you, when you started here—in high school, you had more experience with creative writing. You felt pretty good about that, it sounds like.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: What made the shift for you, to where, now, you're way more interested in the scholarly, academic, formal writing?

Interviewee: I guess because I just didn't practice it. Every class I've essentially taken, I've never been asked to do creative writing, necessarily. Every paper I've always had to write for any class has always been for a specific purpose. Like, "Argue this." Very structured-type things. Whereas, in high school, I think, they let you do short stories and more fun, lighthearted-type things. Then, in college, you have to hit these key points for this whatever class. It's a lot less, "Do whatever you want."

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. It's a lot more structured?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Makes a lot of sense. To what extent would you say that you've grown and changed since high school, as a writer?

Interviewee: [Laughter] Just, overall, just better. [Laughter] I don't know. [chuckle] Just the writing style, for sure, but also just—I don't even know how to describe it. Not grammar and all that. I'm sure that's improved a little bit, but just more mature, maybe, writing. It doesn't sound like it's coming from a high schooler, I would hope, now. [Laughter]

I think it sounds a little bit more mature and a little bit more intellectual when I write. I used to try and use really big words. Try and sound smarter than I was, but actually that looked really bad. It didn't really work with what I was tryin' to say. I feel like I've learned you don't need to use huge words to make your writing good, and interesting, and sound intellectual. You can still just use common language and make it sound [chuckle] [chuckle] okay. Yeah.

Interviewer: What do you think has made the difference? You say you sound more mature now, and you know, I guess, even what words to use.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: [cross talk 05:58] What do you think has been ?

Interviewee: [chuckle] I guess it's repetition. I don't know. It's interesting. I was talking to my roommate, who is an engineering—in engineering. She said she had to write a paper for the first time, now, and she's a senior.

Interviewer: Wow.

Interviewee: I'm like, "I have probably written 100 papers since I've come here." They're all so similar, that it's like, once you get the hang of it, they—it's so easy. I have to write two papers—two com 06:21 papers in the next two weeks that are each ten pages. Very like, "Argue this point," or, "Show how this, and this, and this has changed over time." Those just are so easy to me now cuz I've done them so much, and I know what they're looking for, and just how to make it. It doesn't hafta be spectacular, so creative. It just has to be well written, which, I think, I do a lot better job than now.

Interviewer: That makes sense. As you graduate, then, what are your goals for yourself as a writer, looking forward?

Interviewee: I'm actually going to law school—

Interviewer: Oh.

Interviewee: [chuckle] - in the fall. Yeah. Probably, I'm gonna be doing a lot of writing, still, but definitely, now, an even new style, again. Very formal, very academic. I don't have a lot of experience doing legal writing, but I know I'm gonna hafta to take a legal writing class right when I get in in the fall. I have no

idea what that's gonna be like, but it's definitely gonna be a change. From that point on, I feel like I'm, that's gonna be my new writing style. More so than psychological stuff, cuz that's my major, but I'm not gonna carry that on.

Interviewer: Sure.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: How do you think you can, as you're looking towards taking up this new style of writing, how do you know what to do? How do you know when you walk into law writing, what you'll need to do to be able to do that well? Does that question make sense?

Interviewee: Kind of, yeah. I mean, I think I'm okay at picking up styles. I think it'll be good to have this base of knowing how to write well, just, in general. Then, I don't know. I'm gonna hafta take time to really learn what you're expected to do in the style because it's gonna be so different.

I think it'll be okay, just, again, with practice. I know that the course lasts the entire year. I think I'll get a lotta practice, and I think that I'm—that's actually the class that I'm most excited for cuz I feel like I have written so much. Writing is just, some people hate it. I'm like, "I could write ten-page paper, and it would be fine." [chuckle]

Interviewer: Yeah, you don't mind it.

Interviewee: I don't mind it at all, yeah. I'm hoping that the writing that I've done will carry over and, at least, help a little bit.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: [Laughter] Who knows?

Interviewer: You were just saying, you feel like you have a basic understanding of what it means to write well. As you think back over your experiences here at U of M, what do you think that means, exactly? What does it look like to write well?

Interviewee: I feel like it's, essentially, writing for your audience, knowing your audience and who's gonna be reading it. If I were to write—for my final capstone project, I did a project on happiness. I did it like a research-type style, but then, I made it way more casual. The writing style was really informal, but it was still presenting different research articles, and doing the methods, and all that, but it was very conversational.

Because I knew that the people who were gonna be reading it, not, necessarily, even the panel, but I wanted to send it out to friends and family cuz it's such a

relevant topic. I wanted people my age to be interested in reading it. I knew that it was 30 pages long. No one's gonna want to read this, so I have to make it, at least, interesting.

I think that that helps. You hafta understand that, if you're writing a paper for a class, then you have to know what the teacher's looking for. If you're writing towards a younger audience, you have to use a style that they're gonna understand, and, yeah.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Which upper-level courses did you take?

Interviewee: A lot. I took more than I had to. It just happened that way. I took a [Women's Studies course], which was upper-level writing. Then, I took [Psychology course] which was advanced developmental lab.

Interviewer: Oh, wow.

Interviewee: [Laughter] Yeah, so that was ooh. That was a [chuckle] lot of writing, too. We had to do a big grant proposal for that.

Interviewer: Oh, wow.

Interviewee: Yeah. Then, I took two upper-level com [Communication] classes that were upper-level writing, I think.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: [chuckle] I don't know. Just the requirements I needed for com and psych were always like that. Upper-level ones are always upper-level writing requirements. Somehow, I ended up with a ton of them, but—

Interviewer: It'd be double counted?

Interviewee: Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: [Laughter] Originally, when I took [Women's Studies course], I'm like, "Oh, I'll get my writing out of the way." Then, I ended up totally having it anyway.

Interviewer: [Laughter] Whichever, five different ones.

Interviewee: [Laughter] Yeah.

Interviewer: That's funny.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: What were your experiences like in those courses?

Interviewee: Hmm. They were different, depending on the class. I think that the developmental lab for psych was really the most difficult because we were expected to create our own research study, our own—so, it was very—

Interviewer: Oh, you had to come up with the study yourself?

Interviewee: Yeah. You had to look at a topic—

Interviewer: Wow.

Interviewee: [Laughter] - and then, find gaps. Then, you had to make your whole method and everything from scratch. You had to analyze the data. It was horrible. It was terrible, but it was what we worked on the entire semester.

Interviewer: Wow. What a big project.

Interviewee: Yeah, so that was probably the most difficult, but it's cool. Because now I have that piece, and I put it in my portfolio.

Interviewer: Yeah. Now, when you said that was terrible, it was—do you mean it was hard—

Interviewee: It was hard.

Interviewer: - or it was terrible?

Interviewee: Yeah. I mean, it wasn't really terrible.

Interviewer: [chuckle]

Interviewee: [chuckle] It felt terrible when I finally writing cuz I was like, "Wow, this so long."

Interviewer: It's a lot.

Interviewee: It was just more challenging, I think. I had to be creative in my ideas, not in my writing. Cuz the writing style was super formal, so I didn't get to do anything fun with it. It was just like, "Present it in a academic way and make it sound good." Then, my com classes were much more formal, I guess, or, informal, compared to that one.

You still had to meet requirements. I don't remember what the papers were, specifically. It was still like you had a rubric, and you knew what you needed to write about, but I could still be more creative with it. The papers were only ten pages long, so it wasn't anything bad.

Then, [Writing course], [Women's Studies course] was, I think, the easiest one because we got to just write about any—it was reproductive health, I think—we got to write about any topic we wanted for our final paper.

Interviewer: Oh, wow.

Interviewee: That was fun cuz you could pick anything you were interested in. The rubric was super loose, so you could just do whatever you wanted. That was fun cuz—

Interviewer: That's great.

Interviewee: Yeah, I could be more creative with it.

Interviewer: Sounds awesome. It's awesome. Do you still make use of anything that you learned in those courses in your writing now?

Interviewee: [chuckle] Yeah. The psych one, I have used because I continued that. Well, I took that last year. Then, I, this year, still, I'm finishing out the major, so I had to take a couple psych classes. I, actually, was, just did a paper for one of them where I had to create my own study, so I had—but it was a lot easier than the other class. I was like, "Oh, now that I've done that," it made it feel a lot more manageable. I'm glad that I had that experience, even though it was stressful at the time. Now, it makes my writing a lot, it's just a lot easier. More like second nature.

Interviewer: Have you taken any other writing courses?

Interviewee: [Laughter] I took [English course], [title of course], I think. I'm actually in creative writing right now, but we don't really write a lot in that class. We do a lot of poetry, which, I hate poetry. I don't really think about that class just because it's more, it's all underclassmen. I needed a requirement. I took it pass/fail. It's not as intense as some of my other writing classes. It's very minimal. We did one paper, so far, that was really short.

Interviewer: When you say that you do a lot of poetry, you're reading a lot of poetry—

Interviewee: Both.

Interviewer: - or you're writing a lot?

Interviewee: Reading and writing.

Interviewer: You don't really think of that as writing? You said you were—

Interviewee: I mean, I do, but it's not my style of writing. I don't know. I wouldn't really put that in my skill set, like, "I can write poetry."

Interviewer: I see.

Interviewee: Because I'm terrible at writing poetry. I just do it to, just give it a try, but it's not really for me. It's not my style.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: [chuckle] I did the best I can. It's not good. [Laughter]

Interviewer: [chuckle] It's not my thing, either.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Some people are really good at in my class, and I'm just like, "Well that was really good, but—"

Interviewer: [Laughter] Yeah. Good for you.

Interviewee: [chuckle] "- mine was not. Can't compare to that."

Interviewer: [chuckle] Yeah, that's funny. Have you taken any of—I guess you took the psych class, the upper-level class, and that's in your concentration.

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: Right?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Has that affected the writing that you do in other classes that aren't necessarily writing classes? Does that make sense at all?

Interviewee: Yeah. I'm tryin' to think. Yes, I feel like any time I have to write something, it makes me a better writer, even just a little bit. Just being used to writing a lot makes it less intimidating and easier, I think, to get started when you're doing another writing project. Because I've done so much writing,



especially in my psych classes and all that, now, that I have these two com papers, I feel like I can handle them.

Going into it, I feel more confident about just writing it, in general. If I hadn't taken some of those classes, I don't think I would feel that way as much. Just because I just feel like I have so much experience with writing. Doesn't feel new at all.

Interviewer: It sounds like the writing you do in your psych [Psychology] classes, you feel like helps you in your other kinds of classes, too—

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: - not just your psych—other psych classes.

Interviewee: Yeah. Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: That makes sense to me.

Interviewee: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: Especially, since you're looking towards doing something other than psych—

Interviewee: [chuckle] Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: - in the future.

Interviewee: Exactly. I'm hoping that. It's almost like a critical way of thinking. You're learning how to create a unique idea. I feel like those are just basic skills that, even though I'm not gonna be writing grant proposals, I know the tone of an academic piece. I know how to be creative with my ideas. I know how to find gaps in things, gaps in the research, so I could find my niche for where someone hasn't talked about something yet, and I can find my way in that way.

Interviewer: It's almost 16:04 really great strategies that you've picked up.

Interviewee: Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: What other kinds of strategies do you feel like you've learned in your writing classes that you could use in other courses?

Interviewee: Well, definitely writing towards the audience, for sure. That was something I didn't really understand when I came in here. I didn't really think about it a lot, I guess. I just wrote whatever I wanted to and didn't really think about the audience that much. That was a huge thing.

I think just being able to also analyze different research articles. I do a lot of reading, too, just with, I don't know, I just end up havin' to do a lotta reading a lot, for all my different classes. Being able to read something, and then be able to write about it, and reflect on it. Find where there was a flaw in it, or talk about how it was really strong. I've had to do that in, probably, all of my classes, at some point. That's a skill that I think I'll be able to carry over, as well. Cuz

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Talk a little bit about the capstone class that you've been taking. The [Writing course].

Interviewee: Yes, yeah.

Interviewer: What impact, if any, do you feel like that course has had on your writing, in general?

Interviewee: [chuckle] I think it's been, probably, the best class, so far for my writing just because, first of all, I'd never had to write that much, ever, for anything. I did not understand [chuckle] coming in that I was gonna hafta write 30 pages' worth of prose for my project. It was in addition to the writer's evolution essay we had to do, too. Which, that one wasn't bad, but I don't know.

It's been really great, and I feel like I've just, again, become more confident in my ability to write. When I was working on the project, I'm the type person that will just sit down and write it all out for extended period of time and then go back and look at it later.

There were three days that I just took the whole day and just, after I'd done all the background research, and I knew what I was gonna say, I just wrote for the whole day. Just to get these 30 pages. I just need to get to 30 and then look back and see where I could change things, but I was so freaked out. I'm like, "There's no way I'm gonna be able to do 30 pages of writing." [chuckle]

Interviewer: [cross talk 18:11] That sounds .

Interviewee: "I don't have enough to talk about." Then, suddenly, it just happened. I was like, "Wait. I'm already at 30 pages? Oh, that wasn't bad at all." I get—getting more confident just in longer pieces, too. Cuz, I mean, the typical requirement's ten pages, maybe, for a paper. Now, I guess I would've never expected that I could've done that. It was cool that they challenged us to do something that long and that extensive in a class like that.

Interviewer: Yeah. Has this course had an impact on your sense of yourself as a writer?

Interviewee: Yeah, definitely. Especially, that I feel a lot more confident just with my ability to write and to have enough content and enough ideas to continue writing for a long period of time. To keep the style consistent that entire time, and still have enough to say, and be able to edit that much, that was really cool.

Also, it was great to be able to look back and see, the writer's evolution essay, just to see what [chuckle] [chuckle] I used to write like. [chuckle] That was really eye opening, too, and scary to look, but still cool. Still good to write about and reflect on.

Interviewer: What do you think you've learned from doing that essay?

Interviewee: [chuckle] Definitely that I wasn't as good as I thought I was. I did a project for my gateway course, too, where I did a voiceover for a paper I had written, and I made a video. I thought it was so cool at the time. Then, I went back and looked at it. I was like, "Oh, that wasn't that good." [Laughter] I'm like, "Oh, my gosh. It really wasn't as great as I had had in my mind."

Interviewer: What about it wasn't as good as you thought?

Interviewee: I don't know. I don't like hearing my own voice recorded, so that's just like, "Oh, God."

Interviewer: I don't, either.

Interviewee: [chuckle] No. It was so over dramatic. It was a piece that I had written. It was about a car crash I had been in, but I just totally made it way too dramatic, to the point where I was just rolling my eyes, like, "Oh, my gosh."

Interviewer: You roll your eyes at yourself?

Interviewee: [Laughter] Yeah. Cuz it really wasn't what happened. I definitely took it up a notch from how intense it really was. Yeah, I thought it was really dramatic and really, really cool, at the time. Then, I looked back, and I was like, "That was too much. This is way too much." That was interesting, as well.

Interviewer: Do you think that that changes just because you're, you've had more experience now, or do you think it's because of specific things that you've learned, in particular?

Interviewee: I think a little bit of both. Definitely, I've had more experience, but, at the same time, I've—that was a paper that I think had written very early on, like freshman year, or, even, maybe, in high school. It was a long time ago, and I'd re-written it for that project. I don't know.

I've changed a lot. I've also learned just because I've been doing, [chuckle] at the academic writing, since that point, I've done so much more academic writing just with my upper-level classes and whatnot, that it shift—that's when the shift happened from creative writing to more academic writing, and, I think, more mature-type topics and just projects and things like that, that the tone of the things that I would write about just totally shifted. Looking back, I was like, "That was really stupid." [Laughter]

Interviewer: Oh, I'm sure it wasn't stupid. I'm sure it wasn't stupid. What effect has the experience of writing the capstone project had on you as a writer? I know you were talking a little bit about the length and not realizing you could even write that much.

Interviewee: Right.

Interviewer: What other effects has that had on you, as a writer?

Interviewee: It's been cool to change the style from something. Cuz, yeah, like I was saying, I never really get any leeway in what I'm writing. To be able to do, literally, any project you want, it was really cool. When I was able to experiment around with the tone of it and make it conversational, that was a really cool skill that I think I learned from that. Because it's hard to just stay within the confines of one topic but also step away from it for a second and come back. It was cool to learn how to mesh two different things together and make it work in a paper, in a project like that.

Interviewer: That's cool.

Interviewee: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: The next few questions are going to be about your ePortfolio, your capstone ePortfolio. I'm gonna pull it up here.

[...]

Interviewer: Okay. What I want you to do is, take a look at this ePortfolio. Just remind yourself of the pieces again because you know how it is.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Once you put it up there, you're like, "That's done."

Interviewee: [Laughter] Right. Right.

Interviewer: Just remind yourself of it again, and I'm gonna ask you to talk about what the most memorable aspect of this project was for you. That's the, I think, first thing we'll talk about there.

Interviewee: Okay. The most memorable part?

Interviewer: The most memorable part, for you.

Interviewee: [chuckle] Putting it all together. Once I had everything written, everything in the Word documents, and just tryin' to create this online portfolio. Just being able to realize that I could do all these fun things with it and just set it up so that it was really easy to read. I don't know. I had never had any experience doing anything on Wix [website creator] before, so putting it together and then seeing the final product. Cuz it was like I had all the work done, but I didn't have it in this setting. Just putting it all together was really cool. It was fun.

Interviewer: I'm not familiar with Wix.

Interviewee: Definitely. I wasn't either. I did a WordPress [content management course] site at first, and I was like, "I hate this." Some other people in my class had used Wix before, so I tried it, and I really liked it a lot.

Interviewer: What did you like better about Wix than WordPress?

Interviewee: I thought the design just seemed cooler. WordPress is very limited options with what you can do. This one, it just had cooler pictures and cooler transitions. I don't know. Just the overall look of it was a lot—you could customize it a lot more than WordPress, for sure.

Interviewer: You say different layouts and options—

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: - pictures.

Interviewee: Yeah, a lot more you can do with it in terms of layout and—

Interviewer: What made you feel like that was a better choice for your writing?

Interviewee: It was hard when I was setting this up because I wanted—I'm gonna send this out to law schools as a supplemental thing.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: I wanted it to look formal, but, at the same time, I'm doing a project on happiness. I had to find the balance between the two.

Interviewer: [Laughter] Happy, but formal.

Interviewee: [Laughter] Happy, but formal at the same time, which is really hard.

Interviewer: That is a hard balance.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: How do you feel like you've struck that balance? How do you—

Interviewee: [chuckle] I think I did okay. I don't know. I might've wish I had changed this first picture, but it is happy and cool. I think I tried to, the pieces that I picked to put in here are this grand proposal I did and an argumentative essay I did for [English course]. Put my personal statement in there and then my writer's evolution essay.

I just kept it to the most academic-type papers I had done and the ones that I think I did the best on. I didn't put a ton more in there. I could've linked out, in this evolution essay, to all the papers that I had talked about from freshman year, but then I was like, "I don't really wanna do that. I don't think they need to see those. I can talk about them, but I don't hafta—"

Interviewer: You didn't really wanna put those—

Interviewee: "- include—"

Interviewer: - out there.

Interviewee: [Laughter] "- I don't wanna put that out there." I'll just talk about it.

Interviewer: How do you feel like—just as I'm looking at it, I see, I love this first picture you have here. It's a very happy picture—

Interviewee: It is.

Interviewer: - with the balloons—

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: - and the rainbow. What other ways did you try to evoke the happiness of your theme, even as you kept the formality, I guess?

Interviewee: I tried to keep it bright. Just the tone throughout the entire thing, I think, I tried to make it happy. Then, just the background colors I—and I tried to

put in a lot of pictures. When I was doing—just, on a lot of these, I think it just got a little bit—well, nope, not this one.

I've tried to put in videos, and pictures, and keep it interesting. You can tell I got to here, and I had to put this stuff in, but beyond the data and all of that. Throughout, and then, at the end, I ended up putting in a little, a slideshow of pictures and stuff of just doing fun things. [chuckle]

Interviewer: Oh, that's fun.

Interviewee: I don't know. I thought that was, made it a little bit more lighthearted and not be so—

Interviewer: As you were composing the entire portfolio, what narrative were you were trying to tell? What were your goals for this ePortfolio?

Interviewee: It was almost a little bit conflicting, I guess, because until you get the evolution essay, it doesn't seem like this has anything to do with happiness. I couldn't really control that cuz I did wanna put these pieces in there. I tried to make 'em a little bit more—I put pictures in and things like that, things I didn't originally have. I guess the tone is definitely more academic, at first.

Then, once you start to get to the evolution essay, I set it up for my project. Even throughout the project, it's still academic and formal at the same time as being upbeat. Just because I tried to mesh the two styles together, so it's a little bit of both. I don't know if it's completely informal or formal. It's just in the middle somewhere. [Laughter]

Interviewer: Yeah. You were tryin' to find that—

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: - middle ground?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah. When you were thinking—I know you mentioned the colors a couple of times.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: It's quite a pretty—what is that? A teal?

Interviewee: [chuckle] Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: It's really pretty. What made you choose that color?

Interviewee: Actually, when I originally went to this template, this was the original picture that they had. Which, I was like, “Well, that was perfect.”

Interviewer: Yeah, that’ll do.

Interviewee: Because I probably wouldn’t’ve found that online. I don’t know where it came from, but I was like, “Well, that’s perfect,” so I picked this one right away. Then, I was flipping through, and I almost did yellow. Then, I decided that was gonna be too much because, especially when you’re going through and looking at these pieces. I didn’t really want a yellow background on a piece that’s a psych study. I don’t know. It just didn’t seem right, so I think this was a good color to pick. It’s upbeat, but, at the same time, it’s not over-the-top—

Interviewer: Yellow is a happy color.

Interviewee: - crazy. It’s not patterned. I didn’t wanna make it too crazy but more simple, I guess.

Interviewer: How much was the idea that you might be sending this along with your law school materials, was that a big factor as you were—

Interviewee: Well, originally—

Interviewer: - thinking about this?

Interviewee: Originally, I wasn’t thinking that I would do that. Then, I was like, “Well, why wouldn’t I do that?” It’s just a showcase of stuff and supplemental stuff. They always tell you to send in things that you’ve been doing. Actually, though, once this gets reviewed, I think I’m gonna tweak it a little bit and make it a bit more, not necessarily black and white, but a little bit less colorful.

Probably take out the cursive and just make it a little bit more formal. Just because I think this is really fun for the class, and I think it fits the tone of the whole thing. If I’m gonna send it to law schools, I think I’m gonna change it, just a little bit, to make it a little bit more toned down.

I don’t know how yet. I haven’t really thought about it, but I don’t have to turn it in for a couple of months. I’ll probably tweak with it a little bit, and I might take out things like my annotated bibliography or things that I don’t really need in there, but I had to put in there. [chuckle]

Interviewer: Take out the things that were just for the requirements?

Interviewee: Yes, yeah.



Interviewer: Then, you mentioned the cursive, the font.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: I noticed all the tabs at the top are cursive. What made you go with the cursive if you feel like it's something that you think you're going to change?

Interviewee: [chuckle] Well, I just thought that it was more, for some reason, I feel like it was more casual and fun than—it originally came with something like Arial, or, I don't know, very normal. I don't know. When I want people to be reviewing this, I want them to feel that consistent tone cuz that's a major goal of the whole portfolio for the class. I thought that, I don't know, the cursive, I think, makes it more fun, and more unique, and more stylistic, but when I'm turning it in to law schools, I don't know if it really needs to be stylistic in the way that I wanted it to be for this class.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. I know you were talking about how you used the writer's evolution to bring all of the pieces together to create a narrative. Did you notice any other relationships among your artifacts as you were creating the ePortfolio?

Interviewee: Yeah. I guess just a shift in the topics that I was talking about. Yeah, when I was looking at my past work, I saw that it was all over the place. Freshman year, I didn't really know what I wanted to talk about cuz when you get a open prompt, you can take it any way you want. Then, towards junior year and senior year, when I had both of my majors, and I knew what I was interested in, all my papers, suddenly, turned into about media, or about emotions, or psychological or communication-type things.

Whereas, freshman year, I don't have, really, anything that talks about that. Even sophomore year, there's really not a lot, either. Just a shift in the things that I talked about and things I was interested in, I guess.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. What relationships do you want your readers to notice as they're looking at this portfolio?

Interviewee: [inaudible 32:54] I want them to see that I am able to do these types of academic writings and then see the relationship between what I tried to do in this project and how it relates to these pieces. Especially, the grant proposal that I put in here is so super formal. I want them to realize that I can write that way, but I purposefully didn't write that way for the project. The tone is just so casual throughout the whole thing, and I don't want them to think like, "Oh, she is so sloppy." I want them to realize that that was a stylistic choice, and I was able to take that and turn it into something fun and .

Interviewer: You feel like you're showing—by showing the grant proposal, you're showing that you're capable—

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: - of that kind of—

Interviewee: Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: Whereas, if it wasn't there, people would think that—

Interviewee: That, maybe, I just didn't know how to do it.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: [Laughter] Yeah. Yeah, for sure.

Interviewer: Yeah. That makes a lot of sense to me. Do you think that the act of creating this ePortfolio has had an effect on your writing at all?

Interviewee: Maybe not necessarily creating the portfolio, but the writing to get it into the portfolio, yeah. Creating the portfolio, I thought, was actually the hardest part of the whole class.

Interviewer: The web design part, or—

Interviewee: Yes, yeah. Just cuz we didn't get a lot of direction on that, which is something that I would've—I hope that they do for the next group of people that do the capstone. Because they want it to be so stylistic, and cool, and all that, but we get no direction on it. I'm really bad with technology, so it took me six hours to put together. Not even any writing in it. Just the basic—

Interviewer: Basic?

Interviewee: [chuckle] - template, and figuring out the design, and figuring out— couldn't figure out how to wrap text around an image. Turns out you can't on this one, which is weird. Just little things like that. I think it would be cool if they took you through the main, Squarespace. A lot of people did Squarespace, WordPress, and Wix. Those are the main ones. If they did a little tutorial on how to do that, I think that would really help because it was stressful.

Interviewer: Yeah. That sounds really stressful. As we're thinking about the capstone course—and this kind of feedback is really helpful—how much detail would you like to have had, how much class time would you have liked to have seen spent on tutorials on web design, or thinking about, I don't know. Cuz I haven't been in that class, exactly. Would you like to see more like, "Here's how design creates a different kind of experience—

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: “- for the reader”? Or, “Here’s how you use this particular website”? Or—

Interviewee: I think it would’ve been cool cuz the way that it worked now is that we were, we made the page on our own. I didn’t even know the different, I didn’t even know what Wix was, or Squarespace. I just learned that from other people in the class. I only knew of WordPress, so I learned through other people.

If they had originally presented us like, “These are the ones that people really like to use, that support the type of things you guys are tryin’ to do.” Then, cuz what we had to do is, we had to make it. Then, we put it up on the big screen once it was already made, and people would critique it for style and things like that. At that point, you had already gone through the struggle of tryin’ to figure it out. will

It would’ve been cool if we had been able to pick the template we wanted to use. Like, “Okay. I wanna use Squarespace, so do that.” Lay out what features you wanna do and then have someone sit with you and help you who knows what they’re doing. Like, “This is how I do this you do this, how you do this. Now, you can go do it on your own and figure it out.”

Just not having anyone there who actually really knew about it and was helping you through it was difficult. Cuz I don’t think that part really helped me—I don’t think that had anything to do with my writing. It was more just like, “Oh, this is annoying.” Like, “I did all this work already, and now I have to do another six hours of work with this cuz I don’t know how to do it.” [chuckle]

Interviewer: I’m no good at design.

Interviewee: Yeah, me either.

Interviewer: It’s not my thing.

Interviewee: I hate this type of a creative—it’s cool when it’s all done, but when you’re doing it, you’re like, “I don’t know what colors to do. I don’t know what picture.”

Interviewer: [chuckle] Yeah. Yeah.

Interviewee: “I don’t know what looks good.”

Interviewer: Yeah. I have a hard time with that kind of thing.

Interviewee: Yeah, navigating was a bit difficult.

Interviewer: Just so I'm getting a sense of what would be most helpful. Did you guys talk at all about other resources within the university that would be able to help you? Like, outside of the class?

Interviewee: I don't think so, actually. I don't remember talking about that at all.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: Are there resources you can use that—

Interviewer: The Knowledge Navigation Center.

Interviewee: Okay.

Interviewer: [chuckle] They can teach you how to—I've gone up there before. I said, "Teach me how to use Excel."

Interviewee: [Laughter] Yeah?

Interviewer: Yeah. "Help me. I don't know what I'm doing."

Interviewee: Right.

Interviewer: They can help with a lot of technology things. I'm not sure if they do these websites at all, but I was just wondering if—

Interviewee: Yeah, that woulda been nice. That woulda been really nice.

Interviewer: Even if it's not in class, maybe that would be helpful.

Interviewee: Right. It woulda been cool, too. Cuz we were in a classroom that had computers all around. It woulda been cool if we had a day where we all—once we knew the type of—like, if you wanna do Wix. If we all could sit at our different computers, and then our teacher would go around and help us when we had questions.

We could, at least, work on it in class. Then, when we had questions, we could help each other. I'm just sitting alone in my room tryin' to figure it out, and some people are really good with this. I've learned how to do a lot of things just from other people in the class. At the end of each page, I would—

Interviewer: Oh, that's cool.

Interviewee: Yeah. I would put a link to different—so, every page, you go to the end, and there's another link to go to the next page.

Interviewer: Oh, that's neat. One of your classmates helped you with that?

Interviewee: Yeah. I would've had no idea how to do it. I learned how to take you to a website from a picture.

Interviewer: Oh, cool.

Interviewee: Just little things like that that I was—

Interviewer: [Laughter] Yeah. I don't know how to do that.

Interviewee: - like, "I can't do stuff like that. I don't know." Thank God, there were people in my class who knew cuz it wasn't a part of—

Interviewer: That's great.

Interviewee: - the actual curriculum at all.

Interviewer: You all did that outside of class together?

Interviewee: Well, we did it—we had a group Facebook page, actually. People would post—

Interviewer: Oh, cool.

Interviewee: - questions like, "How do you do this?" Then, someone who had the same format would be like, "Oh, I use it this way."

Interviewer: Did the students just decide to create that—

Interviewee: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: - or did the instructor—

Interviewee: Yeah. I think the students put it together. I'm pretty sure. I know my class had one, and not even everyone was in it. I don't know if the other classes had one or not.

Interviewer: That's really neat.

Interviewee: Yeah, it was really cool. I liked having it a lot.

Interviewer: That's really cool.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Did your instructor know you guys set—

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewee: - that? Okay.

Interviewee: Yeah, he did, yeah.

Interviewer: That's really cool.

Interviewee: That was really cool.

Interviewer: Did you have [instructor] 38:16?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: [instructor]'s great.

Interviewee: [chuckle] [instructor] is awesome.

Interviewer: That's really neat.

Interviewee: [chuckle] Yeah. The other thing I was gonna suggest is to have more checkpoints throughout the course because all of us are seniors, and all of us, of course, procrastinated.

Interviewer: Of course.

Interviewee: [chuckle] We would spend class time talking about our projects, and putting our ideas together, and doing all that. Then, it got to be the last week, and we're all like, "Have you started writing anything?" "Nope." "Do you have any actual writing done?" "Nope."

We're all, this last weekend, tryin' to get it all done. Even though we'd done all the research, we knew what we were doing, we never were required to have like, "Have ten pages done by the middle of the semester." We were all like, "Oh, my gosh. We have 30 pages to write, and we haven't had any checkpoints." Now, everyone was just frantically—

Interviewer: Some mid-semester accountability?

Interviewee: Yes, yeah. I think that, especially with a senior class, I think that helps a lot. To have requirements of when things need to be done.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: That would've been awesome.

Interviewer: Can we talk a little bit about the reflective writing that you did for the portfolio?

Interviewee: The writer's evolution essay?

Interviewer: Is that the reflective—

Interviewee: I would assume—

Interviewer: - piece?

Interviewee: Yeah, it might be because—

Interviewer: I have a question here about reflective writing that—

Interviewee: I think that's what this is.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: Because this is where we reflected on our growth as a writer. I guess I touched on it a little bit. It's the change in the tone and the ability to—

Interviewer: Wow, that's long.

Interviewee: [chuckle] Yeah. Everything seems so much shorter though. When you put it in here, you're like, "Oh, it's so wide, wait 39:45."

Interviewer: [Laughter] Yeah.

Interviewee: [Laughter] I swear. It was seven pages, at one point.

Interviewer: [Laughter] You're like, "It was so much longer before."

Interviewee: I know, and make it single spaced, you're like, "Oh, my gosh." Yeah, just the types of things I talked about, and the tone, and knowing my audience. All those things were things that I talked about in here.

Interviewer: What do you feel like you learned from that, from having to write that piece?

Interviewee: It forced you to go back and look. Cuz there's no other context I feel like I would ever go back into my computer and try and find old writing. Because it was hard enough as it is when I had to do it. To find all these pieces somewhere in my Mac. That was cool, though, that we had to do that cuz it really forced you to read them again and be able to pick out—to look at the first paper and look at the last paper and just see the huge difference. That was very cool. I liked that a lot.

Interviewer: What do you think that people who are interested in writing development, including those of us at Sweetland, could learn about writing development from your ePortfolio? What could we see about how students develop as writers from your ePortfolio?

Interviewee: Probably that your major does have a huge effect on the way that you end up writing, I think. Because I think if I had done something else, like, maybe, I'd done philosophy, or, I don't know, English. Probably, the things that I would've written about and my skills would've been totally different.

Like, I would have no idea how to do a scholarly paper, which is all that I know how to do now. It's because you end up taking so many classes, and that's, those are the classes that you have to do these long writing projects for your upper-level major classes. I think that seriously shapes how you end up writing.

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah. Thinking back to the gateway course, how did the experience in the capstone course compare to your experience in the gateway course?

Interviewee: [chuckle] The gateway course was so much easier, I think. [chuckle] The gateway course, they really held your hand a lot more than the capstone course. They really expected you to know how to do this.

Interviewer: [Laughter] Yeah.

Interviewee: Things that we hadn't really learned about. They just threw you out there, and it's just—

Interviewer: Figure it out.

Interviewee: Yeah. "You can do it. You're fine." A lot less holding your hand, and it was, I think, just a ton more writing. Even though it was only the two projects, the two papers, or whatever, it was tons more writing than I feel like I did in the gateway course. I was not expecting that at all.

Interviewer: Did the gateway course feel hard while you were in it?



Interviewee: [Laughter] Yeah. Yeah, it did. Yeah. We were talking about this, actually, when we were showing each other our final websites. We were like, “At the time it seems so hard, but now, looking back, God, I would do anything to go back to that class.”

Interviewer: [chuckle] That was so easy.

Interviewee: [chuckle] We were not prepared for this capstone class. It was just much more work than we thought, but it was cool, then, at the end, to see everyone’s final work.

Interviewer: Yeah. What have your experiences been like working with other writers throughout the minors? Sounds like you guys had some conversations about—

Interviewee: Yeah, it’s been awesome. It’s been awesome to be able to look at other people’s writing and see it grow because we were, we’ll be put in groups a lot to edit each other’s ideas and things that we were doing for the project. It was really cool to be able to go back and see how people started and what they thought they were gonna end up doing, and then see what it actually turned out to look like. That was really cool, and, yeah, we all had a Facebook page. I feel like our class is pretty close.

Interviewer: Yeah, it sounds like it.

Interviewee: The whole class time was always usually just group discussions about things. There were only, maybe, 18 of us at a round table, so we got really close with each other and were able to communicate a lot, and feel comfortable to ask questions, and stuff. That was good.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. That’s great. What differences do you see between the gateway and the capstone ePortfolios?

Interviewee: [chuckle] We all used WordPress, I feel, for gateway course. I’m pretty sure we all used WordPress. Just the style of them, I think, is a lot different, and the types of writing that are in it, a lot of people, I think, are trying to use this portfolio. They’re putting the link on their résumé, and using it for other things.

I think the tone of it, a lotta times, is more formal. Mine is one of the most informal ones that I’ve seen just because I did a project on happiness, so it couldn’t be super serious. Most people did really intense topics, or made it very academic, or very serious. Yeah, just the tone was definitely different, for sure. Yeah. [chuckle]

Interviewer: Hmm. You’re not using the gateway portfolio in the same way, like on your professional—

Interviewee: [Laughter] No. Oh, no. No.

Interviewer: You laugh. I think that's ridiculous.

Interviewee: Well, I thought about taking some pieces from it, but I wouldn't use the WordPress site cuz it was just terrible. We all had no idea what we were doing, so putting our stuff in there, we didn't try and make it really cool or special in any way. I didn't do anything like links to pictures and that. Nothing like that.

Interviewer: You just threw it in there.

Interviewee: I just threw it in there. Yeah. Just to get it on the page.

Interviewer: [Cross talk 44:45] Yeah, yeah. .

Interviewee: [chuckle] I thought about taking my "Why I Write" piece and putting it in here, but then I was like, "Eh, nah. I don't need it. I don't wanna put too much on this." Yeah.

Interviewer: Both gateway and the capstone courses emphasized reflective writing. With this writer's evolution piece, and I know there was quite a bit of reflection in the gateway course. How would you describe your experience with this kind of reflection?

Interviewee: Unlike anything I've had to do before cuz there's no other class you would ever need to reflect on your writing, I don't think. It's always moving forward. What are you gonna do next? What are doing now? You never stop, and go back, and say, "Oh, look at this piece I did a while ago."

Maybe, in an English class, I had to revise a paper I had already written, but no other class makes you go back and look. I think, when you go back and look, you can see what your strengths are. It really makes it obvious what you're good at. Then, you can take that and move forward from that, knowing how you've changed, and how you can still become better, and play up your strengths, and stuff.

Interviewer: It's a great way of thinking about it. Has this reflection given you new ways to talk about your writing? New terms or concepts?

Interviewee: I guess, kind of. I wouldn't really know, though, because I never had to do this before. I never really talked about my writing before. I mean, I was able to pick out themes and whatnot, but I don't know if I necessarily learned how to talk about it differently. Cuz I'd never really done that before.

Yeah, just being able to, at least, look at it, and see the difference, and pick out these are major—cuz you can't just go through every piece and say, "This is what was different about this." You have to pick out major things and then talk about those throughout the paper. Just being able to look at that and pick out, "Oh, my grammar was better here. These are the themes that I pulled out." That was a good skill to learn, I guess.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. As you know, the minor program is still pretty new, and you've given me some really great suggestions for us to be thinking about. Do you have any other suggestions?

Interviewee: Yes, one more. I don't know if you know about the point system that we do.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: [chuckle] It's awesome, but it's terrible at the same time because it was really hard for all of us. We were always talking about this. That we all really wanted to do a great job on our project, obviously.

Interviewer: [Cross talk 47:03].

Interviewee: I have a lot invested in it, and we're gonna be showing it to a panel of people. There's a lot riding on it, but it was really strange to all of us that we weren't getting any points, or credit, or anything for it. Someone who did a terrible project could get an A in the class cuz they did all these little assignments that will build up your points. Then, someone who did a fantastic job on the project, spent so much time on it, and didn't bore you about the points cuz they were tryin' to make a great project, could not do well in the class.

I feel like more, I guess, emphasis on the actual—what does it actually look like at the end? How hard did you really—how much time did you put into it—would've been much more productive, then. It's cool that you can get an A if you do the things. None of 'em are graded. You can just get it done and rack up your points.

Looking back, I'd say—cuz that's probably not the best way to evaluate the, show how well you did in the class. Because the project isn't even graded. It's what you spend hours on, and you don't get any grade. No one is looking back and saying, "That was fantastic," or, "That was horrible." "Here's an A. Here's, a D." [chuckle]

Interviewer: Right. You feel like the time you invested in this—

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: - doesn't reflect in your grade?

Interviewee: Right. Now, that I've finished this, and I'm tryin' to figure out all my points, I hafta—cuz you can submit different things. If you did certain things that helped you create the project, you can submit them and ask for points for them, but nothing that actually went into the project you can get points for. For example, I wrote blogs while I was doing—cuz I tried to improve my happiness over time, and I used myself as a case study for it.

I wrote these blogs, and then I pulled bits and pieces from that and wrote about it, but I don't, actually, have the blogs in my project, per se. Supposedly, I can get points for writing blogs. At the same time, now, I'm gonna have to go back and try and pick things out that I can get points for. When I'm like, "This is what it is." I did all that, so I don't know why you hafta go back now and try and get points, negotiate points for these [cross talk 49:02].

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Yeah. It just seems goofy.

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah. Any other suggestions? That's really helpful.

Interviewee: I think that's it. That was the only thing. That, and having more help with the actual site production. Everything else, I really liked. I thought it was awesome. I really did like this class. This was a really, really cool to be able to do anything you wanted.

Interviewer: Yeah, that is really cool.

Interviewee: [chuckle] Yeah, it's really fun. When you have to write 30 pages, it might as well be something you like. [Laughter]

Interviewer: [chuckle] Yeah, exactly. It should be something you like.

Interviewee: Yeah, right.

Interviewer: You're gonna be struggling.

Interviewee: Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: Can you think of anything that you feel like professors should know, in general, about writing as an undergraduate, or writing at the undergraduate level? What could professors know, in general?

Interviewee: I guess, just that everyone's coming from a different background. It's really interesting to me seeing people from different high schools. I have a

good friend who came from northern Michigan, and their writing program was terrible. The high school was terrible.

When they came in, they were expected to write at a college level, and not everyone comes in with the same ability to write. I think it's hard, especially for incoming students, to be evaluated based off of a standard that not necessarily is fair for everyone. Some people came in and are already great writers, but some people are terrible.

I think it's more professors should definitely look at the progression over time, and not, necessarily, putting this standard on freshmen right away, and making them, forcing them. Cuz, of course, once you get into college, you figure out how to write. I think, initially, coming in, that was interesting to me to see, especially, the [English course]. Just how different everyone wrote and where everyone came from was just like night and day. I think that's important to think about.

Interviewer: That's really helpful. Do you have any other comments or anything else you'd like to add? Anything that you thought we might talk about, but we didn't?

Interviewee: Ah, I think that's pretty much it.

[...]

Interviewer: I really appreciate it.

Interviewee: Yeah, no problem.

Interviewer: Have a great afternoon.

Interviewee: Yeah, you, too.

[End of Audio]