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Interviewer: \*\*\*. Today is March 29th. [...] we'll kinda get started. Basically, I've got kind of a list of questions that we're gonna ask you, that—some are very kind of general about your writing experience, and then they get a little bit more specific into actual courses and actual projects that you've completed. If you have any questions at any time, just feel free to ask.

Interviewee: Okay. Sure.

Interviewer: I'll just kind of run down them.

Interviewee: [Laughter].

Interviewer: Okay, so the first one is, how would you describe yourself as a writer?

Interviewee: Hm. That's a very difficult question. [Laughter]. Well, it depends on what I'm writing. For example, if I'm doing a blog or something about myself, I'm—I could say I'm very reflective, but in terms of research papers—and I make sure that they're very well researched, but sometimes when I write research papers, I—no. I don't enjoy it as much because I'm much more—I enjoy writing kind of from my perspective a lot more, so maybe reflective would probably be a good word, so that's why research papers generally aren't my favorite. [Laughter].

Interviewer: Okay. Okay. I understand that. [Laughter]. How would you kind of describe the role of writing in you life? That's another broad one. [Laughter].

Interviewee: Yeah. [Laughter]. Obviously, there's the parts where I'm writing for school, so that happens there, but then also, I write in my spare time. A lot of times, if I have something going on in my head that I'm not really sure what I'm even thinking sometimes, it's—writing, for me, is something where I can look at something on paper, and it makes more sense. For me, it's just a way to clarify things for myself, where I've got these cycles running in my head. Instead, if I get it down on paper, it makes a lot more sense.

Interviewer: Wonderful.

Interviewee: [Laughter].

Interviewer: I'm just curious, how do you write? Do you usually—do you physically write with a pen and paper, or on a computer?

Interviewee: Generally with a pen and paper. I really like to see it. I like pages. I like to see it down on paper. Sometimes, when I write on the computer, it has a less of a personal feel, so I do it, but I don't enjoy it as much as when I'm just writing.

Interviewer: Okay. Wonderful. If you can think back, how would you describe yourself as a writer when you began here at the University of Michigan?

Interviewee: Confused. [Laughter].

Interviewer: [Laughter]. Okay. [Laughter].

Interviewee: Yeah, because—in middle school and elementary school, I think I had my own little personal style, but then high school—they taught me such a specific way in which to write, it was—oh, intro paragraph, three middle paragraphs and then the conclusion kind of thing, and it's like no Is, no wes, very structured, and when I began to write just on my own time, it began to kind of seem impersonal and very structured in that way, too, so I didn't really know what my voice was. I didn't really understand, but I think upon coming here, it got a little better.

Interviewer: Okay. All right. Wonderful. Then a question is, to what extent would you say that you've grown as a writer?

Interviewee: Quite a bit. I've had a lot of different projects here, and that's the thing that I like about the writing classes here, is that it's—you don't do one style of writing the entire time. It's all sorts of things.

I've definitely grown a lot. My teachers and professors have taught me more than anybody did in high school, like little specific things I wouldn't think about, like how to even introduce a source seamlessly without making it seem really separated and not letting it detract from the rest of the writing.

I think I've definitely grown in that, too—it's okay to put your own voice in writing. It's not like it needs to be completely formally written. Actually, in the Minor in Writing class, I loved how we read a piece that was about making academic papers interesting, and you don't have to make it necessarily this structured. I think that has really pushed me as well to make everything I write—even the research papers—interesting, so a lot.

Interviewer: [Laughter].

Interviewee: Definitely grown a lot from the time I entered. [Laughter].

Interviewer: Okay, and so if you've grown all this much [laughter], or you've had all this growth, to what would you kind of attribute that?

Interviewee: My professors.

Interviewer: Yeah?

Interviewee: Absolutely, yeah. My sophomore year and this year writing professor's very—they pushed me to go beyond just the prompt. Get creative with things. My first

year was a little more structured. It was—it seemed very—everything I'd taken in the past, but past that, once I got to [Title of course] and then the Minor in Writing, and I like that we also mess around with a bunch of different media, too, and I'd never done a website or something like that, or a portfolio for myself.

Going from taking a piece of writing that I had written into—I don't even remember what it—oh, a news article—an editorial into a video, which I thought was very, very interesting because when I was making the video, I was thinking about how can I attract my audiences not just with words, but with images and music. Definitely my professors—they were so helpful. Yeah.

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

Interviewee: Well, that's kinda hard.

Interviewer: [Laughter].

Interviewee: I guess—I still wanna continue to find my own voice and to be able to put it into writing. Without—sometimes, if I'll be writing something, I'll notice that it'll almost sound like one of my journal entries, but I don't want it to sound like that. I wanna be a little more formal, but still with my same voice in it, so I'm trying to find that balance. That's one thing I'm trying to figure out as well.

Eventually, I would like to publish pieces of writing, whether it be in a magazine or a newspaper, a book or something like that. Eventually—that's a bucket list thing. [Laughter].

Interviewer: Very nice. Wonderful. Okay. Kind of—thinking across your writing experiences at University of Michigan, what do you think it means to write well?

Interviewee: To me, writing well is a lot of descriptive language, making sure that readers understand and are there when—when you write something and they read it, they feel like they can put themselves into that situation, and then also having an extensive vocabulary. That makes writing interesting. All of the best books that I've read, I'm, like, “Wow. What's this word? What is this? I've never seen this before.”

Interviewer: [Laughter].

Interviewee: It's interesting to me, so I think those two are probably what would—I would consider great writing.

Interviewer: Okay. Very good. Which first-year writing requirement course did you take? Do you remember?

Interviewee: I think it was 12—oh, goodness—was it [English 100 level course] or [English course]? It may have been [English 100 level course].

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: I can't recall.

Interviewer: Which would have more to do with literature.

Interviewee: Mm-hmm. Possibly? There was only one book that we read. It may have been [English course]. I'm really not quite sure, but we read one book, and then we did a lot of other problems. One was go to the art museum and write about painting—write what we had seen. Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay, so you talked about kind of the art museum portion, but what were your experiences with this course?

Interviewee: I didn't really like it. It seemed very uncreative. It seemed like the things I had done in the past. I had issues with—so I would bring my writing into my—just to my GSI, or my—I don't really remember. I think she was a GSI—and it was—she didn't really get into the specifics very much. It was just kind of, like, “Oh, maybe you should do this.”

Then I would make edits and edits and edits, and turn it in, and get a grade that I wasn't really happy with, and so I was, like, “Okay. Well, can we meet so we can talk about this writing?” Essentially just blew me off, and gave me an A on the next paper, and I was, like, “Okay.” I feel like I should have gotten a better grade on this paper, but I know I didn't do this well [laughter] for an A on this paper, so it made me feel very much like she wasn't concerned about my writing, so that's something that—yeah. I didn't really enjoy it that much. She didn't seem as concerned about our writing as a teacher should be.

Interviewer: Okay. Okay, so kind of—how did those experiences affect you as a writer, and as you kind of moved past it?

Interviewee: Yeah. It didn't really help me grow [laughter] because—

Interviewer: Yeah. [Laughter].

Interviewee: - for me, I can be self-critical, but I—there are things that other people can see that I can't in my writing, and so when other people are critical of my work, it helps me to figure out, oh, my goodness, you're right. I should just go and do this over here.

Hang on. What was the question again? I lost my train of thought.

Interviewer: Yeah. No problem. [Laughter].

Interviewee: [Laughter].

Interviewer: I'm kind of wondering how those experiences in the first year affect you as a writer, kind of as a whole.

Interviewee: Okay. Yeah, so it didn't really help me grow as much as the next two years did, so I probably still stayed at a standstill from there. Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. All right. But it didn't discourage you from taking more classes?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: That's good.

Interviewee: No, because I knew it was an intro course, and I didn't expect the rest of the courses here to be like that.

Interviewer: Sure. Okay, and so this is probably—well, okay. Are you still making use of what you learned in your first-year writing? Is there anything that you are—that you can see that you still kind of do or are aware of?

Interviewee: Maybe in terms of research papers. There are some techniques that I learned my first year that I probably still use now, with researching on ProQuest and things like that, or the manners of which I will write in a research paper. That's probably about the extent that it goes. [Laughter].

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

Interviewee: I don't think so.

Interviewer: Okay, and then what is your concentration?

Interviewee: I'm economics and international studies.

Interviewer: Okay, and have you had the opportunity to do much writing within that concentration?

Interviewee: Yes, actually. For econ, I had to write a whole paper on the financial crisis, so that was interesting. Then international studies, I wrote a policy memo sort of thing, so it was essentially like—find a problem in a country. You have about \$500,000.00. Help solve the problem. I had to—I put together this full-out plan for alternative prisons in [country] [laughter], so—because they have a really big overcrowding problem, and the police are really corrupt, so anyway—so I did a massive paper for that one.

I had to write a grant proposal for the same project. I think I've written a research paper in international studies before that, too. I can't recall—and I'm going to be writing a major research paper for international studies the next month.

Interviewer: Okay. All right. Wonderful, so with those kind of experiences, how have they affected you as a writer?

Interviewee: Well, because those things were very much—they're nonfiction. They're straight-up facts. I don't like writing papers that are very boring, so I guess it helped me to look at papers—research papers, things like that—from a different light as well. Make it interesting. Make the reader be, like, "Oh, this is a really good idea. I'm just gonna keep reading."

You can even write it as if it were a story, but without the whole story component, and it makes it intriguing for the reader, 'cause I've had to do it so many times, and I don't wanna make it a boring project. [Laughter].

Interviewer: Right. Right. Very good. How confident do you feel about writing in your concentration?

Interviewee: International studies, I feel pretty confident about it. Economics, maybe not so much because it has a lot of math in it, so if I were to try and describe the math that goes behind certain things, I don't know that I'd be able to do it. It depends what I'm talking about. If I can talk about policy changes for econ, that might work, but if I'm discussing research or the methods, I probably would feel a little strange writing those. Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. Okay, and so when you—you talked about—what was it? International—

Interviewee: Studies. [Laughter].

Interviewer: Studies. Thank you. [Laughter]. That you feel pretty good there—what do you think kind of contributes to that confidence, to your ability to be, like, "I've got this"? [Laughter].

Interviewee: Yeah. Probably because it doesn't have anything to do with math. It can have kind of tables and things like that, but you're basically describing the story of—or the background of certain culture or a problem that's going on, and that is easier for me to describe than a method of calculation.

Interviewer: Okay, and so—but you gave the [country] prison example, right?

Interviewee: Yeah. Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: That's the type of work that you are doing in your international studies class?

Interviewee: Right. Yeah. That was one example, 'cause that was a Human Security class, so yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. Very interesting. Very nice. Lovely. Okay, so what impact has the Minor Gateway course that you took—it was [Writing 200 level course]—had on kind of overall on your writing?

Interviewee: Very positive. Because we wrote in so many different ways—and it was very creative, and it was very interesting, and it was taking new things that I wouldn't have written—the kind of places that I wouldn't have written in high school like blogs or portfolio, putting that together—things that writers now probably should know how to use.

It helped me to grow in that way because I was, like, “I don't know how to write a blog. I don't know how to write an editorial. I've never written one before,” so it really pushed me in that way—things that I wasn't used to and never asked of, prompt-wise.

Interviewer: Right, right. Okay, and in terms of your writing process, has it had an impact on your process, or what kind of an impact?

Interviewee: Huge—so before, I would probably just write one draft and then a final in the end, but this one—we went through each draft over and over and over and over, and wrote comments on the side or goals on the bottom for, “This is what I'm trying to achieve with this piece.” Am I achieving that? Here's some commentary for my peer editors. “Please let me know what you think about this.”

Now, I go through draft after draft after draft, and then see if other people can edit it as well, my friends or my boyfriend, whatever. It's helped me to really make sure I'm spending enough time on each paper—set enough time ahead of time so that I can do that process as best as I—as—the best I can.

Interviewer: Yeah. Absolutely. Okay. Wonderful. What impact did that course have on your sense of yourself as a writer?

Interviewee: It definitely helped a lot because a lot of the projects I had written in the past were research papers, and so my goal in this class was trying to find my voice in writing without making it too journal-like, and it really helped in that sense because I was able to use “I” and “we” and “us.” It wasn't as structured. I think my goal was definitely met. I feel like, when I'm writing, it's a lot more me, but not too personal.

Interviewer: Right. Kinda that balance?

Interviewee: Yeah.

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

Interviewee: Great, because they're all there for the same interest. They're very helpful—every single peer editor that I've had in my classes—they were great. They offered great commentary, things that I wouldn't have seen, so because they're also in the writing minor, I think it's a lot easier to find people that are willing to help your writing as well, so that's really helped, whereas in past classes, for example, if I'll have somebody else edit, they're just kinda, like, "Oh, whatever," but because we're all in the same program, I think that it works out a lot better.

Interviewer: Okay. Okay. Great. Let's see. Where were we? The Minor Gateway course emphasized a lot of kind of reflective writing in various forms. How would you describe your experience with this kind of reflection?

Interviewee: I liked it a lot because it helped me to realize the reasons why I was writing things, or what I was thinking as I was writing, or reflecting on—looking back at it a week later and putting my own thoughts on what I thought it looked like a week later. It may have been very different from what it was the week before.

I like that—I was pretty much looking at every piece of writing with purpose instead of just a piece of writing, so that really helped, because now when I write, I'm writing with a purpose—with a goal in mind, which really helped.

Interviewer: Okay, and do you—are you still using reflection in your current writing, whether assigned or voluntary, with other courses?

Interviewee: Not directly on paper. I'll definitely think in terms of the way that I did do reflective writing, so for example, with the policy memo, I'll look at it and be, like, "Okay, so why am I writing this portion? Does this fit? Does this make sense? Why do I think it fits?" Those are pretty much just in my head at that point, but it helps me to think of everything with purpose.

Interviewer: Okay. All right. Very good. How would you describe your experiences using kind of the new media writing? We talked a little bit about blogs, the remediation project—in the [Writing 200 level course] class.

Interviewee: I thought it was a lot of fun. Blogging is very interesting because it's like—it can be personal, but you're also talking to so many people at the same time, 'cause so many people are reading it, so you wanna make sure that they're entertained as well, not just me.

I thought it was a very interesting thing to get used to because I hadn't written a blog before, and then I created a video about the financial crisis, so that was very interesting for me because—I like movies a lot, so I think music with imagery can really do a lot for the words that you have on the screen as well, so I thought that was very fun. Yeah.



Interviewer: Okay. Absolutely. Absolutely. Okay, so then the next couple of questions are about your Gateway portfolio that you created, so can I ask you to pull it up here?

[...]

Interviewee: Okay. All right. [Inaudible 21:49]. Found it. Okay. There we go. Excellent. [Laughter].

Interviewer: [Laughter]. Can you tell me about the most memorable kind of aspect of your experience in creating this?

Interviewee: Most memorable aspect?

Interviewer: [Laughter].

Interviewee: Maybe trying to pick out all the pieces of writing that I wanted to put in there, 'cause I wanted to make sure it was relevant and that it showed my best pieces of writing, so I probably sit there for a very long time, contemplating whether I wanted to put something in there, so that may have been one, and then also, I changed the template of this portfolio over and over and over, because I wanted to make sure that it fit me and my style of writing the best—in the best way, so that happened often. Then, formatting took ages, but I liked it. Those are probably the biggest things I remember.

Interviewer: Okay, the most memorable? [Laughter].

Interviewee: Yeah. [Laughter].

Interviewer: What were your aims for the portfolio?

Interviewee: Well, I wanted it to be professional but still with a personal touch. For example, if I were to show this to an employer, I wanted them to see it and be, like, “Oh, it’s very clean,” but also, it has a nice picture on it, and the color scheme isn’t just black and white. I wanted it to show some interesting aspects of my writing as well. Those are probably my goals—was professional, yet personal.

Interviewer: Okay, and how do you feel your portfolio kind of addresses those goals?

Interviewee: I think it does a pretty good job. I would definitely show this to an employer. I wouldn’t have a problem with that, and also, it would probably help them to get a better idea of who I am as a person or even as an employee, so I think it does a pretty good job of that.

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

Interviewee: Possibly. I guess this—because this portfolio is here, I can add to it later. I know I will be creating, I think, another portfolio for [Writing 400 level course], but I'm not sure.

It also helps me to keep in mind what I'm writing here could possibly go on something like this that's public, so that makes me aware of when I'm writing things and research papers that it's not just for me to take this paper and turn it in. It could also be something that could be in public.

Interviewer: Okay. All right. Interesting. What was the impact of the reflective writing in the portfolio?

Interviewee: It was interesting because I was trying to make this a professional portfolio, so for me, it was a bit hard because when I'm reflective with myself, it's just a bunch of blurbs and whatever—just thoughts in my head.

But with reflective writing, when I put it on here—which it is—it made me cognizant of the fact that my reflective writing can also be read by other people, so I needed to make sure it made sense, even if it was just reflective writing—making sure that it made sense for them, and it probably made it clearer for me, too.

Interviewer: Okay. All right. Wonderful. Let's see. I think that's it. Do you have any other comments about the course or about kind of your journey as a writer since you've been here or anything that way?

Interviewee: Not really. I just know that—college has really pushed me to grow as a writer in general, so probably more so than high school or elementary school ever did.

Interviewer: Sure. Sure. Okay. Wonderful. Again, let me just double check that I didn't miss anything here. I think we did it all.

Interviewee: Awesome.

Interviewer: Yeah. Sounds good.

Interviewee: All right.

Interviewer: Okay.

[End of audio]