

Interviewer: This *** recording ***, and it is November 22. How would you describe yourself as a writer?

Interviewee: Could you clarify what you just said?

Interviewer: Sure. How would you describe the role of writing in your life?

Interviewee: I think writing is a necessary part of life, but I don't particularly enjoy doing it—only for assignments and communication—written communication.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: That's about it.

Interviewer: What kinds of written communication?

Interviewee: When my parents send me emails or if you're instant messaging someone. Something like that.

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

Interviewee: I feel like I had to do a lot more writing, because all the assignments require that I—especially the first-year writing requirement. You're just sitting there writing five pages every couple of weeks. I've had to think more about it, but I still don't like it.

Interviewer: You still didn't like it? Is that—

Interviewee: Not at all.

Interviewer: - okay.

Interviewee: I always just find it hard to write essays, cuz—when you're online that's fine. You know what you're gonna say anyway, but when it's a paper you have to think more about it.

Interviewer: Okay. Would you say that you've grown at all as a writer as you've been here?

Interviewee: I mean I think my writing has improved, but it's mainly because it's just practice—just like if you read more you get better at reading. If you write more you get better at writing. Also reading helps writing, too, so if you read more you write better.

Interviewer: Okay. Do you read a lot?

Interviewee: Yeah, a lot. Over the summer it's just all reading, cuz you don't have time during the school year.

Interviewer: Okay, and you think that reading has helped your writing?

Interviewee: Yeah, because then I know exactly—this is such amazing writing. That doesn't mean that I can reproduce it. I'm actually reading always—one of the reasons why I hate writing is because I'll read it, and I'm like, "This isn't just like these masterpieces from all these books that I read." Then I get really upset about it, because just—it's just a stylistic problem.

It just doesn't flow the way I want it to. It's not perfect, and I think just part of what makes me so frustrated about it is because I read these great books that I'm never gonna match up to when I write. I just get really disheartened.

Interviewer: Okay. What great books are you reading?

Interviewee: Great books as in the class Great Books?

Interviewer: Yeah. No, you said just the reading you do in the summer helps with your writing.

Interviewee: I read some classics. I also read things for fun. Like this summer I read *Hitchhikers of the Galaxy*—the whole series. It's fun but also really—it also has a certain style to it, which is kinda really fun. Yeah, I had a reading list online, so I just kinda go through it over the summer. Go to the library, and I just read most of the time.

Interviewer: You feel like that reading has helped you grow as a writer?

Interviewee: Yeah, because there is certainly grammatical things or just vocabulary—you know what it means. You'd be able to put it into your writing. I don't always, because just like recognizing a word versus recalling a word and then using it is totally different. I read *Lolita* last summer. It's just like these—all these vocab words I had no idea of, but at least I've been exposed to the words versus someone who hasn't read at all. Wouldn't even know what the words mean or have any ideas.

Interviewer: Would you attribute your growth as a writer to anything other than reading?

Interviewee: I had a really good teacher in high school who was—he was my AP teacher for two years, and he really stressed the creativeness of writing. I'm really

mathematical sometimes, so I really like to be formula. It frustrates me also that writing is kinda subjective, and you can't just do it right—you can't just sit down and go, "Okay, I'm gonna do this and this and that." The process is different.

With math you're just like, "Well, I have to put this variable on this side of the equation first," and then there's a system. When you're writing there is no system. As a writer, my writing had always been really formulaic, because I'm trying to do, "Oh, yeah, it has to be like a . . ." On ACTs they always test this stupid five-paragraph form—which I don't think is good writing. I mean, it's organized, but it's just like every person's essay is gonna end up just being this five—just all the same.

Writing is a kind of art and shouldn't be so formulaic, but something 05:15 has to be creative but also can't be all over the place. It has to be organized, and then I'm always trying to figure out how to match the creativity with the organization. It takes me forever to write. My teacher—mainly he was—he got me away from the whole formulaic thing, because he was just like—he was really just an innovative sort of teacher.

Always stressing—he just—if you wrote a perfectly fine paper but it wasn't interesting, he would be like, "Eh." It kinda forced you, and then I come to university. It's actually—they prefer you to be more conventional, and I found that really confusing, too. I guess maybe when you're not conventional then you just have trouble finding good research. Maybe that's why university's like that but I—it's just kinda weird. I've gone through some changes in my writing because of that.

Interviewer: Okay. What do you mean "conventional writing at the university"?

Interviewee: I don't know. It's just because there's such a difference between my high school teacher and my college professors. Whereas if we discussed something in class in our high school and then you wrote about it—that was just a no-no, because you should be thinking something new about—I mean you can use what we learned from discussion, but don't just choose the thesis that we—our group did a group thesis.

When you're discussing things you end up usually at some consensus. Then if you're just using all the same points that you got from class it's like—if the teacher is just reading all these papers of these really motivated AP students who just write in that same way—just using what they find. He wanted us to just think outside the box. Maybe you'd made a point but then—what do you add to it that we didn't talk about?

Then here it's just like, "Oh, whatever," like one time for my Faust paper that was my first-year—one of my first-year writing requirements. I was afraid to talk about the stuff that we talked about in class, and the thesis that he was making

about—I decided to do it on Christopher Marlowe. We talked a lot about what the meaning was behind his book, and that was partly the professor’s analysis, cuz he’s lecturing.

Then I would just—when I asked my [*inaudible 07:34*], like, “Is it okay if I do like what we were talking about?” He’s like, “No,” like—he’s like, “No, it’s totally fine.” This is exactly what we were talking—this is on topic and exactly what the class is about. To me I was—I wasn’t sure if I was allowed to do that, cuz of my previous teacher.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Then the stylistic features were different as well in the university writing—not just the ideas you were talking about?

Interviewee: I don’t really remember concentrating on style that much when I—cuz the main difference was the content.

Interviewer: Okay, but you said your high school teacher you felt like was a more creative kind of writing you were doing for that?

Interviewee: In terms of thoughts. If you were to make an argument about something he wanted to see something new. I was always thinking more instead of the actual writing—more planning on how I was gonna develop it. I don’t know.

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

Interviewee: Mainly this year I’ve been really trying to cut down my writing time, because I can write okay. It’s just that it’ll take me so much longer than people around me, and I just—it’s just really annoying. When a teacher assigns a two-page paper it takes a student two hours. It takes me the whole day. I have to spend time—a lot of time to do it, and I just—my sister was a person who would just sit down and write it and write it. Then now there are all those English majors who are just like, “Eh.”

I can do one hour. It’s like for me—I am a really hard worker, and so I’m—with writing it can’t be—I wanna be perfectionist with it, but then every time I read it there’s something wrong. Then that’s why it takes forever, and it’s not like math where it’s just like, “Oh, I got the right answer. I can stop now.” That’s mainly one of my goals—is just, “How can I make it—help myself write faster so I’m not spending so much time on it?”

I have other things to do, but I really—I can’t just not do it, too. I actually kinda dropped one of my classes. I’m in the environment concentration, and then I was just writing this paper—one of four papers in the class. I guess I just hate writing. I hate doing this. I hate that this major is full of writing and persuading people

and arguments. I can't write well enough, and so I just—I dropped the class, and then I dropped my major.

Interviewer: Oh, no.

Interviewee: Now I'm a minor instead. I'm kinda disappointed that it was just all because I was so frustrated—that one moment. It was like also just other things were just overwhelming. I was like, "I can't do this paper." I just feel like I just can't take another two, three classes that will have to have me write, because I have better strengths in sciencey 10:46 things.

I find it easier to write science papers for some reason than it is for an argument paper, so I just—because environment has all these social—you have two social science requirements, which are—and I took an activism class. That's like obviously very—how do you communicate to other people how important this is? It's like a persuasion thing. I'm not even persuasive in person. How am I supposed to sound persuasive in writing?

Interviewer: Yeah. You feel like science writing is different from that?

Interviewee: Yeah, cuz science writing you have less research; you just write it. It's more straightforward, and the research will somehow—I feel like when I'm researching I'll just feel the thesis coming to me. It's just all the support will be coming to you, and then from there you can just find an easy way to just incorporate what they say. Also cuz each article was writing in itself, and you could see how they organized it. You see how—so there's—I mean, yes, science writing's always organizing of headings.

If you're writing a book it's like the same kind of—or an essay. You're just writing a normal school essay—to break it down to headings would be a bit weird. If it was just like a literature essay it'd be weird, but in science it's just like, "Yeah, it doesn't matter. You don't need to find a transition between this and that. You say, "Oh, now we're talking about the methods. Now we're talking about discussion and conclusion."

They have these things. If you label it you know what they're gonna talk about, and it doesn't matter. You don't have to think of some way to lead into it or—

Interviewer: You like that writing better.

Interviewee: - yeah, cuz it's just like—I just wanna get to it—cuz science is more direct. This is what we're talking about. Nah, nah, nah. Try not to waste your time. Not gonna be all flowery. I'm gonna be technical. I'm gonna be accurate, but I'm not gonna be flowery.

Interviewer: Okay. Alright. Writing goals: cut down on writing time. Anything else?

Interviewee: Probably better vocab. I'll be fine. I'll be doing the intro and doing the first three paragraphs. I'm like, "Yeah, I've had some great vocab." Then at some point it just starts—you keep using the same words, and then get frustrated. I don't know.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: Just too hard on myself.

Interviewer: Okay, so thinking across your writing experiences at U of M [University of Michigan]—what do you think it means to write well?

Interviewee: I think it has to be mechanically correct, because it's just basic—if it's not it'll confuse meaning. You need to be able to be organized. You have to have good ideas. You have to be a good thinker. You have to—depending on what kind of writing it is, if you're—like a science paper you have to be a good researcher. It's not just about writing. It's about synthesizing what you know.

I feel like writing is really—it really demonstrates how you think. If you're a good thinker, then you're a good writer. At least even if you're not a good writer you can make a compelling argument or make someone think something they never thought before. I think that was just part of what my high school teacher was always talking about was—that's why he emphasized content so much, cuz it's about thinking. That's part of why he was like, "No, we shouldn't talk about what we talked about in class."

You should be thinking something new, and with that then you have something to contribute to the community. It's like this literature—like scientific literature—you want to be doing a new study. It makes sense to be—just think creatively. It's what makes a good writer.

Interviewer: Okay. Great. Which first-year writing requirement course did you take?

Interviewee: I took [Great Books course], I think, and then my second semester I had to take [Title of course]. That was a German class—[German course].

Interviewer: Okay. What were your experiences in those first-year writing requirement courses?

Interviewee: I liked the second one a whole lot more, cuz everyone hates Great Books. If you're in the Honors program it's just—everyone just knows it's Great Books. It's just—it was—I enjoy reading. Literature classes are always fun to

read, and then I'm thinking about it myself, but then when I had to go down and write stuff, I'm like, "Well, this book helped me." I don't wanna tell other people about it—what my argument is, just cuz I just—it's a useless thing.

Books are just—you read something great, and you learn something from it. It's not like—I just—I'm more on the absorbing information side than the whole give it to other people and tell them what I think. I don't really critically think very well. Well, I'm not organized enough to make an argument, so Great Books was okay for reading, and we'd talk about the themes. It was interesting, but then you're not—first of all cuz Great Books is a requirement, and it's a certain kind of literature.

It's like classic Greek stuff and whatever, and so you're just kinda stuck on this subject you have to write about. If you don't care about it then you're just—you just can't think of anything creative, because being passionate about something is part of—how you can get a new idea is if you're passionate about what you think about all the time then suddenly something great will pop into your head.

For Great Books it was kinda difficult to care—although for my last one they had freer essay questions. One of them was compare film to—analyze a film using Aristototle's *Poetics* and what he said about something—about tragedy.

Interviewer: This was your last paper in the Great Books course?

Interviewee: Yeah, but it wasn't a final. It was just like any of the other ones. I think it was—my GSI [Graduate Student Instructor] required it to be longer, cuz he was really strict. I think it was actually just supposed to be normal, but he—he was like, "This is the last English." It should be—it should have citations and like all that. It's like, "Okay." That one was fine because it's freer. I chose *Star Wars*, and I—it gave me the excuse to watch it again—

Interviewer: Nice.

Interviewee: - and analyze it. When you're thinking about stuff, and you—but also my GSI hadn't read *Star Wars*—watched *Star Wars* yet. I was like, "I just feel confident about this and like I'd write about it." It was fun to write. We also—I didn't start early enough, so I was doing it—that was the only time I've ever done something—if it was an all-nighter I'd never do that.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: I did not. I went to bed at 3:00 and woke up at 6:00.

Interviewer: Oh, yeah.

Interviewee: That's like big step, cuz I love my sleep. I can't just do all-nighters. That was the only paper that I've done that for, but it was okay, because I just liked it more.

Interviewer: Great, and then you took a German course for your—

Interviewee: Yeah, it was conducted in English. It's a—yeah, that professor was just amazing. He was just so passionate about what he was talking about, and then you sit in class. You're just like, "Oh, my god, he's gonna talk about this." He was so—his ideas were so amazing. What he was saying.

Interviewer: - what was the topic of the course?

Interviewee: [Title of course]. You read four books about the story of Faust. Sell yourself to the devil sort of thing. There was like—there's *Faustus*, *Dr. Faustus* by Christopher Marlowe, which is England and really old. Then Goethe's *Faust* is the one everyone knows about, but I didn't really understand. The great thing about my professor was he wasn't—he was just there to just—the only thing we had to do was our participation, our giant final paper, and our exam.

It gave you freedom, cuz as students you—if you like something then you'll research it more, and if something in class didn't interest you then you don't have to. I'll admit I didn't read the third book that we—cuz I thought I'd read it. I was starting to read it. It was like, "This is so boring. Why is Thomas Mann so pretentious?" Whatever. We'd talk about it in class, but you didn't have to talk about it. You didn't have to write your final paper on it.

You could zone it on what you—zoom in—I don't know—on what you really like to do, or what actually interested you the most when he was talking.

[...]

It wasn't about—it wasn't like in Great Books the professor was like, "We're gonna read this. We're gonna talk about the themes. You're gonna write something about it. You have to do an argument, and you gotta discuss in class." It was just more open, and it gave you more freedom to think about what you liked about it and what you wanted to write about.

Interviewer: What was your experience writing that paper for [Title of course]?

Interviewee: It was fun. I went to—cuz I liked what I was talking about. I went to his office hours, and I said, "I want to write about this." The first thing I said was, "How do I write a ten-page paper? I've never done it before." Then he was like, "Well, you just do it like any other paper. It's just really long." It's always been—the longest I've ever done was six pages, and it's different if you're into that five-paragraph mindset obviously that's not gonna fill ten pages.

You have to think of it differently, so it helped me think that there are other organizational styles. Mine ended up being broken into two parts, two arguments. I did an analysis of the book like this is what I think it means, and now I'll talk about in the literature how this is—this is what I'm arguing is right using the text.

Then I said, "But also to understand that this argument is correct we should think about the author," and so I was using the second half to just talk about the biography of Christopher Marlowe. How the different parts of it would just—that's why he would have written a book that was to be interpreted this way. It didn't—you just develop more. You talk more about things. Now you just—you can talk about just the biography of Marlowe and that takes some paper, and doesn't—not everything has to do with the book, but you can be more in detail with it.

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

Interviewee: Well, I'm really proud of that paper just because it was just—I was able to do it. What was the question again?

Interviewer: What effect do you think that experience with the Faust paper had on you as a writer?

Interviewee: It made me just realize that I could do a ten-page paper and if I'm doing something—and how long it will take to do it and how much time I have to put into it. The next time I have a term paper I'm thinking, "Okay, I need to." I have several due this semester. I have two of them, and I think that I'll have to start now even though it's not due till December.

Yeah, and to just—just that I know that I can—I just need to just do lots and lots and lots of research, and at some point the threads will come in. You'll just be able to make something longer I guess.

Interviewer: Okay, great. Are you still making use of anything that you learned in your first-year writing requirement courses? In the writing that you're doing now?

Interviewee: I really don't remember anything from Great Books. I kinda suppressed that memory.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: Hm-mmm. Not really—other than the Faust thing. I haven't been using it.

Interviewer: Okay, so you learned how to start writing earlier, you said—from the Faust paper?

Interviewee: Yes. Also because I know that I'm a slow writer, and also just—well, no, I think it's just out—in that class I had this one big professor that was so—I was so comfortable. I would be comfortable going up to talk to him, cuz he was so passionate about it. [*Inaudible 26:14*]. It's okay to talk to this person, cuz he'll just—he'll want to talk about—to me about this. Some of my other papers I just feel that I can't talk to anyone about it, and I just kinda go through it.

Interviewer: Okay. Did you take [Writing course]?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: Okay. What is your concentration? You said—

Interviewee: German.

Interviewer: - German, and then the Environment minor.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay, so have you had an opportunity to do writing in your concentration?

Interviewee: Yeah. I think because it's a language that they always want you to write. I find German writing so much easier than English writing. For some reason my upper-level—I'm doing it right now—my upper-level writing requirement—it's in German. I really want to do it in German. I was like, "I need to take this version of the class," cuz there's three different advanced German classes, but one of them's gonna be an upper-level writing requirement.

I was like, "I have to take this exact class and not the other ones, cuz this one has the upper-level writing requirement, and I don't wanna do it in English, so I'm just gonna do it in German."

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: It's okay.

Interviewer: What kinds of writing do you do in your German minor—concentrations? Sorry.

Interviewee: In the beginning since they're just—they're just really happy that you can write—that you're writing something grammatically correct. You're back in that kindergarten age when you're like—you're a child, and you're writing, and your teachers are all like, "Wow, you're such a great writer." It's really because

you got it grammatically correct, and you spelled everything right. That was back with [instructor] 27:47, and it was objective.

It's either right, or it's wrong with the spelling and grammar as long—even if it's—as long as you're not like—organization all over the place. “Wow, you're such amazing. You're such an amazing—you just did all the grammar right, and you didn't spell anything wrong, and you looked up this vocab, and you used it right.” Stuff like that. They were like, “You're the easy grades 28:10.” They just really liked that you just used the language, so that's why language writing is a bit different than English writing.

In English you're thinking about all the nuances and trying to choose a word, and I just get so indecisive. It's like, “Should I use this word or this word?” There are so many options. Then with the German, it's just like, “Oh, I only know this word for that idea, so I'm gonna go with that word.” You're just done with it. You're not over-thinking anything.

When I write my German papers—I write it, and then I look over and just check the grammar. I'm not checking the ideas much. Also because they're always smaller papers—one page or only 300 to 400 words for the longest time. I never did more than two pages for my first couple of years. Not until last year when I had to do three or four. Then this year I have to do eight to ten. That's totally different, but it's—they're usually short, and they're based on grammar mostly.

Interviewer: What kinds of papers are they? What kinds of prompts are you responding to?

Interviewee: The German department is really—they like to be really fun about it especially for the first four semesters, cuz those are the requirements. They're trying to convert people into becoming majors and minors, which they do very well. A lot of people that I know from my third semester German class are majors now, and so am I. It's just they—they always stress creativity. Just have fun with the language, and that—if you're having fun, and you have everything grammatically correct, and you're learning at the same time—that's totally great.

My first essay—I'm really proud of it, but I think it's just find a German website and write about it—whatever. I mean, any way that you want. There was something probably more creative to it. They always have two prompts. One's the creative one—just have fun. The other one's just a straightforward one that you find any other place. Mine was like I decided I would write about the German Wikipedia page about Gummy Bears.

I would write it as—from the perspective of a Gummy Bear. I think our prompt was, “What do you think about the website? Would you recommend it? What else about it?” I like, “Well, I'm a Gummy Bear, and I like this website cuz it talks all about me. I'm kinda sad though that it's not long enough cuz there should really

be more written about me, cuz I'm a Gummy Bear, and I'm awesome, and I'm cute and whatever.”

Stuff like that—it's just really creative, and then you're really excited about writing it. You're just like, “I'm just gonna write this. It's gonna be so hilarious. Everyone's gonna laugh. I'm laughing.” I'm having fun.

Interviewer: Good. What is that eight to ten-page German paper like?

Interviewee: Oh, it's a research paper, which makes it actually easier, cuz I find research papers easier. It's kinda difficult, because you're writing—you're reading scholarly articles in German, and you're looking up German resources. You can't always find a—well, it takes a lot longer, cuz if I'm writing an English one you can scan the title and know what every word means, cuz you're an English speaker. You're like, “Oh, yeah, that's not going to be relevant, cuz this word is slightly nuanced the wrong way.”

In German, sometimes you won't catch—or you just won't look up every single word that you're searching for—during your search results. You might miss something. Like food you probably have. I try to find key words, because certain words are used more frequently, but you don't know what they are, because you're not a native speaker.

Maybe there are two words for food, and the one—the more basic one that you know isn't really the one that they would use in any scholarly article sort of thing. They would use something like nutrition instead of food, which is what mine is about. Mine is about German nutrition, food facts, or whatever. If you write down food it's just—it's basically the same word as eating, but with a scholarly article you rarely use eating as a key word. It'd be more like nutrition—

Interviewer: Right.

Interviewee: - and stuff like that. That's difficult, but it helps that sometimes so many aspects of translated into English, so you can—sometimes they're like terrible translations, you don't know what's going on, but it's actually been okay.

Interviewer: Okay, so what effect have those experiences in your German writing had on you as a writer overall?

Interviewee: It's helped me avoid writing English. That's basically—okay, I just—it's just the way that I am. I just can't get behind writing English where—I'm too perfectionist about it. I just feel like this writing—there are too many choices when I'm doing writing. How I could organize it this way and that way, and I just—I get overwhelmed when I'm writing in English.

When I'm writing in German I just know they're just gonna care that I'm—I mean I do have to have an argument. Okay, it's an upper-level writing requirement, but they'll just be happy it's grammatically correct sort of deal. My grammar has gotten a lot better with less mistakes, cuz German grammar is a case language. There are different kinds of cases.

Grammar's a big part of the German language and getting that right, so they just focus more on that, and I feel better focusing on grammar than total organization style just because it's more concrete. You can be right about it, and I can stop worrying when I reread it. Yeah.

Interviewer: No changes in your writing in English from German?

Interviewee: Probably not that much. I just don't like writing in English.

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

Interviewee: Pretty good. I get consistently good grades for that because I—it's not like perfectionism. I will go through and check if this is the right form of the word and if I did the adjective endings right. I'll just go over and over and over it again and catch the errors. They're just like little errors. It's just like in English if you're just—accidentally spelled something wrong.

If you have to reread it you would understand—you would just pick that out and be fine. Also it's basically what I do with that, and I do pretty well, because it's grammatically good enough.

Interviewer: Okay. Do you have an example of something you've written in your concentration that you feel good about—feel confident about?

Interviewee: [Pause] most likely, yeah. I would say that when I look back on my old German stuff, I'm like, "Whoa." Now that I know that that word isn't used very often, or I'm kind of stretching it with using this word, because when you a type into a dictionary you'll get ten answers for the word. They have different nuances that you don't know about when you're younger, so it's kinda gross, but I was really happy about it when I wrote it.

If I were to read it now I'd be like, "Why am I using such simple words?" or like, "This is an adjective ending. I guess I did notice that one, yeah." I'm hopefully going to be excited about my upper-level writing requirement, cuz it'll be—I managed to do a research paper in German. I would be so excited. Once I finished that—we were already required to do four pages of it, so half of it is already done. He gave it back and said it was great.

Interviewer: You feel good about that?

Interviewee: Yeah, I mean, he wasn't writing—he wasn't grading on grammar at that point, because it was just—it's like a check point to make sure you're not going in the wrong direction and being full of errors and whatever. At least you've progressed somewhere. He said it was good, and I'm consistently doing well with that writing. It makes me feel better about writing, like, "Now I wanna write, because I'll do great."

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: If I put the effort in then I—you know, so.

Interviewer: Does it make you feel better about your writing in English?

Interviewee: No, cuz it's just—it's a different kind of writing. I always go to my—well, sometimes I go to my professors, and I just tell them how much I hate writing. If it's an English class I'm like—well cuz I did tell my professor that it was probably the reason why I dropped her class. It was really embarrassing, too, because I wish I weren't so bad at it, but I just, "Why does it have to be so hard?"

Interviewer: Are your professors helpful when you tell them that you hate writing?

Interviewee: Not really. They never give me—there's nothing you can fix if you hate writing. You just hate it. I was like, "Well, they're always telling me to go to Sweetland's actually."

Interviewer: To go to [Sweetland Writing Center]?

Interviewee: [Laughter].

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: They're like, "They'll get you all sorts of help," but how do they—I've just never gone there. I don't think my writing's bad. It just takes me forever, and I just feel like it's just—I don't know if it will help. I should probably go sometime. It's just I don't know how it works either. If you just walk in or all that, so I have never gone. They do tell me that if I do have problems with it just—they just say, "You'll never have another resource like them again." I don't even know what the resource is because I don't—I don't go. Maybe I should.

Interviewer: Okay, so what experiences in and out of the classroom have had an effect on your writing?

Interviewee: Out of—which is the reading stuff—it's the main thing that helps with my writing.

Interviewer: Your reading that you do in the summer?

Interviewee: Yeah. It gives you ideas of how to organize or the words you can use.

Interviewer: Okay. How has your writing process changed as a result of that experience?

Interviewee: Not much. The writing process is always—it's never consistent with me, which is probably the reason why I spend so much time on it, because I don't have a process. I don't know. It doesn't help with the problems that I'm having, because it has to do with the process is what I have problems with and the rereading. It helps with the rereading. I'll be able to know that this doesn't sound right, and I should find a different way to make it sound awesome.

When it comes to actually doing it—cuz when you're reading you don't know anything of how they ended up writing. How they ended up with the final product, so I don't know either. I can only—the only thing I can do is when I have a final product I can see what it looks like and that it looks—is it better or worse than what I've already read before. Yeah.

Interviewer: Have any of your experiences in the classroom affected your writing process?

Interviewee: No, I don't really think so—other than the research stuff. That's part of the process. It doesn't tell me how to do it, but it would give me resources like—or an idea of how to—a thesis to make, but it's not actually about writing or how you should be writing. That's where I'm getting my ideas, but I'm not—helping with writing at all. It's just that professors just expect you to be able to write. Except I can't.

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

Interviewee: Reflective writing. I don't know what that means, but I think—it's to look back at what you're writing on. I don't really know.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: Reflective. Is it a personal process like reflect back on yourself and how you write, or reflect back on other things? I don't know.

Interviewer: What do you mean—"other things"? "Reflect back on other things"?

Interviewee: Like reflect on—like reflect as in go back and look again. Reread your paper. Reflective writing. Reread what you read or reread what you wrote as you're reading and what you know about or something. See if you've written. I don't know.

Interviewer: Okay. Have you used any kind of reflective writing in your own writing process?

Interviewee: I reflect upon how much I suck at it—

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: - which doesn't help me write. I'm always rereading—if that's what you mean by reflective. I'm always rereading as I read over. First of all because I need this chunk of time. Sometimes you don't have a chunk of time to rewrite. You'll have written one paragraph, and you're trying to get in the zone again, so I just—you keep rereading what you've written, so that you can figure out what style and how you were going and what your thread was in your brain.

What you were thinking about and how you were gonna go about it. That's how I reflect, but I don't know. Sometimes later on I sometimes—I'll think about, "Did I like this writing? Not really. Yes, I did. Maybe."

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

Interviewee: I don't really work with other people when I write. I have read other peoples' writing, but it doesn't really help me in any way particularly. It depends—if they're a bad writer, then that doesn't help.

Interviewer: Is that in workshop or peer review?

Interviewee: Sometimes you're just with a friend. You're thinking about a term paper, and they're thinking about, "Hey, can you read this over?" You might—does this—does it make—cuz sometimes you don't know if this makes sense to other people. Because it was your own thought that you communicated, right? Having someone read it over sometimes—I don't like to burden my friends and say, "Hey, I have this really long paper. Can you read it for me?"

Sometimes if you're in the same class—sometimes they'll read it later, or I'll read theirs later afterwards, and we have time. Sometime you're not done. A lot of people don't finish their paper until near the deadline, so you can't really talk to each other about it until afterwards, but I've read theirs and then you say, "Okay, that's cool." If I'm on the same level. A lot of times they're totally different theses, so you don't end up really learning too much about them.

I noticed that there were different kinds of styles. Some people— for my [Cinema course] we have to do film reviews. They're on the forum, so I'm reading other peoples' writing just to see how they're doing and what they're writing about. Sometimes you get ideas from them or that sparks something in your head. [...].

Not all of them have—so there's this total spectrum of people with terrible writing, because they're just—it's just—they just don't know the language well enough. It's just awful. I don't even know what they're talking about. Then there are these sophisticate—cuz film critics are—people who study film in their major, they're just these really pretentious people, and they're analyzing everything, and they're like, "Whoa." They just—reading film reviews is always just really hard to read, too, because it's just so complex.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Are you guys required to read one another's?

Interviewee: No, I just—I'm nosy. They're public—

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: - and I read them sometimes—so sometimes just like that's—like that—I can tell if this is a person—if this person is a good writer. I can tell, because I read so much. I know what's good and bad. I know I'm not a terrible writer. A bit boring, but I get the point across, and it's fine. There are so much better that I could aim for. I'm not—at least I can speak English, or I can at least organize it in a way that's better and not using the simple words, same deal.

It helps you to be—feel a bit more confident. Not really though. Also this is how a better writer can write. I just feel like I can never get there though, cuz I've been trying. I spend so much time on it. I've spent more time on—than they did, but their writing still sounds so much more beautiful. It's just—it just is automatically organized. It just came out of their head like that. They just thought, organized, and they could just write it out.

For me, it's just like—I'm just thinking, and then I just try to think—thoughts are so hard to organize. They're just this thing just muddled in my head. I'm thinking of them, but I'm just not connecting them in this organized way for other people to understand. I can understand it, because I don't complex—I just understand my own brain.

I understand my brain is complex and doesn't make sense to others—I don't know. They just think—they probably just think in a more organized fashion than I do. I'm so erratic when I'm thinking.

Interviewer: Okay. Have you done any peer review in your courses?

Interviewee: We had to do it for Great Books—

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: - once, and then we met up with them. Well, I guess you didn't have to, but we at—my peer did. We met up, and then we just talked about each other's stuff and what we could do differently.

Interviewer: What was your experience with that like?

Interviewee: It was nice to get feedback. Yeah, because once again I don't know that people can understand what I'm writing—sometimes I can't. Maybe I just—I didn't word it right or something. They'll tell you—I'm not sure—quite sure. It makes sense to you, but maybe this person has a different background, and so they can't— maybe they haven't seen *Star Wars*, and they can't—so it was that *Star Wars* paper or was it?

It might have been something else, but if they hadn't seen it before or read it before—and you're not doing an introduction, cuz you write for an audience. That person will be part of your audience. That person's your peer. If you feel like—if you're— basically when you're writing your paper it's for your professor usually. You can add an allusion to some literary work, because you know that they've studied literature.

They should know what this is, but it's like a peer may not have read it, so then they'll just tell me I really don't know what this is. It's not helpful for them so—but it makes me think about what sort of stuff you need to develop sometimes.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: That's helpful.

Interviewer: Have you had experiences with group or collaborative writing projects?

Interviewee: [Pause] I don't think so.

Interviewer: Okay. If you were—

Interviewee: Oh, no. We did script one time.

Interviewer: - okay. What class was that in?

Interviewee: That was my German class. Our final project was—we had to write scripts, and then we would film it or whatever. I was with—it was four people in a group. We lived in different places, so we ended up divvying it up so that you brainstorm together—the ideas. Then when it came to writing it—it ended up

being me and the person who lived nearer to me, and they would focus on the props and all that other stuff.

Interviewer: What did you focus on?

Interviewee: The actual writing of the script. This was like—the project was a film thing, but you had to have a script, so we—me and a friend—we were also the more grammatical. The other people were idea people, so it's like, "Okay." They're fun, and you know that they'll be better actors than I am. You're just focusing on writing the script. It was fine, because it was—I had someone else with me so the ideas came —and it's also—it's dialogue. It's not like an actual essay.

Then it's also just make sure it's grammar and looking up what this means and what would be funny, because you're gonna make a film. That was actually fine, but that's also a different kind of writing project or collaborative project than other classes you probably have.

Interviewer: Okay, so what did that experience—how did that influence you as a writer?

Interviewee: Not very much because it was just—I'm never gonna write something like that in English. I'm not gonna have a script usually, and it was—you know that it's just for fun. These are the films that your class is gonna see. You're gonna have an inside joke about something in class. It didn't really feel like writing to me, so I don't feel like it really helped it in any way.

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

Interviewee: I'm not one to give advice, because my process isn't very good, but always brainstorm. I know some people—they make outlines before they write. I feel like that probably helps them. Yeah, I also do some brainstorming, too. I'll just jot it down, and at some point something will form. Just start thinking about it. Just spend some time. Just read lots of stuff.

I prefer to just—when I'm doing research I do like to do a lot more of the research end of it first instead of research and then write something and then research some more. You just have to have the bigger picture before you start writing. Actually research should take most of your time if that's your project. It should be mostly research, cuz you're gonna find—you're gonna read things that you don't use. At least you have all these different sources, and you've thought about it.

I spend a lot more time doing reading. I'm more comfortable doing that anyway. Once I have things to talk about it'll just form on its own when I'm writing, cuz

it's all in my brain now. Now I know what I'm gonna say. I can pull out this fact—statistic—from this paper and put it in. It makes more sense. Yeah, for a research paper just start researching. That's my advice, it's just another kind—maybe talking to other people might help you start off if you're having trouble finding a thesis. That helps me sometimes.

Interviewer: Who do you talk to?

Interviewee: This year I've just been dragging my roommate. I had to do a Psych [Psychology] paper. I just sat there. That's when I realized that I was just such a slow writer, cuz I was just—I like, “Yeah, I have this five-page paper. Guess how much I've done so far.” I was sitting there for three hours, and it's only one paragraph that I did in three hours. Are you kidding me? She was like, “What? I would be at least on the second page.”

That's why—and so I actually had her look at my prompt, cuz I'm just so stuck, too, and it was like—and I think a lot of it has to do with I have trouble just starting. I find the middle paragraphs are easier to write than intros, and then the intro's the first thing. I can't just leave it missing, but I really feel like I should probably just start with just the bulk and go back to it. It's weird because with the AP exam or whatever you just have to write.

It's timed. It's written, so you can't do those things. You have to do the intro first thing. You can't just go back to it the same way you can on a computer, so I always find it weird to just—if I were to just skip it—and I rarely ever do that because I feel like I just can't. I'll spend the time writing an intro that isn't relevant, but I just need something there. Then it'll like—then it'll change the way I'm writing my paper, and then I'll go back and switch it.

I'm usually always switching up my—for my upper-level writing requirement I think I'm gonna just switch up my intro, cuz I don't like how it is right now. Anyway my roommate—she just read my prompt for my Psych paper. She's like, “Yeah, I think it's—you're supposed to focus more on the person you're”—it was an interview project—“the person you interviewed instead of the literature that you're”—cuz you're given an article to—for—or read—read and then think about that as you're interviewing this person.

You're supposed to talk more about the interview and not about the subject, and I just—I read into things more than I should. Then I'd already spent—it was like five hours on this crappy whatever couple of paragraphs. Then my roommate just comes in and reads the problem and goes, “Yeah, it seems like you should be,”—I don't know. Why did I not read that first thing when I—I think part of it has to do with—maybe that high school teacher really did not help me.

Now I'm thinking—I'm just thinking different from what they're saying, cuz I wanna be creative, but then it's just actually—why don't I just go with what the

prompt was saying sort of thing. Then also a lot of rubrics are just like, “Yeah, be creative.” Then I read into that so much more like, “This has to be like a crazy paper.” Then it’s like—it’s weird that just my roommate just comes in and changes it. She would be able to.

Interviewer: Talking to other writers.

Interviewee: Yeah, or just having them look at what you’re—she’s not in my class or anything. She’s just looking at my stuff, and then changing the way you’re thinking or what direction you’re going. You realize you’re on the wrong direction the whole time. That’s why it was so hard to write but also because you’re just starting, too. I had some trouble with that.

Interviewer: Any other advice for other writers?

Interviewee: Not really.

Interviewer: Okay. Have you had any experiences with new media writing?

Interviewee: I’m not sure what that is.

Interviewer: Writing for blogs or websites. Using sound or video or a presentation or anything like that.

Interviewee: A lot of projects have presentations. Last semester we had to do a project on toxicology, and you could write a ten-page paper, or you could do a presentation. I actually—I don’t have—there are a few that are worse than me, but I get really worked up when I have to do a presentation. I decided to do a presentation, because I was like, “This will take less time in the long run—because especially for me cuz I take forever to write.” A presentation will be—cuz you’ve researched—do the research—research—you’re just—you can just do bullet points when you’re doing Power Point.

Then you’re just speaking, so you’re just talking about what you already know. As long as you researched it you’re spending less—for me it was better that way, too, and I was able to spend more time being—making it interactive and—which was—I was better at doing than actually doing the actual writing. I’ve done that. That’s a presentation. The amount of oral presentation I have to do for German has increased a lot, cuz they want you to speak more.

The same with that—you’re just talking and—it’s—you’re working on your speaking. I do write about what I’m gonna do, but it’s different from writing. Talking and writing are different, cuz when you’re talking people aren’t even organized sometimes when they talk because they’ll just jump, jump, jump. You don’t really realize you’re speaking in sentence fragments, too, so it doesn’t really matter, because they’re always right.

You know that you can talk about at this point, so they have this down, and that's enough. I've done—I have a blog for—but—I have one blog that I did when I was in Germany, but it was all in German. It was just what I do. That's easy writing, because what do you do? You did this and that and that and that and that.

Interviewer: Was that required for your course?

Interviewee: No, [...]—

Interviewer: Okay [laughter].

Interviewee: - and my friends back home. They didn't really read it, because they don't speak German, [...]. I also have a Tumblr, which I write when I'm—I write when I want—like diary kind of journaling. If you just need to get it out there. If you're thinking about something, like something angered you, so you just—you just—it'll come—it'll just come out.

It doesn't have to be organized, cuz it's just—it's a blog. You just—it's just for you to get it out. No one has to actually understand it, like you can—so I do—sometimes I do that. Sometimes when I'm really happy I'll write about it. Just so I can read it later and go, “Wow, I remember that.” I do do that kind of writing, too.

Interviewer: What effect have those experiences with Tumblr or with your blog and with doing presentations had on you as a writer?

Interviewee: In terms of academic writing, nothing, because they're just different, but it's helped me. I don't know. It just as a writer as a whole I still don't think I'm good. It's just because they're just different kinds. I know that this writing isn't meant for other people to really be reading and following. It's just for me. Writing for me is different from writing for others, and I'm so great—I'm always—great, great for writing for myself.

I don't care if this isn't transitioned, because I just wanna remember this moment, and I'll remember it. I just use this key word and like, “Oh, yeah. Now I remember it.” You don't have to actually go explain the whole story. It doesn't help that much. I mean it helps me with thinking up the whole recalling a word when you have vocab, cuz I'm—I've always had trouble just recalling things or just using it—using words that I haven't used yet maybe in the academic article or whatever.

It helps me practice words I don't normally use or maybe I've heard it recently, and I have time to just—in my free time like, “I don't know what they means. Maybe I'll just look it up.” Something like that so I think that's the only thing if anything that's helped me.

Interviewer: You've been uploading pieces of writing to the Study Archive on CTools [learning management system]. How has that process been going for you?

Interviewee: That's fine, cuz you already have to write anyway. I'm not thinking about speaking 58:54 when I write. I'm thinking about just my class. It's just something that I can just do at the end. Like, "Oh, yeah, I'll just think about my work." Which one wasn't a total disaster. I don't know if—I don't remember what I—which ones I uploaded though.

Interviewer: Okay. Can you think a little bit about that? Like what pieces you've chosen to upload for the archive?

Interviewee: I really don't remember. I think I most likely did my *Star Wars* one for my Great Books. My Faustone—is it every semester you're supposed to do one?

Interviewer: Yeah, it's once a semester.

Interviewee: Did you ask for one from your writing requirements?

Interviewer: I don't remember.

Interviewee: If it was then I did one—there's only one paper in [Title of course]. It had to be the large one which I was somewhat proud of. Actually my professor didn't grade it on—he graded it on ideas. You could always go to him at any time through the whole semester—just go with any—however finished your essay was. At some point if you turn it in—my roommate turned it in without the conclusion.

She was like, "Yeah, I just wanna make sure—this is at the point where I am right now." She said, "Yeah, it's really fun. You're done," and just said, "You're done." Because it wasn't about—if she were to return it in with a conclusion how different would it be? He'd just be reading the exact same thing except now there's a conclusion.

He was just, "Whatever." He was just so—ideas—this is what matters obviously. For me I have—he would have, like, well, you're done thing to people—there's—it doesn't—it's not all due at the same—all this in the very end. It's just whenever you can come in, and if he finds it's good enough to be—if he knew that you did the research and all that, then it was done.

Mine was actually—may not have been fully—as complete. It was just I was giving it to him to look over, but I think I may have uploaded that one. Anyway because it was my longest paper I've written.

Interviewer: Okay, so any other reasons you're choosing the pieces you're choosing for the archive?

Interviewee: I think I usually have to read over some of them before I upload it, but usually—you remember which pieces you've written usually. Some I'm more proud of than others. I think last semester I did one—no, two semesters ago I did one on anthropology.

Sometimes you just don't write that semester and then avoiding uploading my German, cuz I don't think that will help you guys. Yeah, cuz I think the problem is that I think most of this semester's going to be all German. [...].

Interviewer: Okay. Do you have any other comments you wanna add?

Interviewee: No, [...].

Interviewer: Alright, well, thank you so much.

[End of Audio]