

Interviewer: Alright. This is *** interviewing ***, and it's February 14. Alright. ***, how would you describe yourself as a writer?

Interviewee: [Laughter] Really easy question. Okay. I dunno. I guess how I would describe myself as a writer is I really enjoy writing when I can incorporate some type of personal experience just because I feel like it becomes more honest. A lot of the writing that I did throughout my collegiate career that I actually enjoyed was the writing that was more creative nonfiction and more like a personal narrative versus other writing I had to do for other classes, where it was more a structured assignment in response to a text we had read.

Interviewer: Okay. Then how would you describe the role of writing in your life?

Interviewee: I'm planning on going to law school, so writing's a skill that I know I'm going to need to have. Obviously, I'll be using it differently. [Chuckles] I won't be writing personal narratives.

I think that I will be using it in my career, and then also I think that I really enjoy doing it, so I probably will keep doing it in the style that I like just as a hobby, I guess, or maybe a side job of sorts. It depends. [Chuckles] I think that it's always been something that I've really loved and wanted to do while I was at [University of Michigan].

I thought for a while—when I applied to [University of Michigan], I thought that I wanted to be an English major. Then when I got to campus, I changed my mind. I wanted to do political science, which is what I ended up—I ended up graduating with a bachelor of arts in political science.

I thought of double-majoring with English. I didn't—I don't wanna say anything bad about the English department, but I just felt that it wasn't for me, just because I like more in-the-classroom talk about more writing techniques and the style and the tone.

I guess reading all of the text and discussing the text—while it's a great way—you have to, I guess, read to become a good writer, but I liked it focused more on how I could use those techniques to get my point across versus more of a discussion on how other people have used those techniques. If that makes sense. I'm not sure.

Interviewer: Yeah. Definitely. Then you ended up with a political science major and a writing minor?

Interviewee: Right.

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

Interviewee: It's always funny because I feel like I thought that I was a good writer just from *[audio distortion 03:41]* people in high school—I felt more like a big fish in a smaller pond. It's, like, "Oh, I'm a great writer." Then it's funny to look back now at things that I wrote in my freshman year coming in, and it's, like, "Oh, I had a lot to learn still!" *[Laughter]*

Especially being with other people that are such good writers, you learn from them, too. I think that was my favorite part about the classes that were more focused on the writing—I mean the writing minor classes but also my English classes that were focused on writing—was that we got to see what all of our other peers were doing with different workshops. I think you learn a lot from that.

Interviewer: Okay. You think you've definitely changed as a writer since you started at *[University of Michigan]*?

Interviewee: Yeah. I think so. I think certain things have stayed the same. As far as how I like to write and what I like to write about is the same, but I found better ways to do it. I think, before, it just wasn't as—I don't know what the right word is. *[Laughter]*

Interviewer: Could you give an example of something that you think has changed in your writing?

Interviewee: I would say that, before, I would assume that people knew certain details or assume just because in my head it made sense as far as setting—I feel like I left out a lot of details before. It was much more generalized writing. It was more vague. It could've been any—it was just less—it didn't seem as—sorry. I'm much better at writing than talking. *[Laughter]*

Interviewer: That's okay.

Interviewee: I guess it was just more generalized and very vague, where people were left with a lot more questions. I feel that now I've learned to ask questions of *[audio distortion 06:11]*. Going through and looking at something, I try to think of it like what other people—anticipate those questions rather than leaving them *[audio distortion 00:06:23]*.

"Oh, they'll figure it out," I guess was my attitude before that totally *[audio distortion 06:30]* why wouldn't they be able to envision this whole scenario? Whereas I feel like the scenes that I write are much more immersive for the reader *[audio distortion 06:43]* harder for them to, I guess, understand what I *[audio distortion 06:47]* show them. I wasn't showing. I would more tell. I would be, like—

[...]

Interviewer: That's okay. You said you feel like you can better anticipate readers' questions now.

Interviewee: Right.

Interviewer: You also said that you feel like you're showing, whereas before you were more just telling?

Interviewee: Right.

Interviewer: Okay. You said you think that working with other writers in peer groups and workshop helped you to change in that way?

Interviewee: Oh, yeah. Definitely. Because you get those questions, and then you start to ask them ahead of time versus when you get in there. I think that was—I loved that. I thought it was the most—it was what I loved the most, I guess, about those classes—was because—not only getting the questions from people but also looking at their work in the same way helps you to look at your work that way, as if you didn't know exactly what they were trying to get at—or what you were trying to get at. Sorry. *[Chuckles]*

Interviewer: That's great. Can you think of anything else from your time at [University of Michigan] with writing other than peer review or workshop that helped you to grow and change in this way?

Interviewee: *[Pause]* I'm trying to think of things that also—*[pause]*—I guess big things, too, were just—outside of the classroom, when I did go to office hours, which I probably should've done more while I was at [University of Michigan], because every time that I did and you got that one-on-one with the professor, I think you got that same type of—they always pushed me to ask or answer these questions and really challenged the writing, whereas other *[audio distortion 09:38]* could get away with writing something that was good enough, and someone would be—a *[audio distortion 09:45]* other professor or teacher would be, like, "That's great."

Then it would end there, whereas I feel that we did—maybe it's because there's more *[audio distortion 09:57]* and more of a revision process, or it was that one-on-one, challenging it, after the initial draft *[audio distortion 10:07]* in the same way that it caused me to—I don't wanna say scrutinize but kind of scrutinize my work more 10:15, but in a good way. *[Chuckles]*

Interviewer: Okay. Great. Now that you've graduated, what are your goals for yourself as a writer?

Interviewee: I hope that I don't lose everything that I've learned, I guess is one of my fears, or that's my goal: not to lose what I've learned, cuz I know that I'll—I think I won't lose it because I'll definitely be writing a lot in law school, but I don't wanna lose everything. I don't want to change completely—I guess I don't—I like writing—hmm. I'm sorry. I'm rambling.

Interviewer: No. That's alright. Take your time.

Interviewee: I should've formed my response first. My goals as a writer. I really hope to continue improving my writing cuz I'm sure I still have a long way to go. I know that I'm not—my last assignments that I turned in, I still felt, like, "Oh, I wish I had more time to—" or "I wish I would've done this."

I almost see myself going back to my finished portfolio, especially after getting the comments back from the Sweetland faculty members that reviewed my portfolio and revising it further just for my *[audio distortion 11:52]*. It doesn't feel finished to me, I guess, or I feel like I might want to add to it and use it as a more of a professional tool *[audio distortion 12:02]*. "This is how I like to write. This is what I like to write about, so I'm more doing this for me."

I think that's almost the wrong way—not the wrong way to look at it. That could be fine, but I think it does show more than I think it does as far as a professional piece of writing that I could show people to show how I am as a writer.

Then, as far as—I hope that my writing *[audio distortion 12:39]* able to apply to law school. I know it's gonna be a much different style of writing that I'm used to, but I think that I should be able to adapt those skills for a different application.

Interviewer: Okay. Great. Now, thinking across your writing experiences at University of Michigan, what do you think it means to write well?

Interviewee: *[Pause]* *[Laughter]* To write well. I would say—*[pause]*—that writing I think is well done has answered all of those questions for me but also asked hard questions, and if they couldn't answer them, fully explained why they couldn't answer them. I guess it leaves me, even if all the questions are answered, feeling like the writer took the time to investigate maybe not every aspect of what they were investigating, but the relevant questions that one would have.

I hate to keep coming back to that questions and answers *[audio distortion 14:22]* thing, but I think that's what really does it for me. Also, I don't know what it is *[audio distortion 14:32]*. I guess I could—I think it comes from details, and it comes from, I guess, *[audio distortion 14:41]*

I feel like when people want—to write well is to write honestly and fully investigate every aspect of what you're writing about. I guess not to just brush over anything.

Interviewer: Okay. Great. Which upper level writing courses have you taken?

Interviewee: I took [English course], and then I took political—which was the essay-writing course, and then I took political science—I think it was [English course] [...]. Very [audio distortion 15:38] writing course experiences. I also took [English 400 level course] and then—I'm trying to think what else. I feel like I took one other one, but I'm not sure.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: What?

Interviewer: Go ahead.

Interviewee: No, I think that's pretty much it besides the capstone course.

Interviewer: Okay. Great.

Interviewee: [Audio distortion 16:08], but I can't think of it off the top of my head.

Interviewer: Okay. We'll talk about the capstone course a little bit later, but for now, what were your experiences like in [English course]?

Interviewee: I really liked [English course]. I feel like that's where I started to see a change in the way that I thought about writing. I guess that's where it was really drilled in about asking hard questions and then being able to keep asking 16:45 questions and answering them throughout the writing.

That's where I got a lot of the guidance towards having a lot of details and having—we talked a lot about the narrative form and how to write in that way. I really liked it because it was the type of writing that I enjoy doing.

One of the first [audio distortion 17:24] for that course was one that I then went on to use in my interest 17:34 minor course as my—it was my—I'm trying to think. [Audio distortion 17:45]. I don't—and I chose it not because I didn't [audio distortion 17:54] as good as it was but because I really—[chuckles]—liked writing that essay to begin with, and I thought there definitely were other ways that I could express the same thing in a different way.

What I ended up doing was [audio distortion 18:15] that I had written. I had gone to office hours. I'd written it when I was in [English course], and I'd written an essay about—it was actually a sad essay [...].

[...]

I felt very attached to that piece of writing, but also when I came in to office hours, I had written just a lot of different scenes that I had just pulled from different moments in my life. It was great to have someone on the outside say, "This is a great scene, but it's not really relevant, so maybe you should remove it," or ask why I have it here or what it's doing for it, and then for me to come to the conclusion that, "Yeah. It doesn't really belong," which I wouldn't have.

To me, I was attached to all the different scenes, and I wasn't thinking about it as far as how does this move the writing along and how does that further the development of the essay. I think that was one of the—back to that time I went to office hours because it really [*audio distortion 20:29*] that I looked at my essays.

Before, it was more, "Here's a piece of personal expression. I really like it because I think it tells the story really well," versus—I think there I was more looking at how the different scenes build—I started to look at how the different scenes help the development of the essay. Sorry. That was kind of rambling. [*Laughter*]

Interviewer: No. That was great. Thank you. Then what were your experiences like in [Political Science course]?

Interviewee: [*Laughter*] Not as great. The political science department's really interesting because—I chose actually almost—I leaned toward that degree. I mean, I like political science, but I wouldn't stay that I'm—some people are political science buffs.

They know everything about every politician and just love it so much, whereas I like it, and I keep up with things, but I mostly chose it because it was a major where I would have the opportunity to write—[*laughter*]—about a topic that I was interested in. That's why I ended up there.

The interesting part was that I went in to that class after taking—I can't remember if it was after taking [English course] or at the same time as I was taking [English course]. I remember in my first essay I tried to—we had to do a series of essays that led up to a final brief on a piece of legislation.

You chose your piece of legislation. You gathered some data and information on it just like a research assignment, and then you did a first editorial from one person's point of view on the legislation, a second editorial based on another point of view, and then I feel there might've been another essay in between those editorials and the final brief, but I can't remember the exact name that they called it.

[...]

Interviewer: [...]. You had written this narrative scene that you thought introduced the issue well.

Interviewee: Right. That class we [audio distortion 24:31]. Yeah. Then we got comments back along with our grade, so we would know, going forward the sequential essays that we'd have to write, how to improve. I remember I thought I had done this great job on this essay, but then when I got it back, apparently, that wasn't the GSI's [Graduate Student Instructor] opinion as well.

They just—I found that with later classes, too. They really want you to write in the way that political science professional writing is written, I guess. It was not very—I guess most of the comments I received back was that it needed to be more academic and [audio distortion 25:30]. It's just that it wasn't quite what they wanted, I guess.

It was strange for me because, coming into that, I thought, "Well, this will be so easy. I have to write all these essays. I'm good at writing. I'm doing the writing minor. This should be [audio distortion 25:56]." Then I get my first essay back, and I didn't do well on it. I was—[laughter]—really surprised. That was interesting.

Then in the later essays, I did do well, but because I [audio distortion 26:15] conformed to what he said is what they wanted. After I got those comments back, I went to him, and I was, like, "Well, how do I need to write, then?" I probably have the exact comments somewhere.

Interviewer: [Chuckles] Yeah.

Interviewee: I'm not sure. It was—

[Pause 26:37 - 26:44]

Interviewer: They asked you to write in that way later in other political science courses as well?

Interviewee: Right. Then it—

Interviewer: Okay. Did you find that you did that writing successfully in later political science courses?

Interviewee: Yes. It was successful to the people that were grading it, but not necessarily successful to me. I guess successful to me would've enjoyed writing it and would've enjoyed reading it.

To me, what I was writing was—it just wasn't—[laughter]—interesting—it wasn't interesting for me to write about it in that way, just telling versus I really was told in my other classes how I needed to show. Once I embraced that, I really loved that. Then it was hard to just tell the facts, and that's all that really—I guess less of a creative aspect to it. Also, just less—

[Pause 27:55 - 28:00]

Interviewee: - I don't know if it's less or more. It's just more structured, more—I dunno. It just [audio distortion 28:10] boring to me, almost.

Interviewer: Right. Okay. After those experiences in political science courses, how confident do you feel about writing in that major?

Interviewee: At that time I felt very confident doing it. That 28:29 comes mostly from [audio distortion 28:31] getting good grades back, I guess. After that first editorial, I wasn't feeling too confident, but once I found out what they were looking for and gave them what wanted, then it was smooth sailing.

I kind of resent that because I hate when I'm writing and I'm, like, "What does my professor want me to write?" It just seems very [audio distortion 29:09] like they want you to give [audio distortion 29:12]. I just feel like they must read so many papers that are the same, but I guess that's just what's expected.

[...]

Interviewer: That's okay. Then, how often have you used skills or strategies that you learned in [English course] or in your [Political Science course] course in other courses that you've taken?

Interviewee: [Pause] I would say—I went on to take [English 400 level course], which was almost like a continuation of [English course], so there I really felt like I was able to use those skills, but then there I also learned a lot of different things because we weren't just writing personal essays. It was supposed to be like immersion journalism or—what was it called? I can't remember. Yeah, I think it was immersion journalism.

We did an immersion memoir, a travel writing piece, and then—I was trying to think what the third essay was. Maybe literary journalism, I think, I was able to pull on skills from there.

I liked it because I was trying to use those skills, but then [audio distortion 30:46] write three essays that all had—I could apply those skills but in different ways and to different degrees to get into these three different categories. That's not the right word, but all those [audio distortion 31:05] are very similar, but the amount of scenery, the amount of yourself [audio distortion 31:14]. It changed, which is what made it a challenge, which I enjoyed.

Then, I'm trying to think: other courses? I know I've had to write essays for other courses. I'm trying to think. It's funny how fast after graduation I've forgotten all the classes [audio distortion 31:42] take.

[Chuckles]

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: I took a couple—why can't I think of it?—oh, American culture classes. Those were also similar to the political science I took [audio distortion 32:06] political science major.

In those, I had to write a lot of essays. I feel there it was a little more relaxed in terms of I could incorporate some scenic elements, but for the most part, it was mostly responding to the text that we had read throughout the course.

To me it felt more like my political science classes. It was more, "You read all these books. Now write a paper that incorporates all of them." It's awful, but I know I went through and I just—I read the books, but then afterward I went through, pulled the quotes that I'd written down in my notes or that I'd highlighted, and then made my essay around it, and it worked.

It's unfortunate, but that's what I did, I guess. To me, it seems bad, but it got me the grade that I wanted. I don't know. It's interesting. It's almost [audio distortion 33:24] they wanted, though.

They wanted me to have a certain number of quotations, and they wanted me to have [audio distortion 33:33]—they didn't want me to necessarily restate what I had read all the time, but [audio distortion 33:41] a lot of just—I guess sometimes they did ask you to challenge what you read, which then I was happy to do just because it's less boring that way.

It's more stimulating, I guess, to write where you're actually putting some of your own ideas 34:00 in, but a lot of it was very, "This is the structure I want. These are the texts that you need to be pulling from." I dunno. [Laughter] Not my favorite experiences, but not awful.

It's become almost second nature for those classes. That's all it really takes, and that all that they really want. It's not too laborious to do it, but it's tedious almost.

Interviewer: Right. Okay. [...], I have a lot of questions about your experiences with the capstone course and with the capstone portfolio and the gateway to the capstone course, [...].

[...]

Interviewer: Alright. I guess we'll just jump right into the remaining interview questions. What impact did the minor capstone course, [Writing course], have on your writing?

Interviewee: [Chuckles] Okay, so what impact—capstone—I would say that it was the first time that I had had a chance to work on big projects like that. I'd written essays that were ten pages, maybe, at the maximum, or maybe a little over that. I hadn't written anything quite as large as the capstone project within the capstone course.

I guess what it took from it was how to write longer—not necessarily longer pieces but—I dunno—I feel like my capstone project ended up being more like a collection of shorter essays since that was what I was more comfortable with.

It was a way for me to connect all these shorter essays in a way that I hadn't really had to think about before as far as—before, it was more I would have an essay on its own. In the project, I had to think more about the structure of the essays, not just the structure of the paragraphs within the essay. That was different.

I'm trying to think of other things, too. I feel like it was more, for the most part, just a chance to create something with what I had learned throughout my college experience, so that was really a great way to end the minor.

Interviewer: Can you say a little bit more about connecting your college experiences?

Interviewee: Yeah. In the capstone course, what I tried to do was take—and specifically the project, which made up the majority of the course, I would say—would be I created something where I could—like I was talking about last time—create the type of essays that I liked that were more personal, more narrative. Then also I incorporated that with essays that focused on some court cases that related to the topics I was talking about.

I tried to analyze those more in an academic way, so it was a way to combine my interests related to my major of political science and then also the type of personal writing that I like to do.

Interviewer: Okay. Can you think of an example of a way that you combined those two in [Writing course]?

Interviewee: I'm trying to think. My project was a lot—it went in a few different directions, but it mostly circled around marriage. It was a way for me to break rules that I wasn't allowed to break in my political science classes. Instead of just analyzing court cases in a very objective way, I had to bring in more of my subjective opinion.

Being able to write about what interested me, but in a way that I wanted to, but also in a way where I wasn't—I don't know how to—I felt that it was still academic in the way that I did analyze the court cases objectively first but then brought in my

own personal experiences through scenes. I don't know. It's hard to articulate it, especially since I feel like I haven't gone back to look at those essays in a while either.

Interviewer: Right. Okay. Do you feel like the course had an impact on your process as a writer?

Interviewee: Yes. It's just very different because it was so much—our class was different, too, because there were only five of us. I know it'll be different for later capstone courses or other capstone courses, but I really loved it because there was so much more one-on-one attention—or not necessarily one-on-one but specific attention to the work that I was doing and that my peers were doing.

We each got that personal attention, which allowed us to talk about and think about our essays more than I might have on my own without that personal input from other people. Not to say that you don't get that workshops in other classes, but even then it seemed that most of the workshops where we started as a group and talked about things in more general terms.

Then you broke up into your workshop groups, and you each got, maximum, maybe a half-hour, where in this class, if we had a week and one of us was gone for half of one of those hour-and-a-half classes, we were talking about one person's work and then half the other, and the next day of the week, half one person's, half the other.

It was just a lot of time with the instructor that you might not have gotten in other classes. I think you could get that from, like I was saying, break-off workshops, too, but it's just a little different.

It was the first class where I had gotten a lot of personal attention like that, so I think it made me more—it was exciting to hear what other people had to say about my work, which made me think about things more. There was a higher level of, "I need to make sure what I'm bringing is really great because it's gonna be looked at really closely," whereas maybe before in other classes—*[chuckles]*—I hate admitting this, but I'd be, "Uh, well, this class—no one's really gonna pay attention to this. They'll look at it for ten minutes, so I'll just draft something up really quick."

Interviewer: Right. Okay, so you feel like that personalized attention on your drafts really influenced your process as a writer?

Interviewee: Right. Just more revision than normal, too, I guess, just because it was—the project was a whole semester thing, so just different, I guess, than quickly making a draft, reviewing it, and then quickly making another final draft.

Interviewer: Okay. Can you say a little bit more about that different kind of revision?

Interviewee: I guess that a majority of what ended up in my ePortfolio—which I guess happens with—had happened with other work, too—a majority of it was stuff that I hadn't brought in to class, but it came from what we talked about in class. A lot of my initial drafts didn't end up making it to the end, where what was finally produced wasn't—I dunno.

It just evolved more, I guess. It was just more—usually, I feel like my process was to write one draft and then bring it in, have a workshop, and then come back, change what people said I should change, keep what I liked, and maybe—throughout my college career, there was a significant increase in more global revision, but with this process, I felt like there were many more drafts.

It was also interesting, too, because, before, I would be bringing in a complete draft of what I was going to turn in, whereas here you were bringing in parts because most of our projects were more a collection of different either essays or stories or more a collection of work. No one really saw it all till we got later in the class.

It was just interesting to talk about, "Okay, you have this part. Well, then, what are you thinking about doing next for these other parts?" It was just a different process because it was a different type of project or writing assignment.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Okay. Can you tell me a little bit more specifically about the project that you chose to do in the capstone course?

Interviewee: Yes. I guess for the project—I was taking a law and gender course [...].

It was just interesting because that got my mind turning. Then it was cool to be able to create a project from that but then also from my own personal experience [...].

What I tried to do is create a series of essays that looked into different—oh, I don't know what the correct word is—just different areas of marriage or different moments in history that have affected how people think about marriage today. It was just an exploration into some really hard personal questions, which I like doing to myself, even though it was difficult and very—I don't know what the right word is—but a little uncomfortable but in a way that I like talking about my own personal experiences in class and also talking about these court cases that I found so interesting. I feel that there was just a lot of—I dunno. It's—sorry.

[Laughter]

Interviewer: No. It's great.

Interviewee: I start rambling and then forget where I'm going. For me, it was a very fulfilling project, so I like it.

I tried to make it so that other people—I feel that by incorporating the court cases and using hypothetical situations where, since this is how the court case is decided, this is how it would affect people or how it has affected people, universalizes it. I dunno. I really liked being able to write essays but then also have them all connect in a way that explored all these different aspects of these court cases and my own relationship and relationships in general.

Interviewer: Great. I'm gonna ask you some questions now about your capstone ePortfolio.

Interviewee: Okay.

[...]

Interviewer: Okay. Can you just tell me about the most memorable aspect of your experience with the ePortfolio?

Interviewee: [Laughter]. I think with the ePortfolio, I'm not the most—I can't think off the word—technologically savvy. I'm just not really great with—[laughter]—computers.

For me, what I remember most is trying—I chose a visual theme. [...].

[...]. Eventually, I got it to look how I wanted it to look—[laughter]—but, for me, I remember really nit-pickingly trying to get these pictures perfect.

I guess my thought was that it was great that it was a small class because it allowed me to figure out and talk with people about how do I get this to be the way that I want it to be in my head. That was great. I dunno. It was a little challenging at times. [Laughter]

Interviewer: Okay. What were your aims for the ePortfolio? What narrative did you hope to tell?

Interviewee: I guess that I wanted to tell what I was saying earlier, just about how I had this passion for writing personal essays, but then in my political science courses experienced resistance to that. Then in my capstone course, I was able to do something that combined both interests and both styles of writing in a way that I think worked.

I also wanted to show also along the way not just that but the other pieces or courses also that were happening in the midst of that. I feel like I have a great—I

dunno—a good mix of essays from earlier on in my college career to later that shows how the minor and my writing courses have allowed me to grow as a writer.

Interviewer: Okay. Did you design the ePortfolio to create a particular reader experience?

Interviewee: Yeah. I wanted—I dunno. I wanted something that was visually appealing, [...].

[Chuckles]

[...]

Interviewer: Okay. Can you give an example of any other design decisions or choices that you made?

Interviewee: I guess as far as the headings, I had a little difficulty. It was really hard for me to organize how and where to put the essays. I knew which essays I wanted to use, but then I was trying to find ways to connect them. I think the issue was that they could all connect in some way. There was some way that I could reason that they connected.

What I ended up doing is I put all my political science essays under political science and then my capstone writing under capstone writing. Then I was left with a mix of essays from *[audio distortion 18:32]* course, and then my essay-writing course, [English course], and then my upper-level writing outside my major course, the [English 400 level course].

I stuck all those in—well, not all of those cuz I guess—yeah, stuff from more upper level/the intro to the minor course under creative nonfiction, which I really—not my favorite choice of title, but I had such a hard time trying to figure out a way to differentiate it from everything else. Not my favorite, but—*[chuckles]*—but I guess it works.

Then I chose to do the analytical writing, which could also *[audio distortion 19:26]* writing, cuz it was just my directed self-placement essay, and then an essay I wrote in my freshman-year writing course. I dunno. I played with a few different things. This is what I ended up choosing at the end there, but not my favorite headings.

I was trying to find some way to 19:49 group up the essays that fall under creative nonfiction and analytical writing. With the directed self-placement essay and my first-year writing essay, they both were looking at a text and then analyzing it versus the creative nonfiction essays were all more just personal essays.

Interviewer: Okay. Did you notice any other relationships between your artifacts while you created the ePortfolio?

Interviewee: A lot of my essays were related to my personal experiences, and there were a lot of essays about identify and dealing with different things in life. I feel like a lot of my essays were related to—not necessarily the analytical writing or the political science, but the creative nonfiction and the capstone writing—the essays that fall under those headings all had—I don't know if it would necessarily be a theme.

A lot of them had to do with different hard decisions in life or different questions that I just had about my own life, whether it be who I was going to be, or how to deal with death, or how to deal with failure, or how to deal with different fears. There were those connections as well.

I think also that even though—I would say that the political science essays are the most different from anything else, but I think that's why they're there, is to show that contrast and also to bring it into the discussion of what my capstone project ended up being was based off the political science course that I had taken.

Interviewer: Right. Okay. Were there any other relationships that you wanted readers to notice?

Interviewee: [Laughter]

[Pause 22:11 - 22:18]

[...]

Interviewee: Yes. Sorry. I'm just thinking. [Pause] I'm not sure. I guess—

[Pause 22:30 - 22:38]

Interviewee: - that—which I might've already said. The only other thing that I wish that they did notice is that—[pause]— as far as my picture grid went, I hoped that they would realize that—the reason with the picture grid, too, the center image was the capstone project. All the essays around it were the other essays or pairs of essays that I included.

I thought it was a good way of showing my capstone project brought in something from each of those different essays in some way. Other than that, I just hoped that they recognize the relationship and how—which probably I could've made a little more clear, which [audio distortion 23:37] tried to do by saying which course it was from just to show, "This is how I've grown," or "Here's the progression of my writing."

Interviewer: Okay. Do you think that creating the ePortfolio has had an effect on your writing?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: Most definitely. It just caused me to think about how to present it as a collection, which I never really had to do before.

I feel like creating the ePortfolio is something that you almost thought of as secondary. Like, "Oh, I've done all this writing, and now I just gotta throw it in the ePortfolio," but it almost could've been—you could've expanded it into almost its own course just talking about how different design decisions effect what people will anticipate of your writing or help them to draw those connections. It was interesting to think about presenting the writing in a way that also tells that story.

Interviewer: Okay. What did you learn from the reflective writing in the ePortfolio?

Interviewee: That'd be like the writer's evolution essay?

Interviewer: Right. Yeah. The evidence-based essay and the contextual reflections.

Interviewee: Okay. I guess through those—I think it's interesting, and it helps you grow as a writer to look back on what works here, what didn't work there, and how you adapted throughout your college courses to make it more things working than not working. It's also just good in the same way that it is to just revise other people's work.

When you go back and look at it later on, you see more maybe than you did when you were closer to it. Yeah. I think it helps to see where I had been and where I could go to be better.

Interviewer: Okay. Could you give an example?

Interviewee: I guess—[laughter]—I know for one—for the political science—I'm trying to think. I need to go look at this essay of his.

I think a lot of it was looking at where—[pause]—writing essays that included elements of scene and narrative worked and then where they didn't work. For example, like I was saying, the essays that fall under that creative nonfiction topic—they were all essays where that worked, but then I tried to implement it into my political science writing, it wasn't as well received.

I guess for the most part it looked at that aspect of my writing, just how I like to write more scenes, narrative writing, more personal writing, but then how *[audio distortion 27:44]* not necessarily—when I'm writing for my political science courses, it was necessarily the right place to do that.

Then also just how bringing people into my personal experiences by providing the scenes in the essays where it makes sense really does help to—as representation or I guess as evidence of the point I'm trying to make. I think it's really—I dunno.

I just think it comes off as really honest and just more—I dunno—believable because it really did happen, as evidence, rather than hypothetical evidence or just vague statements. I think showing a detailed scene where these things I'm noticing are *[audio distortion 28:40]*—using that is better—sorry. I'm really *[cross talk 28:53]*.

Interviewer: No. That's alright.

Interviewee: I guess what I'm trying to say is that using those more detailed scenes was a good decision because it provided that evidence I needed in a good way.

Interviewer: Good. Okay. What could people interested in writing development, including the administrators like people at [Sweetland Center for Writing], learn about writing development from your capstone ePortfolio?

Interviewee: *[Laughter]* I guess what I would say is that—

[Pause 29:40 - 29:46]

Interviewee: - I dunno. It's hard for me to think of—*[pause]*—you're saying by looking at the portfolio, what would they observe about my writing development or writing development in general?

Interviewer: Yep.

Interviewee: Okay. I guess it shows how—I think through my capstone courses, I was able to—*[pause]*—there was a lot of learning about how to think about questions and think through questions, and once you get an answer, ask more questions. I think you can tell from my writing how as my writing progressed or developed with more courses and practicing this, I *[audio distortion 30:59]* courses. I think it just comes from—*[pause]*—just talking about the questions and having people ask the questions of you and—I don't know. Sorry. *[Laughter]*

Interviewer: No. That's great. Thank you. So you think that your writing developed in the portfolio by answering questions and thinking of more questions?

Interviewee: Yeah. Then it also shows how I was able to first learn how to write these essays as individual writing assignments in previous courses and then in the capstone course, write a collection of essays or more of a collection of *[audio distortion 32:04]* I have learned. I guess it shows how when you get these small pieces and then you're able to put them all together into something bigger. I dunno.

Interviewer: Great.

Interviewee: That's a bad analogy. *[Laughter]*

Interviewer: No. That's helpful.

Interviewer: Okay. Now I'm just gonna ask you a few questions about the gateway course.

Interviewee: Okay.

Interviewer: How did your experience in the capstone course compare to your experience in the gateway course?

Interviewee: I'd say they're pretty comparable just because I had the instructor for both courses, but it's a little different cuz, like I was saying, the capstone course was a smaller group versus the gateway course was a larger group, so it's a little different. I think they're very similar, but the capstone course was just a much deeper level of revision and deeper look at specific pieces of writing.

It was more discussion in general terms but in a way where talking about different things or working through different questions that maybe didn't relate to anyone's essay. When I went back to write my essays for that course, I was in the habit of thinking through things in that way.

Interviewer: Okay. *[Pause]* What were your experiences of working with other writers throughout the minor?

Interviewee: I really enjoyed working with the other students that were *[audio distortion 33:54]* just because we were such a small group. I feel like I not only felt I knew them so well just from the close look at all of their writing but just from spending so much time together.

I feel like it was just such a great—looking at their work helps—while I'm looking at their work, I'm thinking about ways that I could also improve my work in the same way. I dunno.

I have a lot of admiration for the work that they did. It was really great to see what other people were doing and then not necessarily incorporate it directly in my work

but just to think about the way—the way that we were looking at their essay, I would then go back and look at my essay in the same way. Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. Great. Anything else you wanna say about working with other writers throughout the [Minor in Writing]?

Interviewee: I really enjoyed the workshop element of it, getting to hear their feedback and also being able to look at what other people are doing. I'm trying to think what else. Also—I'm trying to think what else. I feel like in the gateway course we did a lot of the blogging, too, which is different way to interact with the different writers in the course. I'm trying to think what else.

Interviewer: What was your experience of doing that blogging in the gateway course?

Interviewee: Yeah. Yeah, that's all I can think of right now. *[Laughter]*

Interviewer: Okay. Great. What are the differences that you see between the gateway and the capstone ePortfolio?

Interviewee: Not as much thought went into design for the gateway portfolio as to the capstone portfolio. I guess for the gateway portfolio, I just chose a color I liked and put a couple of pictures that I thought went well with the essay to add pictures. It was just less thought put into what story it was telling, I guess. I wasn't thinking, "Oh, well, this color goes with this essay or contrasts this essay in a good way," or "Oh, this picture is good because—" I just wasn't thinking about it like that, whereas in the capstone course, I was.

Interviewer: Okay. Both the gateway and the capstone courses emphasize reflective writing. How would you describe your experience with that kind of reflection?

Interviewee: I think it had—I was saying earlier, as far as the reflective writing in the capstone ePortfolio, I think there's good things about it because you get to go back and look at pieces that you've done once you have more distance and see that development. At the same time, I feel that in a way I get a little—I'm just less enthused about writing in that way.

Interviewer: Okay. Less enthused about writing in that way than in what way?

Interviewee: Than writing in more of a narrative style. I think we all had that in the capstone course when it was, like, "What are we gonna bring in today?" Everyone would be, like, "Oh, something from my project." Very rarely, it was people were excited for us to look at their evolution essay. It's different. I guess we were just more passionate about our project because we had chosen it versus the reflective

writing in both were more of a—I think it's a chore, but it's a good chore. You get something good out of it, but not necessarily as enjoyable. *[Laughter]*

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Are you still using reflection in any of your writing now?

Interviewee: Yes and no. I haven't really been doing that much writing since being done with the capstone course, but I would say that I will probably use it in the future just because I know it's helpful. *[Laughter]*

Interviewer: Right. In what way is it helpful?

Interviewee: It's an encouragement to go back and look at something more carefully, in the same way that I would say analyzing any piece of text is and then writing about it. It just causes you to look more closely at it and think about it *[audio distortion 38:54]* you wouldn't necessarily if you were passively reading it or passively looking back at your work. I guess it just helps you get more out of it than just turning it in for the grade. It helps you to develop as a writer.

Interviewer: Okay. Great. Has that kind of reflection given you new ways to talk about your writing, like new terms or concepts?

Interviewee: Yeah. I guess so, but—I dunno. I feel like—*[pause]*—I dunno. Can you provide an example? *[Laughter]* I don't know necessarily what you mean.

Interviewee: I guess I'm just wondering if by doing the all the different kinds of reflective writing in the minor, if you've come up with any new ways to talk about your writing.

[Pause 39:58 - 40:05]

Interviewee: I'm sure I have, but I'm having a hard time thinking of a specific example. I think the more you talk about anything, the better you get at talking about. Obviously, I still need to practice with that.

[Chuckles]

Interviewee: Yeah. I'm having a hard time thinking of something specific.

Interviewer: Okay. Great. The minor program is still relatively new. Do you have any suggestions for instructors or administrators for the program?

Interviewee: We talked a lot about this at the end of the course. I'm trying to think of some things, when it was fresh, that were things that we had said. It's hard cuz I wish that all of the sections could be as small as ours was. I know that's not really possible.

I guess just—I don't know how necessarily, but to create that same type of experience, whether that means people are—I don't know if you can require people to go to office hours or strongly encourage them to go to office hours. Obviously, they'll still do the workshops, which I think are really important to keep. I don't think you would not continue to do them, but I think that's the best part of the class and really what we pretty much did during the class.

I know it'll be different cuz [*audio distortion 41:53*] in a workshop group, but I think it's really important to emphasize the importance of going to talk to your instructor because I feel like not only in the capstone course but in other writing courses where I have gone to talk to a professor about a specific piece of writing, and not only doing better in terms of what the grade, but doing better in terms of going deeper with it. They ask questions that I wouldn't necessarily ask of myself that help push me along. I dunno. It's just different.

I feel like in workshop groups, sometimes it's hard. Even for us, it was 8:30 in the morning, and we'd be, like, "Okay, what do people think about Kayla's work?" or "What do we think about Jen's work?" and it'd be crickets. No one would have anything to say, so it was nice to have her there to be, like, "Okay," to get us started.

I feel like when you break off into groups, you don't know as much what's going on in those groups if the professor's not hovering around. I dunno. I just think that was an important part of it that we got so much close attention from him. I don't know if there's really a way to—I dunno. [*Chuckles*]

Interviewer: Okay. Great. More generally, what do you think professors should know about teaching writing at the undergraduate level?

Interviewee: I'm trying to think of what [*audio distortion 43:39*]. I think—
[*pause*—for me—I dunno. I'm just—I think—oh! what do I think?

[*Laughter*]

Interviewee: Sorry.

Interviewer: No. That's okay. What do you think professors should know about teaching writing at the undergraduate level?

Interviewee: [*Pause*] I guess that it's—[*pause*—definitely helpful for them to talk to us, but I think about different strategies and things that we can be doing in our writing. I think what I've gotten the most out of classes is when they're able to engage everyone in the group so we're all actively thinking through questions and actively—because talking about writing if you're not necessarily thinking about it in a way where—I dunno.

I guess when it's more—I don't know what I'm trying to say, but I think the thing that I would say is that, teaching at the undergraduate level, it's really important to engage the students in the class so they're not only excited about what they're going to be working on but also feel like they're—I don't know—I can't think of what I'm trying to say.

I guess rather than lecturing about writing, you have to have a good amount of talking about what people have experienced writing for, what their experiencing working through drafts, or what they've noticed in their workshops, and then also having those workshop opportunities. *[Audio distortion 45:54]* important mix of those things.

Interviewer: Yeah. That's great. Do you have any other comments you wanna make as we finish up the interview?

Interviewee: *[Laughter]* No, for fear of saying "um" and "like" more.

[Laughter]

Interviewer: Okay. Thank you so much.

Interviewee: Alright. Thank you. Sorry.

Interviewer: Yeah. It's great. Bye-bye.

Interviewee: Bye.

[...]

[End of Audio]