

Interviewer: This is \*\*\*. I'm interviewing \*\*\*, on November 15th. [...]. Hi. [Laughter]

Interviewee: Hi. [Laughter]

Interviewer: We have a few sort of general questions, just about how you think of yourself as a writer. The first question is, how would you describe yourself as a writer?

Interviewee: My writing style's probably very informal.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: Obviously, in college, you get exposed to a lot of different styles; English creatives, professional, and stuff like that, so you have to adopt, versus like different voices as you write. In general, the kind of writing that I tend to do is very informal in style, and just kind of personable, as opposed to a very academic style, or big words and stuff like that.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm, okay.

Interviewee: I'd rather just have a kind of a free form.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm, okay, and how would you describe the role of writing in your life? What does it do for you?

Interviewee: [Sigh] Oh, God, we wrote a paper about this in [Writing 200 level course].

Interviewer: Oh, you did?

Interviewee: It was like, "Who are you as a writer, and what does writing mean to you?"

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Interviewee: Honestly, it's kind of counterintuitive, being a writing minor, but I actually don't enjoy writing.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: Okay? I actually hate it.

Interviewer: Okay. [Laughter]

Interviewee: It was funny, cuz the whole thing was like, I hate writing, but I love having written, right?

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: That's very true for me.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: I hate the writing process, because I torture myself over perfecting it, and just making everything flow and make sense and connect, and everything like that.

Interviewer: Yeah, mm-hmm.

Interviewee: I've been doing it for so long that, I don't want to say I'm burnt out, but just the whole process is like a grind for me.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: When you're done, and you submit it on CTools [learning management system], or you hand it to your professor, you just feel so relieved. It feels really good, knowing that you're giving them some of your hard work, and a lot of your time, cuz it takes me forever to write, just because I do mull over it like a ton.

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah, but do you see that paying off, like you like the result?

Interviewee: Yeah, I mean, it's always like N/A. [Laughter]

Interviewer: Okay. [Laughter]

Interviewee: It sounds bad.

Interviewer: No, no, no.

Interviewee: It always turns out well, and your hard work paid off and all that, but the whole what led up to that A is just not enjoyable to me.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: It's not cathartic or anything like that.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: It's just a struggle, I guess.

Interviewer: Yeah, okay, yeah.

Interviewee: I mean, that's fine. In my free time, I'll tweet and do that kind of stuff.

Interviewer: Oh, okay.

Interviewee: That's different, cuz you're limited to 140 characters, so there's only so much torturing of yourself you could do to make sure your grammar is right in like two sentences.

Interviewer: Right, right, so that feels different?

Interviewee: It's different. It's just more fun, cuz it's your voice, and people can love it or hate it or whatever, but it's short.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: There isn't a whole lot of work that goes into it, but you get same effect, like if you get positive responses.

Interviewer: Yeah, interesting. Yeah, that's interesting. How would you describe yourself as a writer when you began here at U of M [University of Michigan], like as a freshman?

Interviewee: Coming in, I took [English course] the first semester, and I was pretty confident going in. The first thing we did in class was make nametags out of crayon. We wrote our name with crayon on a little note card.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm, yeah.

Interviewee: I was like, "Oh, this is college?"

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Like, "This is what we're doing?" but I was pretty confident coming in. I had a lot of AP classes in high school, with English and stuff like that, so I knew kind of what I was doing to begin with.

Interviewer: Yeah?

Interviewee: It was more of like, in [English course], you get different styles, so there's a like a professional research paper, and there's like a satire or stuff like that.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: It was basically just taking what you already know and writing different essays, like that, so it wasn't like it was a life-changing, like, "Wow, I didn't know what I was doing."

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: It was just making what I knew I was doing well better.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: Part of the reason I did the minor, is because I had just taken so many English classes to begin with. I took [English 200 level course], [English 200 level course], like a poetry one, [English 300 level course] or something.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: I had taken a lot of them and done well, and it was just like introducing myself to different styles.

Interviewer: Yeah, so you wanted to sort of keep pushing into—

Interviewee: Yeah, I was just trying to—like little things, little nuances to my writing, that you pick up. You might not learn a crazy amount of information or something, but if you can pick up a couple things per class, that just enhances what you're already doing and I think it's good.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm, and the next question's actually connected to what you're saying. How would you say you've grown as a writer? How have you seen that change?

Interviewee: Yeah, I mean, it just kind of builds. It builds. From class to class, you take what you learned in the last class, even if it's just formatting stuff, like if somebody's MLA is interpreted a different way. Yes, there's a handbook, but sometimes teachers will like, "Is your period before or after your cite in parentheses?" and stuff like that.

Interviewer: Right, right.

Interviewee: It's just annoying things like that, but it just transfers from class to class and it builds.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: Even if I took a creative writing class, there are some elements of like a professional class you may have taken in the past that transfer over.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Interviewee: With the thesis statements and stuff like that, all that still is in every single essay you'll ever write.

Interviewer: [Laughter] Right.

Interviewee: It doesn't go away.

Interviewer: Right, right; so what would you attribute this growth to, just the fact that you took so many classes, or the types of classes you took?

Interviewee: Yeah, well, in [English 200 level course], I actually struggled. I actually ended up going to office hours a lot, and so I found that it actually did help. As confident as I was in my writing, while I'd watch other people around me struggling and like, "Oh, I don't really know what to write," or whatever, I was just kind of like, "I know what I wanna say. I know how I wanna say it, but how does the teacher—what are they trying to get out of this assignment or whatever, or trying to get me to learn?"

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: I found that going to office hours actually helped a lot in that regard.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: I went a lot for [English 200 level course] too, and I guess, I met with [Instructor] a lot last semester, cuz she allowed rewrites and stuff, as many as you want, but you have to meet with her.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Interviewee: It wasn't like, "Oh, this is what you did. Have a nice day, and come back."

Interviewer: Right.

Interviewee: It was very intense.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: I don't know. She pushed us a lot, so as good as I thought I was, I'm amongst a lot of other people that think they're good at writing too.

Interviewer: Right. [Laughter] Right.

Interviewee: It was just was one of those things. I was comparing myself to their writing and ideas, thinking if it was better or worse than theirs; but you go to office hours, and she would fix it.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Yeah, yeah, that's great. How would you describe your goals for yourself as a writer?

Interviewee: I'm actually planning on going to law school, so writing isn't gonna go away from me, ever.

Interviewer: Okay; right, yeah. [Laughter]

Interviewee: As much as I would like to do something that didn't involve writing, law is very writing intensive.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: I would say, going away, I see what I learned throughout college here. I still have [Writing course] to take next semester, but that's something I'm writing in my personal statements, is like, "As a writer, I'm writing; I have written a ton," compared to a lot of kids that did poly sci [political science] and stuff like that, so it'll help.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah; so you've been sort of a professional, end-point, in terms of your writing, just thinking about being a lawyer?

Interviewee: Yeah. Yeah, I don't see myself blogging or writing books or anything like that, but in terms of memos and briefs and stuff like that, that's very much gonna be a part of my everyday life.

Interviewer: Yeah; yeah, definitely, and you've already touched on some of this, actually, but I'll just run through the questions. These next set of questions about transfer, which you've talked about them already. Thinking across your experiences—just this is a more general question—what do you think it means to write well? How would you define that?

Interviewee: I mean, you kind of have to experience it.

Interviewer: Uh huh.

Interviewee: Like you write somebody's paper that isn't—if they're not a strong writer, you can just tell that this is not a well-written piece, as compared to somebody who knows what they're doing or put in the time or something like that. You can just tell. It flows and it makes sense and the points connect.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: It's like an art. It takes time to craft, and a lot of people don't appreciate it. They're just like, "Oh, I put words on paper. If I get my point across, sweet."

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: It's like one of those things, but something that I pride myself on is getting everything to flow and connect and make sense. At the end of the day, everything comes into a conclusion that just fits everything together to get your point across, so, I mean, it takes time.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm yeah.

Interviewee: It's almost like a talent that you're born with. It's like some people can just write, like some people are math people. My roommate's in Ross, and he thinks he's a good writer, but he's not a good writer.

Interviewer: Yeah. [Laughter]

Interviewee: He'll have me read his papers for like his mythology class, and I'm like, "This is terrible."

Interviewer: Yeah. [Laughter]

Interviewee: He'll get a B on it or something, and he's fine with that, cuz he thought it was a good paper, but it's just one of those things.

Interviewer: Right, right, right; and you've already talked a little bit about this. You took [English course]. What were your experiences like in that course?

Interviewee: Well, I was in CSP [Comprehensive Studies Program], in the CSP program.

Interviewer: Okay, mm-hmm.

Interviewee: I mean, it was by default, because I wanted Central Campus. Freshman year, I didn't want to be on North, so I applied for residential college.

Interviewer: Okay, yeah.

Interviewee: Then my roommate, I wanted a specific roommate that I chose, and his parents looked at the RC thing. They're like, "There's no way you're doing this. It's too artsy; it's too whatever."

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Interviewee: Then I cancelled out of RC, and when you cancel out of RC—

Interviewer: Cuz you wanted to be with him?

Interviewee: I wanted to be with him on Central Campus.

Interviewer: Yeah, right.

Interviewee: I didn't wanna be on North.

Interviewer: Yeah, okay.

Interviewee: When he was like, "No way I'm doing RC. I wanna do Ross," kind of thing, like, "I'll take my chances," of kind of thing.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm, right.

Interviewee: I was like, “Well, I don’t wanna be stuck at RC, when you’re somewhere else, and this is gonna suck.”

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: I cancelled RC, and when you do that, you default into CSP, whether you need it or not.

Interviewer: Okay, okay.

Interviewee: I was in the CSP writing class. There was like some athletes and some whatever, but my teacher—

Interviewer: Uh huh.

Interviewee: I was one of the very few students that she allowed to rewrite papers and meet with her a lot, cuz she took me under wing, almost, and it was very strange. I mean, I appreciated it, but she noticed that I cared more than other people, and that I really wanted really wanted to make it good work, and that it was more than just an assignment to me, I guess, at the time.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Interviewee: She worked with me a lot, and it was just like, there was only four or five essays in that class, but I went to office hours for every single one of them, just to kind of get my thoughts out there, and she would kinda help put them together.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: It was just kind of a teamwork kind of thing.

Interviewer: Yeah, so how did that affect you a writer? I mean, did it—

Interviewee: I mean, it showed me what the expectations are at U of M [University of Michigan] with writing, because I went home last weekend to do laundry and what have you—

Interviewer: [Laughter] Yeah.

Interviewee: My brother was like, “What’s the longest paper you’ve ever written?” and that kind of thing.

Interviewer: Uh huh.



Interviewee: I was like, “Oh, 20 pages.”

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: He was like, “What? I don’t even read—”

Interviewer: How old is he?

Interviewee: He’s a junior.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: He’s like, “20 pages?” He’s not in the APs or anything. He got a scholarship to [University] for baseball.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: He was just like, “20 pages? That’s insane.” I was like, “Yeah, my average paper is maybe 8 to 10, 12; if you’re lucky, you’ll get a five.”

Interviewer: Mm-hmm, right.

Interviewee: He’s like, “The longest paper I’ve ever written is a three.”

Interviewer: Yeah. [Laughter]

Interviewee: I was like, “It’s just like night and day.”

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Even freshman year, in [English course], the minimum you write is five.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm, yeah.

Interviewee: It just grows, from a 5 to a 20-page paper.

Interviewer: Uh huh.

Interviewee: It’s just a time crunch and stuff like that.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: It’s just very different from high school.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: In AP, we wrote like one research paper, and it took the whole semester. There was a huge process of note cards and testing your hypotheses and all this stuff. Then you get here, and it's like, "Oh, yeah, there's a ten-page paper due next week."

Interviewer: Right, right, right. [Laughter]

Interviewee: "Oh."

Interviewer: Yeah, right. [Laughter]

Interviewee: You have to just do it and know what you're doing, cuz otherwise, you're gonna be in a world of hurt, cuz you're not only trying to put your ideas together, like you don't even have to write a paper.

Interviewer: Right, right, totally. Are there specific things you learned in that first year writing course that you're still using in your writing now? Are there lessons that you took away?

Interviewee: It was so long ago. I'm an old [...] now. I'm a senior.

Interviewer: Yeah, it's okay, if you don't remember anything.

Interviewee: Yeah, not specifics. Nothing huge, but it was just the process and the expectations was probably the biggest thing, which, I guess, is the purpose of [English course].

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: It's not supposed to be too intense, and you sort of form like a—there's five sections or whatever, five papers you write for the course.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: Yeah, it was just like the mentality of writing papers here.

Interviewer: Which was? How would you describe that?

Interviewee: You have to be thorough.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: It's not enough doing a Wikipedia search and doing that kind of thing. The format's just the beginning, and it's really the content, and then how you portray what you want to say, over the course of five pages or whatever.

Interviewer: Yeah, mm-hmm.

Interviewee: You can't really fake the margins or the fonts or the size 14 periods or whatever.

Interviewer: Right, right. [Laughter] Mm-hmm, right.

Interviewee: It doesn't fly.

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah, that makes sense.

Interviewee: There was just kind of the expectation of like, "Yeah, welcome to [University of Michigan]. This is how you're gonna write now."

Interviewer: Mm-hmm, right, this is what you need to do, yeah.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Did you take [Writing course]? It doesn't sound like you did?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: No; and what's your actual concentration right now?

Interviewee: I'm comm [communications]; comm major and then writing minor.

Interviewer: Okay; okay, so do you have a lot of writing in that concentration?

Interviewee: Yeah, there's a ton of it.

Interviewer: What's it like?

Interviewee: It's all writing?

Interviewer: It's comm, and then what else did you say?

Interviewee: Oh, the minor in writing.

Interviewer: Oh, and the minor in writing, right, okay.

Interviewee: I'm like not a double-major or anything.

Interviewer: Okay, so what kind of writing do you do in comm?

Interviewee: It depends on the class.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: I found that the classes that are required for the concentration, so like the prereqs, and then once you get into the concentration, there's X amount of credits you have to take, that you have to take, and then there's certain cognates and electives.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: A lot of the classes, like the required ones, there are exams and papers.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: You have two exams and two papers, or whatever, and they're usually pretty big, and then the electives, for the most part, it's just a lot of paper writing.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: Right? You go to class, you do the readings, whatever, and sometimes you'll have an exam, but sometimes not, and it's just a ton of paper writing, so I'm writing constantly.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: I wrote, I think I counted, it was like 20-something papers last semester.

Interviewer: Wow; wow, yeah.

Interviewee: Yeah, well, it was between my comm classes and my writing class, like [Writing 300 level course] or if it was [Writing 200 level course]. Yeah, 20 papers, that's a lot.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm, yeah. How would you describe the type of papers you have to write in comm?

Interviewee: For the most part they're like—it depends. Right now, the ones I'm writing are analytical of media, so you watch like an SNL clip and you—like for one my classes, you watch like an SNL clip, and it's like, "How does the camera work?" and, "How does the audience work?" and all this stuff.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: You basically have to elaborate pretty deeply into what you want to say. Then there's this one other, like watching commercials. The one I wrote was like a 12-pager. Last week, it was about sexual imagery in TV commercials and stuff like that.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Interviewee: It's a lot of analytical stuff, and then, in the more core comm classes, it's a lot of research stuff, so it's finding support for your arguments in newspaper articles and the whole library of stuff on line, like finding scholarly journals and stuff. Getting it all to mesh is the biggest thing.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. What affected those experiences, like that type of writing that you've done in those classes? How has that affected you as a writer, do you think? Has it changed you?

Interviewee: It's just made me better. I guess, it gets easier to do it, the more you do it. [Laughter] It just takes time and practice, like anything else, but I found that the research ones take way longer, because as much as you want to take a long quote and throw it into your paper, so it takes up a nice chunk of your page or something like that, the temptation is always there, but it's just getting everything to flow. Then the citations are pain, like doing a work site and stuff.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Interviewee: Yeah, then the other papers that I wrote, like the analytical ones, it's basically like your thoughts.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: It's what you see, how you want to say it, so sometimes there isn't a source or a citing. It's just you, so I kinda like that more, and it's easier to write, cuz it's just like you're connecting your thoughts to your thoughts.

Interviewer: Yeah, mm-hmm.

Interviewee: Yeah, it's just different styles, but practice makes perfect, like anything else.

Interviewer: Yeah, but it sounds like you sort of prefer the analytical style.

Interviewee: Yeah, I'd rather write like my own opinion kind of thing.

Interviewer: Yeah, interesting. How confident do you feel about writing in comm, in your major?

Interviewee: I rely on writing to keep my grades up. [Laughter]

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: The test will be final. I'll get like a B, or I'll get some flavor of B or something on the exam, and then the papers will come, and I'll be just like, "Okay, A."

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: There's an A coming, because there's a paper coming.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: It'll be like an A or an A-minus, and I can go to talk to the professor about it or whatever.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: For the most part, I'm pretty confident that I can do well on the papers, but I don't know if it's because I'm that good of a writer or it's because I'm just putting in more time than other people. That's that what I've kind of come into lately.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm, yeah.

Interviewee: Like, "Are people just doing the minimum and spitting out something, and they get what they get?" as opposed to me, who, I go over it a million times, and make sure everything flows and is perfect and matches the prompt and answers the question a lot.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Interviewee: I don't know. It's kind of like a double-edged sword, as to how much time you spend, versus how thorough are you.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm, yeah, interesting. Okay, and now, there's some questions about the Gateway course that you took, was it last winter?

Interviewee: Yeah, it was, yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah, so what impact would you say that that class had on your writing?

Interviewee: It wasn't so much on my writing, as much as my perspective. It showed me that I'm not alone in my—I mean, some people writing.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Some people love to blog, and they have their own page, and they write for the daily, and they write for their internship, and love it. They live and breathe writing, but there were people in my class, like the quote of, "I hate writing, love having written," that was something we talked about a lot.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: It just showed that a lot of people are like me, and that they kill themselves over getting this paper just perfect. Then, when it's done, it's a huge relief and weight off your shoulders, and all this stuff, but the whole process is what's so unenjoyable.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: It was just kind of like different people's perspectives on writing, and why they do it and stuff like that, that kind of just was like, "Oh, I'm not alone. Okay, this is—"

Interviewer: Yeah, and that feeling of not being alone, did you feel like that affected your writing itself, or your process or anything?

Interviewee: I mean, I didn't change my process, because I feel like, for the life of me, I'll always try to make it perfect.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: It's just like who I am, but knowing that other people struggle with it too was just kind of comforting, in that like, "Okay, I'm not just trying hard and doing well. I'm actually putting in the time, and it's just like the struggle is part of it."

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, definitely; so it doesn't feel like writing's gotten easier or quicker or anything?

Interviewee: No. [Laughter]

Interviewer: Yeah, which is fine.

Interviewee: It's not easier, because I do the same thing to myself every time.

Interviewer: Right.

Interviewee: It doesn't matter if it's a one-page assignment for homework or if it's a term paper. It doesn't matter. I'm still gonna mull it over, and go it over a million times and make sure it's perfect, cuz it's a reflection of myself.

Interviewer: Right, yeah, totally; totally. What impact has the class had? You sort of already answered this a little bit but, but what impact has it had on your sense of yourself as a writer? Has it made you think of yourself as a writer in different ways?

Interviewee: It just showed me or made me think there are different avenues you can take with writing; writing as a career or as a hobby or something like that.

Interviewer: Okay, mm-hmm.

Interviewee: Some people do it for leisure, like keep a diary or they do their blog post or whatever, and other people just are doing it for their job. They just have to do it, as a part of writing within their job. Yeah, it was just like what you use it for.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm, and so how do you imagine you use it? How would you describe that?

Interviewee: When I have to.

Interviewer: Yeah, okay, yeah.

Interviewee: I'll basically just write when I have to. I'll use my words when I have to.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: I'll use the written word when I have to, but for the most part, I feel like—

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: I mean, the thing with court and stuff is, contrary to what you see on TV, where every single case goes to litigation, like four percent go to litigation.

Interviewer: Right, right, right, right, right.

Interviewee: Everything else settles out of court or whatever, and a lot of that is memos and writing, and finding sources that back up your point, and all that stuff, so it's basically like the writing process in real life, in a way, and that's why I kinda think I'll be good at it.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: Yeah, it's just like, I'm not gonna be writing books.

Interviewer: Right.

Interviewee: Like I said, I don't perceive myself writing books in the future.

Interviewer: Right.

Interviewee: If I kill myself over a 20-page paper, imagine what I would do with a [Writing 200 level course]-page book, that's gonna be published to shown to a million people.

Interviewer: Right.



Interviewee: I'll use it when I need it, I guess, but I'll always have that school set and that toolbox of things that I can use in my papers, just from all the classes I've taken.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm, yeah, that makes sense. What have your experiences of working with other writers in the course been?

Interviewee: In terms of like proofreading other people's papers and stuff?

Interviewer: Yeah, just what have you gotten out of that, working with other writers?

Interviewee: It depends; just specifically in [Writing 200 level course]?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Okay. I don't know. I learned that people, they have very different styles. Everybody, they'll interpret a prompt a different way, and they will write in a different style. They'll use different sources than you would have thought to use and stuff like that, so it just opens your eyes. Some people might be better writers than you, or in that paper they were, or that draft, they were, and other people are just like, "How do you go to this school?"

Interviewer: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Interviewee: That's honestly what goes through some people's heads, when you hear what they're reading and stuff. You're just like, "Really? You submitted this? Did you write this yesterday?" are some honest things.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Interviewee: You find yourself comparing your writing to others, because you are around people that are also passionate about it, or at least they're good at it, so it's just like a comparison game.

Interviewer: Yeah, and does that affect your own writing?

Interviewee: It just shows me what I'm up against, in terms of like—I don't necessarily think that when teachers grade papers, they stack them up against other students and like, "Oh, well, this kid's was an A, and this kid's was maybe 90 percent as good as this one, so this is a B," but it just shows you what other people are thinking and what other people are writing about, their styles.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: We're all relatively the same age. It was just kinda like what people's level is, for that time in their life, cuz I think you do get better, as you practice.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm, yeah. I don't know that much about the class. Is there a lot of interaction with each other in the Gateway class?

Interviewee: Tons; a ton.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: Yeah, I think we wrote five or six different papers in that class, but for each one, you submit it online, and then like the next day, your whole group is reading each other papers, or they read them the night before and made comments and stuff. Then you are in a group of four or five, so it's very collaborative, in the sense that, for 15 minutes per person, you're going over their paper.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: It's very direct feedback. Sometimes people sugarcoat it, like, "Oh, this paper was really good."

Interviewer: Mm-hmm, right.

Interviewee: "Yeah, I really like what you did here," and in the back of their head, they're like, "This sucks."

Interviewer: Right, right.

Interviewee: There's always that political correctness, when it comes to like, you have to see this person the next day.

Interviewer: Right, mm-hmm.

Interviewee: You just can't rip them and then expect everything to be fine, which I wanted to do sometimes.

Interviewer: Right. [Laughter]

Interviewee: Yeah, there's a lot of collaboration and group work, teamwork, like the blog posts. Sometimes people could respond to your blogs and stuff like that, so there was like a sense of the community in that class, in that we weren't just like numbers, that our teacher was evaluating us like we were people, and we were students helping each other.

Interviewer: Yeah, and did that affect your writing, you think?

Interviewee: Just like having multiple perspectives, as opposed to just [Instructor].

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: She was great, but the students have different outlooks on the paper, on the assignment, and even the effort they're gonna put towards it or whatever. There's kind of like what you tell [Instructor] you're gonna do, and then what you're actually gonna do, what you'll tell the students you're gonna do, like your other students.

Interviewer: Right, mm-hmm.

Interviewee: Yeah, just the perspectives helped the most. It wasn't like, "Oh, your grammar sucks," and that kind of thing that students would tell you.

Interviewer: Right.

Interviewee: It was more like, "This is really good, but have you thought about this?" I mean, that's fine. That's what I kind of expected with people you don't really know.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Interviewee: If it was like my roommate, I would tell him otherwise.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm, so do you get feedback from other people that you know?

Interviewee: No; well, just like professors.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: Earlier in this semester, early in my college career, I would send my papers to one of my friends, who she went to high school with me, and she went through all the APs and stuff. She was a good writer and knew what she was talking about. She was a night owl. She would be drinking coffee at like 10:00 p.m., stay up until whatever, so I was like, "Oh, here, read my paper. What do you think?"

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Sometimes it was just her nature to be like, "This paper is awful, and you need to rewrite it."

Interviewer: [Laughter] Yeah.

Interviewee: I was like, "There's no way I'm rewriting this paper. It's due in six hours; there's no way."

Interviewer: Right.

Interviewee: Other times, she'd just be like, "Oh, yeah, change this," whatever, but as a whole, I usually don't give my paper to anybody, cuz, for the most part, unless it's a professor or the person that's going to be grading it, like a GSI or something, I don't

really—I don't know. It sounds bad, but I don't really value their perspective, cuz chances are, I know what I'm doing, when it comes to writing, better than they do." Sometimes a different set of eyes does like, "Oh, well, this didn't really make sense to me," or, "Did you think about this point?" or, "Here's one more thing you could add in," so sometimes it is helpful, if you have another page to make up or something like that.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm, right, totally. It also sounds like the Gateway course emphasized reflective writing, and so, how would you describe your experience doing that kind of reflection?

Interviewee: At the end of the essays, at the end of the papers that we had to write, this was something we did every single paper, was the next day, we were to write a reflection on how it went; how the process was; what we thought about what we were doing; whether we were happy with the end-product or not.

Interviewer: Yeah, mm-hmm.

Interviewee: Regardless of whether the paper was an A or not, like you may not think so, but you were free to say that, like, "I struggled a lot on this paper," kind of thing, and like, "This idea, I wanted to come through," so you could enhance what you wanted to emphasize and kind of bring that to light at the same time. It's like a critique of your own work.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: You might be sabotaging yourself in saying that, pointing out your weakness of the paper, what you perceived as weaknesses, but at the same time, it just helps you reflect, so you can get better the next time. It was a very useful exercise. I'd never really done that before.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: I did that in [English course]; I take that back, but it was way less invasive.

Interviewer: Okay, yeah.

Interviewee: It was just like, "Oh, this paragraph was about this, and I wrote about this because this point, and the point of the paper was this, and I think it worked out well." It was just something like that, but in [Writing 200 level course], it was way more critical of yourself.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm, and you said it was useful. How was it useful?

Interviewee: Cuz you get a day to reflect on your paper. Usually, you take a test and then you're thinking about the test later. You're like, "Maybe, I was wrong on that one, that I

was between two questions,” or, “I should have written about this in my short answer or something like that instead of what I did.”

Interviewer: Right, mm-hmm.

Interviewee: Giving yourself a day to just have it in the back of your mind and not as a focus, where your perspective might be clouded by just getting it done or just writing in general, it just helped to think about it, like from a different lens. It’s not due anymore, so you’re not pushing to get it done and overlooking things.

Interviewer: Right, mm-hmm.

Interviewee: It was just kinda like the one day that you think about it.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm, yeah. Do you still use any of those techniques? If it was useful, do you still do that with your writing right now, any sort of reflection?

Interviewee: No, cuz it’s not an assignment anymore for the classes I’m taking right now.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: I do think about it though. I do think about like, “Will I turn it in?” or whatever, and then I’ll find myself, like after class, walking with somebody, and we’ll be talking about the paper and talking about whatever, and sometimes what they wrote about kind of piques my interest.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: It’s like, “Oh, that’s an interesting point,” or something like that, but for the most part, on comm papers, you’re pretty much on your own when it comes to that.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Yes, you can go to your GSI, your professor or whatever, but I feel like they’re not as open to helping you or whatever.

Interviewer: Right.

Interviewee: It’s more just like, “Well, what do you think?” It’s like, “That doesn’t help me, cuz I’m asking what you think.”

Interviewer: Right.

Interviewee: I don’t know. It’s like they just ask a bunch of questions that I’ve already asked myself.

Interviewer: Right. [Laughter]

Interviewee: I don't know; it doesn't really help.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm, but the reflection sort of is in your head a little bit.

Interviewee: It's more in my head. I don't write it out after my paper or anything like that. I don't really have the time or the desire to do that, if it's not due, but in the back of my head, it does go on.

Interviewer: Yeah, mm-hmm, right.

Interviewee: Just like what I could have done, should have done; something I would have changed, if I had more time or had not procrastinated so much, or something like that.

Interviewer: Right, yeah. Yeah, that makes sense. How would you describe your experience with new media writing in the Gateway class, with like the blogs were that were a remediation project?

Interviewee: Honestly, I wasn't a fan of that part of the class, like the blogs. I don't like blogging, really, and it was kind of like a forced thing. It was like, every week, you have to write one page worth of blog content, and then, not only that, you have to comment on people's stuff.

Interviewer: Uh huh.

Interviewee: For me, it was kind of a chore to do all that. It wasn't life changing or like, "Wow, I'm gonna blog when I get out of this class." I really didn't like it, but I don't know. I talked about Twitter earlier. It's short and sweet or whatever, so I enjoy it more, and I follow one of my older professors. She tweets a lot now. [Laughter]

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: We follow each other. It's just like one of those things, and we can comment on people's tweets or something like that, but as a whole, like with the whole blogging process and the remediation, where I turned one of my essays into a video.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: It turned out okay. I was like a total rookie with iMovie and stuff like that, so getting all that stuff to work. We did a workshop in class, how to deal with that and everything, but it's just harder than—I don't know; I wasn't good at it, to put everything together.

Interviewer: Yeah, mm-hmm.

Interviewee: It didn't come out the way I would have liked, the way like the YouTube videos that I used didn't convert, so they were all grainy, and it was just kind of like, it was fine content-wise and humor-wise and everything. It was good, but it was just my delivery of everything that I wanted to do in that video just didn't shake out.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: Yeah, as a whole, new media writing, unless it's short stuff, short and sweet stuff, I don't really enjoy it. It feels like a chore. The whole class is going to be reading it, or a majority of the class is going to be reading whatever you write, so because of that, it's like, "Oh, I need to make sure I don't mistake all the their, their, and there's, or the twos or the whatevers."

Interviewer: Mm-hmm, right.

Interviewee: You can't have any misspellings. I mean, something tells me nobody cares if you do something like that, but I care.

Interviewer: You mean, because it's new media writing in particular, or just in general?

Interviewee: Anything.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: I mean, if it was just a one-page homework assignment that everybody was reading, and you have a bunch of misspellings or grammar mistakes, or you just sound like a clown, it's reflective of you, in my opinion.

Interviewer: Yeah, mm-hmm, yeah.

Interviewee: Some people might not even care. They just brush it off.

Interviewer: Yeah. Do you think it's different in the new media writing? Do you feel it's different than the other writing that you do in front of class?

Interviewee: Well, it's different, in the sense you don't need sources and stuff like that. Sometimes you can throw in like a video, like, "Oh, this got me thinking about this guy's speech," or something like that.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: I don't know. I like that it's shorter. I like that new media writing is, as a whole, shorter in length, and that the format is personable and informal and stuff like that, but it's just the frequency with which—like there are people that are bloggers for a living and they blog constantly.

Interviewer: Right.

Interviewee: I couldn't do it. I have things to say and stuff, but that's I'll tweet it or something. I won't write a short story about it. I don't have the desire to do that. Some people do. Some people love it.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm, yeah, and so now, they want us to pull up your portfolio, if that's okay.

Interviewee: Yeah, go ahead.

Interviewer: I'm gonna have you do it, cuz I don't know which way to access it.

Interviewee: Is it like—

Interviewer: Is it R?

Interviewee: I don't know what I have it in or not. Is it like CTools?

Interviewer: Did you put it up on CTools? Actually, sorry, let me just log in so that we can—

Interviewee: Is this the portfolio that I did for [Writing 200 level course]?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Yeah, oh, okay.

Interviewer: Is it on CTools?

Interviewee: No, it's WordPress [content management system], but I don't remember any of my login stuff.

Interviewer: Oh, you don't?

Interviewee: No. [Laughter] I could try. I can give it a shot.

Interviewer: Okay, let's try, if you can.

Interviewee: Okay.

Interviewer: The questions are just sort of about the portfolio, so it's nice to have it.

Interviewee: Okay. I mean, I can talk about it, probably.



Interviewer: Yeah, so you had a choice, right? You could make a WordPress site or something else?

Interviewee: No, we didn't have a choice.

Interviewer: Oh, you had to—

Interviewee: We had to do it in WordPress. Nice.

[...]

Interviewer: Okay, so the questions are sort of just about what your experience was like. The first one is, creating the portfolio, what was the most memorable aspect of your experience making the portfolio?

Interviewee: I kind of liked just making it my own, in terms of customizing it and stuff. It just kind of shows who am I. The pictures I chose are very selective.

Interviewer: Uh huh.

Interviewee: [...]. There's a billion different formats, in terms of how you can display all your stuff, but I did it by categories.

Interviewer: Yeah, mm-hmm.

Interviewee: You can go by paper and read all the stuff, but it was kind of annoying though, cuz at the end of the semester, everybody's kind of, one, they're burnt out; and two, there's a lot of work involved with this.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: I don't know if I got on it too late or something like that, but we had the opportunity to rewrite every single paper we ever wrote, basically, and put it on the blog. That, in itself, is a pain, because if there's something that she didn't like or something like that, then you have to cater to what she would have liked to have seen different.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: I don't know; when you're doing that for five papers and then, not only that, but making this from scratch, it's very time-consuming.

Interviewer: Sure, mm-hmm.

Interviewee: At the end of the day, you can't go to office hours when it's done and talk about it.

Interviewer: Right.

Interviewee: Your grade is your grade, so it was just different in that regard, getting everything to go together and then comparing yours to other people's, like if they turned it in early or something, you can see it. Yeah, that was cool. It was different.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, mm-hmm. What were your aims when you made the portfolio?

Interviewee: I don't know that—they kept talking about like, “Oh, you could show it to employers and stuff,” but I don't know. I don't see it being used like that. I don't see myself going to an interview and being like, “Oh, and we made an ePortfolio in one of my writing classes. You wanna see it?” I don't see them saying, “Yes.” They'd say, “Oh, maybe some other time,” or, “No.”

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: Unless you want to be a journalist or something, or a columnist for a newspaper or something like that, then I can see how it would be useful, but depending on what you want to, like some people are premed. Med schools don't care. Hospitals don't care that you made a portfolio in English class, but apparently, [Writing 400 level course] builds off of this, or you make your whole new one or something like that. I don't have the syllabus or anything yet. I don't know. It depends what you want to do, as to how useful this will be.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: If anything, it was just having done it and having the experience, cuz I have everything I've ever written, and then they wanted older writings, to see where you've come from.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: There was [English course] stuff in there and, I mean, there is a difference. There is a difference in my writing style and the quality and stuff like that. I definitely noticed that in reading it and being like, “What was I doing three years ago?”

Interviewer: [Laughter] Right.

Interviewee: Yeah, it just shows kind of a progression, which, I guess, is kind of the idea of the whole—I don't know what it's called, like archiving everything that you've done?

Interviewer: Mm-hmm, yeah.

Interviewee: I guess, it gives you guys access to everything I've ever written at the same time.

Interviewer: Right, but did it do anything for you to see that?

Interviewee: It was more like a realization of like, “This is where I was; where I am,” kind of thing. It was just, each class demands something different, in terms of style and content and their goal at the end, so it just shows that—like in high school, you only write one kind of paper; well, I guess, two. It’s short answers on tests, and then the one research paper is the big writing assignment. Here, you’re writing a couple of those per semester, per class, so you get lots of experience, and it shows you how you grow, especially between like a 5-page paper and a 20-page paper, how you can stretch it, and how you just build off of different points to make one point be five pages, instead of multiple points into five.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Do you think that making this portfolio has affected your writing?

Interviewee: It’s affected it in the sense that I changed some of my final drafts to put into this, but as a whole, no. It was more like setting it all up and making it all work together so it all made sense, as you go to different tabs to find different papers and stuff like that.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: I didn’t put my final draft and then my—actually, no, I did. I think I put my final draft of the paper, and then, yeah, edited final draft, so you can actually compare them, and then there’s a reflection for all of them.

Interviewer: Yeah, interesting.

Interviewee: Yeah, I guess, that is true. You can compare the two.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Sometimes the changes aren’t very drastic, and sometimes I rewrote the whole paper, so it’s kind of up to you, in terms of what you want to see.

Interviewer: Do you think that was a different process than if you’d done it and not had to put it on any portfolio? Do you know what I mean, if it wasn’t up online?

Interviewee: I don’t think so, because the papers that I wrote, at first, they were going right to [Instructor], so she had already seen them. That was my audience, was her, so by putting them in an ePortfolio was basically just like spreading them out on a table and putting them in different piles and showing you what you can see. It’s all just right there digitally, instead of just holding them in your hands, so they’re just like that.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Do you think it affected how you think of yourself as a writer?

Interviewee: How I think of myself as a writer?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: No, it just showed me that you can always improve your writing.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: As good as you think a paper might be, it could always be better, unfortunately, cuz it's kind of like a never-ending cycle.

Interviewer: Right. [Laughter]

Interviewee: You can always fix something and you think of it, or they find something that could change or they didn't like or whatever, so it's just a process, and it doesn't end. There is no end.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm, yeah, yeah.

Interviewee: I guess the grade is the end. Once you get the grade, you might be fine; but no, not really.

Interviewer: Right, okay, and what about, what was the impact on you of the reflective writing that you did in the portfolio itself?

Interviewee: Like at the end of every paper?

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: Well, each paper obviously had its own topic, its own thing that it was trying to—so if it was a satire, or it was a serious paper, or if it was a reflective essay.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: We had all of those, and—I'm sorry, what was the question?

Interviewer: What was the impact of that reflective writing?

Interviewee: Oh, yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: It just makes you think back. Somebody asks you to think about it, but even when you're writing down the reflections in your head, sometimes you can build off them. It's like something you otherwise wouldn't have done, when you were just thinking about it, so maybe more thoughts come on top of your thoughts that you were writing

down and it just increases it. For me, I find that I can express my thoughts better through writing than I can verbally.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: That's just one of those things. Once you start writing it out, sometimes things just flow, and sometimes you have to push to just get the word limit.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: It kind of depends on how emotionally invested and how you feel about the outcome of that paper, or how much time you put into it or not. [Laughter]

Interviewer: Mm-hmm, right.

Interviewee: Sometimes you're happy with what you got, because you did it in a night, and sometimes you put a week into it. Sometimes it works out; sometimes it doesn't, like sometimes you overthink it.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm, right. Did the reflective writing on the ePortfolio feel different from other reflective writing?

Interviewee: No, it was the same, actually.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm, yeah.

Interviewee: Yeah, it was very much the same, in terms of just the process and what my intentions were for writing it.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm, cool. Do you have any other comments? That was the last question? Are there any other—

Interviewee: No. I emailed the professor for [Writing 400 level course], to get the syllabus, cuz there's two sections it, which I'm kind of confused by.

Interviewer: Oh, yeah, mm-hmm.

[...]

Interviewee: Yeah, I'll say I don't really have any questions, I guess.

Interviewer: Okay, okay, okay; great. Thank you for doing it. Let me turn this off.

[End of Audio]