

Interviewer: Hi. This is *** and I'm meeting with xxx on the 28th of April [...]. ***, thanks for meeting with us.

Interviewee: No problem.

Interviewer: Yeah, and graduation looms, right?

Interviewee: Very much so. [...].

Interviewer: Right. Are you gonna go through the whole—

Interviewee: Mm-hmm. I have three graduations since I'm a double major, so—

Interviewer: Oh, terrific.

Interviewee: Yeah. [...].

[...].

Interviewer: [...]. What are your majors? Since we haven't met before, just so I'll know some of your background as we're getting started.

Interviewee: Yeah. Communications and Screen Arts and Cultures.

Interviewer: Okay. Okay. Okay, great. Were you at [University of Michigan] the full four years?

Interviewee: Yep.

Interviewer: Did you transfer in? Okay, you were here the full *[fading voice 01:01]*. Okay, great. With that background now that I'm caught up with it, as I indicated, we're interested in your experience with writing while you've been at [University of Michigan]. The first question is really broad. It just asks you to think about how you would describe yourself as a writer at this point that you're leaving school.

Interviewee: At this point, I would say I've obviously geared more towards academic writing than personal writing or any kind of narrative writing. I think I just took the survey and it was funny because I was like I'm actually a quite pessimistic writer in the fact that I always think that my writing is not ever—like, “This is the worst paper I've ever written,” when I'm writing it. Then I take a break and come back and I'll read my papers over and I'm like, “Wow. Actually, that makes a lotta sense. I actually make some really good points.” I know that I'm a good writer. I just when I'm writing my papers, I feel like I'm very pessimistic about the outlook that what I'm saying isn't making any sense or isn't coherent. I do a lot more academic writing now, so—

Interviewer: Okay. Okay. It's interesting. At the point that you're leaving school then, what do you see the role for writing in your life going forward if you've thought of yourself as primarily an academic writer?

Interviewee: Yeah. Going forward, I plan on obviously probably doing a lotta writing if I do get the job at Google because it's probably gonna be a lotta advertise-based writing, so more of quick jargon instead of actually long, academic research papers. I'm also, since I am a film major, I've dabbled a little bit in screenwriting so I might on my free time just pick it up again because I

thought it was really interesting. Going forward, I could be doing a lotta different kinds of writing than actually purely academic, so—

Interviewer: Yeah. That's interesting. Was the screenwriting you dabbled in, was it part of a class or an assignment?

Interviewee: Yeah, I took a class.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: It was [an intro writing course] where we had to pick an existing television and then write a brand new episode for the characters already. [...].

Interviewer: Wow. What show did you work with?

Interviewee: [TV Show]

Interviewer: Okay. Oh, that's great.

Interviewee: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: We've talked a little bit about how you see yourself exiting the university. Thinking back, how do you think you might've described yourself as a writer when you started here four years ago as a first year student?

Interviewee: As a first year student, I would say I actually did a lot more therapeutic writing, so I did a lot of late night if I couldn't sleep would just sit down and write. I thought I was an excellent writer because I was coming outta AP English and I'm from not necessarily a lower class hometown but one that doesn't have as many opportunities as a lotta students here. Definitely was a bit shell-shocked when I first came to the university because it was so rigorous and demanding.

Interviewer: You mean the writing components?

Interviewee: The writing. Yeah, the writing components was, I mean, multiple pages of papers and multiple papers due all in one semester. Times that by four classes a semester, it was absolutely amazing. I would say I was a little bit cocky coming into it, thinking I knew exactly how everything went. Then even my first semester, I was just amazed by how much writing we actually had to do here.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. How do you think that you adapted to that expectation, then, over that year or even in the years that followed?

Interviewee: Yeah. It took a lot of trial and error of me getting B minuses on papers for me to actually learn to write correctly. I'm really bad in the fact that I can't take feedback very well. When I first was in an English class like that, I used to whenever I got my paper back, I never used to read what they wrote. In here when I started goin' to college, it was like I was consistently getting the same grade on every paper, and so it was obviously I needed to change. I actually started to read the feedback and try to incorporate it. Plus I had professors that liked mandatory meeting with them to talk about the papers. It really opened me up to more feedback. Then taking the television writing class where for one day you have to bring in ten pages and then everyone just reads it and you have to sit through an hour and a half of them telling you what's wrong with your paper, that really helped me ease into accepting criticism. It wasn't necessarily a reflection on

my person. It was just like, “This is how we wanna help you make your product 05:32 better by pointing out to you what you could improve.”

Interviewer: That is really interesting. That's such a huge hurdle sometimes to come through.

Interviewee: Uh huh. Oh, yeah. It was terrifying right before the class. It was hard because I'm defensive and I'm very loud and opinionated, so it was hard not to defend why. If someone was like, “This doesn't work,” I'm like, “Well, this is why I wrote it.” I had to keep myself back and just be like, “Oh, okay. You have a different viewpoint than me.”

Interviewer: That's funny. When you were saying that you were initially resistant to feedback, were you thinking about while you were in high school or when you first came to the university?

Interviewee: A little bit of both. I started, I think, in high school cuz with English, I've always been really, really good with writing. When I had mastered—so you know AP [Advanced Placement] English scale is graded one to nine. When I'd hit my nine, I was like, “Obviously I'm at the top.” Like I already have what I need to pass this test. I don't really need to improve here. I think that attitude carried over because towards the end of my AP English, it was like I was getting nines on everything. How else could I improve it if I was at the top? I think that carried over into college.

If I'm thinking correctly, I don't think I took my first year writing course until my second semester and that was, by that time, I'd already written a couple papers and was like, “Wow, this is a lot different than what I was expecting.” AP English did help me cuz it helped me just sit down and write instead of taking breaks and all that. Cuz I would just sit down and write an essay in 45 minutes. I think the first semester was when I really was like, “I need to actually learn how to adapt cuz it's not the same style of writing.”

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Right. Right. Quite different. As you're graduating, are there goals that you have for yourself as a writer now?

Interviewee: mean, like I said, I would like to maybe get back into screenwriting. That would be something really cool. I mean, it's something I could do on the side and not necessarily have to quit a career or anything like that. I always thought when I was younger I was either gonna be a actress or some kind of writer. I love to read. I'm a huge fan of books. I love reading. I would like to maybe get back into some of the writing. I used to write books when I was younger, but would never finish them, of course. I think I would like to at least try to get back into that side. Even if it is just through screenwriting if it's [cross talk 07:54] a new outlet that I could get through, then I think maybe finishing a screenplay would be probably one of the major goals.

Interviewer: That's great. The next few questions ask about transfer, like how you might've applied learning in one class to another. The first question though is quite broad. It just asks thinking across your writing experiences at U of M [University of Michigan]—so not just writing courses but anything you had to write for—what do you think it means now to write well?

Interviewee: One of the biggest things I think it means to write well is to be able to interpret the prompt or the reasonings or the limits that you're given and then work inside of those. A lot of writing that you do at the university is tailored specifically to what the teacher tells you to do. Before maybe to be a writer, it might've been just writing whatever you wanted and all that, but I think to write at the university it's very important that you understand the guidelines and that you stick to them. That doesn't necessarily have to be a trapment. 09:01 I feel like it's also quite freeing to actually understand what you're writing about. I think that really through all courses is the biggest thing, is just know exactly who you're writing for and what you're writing about.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Are there any other features or things that come to mind when you think about good writing?

Interviewee: Yeah. I think probably a decent grasp on more than just basic language, so not using “thing” or “good.” Using actually descriptive words so that it's not repetitive and boring to read a paper that you wrote. I think just having somewhat of a passion for it. I mean, I definitely preferred one of my majors over the other, so I always found it was way more interesting to write about film than it was to write about anything communications. I would write things about feminism [...] or about blacksploitation [...]. Stuff like that is way more fascinating to me than having to write a paper on research about advertising images. I felt like I put a lot more into it and I was interested in not only just getting information when I saw my resources, but actually figuring out a new argument or a different way to approach it instead of just spitting out what the presser wanted at it. I think a definite passion makes your writing at least appear that you know more than just what's the basic requirements.

Interviewer: Yeah. That makes sense. Can you tell me about which upper level writing classes you took while you were here?

Interviewee: Yeah, I took a lot.

Interviewer: Okay, great. Do you wanna just tell me what they are and then maybe we can take apart what your experiences were in there?

Interviewee: Yeah. I'm tryin' to think. Basically, almost all of my basic communications requirements, every single one of them was an upper level writing. Then I took a lot of screen.

Interviewer: Okay, so that includes—

Interviewee: Like [Communications course], which is—I don't even know the name. It's like media, something about—it's a lot about media. A lot of media classes. I know we did media and television and, I don't know, maybe media topics or something like that. I just know that almost, I had five upper level writing classes. Yeah.

Interviewer: Those classes would've counted? Then the screenwriting?

Interviewee: Yeah, so it was television theory, I think was a upper level writing.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: [Pause] Hm. Think. Film history might've been one. I'm not totally sure, but I know definitely television writing was because we did multiple drafts for that one and she said that counted as an upper level writing.

Interviewer: Okay. Why don't we think about 'em then in two parts? Cuz we're interested in what your experiences were like writing in those upper level classes. Maybe I can have you think first about in the comm [communications] classes, what kinds of experiences you had. Then we'll talk about the other major. Does that make sense?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: In communications, I felt like a lot of it was academic, but more like a—how do I put this—the readings were very, it as very academic, but it wasn't in the facts of quantifying information or any kind of numeral. It was more of theories and opinions and general trends. I know for my [Communications course], we wrote about how—I remember I wrote about how reality television was used as a medium to break through to talk about more controversial subjects. It wasn't along the lines of, oh, 57 percent. It wasn't in the terms of academic that way, but it was more of social, about social issues. Like the consequences of showing someone who had AIDS on a reality television show in the nineties and all that kind of stuff. That was more of what my communications writing was about. It was a lot of very much media-based, a media focus. Like how media has affected lives or stuff like that.

Interviewer: Okay. Then thinking about the courses that you took more on the screenwriting or screen arts? Is that the name of the major?

Interviewee: Yeah, screen arts, yeah.

Interviewer: How could you describe your experiences in those courses writing?

Interviewee: Yeah, so those were definitely more on writing off of movies or televisions or theory about movie or television. Like I had mentioned, I know I wrote my final paper on the TV theory class, I wrote it on feminism [...]. It was like taking general theories that I probably learned in communications, about feminism in the media and stuff like that, and then applying them to a very specific television show. I know for one of my other classes, I wrote about sci-fi movies in the 1950s as a manifestation of fear of the Cold War and nuclear warfare. A lotta social issues that were going along manifested itself through these sci-fi movies. Those were more taking general theories and then applying them to a very specific niche category.

Interviewer: Right. Interesting. Both of these areas were within your concentration though, cuz you were a double major. Could you talk a bit about how confident or comfortable you felt in writing in those areas?

Interviewee: Yeah, so it definitely helped when I got the second major. [...]. I felt like by the time I got into screen arts, I was really, really confident cuz I'd obviously heard the same theories over and over again in communications. Then a lot of them, it's actually a really a lot of overlap between the two majors. I would get into a class and have already read several of the theories that we would have to write on. I know especially for this past semester, I took a communications class on television, which that's like my concentration in screen arts. I basically already knew exactly what the class was about. It was a different way of approaching it, cuz it was more of the communications side rather than the production aspect of it. A lot of it was over writing, so overlapping, so I was very confident definitely in my screen arts. I got an A in almost every class.

Interviewer: That's interesting. How do you think—so you had this prior knowledge, then, coming in?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: We'll call it that. How do you think that influenced the confidence you felt in your writing? How did you see those things relating?

Interviewee: Yeah. The first thing was that I immediately knew what I wanted to write about almost every single class. Cuz the screen arts are very, very broad, which it can be a little bit hard sometimes. They're basically like, "Pick something that interests you in this class that you learned about and apply several theories that you learned about in class to it." I mean, if I would've never had already been well versed in the effects—comm a lot is about media effects. If I wasn't already

well versed in the fact that women are not seen on television very much and this is what the portrayals of women usually are when they are on film or television or are in media and the sexualization of them, then I think I would have a harder time approaching a topic such as feminism in a television show because I wouldn't know the context at which the media today and in the past presented these.

I mean, almost immediately I knew exactly where to turn for resources, how to get research and that just made it easier for me and made me more confident and less nervous about writing. Then actually allowed me to develop new ideas that weren't necessarily—I necessarily found in research. I would be able to look at something and look at what they've said about it and then actually put a different spin on it because I saw it differently, so—

Interviewer: Okay. Okay, and having seen it before, then influenced that thinking—

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: That's a really interesting point. Are there any other writing specific courses that you took, especially in the last two years at the upper level?

Interviewee: Not specifically English. I know there was a couple ones or English or writing that I tried to get into. I would say the screenplay one was the most writing-centric course I probably had taken in the last two years.

Interviewer: Okay. Okay. Yeah, and it's an unusual class, right?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Not everybody comes through and does that?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Are there ways that you think that act of being asked to write that screenplay for that show changed how you think about writing more generally in any way?

Interviewee: Well, yeah, definitely. I mean, it causes you to get outside of the rigorous academic sometimes dry writing and get into something way more creative where you actually have to give a voice to someone that you have never met, someone that actually doesn't exist. It's definitely a new way of thinking about it cuz then you get inside characters heads and you have to learn to think what would motivate this character to do this. Cuz every step in a screenplay has to have motivation, otherwise it won't make sense. Just to get out of your own head and think about that, I feel helped my writing immensely cuz it's like by experiencing that, I can look at things from other viewpoints. It kinda is like a break, so I'm not just strictly getting drawn out with the same academic jargon over and over and over again. I stepped out, got a creative breath of fresh air, which allowed me to continue writing.

Interviewer: That's an interesting way to think about that. In your upper level courses more generally, the question it's asking whether you've used skills or strategies from any of those courses that emphasized writing and then were able to apply them in other courses.

Interviewee: Yeah, so I had to learn really, really quickly how to pace myself when writing 60 pages of screenplay.

Interviewer: That's interesting. I'm [laughter] sure.

Interviewee: Cuz when you're taking 16 credits, I mean, screenplay is interesting because you can pound out 10 pages in 10 minutes because it's all spaced really weird. That really taught me how to pace myself when it comes to writing cuz, I mean, it's like you go for half the semester not writing a single thing. Then in the second half of the semester, it's like by the end, 60 pages has to be turned in on his desk. Then it also taught me how to help me way better with my revision skills because you had to turn in a draft and then you had to go through and that's 60 pages you have to go through. If he says a scene doesn't work this one way, then it's not like you can just change a sentence. It's like you have to revisit the entire motivation. Especially with [TV Show] every scene has a purpose for a future conflict that's coming.

Interviewer: Of course. Sure.

Interviewee: If you have to change one scene, that will affect every other scene that you have that character be in for the rest of the show. If he didn't like the beginning scene in the first ten pages and you have four scenes after that that are influenced by this one scene, you have to change every single thing. I would say for revision, it definitely showed me that just one small thing can affect so much other things, which I think is in paper, too, that a lotta people will not realize that by the end of their paper, they probably have come to a different conclusion than they probably started with. That affects how your paper is perceived, so going back and changing that is really key.

Interviewer: Yeah. The willingness to go back and change it, right? Yeah.

Interviewee: Yeah, exactly. When you're done, not just disregarding it and turning it in.

Interviewer: Right. Right. No, that's a really interesting analogy between those two kinds of writing, which you might look at and think, "Oh, one is not like the other." That process [*cross talk 20:53*], yeah.

Interviewee: Yeah. It's the same. Yeah.

Interviewer: That's great. The next few questions are interested in your writing experiences more broadly. The question asks thinking back over especially the last two years again, your upper level years, are there certain kind of experiences you might've had whether in or out of the classroom that have had an effect on your writing? They are interested here partly in work experience or extracurriculars or other ways you use writing even beyond classroom stuff.

Interviewee: Yeah. Beyond classroom, I don't necessarily do a whole lot of other writing. [...]. I've had to do a lot more tonal writing, so writing very specifically and watching my tone. If you're a professional, what I might say to a friend, write to an email to a friend, I just learned—this is in the last month—my boss is like, "Don't use exclamation points cuz it could be seen—you don't know if someone's gonna interpret that as you're yelling at them."

Interviewer: Oh, interesting, so you [*cross talk 21:59*] communication in your job?

Interviewee: A lot of professional writing. Yeah, like communications in my job. [...] how I write even in a email, in an announcement, in a short draft or a memo, I've had to learn how to professionally set up a way of writing that very much tonal based, so how my tone is perceived. Which, it's been definitely an eye-opening experience cuz I was like, "What do you mean I can't use an exclamation point if I wanna say have a nice day?" He's like, "No, try not to use them cuz you never know how people will interpret that and if someone has a problem with the way you're speaking." Even when I've been really frustrated, I have to learn how to tone that back and especially over email or over an announcement, something that's not in person, it could mean totally different things. How my writing is perceived has definitely been, I'd say at work, that's probably really huge.

Interviewer: Yeah, that's so interesting. Do you think are there any ways that you see that experience and that realization then spilling into other kinds of writing you do?

Interviewee: Yeah. I mean, now I read over my things and make sure that the tone, like who I'm writing for. It's not laid back. I shouldn't be as laid back. I also think on the other hand, I have gotten more personal in my writing because before, it was strictly academic but I feel like I don't know if this is just a combination of what I've learned at work but also maybe just getting more familiar with my professors in my classes, but I have been taking a little bit less of a strictly academic. If I'm writing a paper, I won't be strictly dry. It's more of you can see my personality in it.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Great. If I use the term reflective writing, what would that mean to you?

Interviewee: Reflective writing would sound like something that if you had an experience and you didn't quite know how to figure it out, you would just write what you were thinking and then realize, maybe come to a realization of what you really mean. Or reflecting back on an experience, so going back to an experience and using writing to re-experience it or digest it.

Interviewer: Is that a way that you've ever used writing or use it to start your process?

Interviewee: Oh, yeah. Not necessarily, maybe not my academic process, but I definitely used that sort of reflective writing. I used to do it a lot when I was younger. If you're in the angsty teen years where everything didn't make sense and you're very frustrated, I used to write a lot, just type whatever was on my mind. Then once it was out, it was done and I could deal with it because I wasn't just constantly thinking about it anymore.

Interviewer: That's interesting. Is that something that you'll still do?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: You mentioned even when you were talking about yourself coming into school, that you used writing in that way.

Interviewee: Yeah. I definitely have gotten way more busy since I first started school, but yeah. I actually, I do a lot. I mean, I've been dealing with a lot of anxiety and so I find that doing anything to distract myself helps a lot. I would definitely see myself writing, doing that type of writing to work through what's goin' on.

Interviewer: That's great. The next couple questions are interested in your experiences working with other writers in courses or in other contexts, at work or anywhere else. They're just interested in what your experiences have been. They say "recent experiences" so, again, they're thinking about the second half of your college career.

Interviewee: Okay.

Interviewer: Peer review, workshop.

Interviewee: Yeah. Like I said, the biggest experience I had was with the screenwriting class. That was pretty big. It was amazing to hear—

Interviewer: How large was that class?

Interviewee: It was about, I would say 15 to 16 people maybe. It wasn't huge, but he definitely said it was bigger than most classes he takes on for screenwriting. That was really interesting to see, only because I was one of the very few people that came from no screenwriting background so I had no idea what I was doing. To read and listen and hear some of the other very talented screenwriters who were in that class, the interaction was pretty awesome to hear and learn from them.

Interviewer: That's great.

Interviewee: Then very recently, I had the experience—which is not, I guess, typical probably to what you guys would think of as interaction with other writers—but I'm in a [Production course]. We take an original screenplay and then actually make it into a movie. To interact with that, so to watch somebody's characters that they have written and see them go through multiple drafts and reading multiple drafts and then giving suggestions to them and then actually watching these characters manifest into real life has definitely been probably one of the most rewarding experiences here.

Interviewer: Is that the project and then they screen them at the [Michigan Theater] [cross talk 26:55] city or—

Interviewee: Mm-hmm. Yeah. We just did it this past Saturday.

Interviewer: Yeah, I feel like I have a student in a class who was going to be in one and she mentioned it to the classmates, that she was. I couldn't figure out what it was exactly she was gonna be in, so it must be that.

Interviewee: Yeah. [...]. That, I think, is probably one of the really interesting experience because it's not only watching someone else edit and seeing—cuz it's this writer who wrote the script obviously went through all of the writing classes that we'd offer here for screenwriters. They are very, very talented writers that will probably go on to have actual careers. To work with them, then to watch this different stages, so to get the original story all the way back [...] and then watch it as it evolved and watch it as she wrote it. Then bring her on set and then actually take those characters and bring them to life and see their interaction and stuff like that was amazing.

Interviewer: That's a really interesting way to think about revision and collaboration around everything.

Interviewee: Yeah. It was crazy in collaboration. Cuz, I mean, we had two different teams and each team had about 20 people on it. We had two different scripts, so then every Friday we would workshop the scripts. Every Friday, you would come with suggestions, come with cause and effect things. What happens if instead of doing this cause, we do this? What would therefore be the effect of it? How would this story change? How would this world change? What if we changed her from white to black or what if we made her a him? How would that perpetuate the story? How would that change the story?

Interviewer: Even though it wasn't your own writing, did you feel that you took things from that experience to your own writing in any way?

Interviewee: I would say that, I mean, this class just ended so I don't think there's been a lotta time to actually put it into action. I mean, just to be around something like that and watch it occur and see how it can grow and see how it can go from an idea somebody has all the way to an actual film will probably definitely benefit me if I choose to pursue screenwriting. Because to see that caliber of writing and see what is a base minimum that I would have to go off of instead of just

being blind and bein' like, "Oh, I can write a good character," to actually see what a complex character looks like and then watch it be played out so I could see the cause of what the effect of writing this would be in a real film sense was really, really important.

Interviewer: That's great. Sounds like a great project.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Another fairly broad [laughter] question. It asks now that you're graduating, what advice would you give college students about writing? What are some things they should think about if they're just starting a paper?

Interviewee: I would say be prepared to forget everything you think you know about writing. I feel like a lotta students, [pause] maybe not that they're not prepared to write. I just think that each stage of writing you've ever done in your life is different. From the beginning when we were first learning to write, it was all about the five paragraph, beginning, middle, end. Then when I got to high school, my AP English teacher was like, "Throw all that out. We're not gonna do that." Then when I got here, it was like, "Throw all of that stuff out. We're not gonna do that." Cuz each institution has a different way of doing things. I'm assuming even when I go to my career, they're probably gonna be like, "Throw it all out. This is how we want you to write." I think if somebody would've told me to realize that you have to adapt your writing to the audience that you're writing for, it probably would've saved me a lot of hassle with rewriting and not understanding why it was not working. Why wasn't this working? Then absolutely take advantage of every single resource that this college has to offer.

Interviewer: What are you thinking of there?

Interviewee: Well, I mean, even Sweetland Writing Center, any of your professors' office hours. I feel a lotta people come to college and just expect to be handed, "Oh, well I did all this hard work. I should just get a degree," or, "I should just get a job." I feel like college is way more effective if you just take advantage of the massive amount of resources that they have, cuz they have unlimited amount. If you put the hard work in, you will get so much outta this. I would definitely say that if they're ever at all confused about anything, go to the Sweetland Writing Center, go to a professor. Heck, find a tutor or find an upper-level English student that knows how to write. Even if you're an engineer, find an upper-level engineer student that knows how to write what you need to write.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. That's a great way to think about that. They are interested in whether you've had any experience with new media writing, so blogs, websites, electronic portfolios, digital portfolios.

Interviewee: Yep. Definitely did a couple blog, blog based stuff. I did 'em for both SAC [Screen Arts and Cultures] and for communications, [cross talk 31:47] blogs.

Interviewer: Okay. Could you talk a little bit about blogging for the course?

Interviewee: Mm-hmm. I thought it was interesting. In one class, it was really good. In one class, it failed because nobody really participated. My screen arts class, it was actually really, really interesting because we were a smaller, tight-knit class. It actually became a thing where people were logging on not when required to and actually showing, sharing really crazy stuff. If we were covering a certain topic and maybe some of the stuff wouldn't be necessarily appropriate to screen in class but it was appropriate for our age group, we would post it on there like, "Isn't this crazy?" Or a lotta people had experience with maybe different types of media from other countries. I remember somebody posted this really weird orange juice commercial from France and we're like,

“Wow, that’s crazy.” The cultural disconnect is so weird. That would never be cool here. It was a lot of exposure to even stuff like that. Then the communications class, it was mostly people logged on when they were supposed to and only when they were supposed to just to write it and then didn’t think about it.

Interviewer: What was it that you think made one work and the other not?

Interviewee: Well, I think because the class that with the screen arts one, we were actually pretty tight-knit. I think the teacher honestly, she just was really fascinated about her subjects. I’ve spoken to her outside of class and she is concentrated in television. This class was about television. She also during our class, sometimes not even meaning to, but she let us just rant because a lot of with television is that unlike other disciplines, television is very new. Only very recently have they actually just started taking it seriously as scholarly. For most of the part, all the examples they use, all the theories they have are stuff that we know because we either grew up around it or we’ve been exposed to it. A lotta people get really passionate about it really quickly because it’s something that not a scholar wrote 200 years ago or has been in ancient history books. It’s something that is within the last 50 years.

I think that and the fact that the teacher just let us go and rant and talk to each other and see different viewpoints translated again onto the website. Cuz then somebody would post something and I would disagree with that and so I would write about it. Then they would say why they posted it and stuff like that. While the other class was a little bit bigger and it wasn’t necessarily narrowed down on a really specific topic like television theory. It was more of a general media, which has a much wider range of topics and research and is a lot older, so—

Interviewer: Yeah. That makes sense. Other kinds of digital writing besides the blog?

Interviewee: Not for necessarily a class. I’ve done a little work with websites. I know I used to have an online diary way back when, like when I was early high school years. Then I worked with HTML [Hypertext Markup Language] code, so I’ve done some of that.

Interviewer: Have you ever created an electronic portfolio where you might assemble all of your writing work or—

Interviewee: Not necessarily for writing. I’m in the process of doing that for film, so having a film reel. Electronic portfolio for reel, for film, but not for writing.

Interviewer: Is the idea, though, that it would showcase [cross talk 35:15]—

Interviewee: Yeah, it’s snippets of your clips that would showcase if I wanna be a cinematographer or work with camera, it would be everything that I have ever done where I was the camera operator so they could see it. It’s done for every range thing, so if you like sound recordist or director or an editor or something like that.

Interviewer: Okay, but that not featuring written work that went into those?

Interviewee: Yeah, no.

Interviewer: It’s more like the production of that work?

Interviewee: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: Okay. Great. *[Pause]* These other things are about writing portfolios, so that wouldn't really apply there.

[...]

Interviewee: Yeah. Like I said, because I'm always such a pessimistic writer, what I do actually is I go back and look at the papers that I've gotten the highest grades on. Then I'll actually sit down and read them again. That's probably the first time I've looked at them in a very long time. Then I'll read through and I'll be like, "Wow, I actually made a lot of really good points." Then I would, once I look at it from I'm not turning this in right away so this isn't a deadline, it's just papers that I've already written, that's what I do. I look at what the grades they gave me and then, "Oh, well this said it was an A, but I remember thinking this was a horrible paper." Then I read it again and I'm just fascinated that actually this is actually an A-worthy paper. That's how I go back through them.

[...]

Interviewer: It's interesting. You describe that process of going back and starting with the papers that you just remembered had a high grade.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Does the process of then rereading that work, does that make you think about your own writing in any different ways or—

Interviewee: Well, I've gained more confidence. Now I know that I'm a decent writer because after, like I said, I mean after getting so many off grades that I realized, yeah, even when I'm writing and I'm really down on myself, in the back of my mind now I'm like, "You know you're not that bad. You know." I try not to let that fool me cuz I don't wanna just rest on the fact that I've been a good writer and I don't wanna push myself.

I think the process of going back and looking at it, like I said, since I'm not in the moment writing it and then not in a dire need to turn it in—like this is not gonna determine anything, it's already done—that allows me to step back and be more of an objective viewer rather than bein' like, "Oh, god, this is horrible," or "I can't believe they gave me an A." It's more like now I can just look at it like I'm reading someone else's paper and be like, "Actually, this paper makes a lotta really good points." Then I definitely think I would grow from that. I mean, whether I am consciously thinking about it or not, then even just reviewing your own work and seeing how you work and modifying that so—

Interviewer: Yeah. Those are all great point to raise. We're near then end. One of the last questions asks very broadly what do you think instructors should know about teaching writing at the undergraduate level?

Interviewee: That's a good question. *[Pause]* Well, I think one of the biggest things is that every person, especially at the undergraduate level, will come in with a different experience. It's really hard to say it, but teaching writing can't be generalized, no matter how much easier that would be to teach. Because if you just assume that everyone has—I remember in my [English course], there were people that I read and I was like, "Wow, these are actually really good papers." Then I read 'em and I was like, "I can't believe you passed high school. How did you get into college with this kinda writing?" Every person comes in at, I guess, a definitely different level. Some people are destined to be able to write academic papers that are English or social media or informational based. Then some people can only write quantitative studies because that's just the type of person they are.

I think if everyone kept that in mind, it would be a lot less intimidating to come into class. Because if you realize that you're just not gonna be a writer no matter how much you try or time you try to put into it, it's just not for you to be—like for me, I could never be a quantitative study writer. I have not even the first clue. I don't like math. I don't like numbers. That's why I became a film major. If I had to take a class and that's all the kind of writing that I had to do, to have the teacher know that, hey, I can write you a screenplay but I can't write you a research paper, that probably would be a lot easier for the teacher to understand and try to work with and I wouldn't flunk the class.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. That's interesting. Yeah, that's an interesting idea, meeting people where they are. Yeah.

Interviewee: Yeah, so meetin' 'em halfway. That way, some people will fly through these classes and not need that much attention. That's just the type of writer they are. Some people will need you to read every single draft of the six drafts they have to make in order to turn something halfway decent in.

Interviewer: That makes sense. Yep. Was there anything else that you encountered in instruction in classes that you took that changed your thinking about your own writing, for good or bad, I guess? *[Laughter]*

Interviewee: Yeah. *[Pause]* I mean, definitely I really liked my [English instructor]. I remember liking her a lot. We met afterwards and we talked for ten minutes after our meeting time. I think that she definitely helped me. Interestingly, I think probably one of my SAC teachers changed the most because I remember the first time I ever wrote for him, I got a C minus on the paper. This was my junior year. I was like, "I don't get C minuses on papers. What is this?" I went and talked to him about it and just the way that he saw things and what I was communicating, I just realized that we were not on the same page and that's why. I think he probably kept me in reality check, that you might think that you get something down. Then you meet a new audience that is completely and totally different than what you're used to writing. You can be the best writer ever and get consistent As on papers, but then you meet someone that doesn't understand how you write things and he wants you to write it differently. It was a reality check.

Interviewer: It's interesting. You had brought up that idea before about if somebody had said, "Adapt to an audience," I think was how you put it, a long time ago to you, that would've made *[laughter]* life easier. It's interesting to hear, then, this encounter. Again, he's pushing you on that similar idea.

Interviewee: Yeah, so I think that's a really, really big point. I mean, even just between teachers, cuz you could have completely totally different teachers for all of your [English course] and [English 100 level course]. Even between one teacher to the next, it could be completely different even though it's the same class.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. That makes sense. Well, ***, are there any other comments or anything else that's come to mind as we've been talking and you've been thinking a bit about your writing that you would want the folks looking at this to think about?

Interviewee: No. *[Pause]* I definitely, I mean, I think that the academic writing that I've done here has been some of the best writing I've ever had. I think that it's definitely good that they push you to write. As much as everyone hates the papers and everyone dreads doing them, I definitely think that it has taught a lot. I think I learn better now through exploring material rather than just sitting in a lecture hall and hearing about it, so—

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. That's great.

Interviewee: Yeah. I just wish they didn't make 'em all due at the same time. *[Laughter]*

[...]

Interviewer: Yeah. [...]. It sounds like you've had some just really delightful experiences. The screenplay class sounds amazing.

Interviewee: Yeah. It was phenomenal.

Interviewer: Your idea to keep pushing on that is a great one. I hope you're able to do that.

Interviewee: Yeah. Yeah. Thank you. Me, too.

[...]

[End of Audio]