

Interviewer: Okay, so I'm *** and it's December 8th, 2014. I'm here with *** doing an exit interview. Okay, so the first question that I have for you is how do you describe yourself as a writer?

Interviewee: As a writer I feel like I am not—I'm probably average. I'm not as good as some of the English major, but business major wise I'm probably average.

Interviewer: Okay, so compared to your peers in the business major?

Interviewee: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: Average, okay. How would you describe the role of writing in your life?

Interviewee: I don't actually do a lot of writing. I think it's just because I'm more of a business person so I do more number crunching and analysis than actual writing. I do write once in a while for an assignment or just instant messaging or Facebook. I don't actually write for fun.

Interviewer: Okay. How would you describe yourself as a writer when you began here at the University of Michigan?

Interviewee: Yeah, when I first came I think I was probably not as good as where I am now because I just feel like as I grew I became more professional in my writing than in high school I wasn't as serious. I guess they didn't care as much so I think when I first came I probably wasn't as good.

Interviewer: To clarify your high school instructors didn't care as much or—

Interviewee: Yeah, so the school probably wasn't as competitive so it wasn't as big of a deal.

Interviewer: Okay. To what extent would you say you've grown and changed since then as a writer?

Interviewee: I think freshman and sophomore year I probably got better since I was taking more English classes as well as classes that require writing. Then junior and senior year I focused more on finance, so I did less writing and probably dis-improved or got not as well. It's more like a curve, it goes up and then went back down.

Interviewer: Oh, interesting. You feel like because you didn't take as many writing classes in the last two years that you—

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: --decreased your skills as a writer. That's really interesting. Okay, as you graduate what are your goals for yourself as a writer?

Interviewee: You know I actually realized that writing is pretty important from the internships that I was in even though I was number crunching I still had to write out what that actually means instead of just numbers. My goal is to actually improve continuously to get better at business writing, concise writing, as well as just writing in general so people can understand better.

Interviewer: Yeah, definitely. What were the audiences for that sort of analytical, you were doing analysis of numbers or—

Interviewee: Yes, so the audience is more my manager, but then it will also translate to other people that they work with and/or the clients. Because they have to show their findings.

Interviewer: Right, okay.

Interviewee: It's actually a lot of people.

Interviewer: Yeah, definitely. Very different sort of levels of expertise that they're bringing in.

Interviewee: Right, right, right.

Interviewer: Yeah, that's so interesting. Thinking across your writing experiences at University of Michigan what do you think it means to write well?

Interviewee: Meaning to write well is to target your audience. Depending on what kind of writing you're doing you want to make sure that your point come across as being that and in creative writing they know that it's not real. Also concise so you're not repeating yourself ten times, as well as just to use different words. Words that describe things better than just trying to explain in a lot of words.

Interviewer: Which upper level writing courses have you taken?

Interviewee: In business we actually don't need an upper level writing class. I did take the [first-year English course], no [English course] as well as [upper-level English course].

Interviewer: Oh, okay, nice.

Interviewee: They were both freshman year.

Interviewer: Oh wow, so you took [first-year English course] in the fall and then [upper-level English course] in the winter.

Interviewee: Winter, right.

Interviewer: What were your experiences in [upper-level English course]? What was that like?

Interviewee: Yeah, I think [upper-level English course] was actually better for me because I knew what they were expecting instead of the first English class you don't know what to do. Then also since I had a base of my writing already I was able to improve upon what I had and the feedback that I got from [first-year English course]. [Upper-level English course] was actually a lot better. I got better grades. It was easier for me.

Interviewer: Nice. What effect did those experiences have on you as a writer?

Interviewee: Yeah, so for awhile I wasn't against writing. I never liked writing so it wasn't something I'll just do for fun. As I was writing I feel like I actually liked it for awhile because I knew what I was doing and it came more naturally than having to sit there for three hours trying to think of something. I feel like— what was the question?

Interviewer: What effect did those experiences have on you as a writer?

Interviewee: Yeah, so it did help me a lot as a writer.

Interviewer: Nice, so just in terms of clarity of sort of knowing what was expected of you or—

Interviewee: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: Okay, that's interesting.

Interviewee: Because I was just writing a lot. I kinda know what I was doing, but then after I stopped for awhile I kind of forgot what I was supposed to do.

Interviewer: Gotcha. Do you still make use of what you learned in that course in your writing now?

Interviewee: I do to a point, but I probably don't remember everything that I learned in the class. I wish I remembered it all and just kept using it. I would say I probably don't use as much as I should from those classes.

Interviewer: Okay, interesting. What other writing courses have you taken? You mentioned [first-year English course] and [upper-level writing course], have you taken any other courses that you would consider writing courses?

Interviewee: I wouldn't say they're writing courses, but more like classes that requires a lot of writing. Asian studies classes, so I took—which one was it? Asian studies with [Instructor]. I don't remember the name. Oh yeah, for Ross

[the business school] you actually have to take right now it's called B Comm, Business Communication, so I took [second-year business course] and [third-year business course]. Those are more on presentation as well so it's writing and presentation and email skills and interview.

Interviewer: Nice, can you talk a little bit about how each of those courses, that's three you mentioned, have affected your writing to this point?

Interviewee: Yeah, so they're very different in the sense one is more research on what you find and then your understanding of the stuff in Asian studies. Versus B Comm it was more concise just business writing as long as the other person get it. They don't care as much about if it's beautiful writing, or if it's something that you will attract a reader because they kind of have to read it regardless. It's more of just like communicating for the other two classes.

Interviewer: The main difference would be the purpose?

Interviewee: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: Yeah, that's really interesting. Do you think those skills have translated into how you write now?

Interviewee: I do because now I tend to write shorter just because I feel like that's what is good, considered good in the business world. I don't write as long as creative as I should.

Interviewer: Okay, cool. Thank you. Okay, so we've already covered this. The next question is how have these writing courses—so I'm thinking specifically the B Comm courses you're talking about. How have they affected the writing you do in your concentration or in your major?

Interviewee: Yeah, so I actually do writing for the finance classes or strategy classes just to show what I learned. Because of those classes and they're in the business school so I consider them as a guideline of what I write in other classes in the business school. I use it more than I would use for English classes.

Interviewer: Nice, and does that help?

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay. How confident do you feel about writing in your concentration, in your major?

Interviewee: I am pretty comfortable. Probably as comfortable as other people I would say. Yeah, so I don't think I'm a lot better but at the same time I don't feel inferior.

Interviewer: Do you have any specific examples of that? I know that's kind of a weird question. You said earlier average. Do you have any—what is it in your writing that makes you feel that way or in your writing experiences?

Interviewee: I think it's more like the curve because business class is curved. If everyone are doing well or everyone's doing well then everyone will get 40 percent A's and 60 percent B's overall. Average is probably a B+. In my B Comm I got A's for both of them so I guess it wasn't like my writing but the final results that make me feel like I was average.

Interviewer: Were those grades for the whole course or just for the writing assignments?

Interviewee: For the whole course.

Interviewer: Oh, that's interesting.

Interviewee: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: Okay, so your sense of yourself as a writer being average has to do a lot with the grades that you're getting in the course and how you know that they grade the course overall?

Interviewee: Right, right, right.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: Because I don't really see other people's writing so that's why.

Interviewer: There's not a whole lot of peer review or anything like that?

Interviewee: Yeah, not at all.

Interviewer: Okay. Let's see, I think we already covered this but how often have you—and maybe we can go a little more specific, but how often have you used skills or strategies learned in one of the writing classes, I'm thinking of the B Comm classes you were talking about, in your other courses. Can you give examples of that?

Interviewee: I guess we learned that you want to target who you wanna target. If it was investors, they don't have time to read so you wanna keep it very concise and to one paragraph or one page. I do think that I use that a lot just because they pretty much transfer even in the rubrics of other classes. They tell you to be concise so it's a good reminder as to what we learned.

Right when we get into business school we take [second-year business course] and then the next year we take [third-year business course]. It's a more earlier class so it prepares you to use that for other classes.

Interviewer: Okay, cool. Mainly sort of the concision, keeping things concise is the main—

Interviewee: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: —takeaway? Okay, cool, thank you. Thinking back over the last two years, what experiences in and out of the classroom have had an effect on your writing?

Interviewee: Can you explain that a bit?

Interviewer: Are there any stand out experiences whether in school or outside of school that you can pinpoint as having a direct effect on your writing whether for better or for worse?

Interviewee: I feel like since I'm so used to writing concise that I can't really elaborate any more. Even in an internship I tend to write really short paragraphs. Then they'll be like oh explain more, and I'll be having a hard time doing it just because that's not what I'm used to any more. For worse I guess it's not—I guess my skill of trying to explain things is not as well, but for better is that it's shorter. If they require shorter ones, then I can do it.

Interviewer: Definitely. Are there any experiences outside of the classroom that have had an effect on your writing?

Interviewee: Other experiences?

Interviewer: Yeah, so part of the question is outside of the classroom.

Interviewee: Outside of the classroom I guess previous job experience too that I did business work as well. It was always a one pager. The limit is one page no matter what it is. You can't go over that.

Interviewer: Yeah, definitely. If I use the term reflective writing, what does that mean to you?

Interviewee: I remember doing that for [first-year English course] and [second-year English course]. It's just like you write and then afterwards you kinda write about how you felt when you were writing. It's like what were the challenges or things that you came across. How did you write the way you did? That's what I think about.

Interviewer: Have you recently used reflective writing in your own writing processes whether—and this could be something that was assigned to you or just that you did on your own?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: Probably not, not recent in one, two years.

Interviewer: Okay. What have your recent experiences been of working with other writers in your courses or in other content. This is another one like you mentioned that you don't have a whole lot of peer review in your courses. This could include in the classroom but also outside of the classroom.

Interviewee: I guess for group projects sometimes you write—every person will write a part of it. I'll read their part and then read my part, and I guess did you say what do I think about it?

Interviewer: Just what have your experiences been like with it?

Interviewee: Yeah, I read it. Then so I kinda see what they're writing as well. Our goal is to sound similar.

Interviewer: Oh, OK, yeah interesting.

Interviewee: Yeah, so the professor would think it's the same person, yeah.

Interviewer: What are your strategies for doing that? I know that can be really challenging because people bring so many different writing styles.

Interviewee: Yeah, so we usually have one person that just edits the whole thing at the end. I guess we would try to sound similar, but at the same time someone will use their writing style and change it all.

Interviewer: Okay, and then so you mentioned not a whole lot of peer review in your classes. Can you think of any examples of that, of peer review?

Interviewee: In my major?

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: No, I wouldn't say so.

Interviewer: Okay, probably in [first-year English course] and stuff?

Interviewee: Right, right, right.

Interviewer: Okay, and yes to group writing to projects.

Interviewee: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: Okay, so now that you're about to graduate what advice would you give to college students about writing? What are some of the things that you think they should think about as they begin writing a paper if you were to give advice?

Interviewee: Yeah, I think just brainstorming was one of the things that I learned, one of the things. Just sit down and just scribble as much as you can. The other thing is if I could go back I'd probably take more writing classes even though I won't do as well. I think in college it's just like we're so focused on grades that we don't wanna take classes that we're not good at.

At the same time that's why we're here. I would have taken more if I could do it ungraded or not seen. I would encourage them to probably try to go in a few more writing classes because it's actually really important no matter where you're going.

Interviewer: Nice, okay cool. Thank you. That's a really interesting insight that the potential grades played a role in your decision to take or not take writing classes.

Interviewee: Yeah, and the higher you are, the 300 levels, you're probably taking it with writing majors, right? I felt like it was a disadvantage for me to just take a class to strengthen my skill. I didn't wanna take a pass/fail because they look at your transcript and wonder why you're taking a pass/fail.

Interviewer: Yeah, definitely. Okay, cool. Have you had any experiences with new media writing such as writing for blogs or for websites, making an electronic portfolio, an M-portfolio or a digital portfolio?

Interviewee: Not really, probably just like Facebook.

Interviewer: Okay, in your own time?

Interviewee: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: Outside of school. Any other blogging or anything like that?

Interviewee: No, I tried doing photo clip where you take a photo and then you write about it, but that didn't work out.

Interviewer: Yeah, it's interesting how some of those catch you and some don't.

Interviewee: Uh-huh.

Interviewer: I'm awful at Tumblr. I'm just really bad at it. *[Laughter]*

Interviewee: Yeah, and the fact that you have to do it every day or every week.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: No, I can't.

Interviewer: You miss so much.

Interviewee: Right.

Interviewer: Totally. With Facebook are there any experiences that you've had with that type of writing that you see connections between that realm and the writing you've done for school?

Interviewee: Audience is you wanna write something that other people would care about. Audience is probably similar, similarities between them.

Interviewer: It's huge, right? Because it's so immediate with Facebook you can tell whether or not somebody was successful just based on the attention, yeah.

Interviewee: Right.

Interviewer: Okay, have those experiences affected your sense of writing?

Interviewee: No, I wouldn't say so. I wouldn't say I'm very active on Facebook so that's probably why. I probably post once every three months so no.

Interviewer: Okay. Let's see, okay so you've been uploading pieces of writing to the study archive on CTools. How has that process been going for you?

Interviewee: Harder and harder cuz I don't take as many writing-oriented classes any more. I think the last few were probably shorter than before just because I don't have a sample of longer writings that I do for classes no.

Interviewer: Okay, and so that's kind of in keeping with the trend that you mentioned of concise, right?

Interviewee: Right, right.

Interviewer: Okay, so why did you choose the pieces that you chose to upload for the archive?

Interviewee: Because I think this year was probably the hardest because it was mostly group writing. I wanted to upload something that was my own writing and not including other people. That was probably one of the only ones that I could find.

Interviewer: Oh, okay. It was the only single-authored—

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: —text?

Interviewee: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: What was it that you uploaded?

Interviewee: It was actually for photography. It's probably not serious writing. It was just a reflection of a reading that I did. She said not to be—what was it? Don't really care about writing. Just say what you wanna say. It's probably worse than all the other ones that I have done.

Interviewer: That's interesting. It was more about the content than the actual writing.

Interviewee: Right, right, right, yeah.

Interviewer: That's really interesting. It was a reading response?

Interviewee: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: What was the reading on, do you remember?

Interviewee: It was on—was it Sontag? It was one of the books. We were supposed to read a chapter and just say how is that similar to photography. How does that change your view on photography?

Interviewer: Oh, interesting, cool. What was it like looking back over your old writing and uploading some of it for this study?

Interviewee: I haven't really looked at my old writing, but I'll probably say it was better before.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: Uploading now is just harder.

Interviewer: Do you think the act of uploading the writing made you think differently about your writing at all?

Interviewee: Yeah, so as I was trying to find one for this year I realized how little writing I did over the whole semester. It kind of made me think maybe I should do more writing on my own just so I can keep up with it and not forget it.

Interviewer: Interesting. Would that be writing on your own for school, about school stuff or just outside of the classroom about whatever you wanted?

Interviewee: Just outside. For that I was thinking about doing more GMAT verbal just for fun so I can keep up with the writing.

Interviewer: Oh, interesting. I'm actually not super familiar with the GMAT. Is that the business school?

Interviewee: The business school, yeah.

Interviewer: [Cross Talk 23:32]

Interviewee: I think they have an essay writing as well as grammar, correction or something.

Interviewer: Is there vocab stuff too?

Interviewee: No, that's GRE.

Interviewer: Yeah, I was gonna say that's what I'm familiar with is the GRE which is pretty similar I think to the SAT.

Interviewee: Yes, yes.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: ACT is probably similar to GMAT.

Interviewer: Oh, okay, okay, interesting. That would be one way of practicing some writing skills and also preparing for the GMAT?

Interviewee: Right, right.

Interviewer: Okay, interesting. Do you plan to go on to get your MBA? Is that what the GMAT would prepare you for?

Interviewee: Yeah, so it's good for five years so I might—I was thinking about taking it just in case I wanna do it later on. I'm not sure about whether or not I wanna go yet.

Interviewer: Okay, that's fair. Let's see, okay so this is one of my favorite questions. What do you think that instructors should know about teaching writing at the undergraduate level? That could be any instructor. It's like you could think about your English instructors that you took, you could think about instructors in your major whether—yeah so what advice would you give to them about teaching writing?

Interviewee: Yeah, so what I liked about B Comm is that it was more of your progress in the sense that everyone starts different. They graded upon how much improvement you had versus more of the English classes the instructors they have rubrics that they grade with. It was more intimidating and I didn't have as much drive as I would have if it was based on improvement. Just because I'll be like oh I'm not gonna do well anyways so I might as well not try. Versus if I can improve more than I can get a better grade. My advice would be to kinda grade each student on the level that they're in right now.

Interviewer: Right, that's really interesting. You're saying that having the rubric was almost demotivating for you?

Interviewee: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: In your B Comm classes how did the instructors justify their grades to you? Would they write a note along with it or would they give you a written comment?

Interviewee: Yeah, so they would tell you what the requirements are. Then at the end they would write what they think of it and give you a grade. Then the final grade itself doesn't have to be the same as the grading from before. They have a little gray area where they can add or subtract based upon your participation or how much improvement you had.

Interviewer: You find that system more motivating?

Interviewee: Yeah, so I actually went to them more often just because I wanna see what they're thinking, and then to see what I need to improve on.

Interviewer: That's really interesting. Would that sort of substitute for the information that you would have gotten from the rubric in—

Interviewee: Well, it's more like I want to do better because I have a chance of doing better in the class. That's why I go to them more often and then just try to improve myself more.

Interviewer: Okay, that's really interesting. That would be your advice for all—

Interviewee: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: —instructors for teaching writing. Okay. Do you have any other comments, anything that we haven't covered about your writing experiences here or anything that you thought of that you didn't get a chance to say?

Interviewee: Yeah, so I realize that the English classes here are not very open to everyone that are not English majors. I'm taking photography right now and they have photography for non-majors. For me it was like oh I don't think it will be as hard as—because I'm very interested in photography, but I wouldn't wanna do a studio class because I'll be taking classes with actual art students. If there were creative writing for non-major or classes that are not directly taken with the major people, I would be more likely to take them. Yeah, I just didn't take that many because I was worried or scared.

Interviewer: Yeah, that's something that occurred to me when you were talking that it would really make a lot of sense to have an upper division writing specifically for non-majors kind of thing.

Interviewee: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: That's really interesting. Do you think that the B Comm classes that you took sort of filled that role for you or do you think there's something else that you could have gotten from an English class for non-majors?

Interviewee: Yeah, B Comm was definitely different and I wouldn't even say that their main focus is writing. I think their main focus is to be more well-rounded for business so it was one-third presentation, one-third writing, one-third of just speaking in general, talking. I would benefit a lot from just writing classes.

Interviewer: Okay, so focused on the writing?

Interviewee: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: That's really interesting. Any other thoughts, comments, reflections?

Interviewee: Is ELI the same as English or it's different?

Interviewer: It's a different entity on campus. It's like a different department.

Interviewee: Oh, I see. If I knew a bit more about it maybe that—because I think that's like the one that's kind of for non-major. I'm not sure. If I understand it a bit more, maybe I would take those.

Interviewer: Okay, and what about Sweetland, did you ever—

Interviewee: Yeah, I've gone to Sweetland a few times. The walk-in hours as well as making an appointment. It was just hard because you're always getting a different person. If you're working on one essay, you get multiple feedback from different people, from different instructors or buddies, whatever you call them. It wasn't as effective as I would like it to be.

Interviewer: Okay, did you find that you got conflicting feedback from people?

Interviewee: Yeah, and I would spend half the time trying to explain what my project is when I explained it the time before. I wouldn't even go more than twice.