

Interviewer: [...]. All right, so just for the record, I'm \*\*\*, and I'm meeting with \*\*\*. [...]. It is—what is the date?

Interviewee: Twenty— twenty-eight.

Interviewer: It's March 28 [...]. All right, so \*\*\*, just to get started, there's some kind of general questions about your thinking about yourself and your own writing. The first question is, how do you describe yourself as a writer.

Interviewee: Just like an open question?

Interviewer: Yeah, just very open.

Interviewee: When I write, I usually—I don't map it out the way a lot of people do, like outline and stuff. I write the way I would speak it 'cause I'm more of a speaker. A lot of times, my writing will just like—I just write it the way it sounds in my head, I guess.

Interviewer: Okay, great. Thinking about sort of your own vision of your writing, also yourself as a writer, how would you describe the role of writing in your life?

Interviewee: This year, actually, one of my roommates in encouraged me to write down my thoughts and stuff 'cause I really like to talk, and I think they don't have all the time to listen to me talk. [Laughter] She's just like, "Oh, buy yourself a journal, and write in that journal." I found that it really helps. At first, it was a lot of just writing, like organizing my thoughts, 'cause that's basically what I do when I talk to them. Since then, a lot of it has been writing down what I'm feeling. It's kinda hard to describe.

I write down my thoughts on a particular issues. It's become less focused on me and more like what I think of what's going on. Last night, I wrote about the gay marriage debate 'cause it's something I feel really passionate about, but I've never really felt comfortable arguing it to people because it's very politically charged. I used to get in arguments with my dad. I'm not as rational when I'm passionate about something. Last night, I just wrote everything down and constructed an argument so that if I ever got in an argument with my dad or someone, it would be more constructed, I guess.

Interviewer: That was very much personal writing? That wasn't like you were asked to write about that topic for a class or—

Interviewee: No. I mean, it was—we were talking about it in one of my classes which is what made me think about it, so.

Interviewer: It's a way to kind of work out your thoughts, ideas.

Interviewee: Yeah, like back when a lot of the school shootings happened, I wrote about that, too, just to get my thoughts on paper, I guess.

Interviewer: Oh, that it really interesting. That's great.

Interviewee: Yeah. My roommate—it was a good idea to write down everything.

Interviewer: Did you tell her later?

Interviewee: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. 'Cause she does it, too, so she says she gets it.

Interviewer: That is great. That's so interesting. Thinking about when you came to the University of Michigan—you're a junior now, so thinking back a couple years—how would you describe yourself as a writer then, and the last's about questions about sort of development?

Interviewee: Before, I definitely wrote less, and most of the writing I did was structured, like a five-paragraph essay. We wrote those for the SAT, the ACT, and in every English class I had in high school. When I first came here, my first class was the first-year writing requirement. I took Great Books 'cause I'm in honors and we had to. With those papers, I definitely structured it very—as a five-paragraph essay. Since then, I've taken philosophy classes, so I've learned how to write philosophy paper. I'm a psych [psychology] and soc [sociology] major, so we've learned how to write research papers and stuff. I just expanded my different types of writing, I guess.

Interviewer: Would you say you've grown as a writer? Do you think you approach it differently? You talk a little bit about your kind of stream of conscious approach. I don't know, has anything changed in the last years?

Interviewee: I mean, I don't know if this is just like me saying what I wish would happen, but I feel like I do better on papers that I write the week before or something. If I work on it months in advance, if I plan it out, outline it, and then write it from there, I feel like I don't do as well. I mean, I don't know if there's any empirical evidence to back that up, but I feel like I write better when it's just coming out.

Interviewer: Okay, and when it's closer to the deadline? Not farther away?

Interviewee: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

Interviewer: Some people would say a week out is actually a long time. [Laughter]

Interviewee: I mean, normally, I start freaking out about it a week out. I start—'cause I'll make one of those webs, I guess—is that what they're called—a couple days out, and then I'll literally write out the paper the night before, usually up until the morning.

Interviewer: That's great. How would you describe your goals for yourself as a writer?

Interviewee: I wanna go to law school. I wanna be a lawyer, so my goal would definitely be more of the argumentative writing. That's why a lot of my writing in philosophy, I feel

like, has been really helpful with that, just being able to construct an argument that follows logically and then counter any other arguments that may come up.

Interviewer: Great. When do you have to apply?

Interviewee: Next fall. I'm starting to think about recommendation letters and stuff. It's nerve-wracking.

Interviewer: It comes up fast, doesn't it? Yeah. These next few questions are about transfer, thinking of how something you did in one class maybe has been useful or not later on. Thinking about your writing experiences at U of M [University of Michigan], what do you think it means to write well?

Interviewee: Definitely, what I've learned most here is to construct a thesis. That's the most important thing with a lot of the papers for the professors that I've written for is just to construct a thesis, like an argument, and have everything follow from there. One of my first classes that I took with a significant amount of papers was [Instructor's] criminology class, which it didn't really sound like a paper paper class, but she's very—I think she's helped me with writing a lot because she expects the thesis. When she gave the paper topic, I pretty much, the first paper that I wrote, it was a laundry list of what we'd learned. It read more like a textbook, I think, than an argumentative paper.

I went to her office hours, and she talked to me about what she expected. She looked at some of the things that I had, and she was like, "Oh, you can construct a thesis from this. You can argue something." I think that—I really learned from her, and since then, I've been able to more like construct a thesis. A lot of times, it's interesting because it's something that I would've never thought of before, but I take together all the facts, and I can see something, like a common thread, in all of them throughout them together. So that's been—

Interviewer: When did you take the criminology class?

Interviewee: I wanna say [...] my freshman year.

Interviewer: Okay, so, so early on then?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: You mentioned this just a moment ago that for the first year writing requirement, you didn't take [English course].

Interviewee: No, I'm in honors, so we had to take Great Books.

Interviewer: Okay, and that counted as a first-year writing requirement?

Interviewee: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: Okay. Thinking about that class, then, what were your experiences in that course around writing?

Interviewee: I felt like it was, honestly, less about writing and more about reading. I'm not sure—I never really did very well in the class. I got like Bs and B-pluses on my papers. I might've just missed the writing aspect of that class. I'm trying to like—I know I submitted one of my Great Book writings—it took forever to find it—for the study. I wanna say—'cause they never explicitly discussed writing with us. It was more we did reading responses to like *The Iliad*, *The Odyssey*, then, second semester, to the little readings.

I think my problem in that class, what my GSI said, was my arguments were from lectures. They were arguments that the professor made. I think for one of the papers, they asked about the motives behind Clytemnestra's murder of her husband. I think my paper was basically my notes from lecture. 'Cause that's the way it was in middle school and high school. Your professor wanted to know if you were listening in class. That's how I wrote my paper, and she was like, "I wanted you to construct your own argument." I had no idea how to do that, so I didn't do very well in the class.

Interviewer: One of our questions is about whether you're still making use of what you learned in your first-year writing requirement. Again, thinking around the work they did do on writing—and I know this class is a little different, so—

Interviewee: I mean, the thing about that is I don't think we actually wrote a paper paper. Our longest paper was like four pages. Everything else was like reading response essays. I think there were two essays and then one paper. I didn't think it helped very much, I guess. I feel like I've done a lot more writing in a lot of my other classes than I actually did in Great Books. It was mostly a lot of reading and trying to decipher the poetry.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I think the way you describe sort of learning from the criminology class around sort of argument—

Interviewee: [Inaudible 00:10:19]

Interviewer: Well, it sounds like that's more of what you're carrying with you.

Interviewee: Oh, yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Definitely. I also took a—I don't know if—for honors, we have to take the Texts and Ideas requirement second semester, freshman year. I took *Faust*. For that class, we had to write a 15-page paper, and it was completely open topic. I've never done anything like that before. That was a good experience for me, I think. It was really daunting, but once I had an idea—like, I knew, by then, that I loved sociology, and social theory was also what I was learning at that time. It really fascinated me. I ended up writing my paper—I can't even remember how I argued it, but I paralleled *Faust* to Weber, to his Protestant ethic. It was really fun for me to be able to synthesize what I was learning in one class, which I wasn't that interested in—*Faust* was a

requirement—with sociology, which I was interested in. I ended up really enjoying writing that paper.

Interviewer: In terms of constructing that paper, were there kind of specific things they talked about in class? Or was it more you figuring it out as you went?

Interviewee: He gave us a lot of leeway. Basically, mine was a literary critique—is that what they're called—through the lens of Weber. It really didn't discuss what we talked in class, more as like what I read. I went to office hours, and I went through it with him, and he said that's what he was looking for, like something that you are interested in in the class and just like write about that.

Interviewer: That's great. Sounds interesting. Sounds like you did not take [Writing course], which is kind of an entry-level writing course. Very quickly, your concentration, you said you're in psych and sociology? Did I get that right?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Have you had an opportunity to do writing in courses in your concentration now?

Interviewee: Yes, for sociology. Definitely for sociology. For psychology, there's—I feel like they were more very short, one-page summary papers of our reading maybe for Psych 111. I haven't actually written a paper. There was one class that was cross-listed with sociology and psychology. It was [Instructor's] class, so.

Interviewer: Okay, okay. Then, maybe thinking about sociology, what are some of the kinds of writing you've been asked to do?

Interviewee: I love [Instructor]. I've taken all of her classes, and for every semester, for every class, she'll have us write two short papers, so like five, six pages. Those were what I was talking about. You have to construct a thesis and argue from there. I'm taking [Title of course] right now. Her last paper, we had to watch a movie—she had a list of movies to choose from—and then apply axioms of the sexual and natural attitude to it. That was really interesting. I like doing things like that, like applying a lens, I guess, to something that we're watching or reading. Then, now I'm taking [Title of course] with [Instructor]. For that class, we just have to do a research project, so kinda like this, I guess, then write a ten-page paper on it. I think four of those pages will probably be appendices. It won't be that bad.

Interviewer: Do you know what your project is?

Interviewee: I'm doing surveys, and I'm coding Facebook pages. I am looking at the connection between number of friends and social networks, strength of relationships, to health. Like the number of times they get sick in the year, especially in college and stuff.

Interviewer: Just kind of a follow-up question, still thinking about writing in your major, can you describe how confident you feel writing in your major then, that work that you've done in sociology?

Interviewee: I still get really nervous when I turn in a paper 'cause I definitely do better on tests than I do papers. I feel a lot more confident than I did my freshman year, sophomore year. I feel a lot more confident now.

Interviewer: Can you say why you think that is?

Interviewee: I think I just have a better idea of what professors are looking for, how to write a good paper, how to argue something, and just the experience.

Interviewer: Our next questions are about writing experiences. Nice segue. Thinking about sort of classroom writing, can you talk some about what experiences you've had in and out of the classroom that have had an effect on your writing?

Interviewee: Like writing experiences? Or just like—

Interviewer: The question is broader. What experiences, in and out of the classroom, do you think have affected your writing?

Interviewee: In the classroom, getting grades back and talking to the professor, GSI about what they were looking for has affected my writing. Outside of the classroom, like I've said, I like to recreationally write sometimes.

Interviewer: Again, thinking about the journal?

Interviewee: Yeah. I mean, reading, I hope, helps my writing. I don't—my parents think it's really weird, but I don't really like to read fiction 'cause it—I don't know. I think it takes a lot of effort to imagine a whole new world every single time you open a new fiction book. My mom likes reading fiction, so she doesn't really get it. I like reading nonfiction. That's how I decided that I liked psychology and sociology. It was just picking up those books, bargain books in Barnes and Noble. It just gelled for me, like it just worked. I just understood it. That's how I decided that I liked that area of study. Reading a lot of the research reports in psychology, like the research papers, those, I think, will definitely help me when I write my sociology paper.

Interviewer: I was just gonna—I thought it was interesting that you mentioned reading. I was gonna ask if you think there is some, an effect somehow on your writing from your reading.

Interviewee: I definitely think so. Even in high school, a lot of elements that I got for my papers were from reading.

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

Interviewee: For me, it means writing down my reflections. It means like writing down my thoughts, I guess.

Interviewer: Is that something that you've been asked to do, whether in a class or any sort of thinking back on your own work kind of prompts?

Interviewee: Not since like high school or middle school. I feel like I haven't done that here. I know for Great Books, we were given opportunities to correct our papers, but we were never told to reflect on what we wrote.

Interviewer: It wasn't like, "I did, approached the assignment for this reason"?

Interviewee: It was more like [crosstalk 00:18:46]. Oh, yeah it was very—

Interviewer: It was more just you can go back and do it again.

Interviewee: - technical, like after reading her responses, just correct your paper.

Interviewer: Okay. Working with other writers in your courses, have you had any experience with workshopping, peer review?

Interviewee: Oh, yeah. In one of my sociology classes, [Title of course]—I took that last semester; I really liked it—we were given, I think—okay, so we had three papers. For two of them, we peer-reviewed, and for one of them, it was just turn it in. I always find it really hard to peer review, to review other people's papers 'cause when I read it, I'm not really thinking constructively, I guess. I don't know. A lot of times, I feel like I'm grasping at straws when I correct them. It's a lot of like spelling, grammar, and like, oh, maybe you would benefit from adding something here, even though it was fine. I don't know how much the peer editing helped me, because she didn't grade it before and after or anything.

Interviewer: Then you also go feedback from other students?

Interviewee: Right. Yeah, we peer-reviewed each other. We were like put in pairs for each paper.

Interviewer: Okay, and how was the experience with the, in feedback you got?

Interviewee: Same thing. A lot of it was grammar, spelling, I guess. Then, it depended on my peer reviewer. I had a class with a bunch of football players, and so they were very slapdash in their peer reviewing. For my first paper, the girl who peer-read 00:20:34 mine, I actually was in philosophy with her, sophomore. She was very constructive, and she offered a lot of good criticism for my paper.

Interviewer: Have you ever worked on any projects where you had to jointly construct a paper?

Interviewee: No, not any—

Interviewer: Sort of joint writing? Okay.

Interviewee: Team projects and presentations, but not a paper.

Interviewer: Not specifically writing work. Okay. If you imagine that you're giving somebody advice about writing, what are some of the things they should think about as they're beginning a paper?

Interviewee: If I were a professor, I guess, telling someone how to write a paper, I would say—

Interviewer: Or a student.

Interviewee: - I would say to write down what you know, like what you want in your paper, and then take a thread and thread them all together. Make sure that your argument follows threads.

Interviewer: Any other steps in the process?

Interviewee: I don't know if the—I know, with me, I write the paper at night, and then I print it out in the morning before class. That's when I proofread it 'cause I'm usually pretty tired at night. I know some people, they say they write it a week ahead, and they leave it for a week and then come back to it fresh. Definitely proofread your paper. Whatever works for you. If you can finish it a week ahead, more power to you. I think whenever I proofread it in the morning, I never change anything in the paper big. I usually just correct for spelling, grammar.

Interviewer: A couple questions about digital, or new media writing. Have you had any experience with new media writing in any courses?

Interviewee: New media, like ...

Interviewer: That could be—here are some examples they offer. Blogs, websites, sound video production.

Interviewee: Yeah, we wrote—

Interviewer: PowerPoint.

Interviewee: - blogs in—I took [Title of course] for psych. We blogged for that class, and we also blogged for [Title of course], the class I just talked about. I'm not sure what it



was about [Title of course], but I just, it never really clicked for me. The blogs were very, just mechanically written the night before. Oh, I have a blog entry due. I'll write about this. I would go through the PowerPoint and find a topic that I wanted to blog about and just spit it out, basically. With [Title of course], for the blog, maybe I'm just more interested in the class. I would be sitting there in lecture, and I'd think, she'd say something, and I'd think of something that I'd read online or something that I've researched before, talked about in class before, and I'd kind of like jot that note in the margin. Oh, you can write a blog entry about this. I felt like my blog entries for that class were a lot more cohesive. I enjoyed writing them more.

Interviewer: Did that kind of writing, that sort of online audience changes a little—the other classmates saw it, right?

Interviewee: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

Interviewer: Did it change your thinking about your own writing at all? Did you feel like your approach in any way—

Interviewee: It was much more informal. It had—her criticism for my first blog entry was it was a little too long. 'Cause if someone's reading your blog online, they're not gonna have the attention span to read two pages. She said to just make it very short, to the point. I think that's what I learned from that class about writing blog entries.

Interviewer: Okay. Any other kinds of new media work? PowerPoints, sound, video editing? Anything like that?

Interviewee: I've done PowerPoints since middle school, but I've never done a presentation presentation, like a proposal to anyone through my PowerPoints. It's mostly been like if the teacher asks us to—sometimes the professor will assign you a chapter, and you get a ten-minute presentation on that chapter. That's the extent of my PowerPoint work. Then, I've never done any sound or digital media work.

Interviewer: Our last few questions are asking about the archive pieces that we've asked you to go ahead and put up on our site, on the CTools [learning management system] site. Is that process been okay? You mentioned you found a few things to put up. Great. If you can, just walk me through what kinds of pieces you chose and your thinking about how you chose them.

Interviewee: My pieces were really limited 'cause I—ever since middle school, I like deleting everything at the end of the semester off my laptop just so it's like a cleanse. I didn't realize that so many schools and things would ask you to submit writing samples and stuff. Yeah, I had to go back—a lot of times, I email things to myself to print out an official, so there's like a record of that, thank God. That's where I got my pieces. I know I submitted one of my essays for Great Books. It was probably a first draft 'cause I emailed it to myself, and I cc'd my GSI. It probably wasn't the final paper that I turned in. Then I think the other one that I submitted was a sociology paper that I wrote. It was

probably the one I did, like best of all the ones I could find. It probably wasn't a final paper, either, actually.

Interviewer: Do you remember what it—the sort of structure of it was?

Interviewee: I wanna say the one I ended up submitting was for one of my sociology classes. We had to read a book and then argue a thesis about how gender-natural attitudes—'cause I took [Title of course]—how the gender-natural attitude tracked onto the book. That paper—this is how I constructed a lot of [Instructor]'s papers now 'cause I know what she's asking for. I would like come up with a thesis and then an example from the book, and then I explain the concept from class and connect those two together, and then another example from the book, another concept from class, link those two together. I think that was what the structure of the paper was. The conclusion was really short.

Interviewer: Other thoughts about the sort of archival work? It sounds like you were a little bit hampered just by what you had [crosstalk 00:27:26]—

Interviewee: Yeah. I mean, I save them now. I'm gonna need them for law school applications and stuff.

Interviewer: Yeah, that's fine. I was just saying that's what the—I teach [English course], and I was just thinking that's a good reminder for my students to not just dump it all at the end.

Interviewee: [Laughter] Yeah.

Interviewer: Great. Those are the questions from the interview. Do you have any other comments that you wanna offer about kind of your writing experiences at school, your thinking about yourself as a writing, if anything we talked about, prompts, thoughts that I didn't address?

Interviewee: Not really. I think the only thing I would say is I do feel more comfortable writing, but I definitely freak out more about papers. They make me more uncomfortable than exams would. Even blue book exams, because teachers are usually more lenient when you write essays on blue book exams and more like following a rubric, like, oh, she said this, this, this. I still get more nervous about papers.

Interviewer: Do you have thoughts about why that is? Why that you're more anxious about writing papers than taking a test?

Interviewee: I think it's because I know less what the professor's looking for and I don't know if my argument's completely sound. With exams, multiple-choice exams, there's one right answer. With blue books, they're usually just checking off what you've learned. With papers, for some professors, they're very lenient, like they want you to follow the rubric. I'm taking a class right now, or last semester, where the professor—I got points taken off because I didn't follow the rubric exactly. I think it was a psychology class, but

she wanted everything structured in that order, too, she listed on the rubric. I was not expecting that. After that, I corrected for it, and the class was fine. Part of it, I guess, is not knowing what the teacher expects.

Interviewer: I was just gonna say that discussion about the rubric sort of tied in with that thought about expectations and that it can be a little more gray about how to approach things.

Interviewee: Right, yeah. No.

Interviewer: Your discomfort, it doesn't sound like, is with your own abilities. It's more just what, how it will be assessed?

Interviewee: I think so. I'm waiting on getting one of my philosophy papers back now. I think it's just like I'm—after turning in something, the confidence of knowing either I did really well or really poorly. With writing, a lot of times, you just don't know at all. With this paper, I can't—it was due the day spring break started. I remember doing it at home, and I think it like, it woulda been a good paper for like any other class, but it was my first paper for this class. I don't know if it's what she was looking for. I don't think it was a very good philosophy paper. It was more like a good not philosophy paper. I think with that exam, she told us that she wanted us to construct one of those premise-premise-conclusions and then bring in a counter argument and then counter that counter argument. I don't think I structured it like that, so I don't know how she's gonna grade it.

Interviewer: That's actually helpful to kind of hear you walk through sort of what the reservation might be around writing versus other sorts of assignments. That's helpful. Anything else come to mind at all?

Interviewee: I don't think so.

Interviewer: Great. Well, \*\*\*, I really appreciate your help today. [...].

Interviewee: Okay.

[End of Audio]