

*Interviewer:* This is \*\*\* and I'm interviewing \*\*\* on November 26. [...]. The interview questions ask generally about your sense of yourself as your writer—as a writer. We'll talk some about your experiences with courses and how that's changed how you've thought of writing or yourself as a writer. We'll start off very broadly then. The first question asks how do you describe yourself as a writer.

*Interviewee:* Goodness. I would say definitely a strong writer. The English major definitely forces that, but I also see myself more as an academic than a creative writer. I'm very much good at essays and argumentation. The persuasive essays rather than making a story line.

*Interviewer:* Is there any reason that you draw that distinction when you think about your writing?

*Interviewee:* I think mostly just because I've tried to do creative writing courses and have found that I've struggled a lot. That it's, I think, the math primary is very much the logic and not—you're creative to an extent but not in writing. I can daydream, but I can't write those daydreams down in a way that I would like to read.

*Interviewer:* With that distinction in mind, how would you describe say the role of writing in your life? Whether we're thinking about school life or out of school life.

*Interviewee:* I think definitely school it's important. It's the major way of communication for me through work, through English classes, even through math. Very much you need to be able to write down granted it's in symbols rather than words. You need to be able to write your logic. Outside of school and work, it's, to a certain extent, the way for me to be able to think through everything in my mind. Doing flow charts and doing almost letters in order to compartmentalize different thoughts that I'm having and different problems that I'm working through.

*Interviewer:* That's interesting. Maybe you're thinking more of personal—

*Interviewee:* Yeah.[...] [I] have probably a 60-page document on my computer that is just letters.

*Interviewer:* With her in mind? What an interesting thing.

*Interviewee:* Mm-hmm. Yeah. It's a way for me to organize my thoughts and what's going on and logic through situations I'm going through, but then it's going into a letter. Just 'cause I've always been taught if you stare at a blank screen then if you just write, "Dear Someone," then the words will start flowing.

*Interviewer:* That's a nice way to think of it.

*Interviewee:* I usually write in a book too later. That's how I was taught. There was someone else. I think it's still going to a book, I believe. It's like, "Okay. You just write a letter." I'm like, "Great. Yeah." *[Laughter]*

*Interviewer:* You said you were a senior now. Thinking back, did you start your freshman year at [University of Michigan] also?

*Interviewee:* Yes.

*Interviewer:* You didn't transfer in. Way back then, how would you describe yourself as a writer when you began at the University of Michigan?

*Interviewee:* I think I was definitely not where I am today. I also know that in high school we very much were taught the college essay writing two—my last two years of high school with my AP. Language and literature professors they actually had taught in a college setting before and so we very much were being taught in that way as well. I came in and had already written 2 20-page papers and found that I didn't write another long, extended argument essay until, I think, 2nd semester of my sophomore year. I mean I think that I came in knowing that that was part of my strong point. Then again I also know that I read back some essays and cringed at some of the *[laughter]* logical missteps that I was making.

*Interviewer:* I was going to say, what was—what made you cringe? Was it logic?

*Interviewee:* Yeah. I mean, some of just the—your straw men and ergo all of that stuff like the slippery slope arguments that I just was reading it and was like, "Oh. That's not necessarily true. Okay." I'm in the Honors College and so we had taken the Great Books course instead of an [English course] or [English 100 level course]. Definitely had revision stuff in there, but then I was realizing that there's different writing using the Greek poems and some of that. That those, I think, gave me a little bit of a run for my money as a freshman. *[Laughter]*

*Interviewer:* The follow up question is to what extent you'd say you've grown as a writer. It's interesting because you felt at times pretty confident when you arrived and had a lot of experience with longer, argumentative writing.

*Interviewee:* To a certain extent, I think a little bit of a false sense of confidence as far as I knew how to write and I knew how to develop papers, but then I also know that I've taken great strides since then. I was confident, but then to where I am now I'm realizing like, "Okay." I was confident back then, but only to a limited scope.

*Interviewer:* You attribute those great strides to—

*Interviewee:* I think just amount of writing that I've done. Taken lots of English classes. Actually, took an upper level writing math class last semester.

*Interviewer:* What was the class?

*Interviewee:* It was [Math course]. It was an introduction to life insurance and risk management, but it was in upper level writing learning the tricks of the trade and that. I think that that also really helped because I got out of the English writing, so had to write a 20-page paper on a life insurance policy standard. It was just different which was really helpful.

*Interviewer:* That is really interesting. Before we turn to thinking about specifically some of your course work at [University of Michigan], this last question in this section asks what your goals for yourself are as a writer at this point then?

*Interviewee:* I think definitely I'm very much looking ahead after graduation right now just doing job interviews and stuff. Earlier this year, I wanted to go to English grad school, and do a Ph.D. program and have abandoned that for the time being. Now I'm very much going into an insurance business sector. I think my goal right now is just to make sure that I keep writing. That to keep reading, keep writing, to keep—not necessarily honing the skills that I have but keep them. It's still very much present. I mean I wouldn't mind surviving the senior thesis for English. [Laughter] Yeah.

*Interviewer:* What is that project in scope? Is it length?

*Interviewee:* It's 40 to 60 pages just a multi-faceted, multi-level argument. Yeah. [Laughter] It's very much forefront of everything. Just make it through. [Laughter]

*Interviewer:* That is a current goal which it you'll be fine. The next questions ask a little bit more about thinking, especially about your experiences at U of M [University of Michigan]. The question starts broadly. What do you think it means to write well?

*Interviewee:* I think to write well is to be able to articulate what's in your mind in words or symbols on paper or computer what not, so that others can read it as well. I think I'm a little bit outside of the box in so far as I see math proofs bring writing. Just you want your thoughts and your logic or whatever you want to articulate to be able to be understood by somebody else.

*Interviewer:* We started to talk about this just a moment ago. The question asks which first year writing requirement course you took.

*Interviewee:* I took [Great Books course].

*Interviewer:* That's in the honors college in lieu of the [English 100 level course], [English course]?

*Interviewee:* Yep. Exactly.

*Interviewer:* Thinking about that class, what were some of your experiences in the course around writing?

*Interviewee:* I think definitely it was interesting in so far as it was my first and, honestly, only large course here at U of M [University of Michigan].

*Interviewer:* How large is large?

*Interviewee:* It was, I believe, sitting at about 400 students. We had just a lecture and then we would break down into discussion groups. I think that that really shaped my reading because we had so many different points of view of the writers. We would read Homer and we would get our professor's point of view, but then we would also get the GSI [Graduate Student Instructor]. Then we would get the 15 kids in our discussion group. It was so many different ideas all floating around which helped. Likewise, it's very much focused on the revision process of the papers.

*Interviewer:* I was going to say. Talk to me a little bit about how they structured writing assignments in that large a class.

*Interviewee:* From what I remember, we would have a couple of short, inconsequential writing assignments where it was journal, one page, write on this passage that we would just turn into our GSI. I believe it was just one of those check, check, plus. Check, minus things. As far as the papers went, it would be we would do a rough draft. We'd return two copies in. One to our GSI and the GSIs actually rotated the discussion sections in so far as we would turn our papers into our GSI, but our GSI wouldn't grade it. Then we would have one—

*Interviewer:* A different GSI who didn't know you? Was that the idea? They weren't biased?

*Interviewee:* Exactly. They weren't biased or anything. Then we would do a revision process in class, so do peer editing. The grade that we would actually get on the paper was a if this was a final paper right now, what grade would you get? You would get both of those copies back. We would be able to revise and then the following week we would turn in a final copy to our GSI. I believe that they swapped papers again with a different GSI.

*Interviewer:* That's an interesting system. Those papers length, topic?

*Interviewee:* It was, I believe, anywhere between four and eight pages, five and eight. It was usually just a find a theme in these two writings or very open-ended. They gave us four topics, I believe, writing about, “Oh, talk about the women or domestic space in *The Iliad*,” or stuff like that. Very open-ended and we would just have to choose one, but then we always had the option of talking with our GSI or the professor and creating a new topic as well.

*Interviewer:* That’s useful to hear you walk through it just because it’s a little different experience from the [English 100 level course], [English course]. How do you think the experiences then in that course shaped your writing?

*Interviewee:* I mean I think definitely I still revise. In high school, I got into the habit because I knew that I was one of the stronger writers in class and such that I could write a paper and just turn it in. I was one of those people who would potentially not read over a paper before I turned it in. I think the revision process really has stuck with me where there’s not a paper now that I don’t read out loud.

I wasn’t the biggest fan of the peer reviews and am still not just ‘cause I think there’s part of me that’s stubborn and stuck in my ways. *[Laughter]* It was helpful to hear what people had issues with with the writing. I think that that’s when I started realizing that people did have different writing styles. ‘Cause it would be stylistic issues that a lot of times people would pull out. It’s like, “Oh, I don’t like it when you do this parallel structure for a paragraph.” It’s like, “Well, that’s how I write.” That was the first time that I realized that.

*Interviewer:* The next question asks if you’re still making use of anything that you learned in the first year writing course. You mentioned revision.

*Interviewee:* Just the revision, I think is really the things that stuck with me.

*Interviewer:* That’s good to know. The next question asks if you took [Writing course] which is a precursor class some people take before their freshman writing, but it—

*Interviewee:* No. *[Laughter]*

*Interviewer:* Worked your way around that. Question asks what your concentration is.

*Interviewee:* I’m Honors English and then actuarial mathematics.

*Interviewer:* Maybe we can think about one and then the other. If you had opportunity to do writing in the concentration? It sounds like on both sides, so we’ll pick whichever you want to start with.

*Interviewee:* For English, I think is the one that very much is always brings to mind is every single English class I have at least a paper. *[Laughter]* I'm doing the Honors thesis, but that's a big part of my life now. It's nice to have a long term project. Where I know that some professors give, "Here's a final paper. You have three weeks to do it." This is really nice in so far it's a whole six-month thing I write. Then for math, not too much. I mean not too much like academic paper writing at all.

*Interviewer:* You mentioned the insurance course.

*Interviewee:* There's the insurance course that was an upper level writing class. Other than that, I mean it's homework and stuff that we have to write proofs. That's not any paragraphs or anything like that. It's all symbol.

*Interviewer:* Thinking about either side either the English side or the math side, the question asks how confident you feel writing in your concentration. You can just let me know which space we're thinking of.

*Interviewee:* For English, very confident. That I've been getting good feedback from thesis advisor and stuff like that. The course professor saying that good, on track, and stuff. I'm able to articulate what I want to be saying in a way that I want to say it which is a nice success level for me. As far as math, I think I'm decently confident. It's just because I know that I have a lot more writing experience than a lot of the other math readers do, but it also is a different type of writing that I'm not completely comfortable with. It's less about the artistic value and more about the actual content.

*Interviewer:* Do you think the experiences you've had writing in your concentration have changed how you think of yourself in a writer in any way?

*Interviewee:* I think just the whole practice makes perfect adage comes to mind as far as I think that I—my vision of myself as a writer has been influenced just simply based on the amount of writing that I've had to do. That it's impossible to write hundreds of pages of papers over the course of a couple of years and not self-evaluate where you are as a writer.

*Interviewer:* The next question's still are thinking about your writing experiences but maybe a little more broadly. The question asks what experiences in and out of the classroom have had an effect on your writing. We've talked a little bit about some of the classroom writing.

*Interviewee:* I think going back to the letter is just—that that really has given me a release. Any life up or down I can find myself turning to writing for it. Obviously, still call my mom potentially bawling. [...].

I think just every experience I've also found that that's the way that to remind myself of memories that I've had. Now going back [...], I can read. There's letters where it's like, "Ahh. You're talking about the boyfriend." Now the ex-boyfriend and everything. It like, "Okay. Yep. Here's the letter where you're breaking up with him," and two days later you broke up with him. *[Laughter]* Yeah. I think that writing very much is what I go to.

*Interviewer:* Do you think your processes changed as a result of either your in class or out of class writing? The actual process you go through to get started, to make sense of things.

*Interviewee:* I think so. The biggest thing that my professors *[inaudible 18:41]* it's just the blank page syndrome where you just stare at the blank page, and it's impossible. Yeah. *[Laughter]* It's impossible to start and to have even gotten little tips and tricks. I mean the whole letter thing really has helped even—I had a professor just say, "Just put your name on it and go into draft mode." Then you can't see how far down the page you are. You just keep writing. I think that that has helped doing the little—the process of writing. Where there's now it 19:16 immediately go for that. I'm going to say if you ever have any organizational logic problems, just do an outline and just write from your outline and such like that.

*Interviewer:* If I use the term reflective writing, what would that mean in your experiences?

*Interviewee:* Goodness. Reflective writing. That actually takes me back to high school days where it was mostly just the self-evaluation of your own writing. We did it a couple of times in my sophomore year of high school. Then I know but I think that it's also changing as far as reflect upon your own not even just writing but then also broadly.

*Interviewer:* Thinking of it in those ways, have you ever used reflective writing as part of your writing process? This is either voluntarily or required in class.

*Interviewee:* Not really. I remember freshman year I think that we had to do in Great Books do a evaluate your own essay. We had one of those peer review sessions and you had to justify why or why not we use the edits that the person had given us. I actually said, "Well, I used this because I thought that it made it stronger, but I didn't use this because I liked it the way that it was."

*Interviewer:* Speaking of peer review and you raised it earlier, the question asks what have your experiences been like working with other writers in your courses or in other contexts if you had collaborative work other places?

*Interviewee:* Definitely this thesis course that I'm in right now is ten students who are all writing our theses. We do work shopping. This was my first experience doing work shopping.

*Interviewer:* Different than the Great Books workshop?

*Interviewee:* Yeah. Different than the Great Books. It's somewhat to the same thing as far as people. You'll post your draft onto CTools [learning management system] and then people will read it, do comments, and then do—you sit there and they all talk about it and such which was different than the Great Books. Just 'cause Great Books was very much more of a conversation. You got to discuss why you chose the things that you did whereas now it's more of a—the writer can speak, but we can't justify. We can't defend our work in any way. We can explain something if somebody asks us a question, but we can't—

*Interviewer:* It's more of a taking in of information?

*Interviewee:* Exactly. I don't know. I've grown to love and hate them simultaneously because there are some comments that really help and especially seeing outside readers who don't have context in early modern poetry seeing where I need to flesh out more so that it's accessible to everybody. There are also a couple of writers and I that don't get along. *[Laughter]* Just even more the stylistic issues that they just don't like my way of writing. Sometimes it's a little bit frustrating, so I don't see their comments as—either as authoritative or as helpful just because I know that a lot of is them just not liking my style.

*Interviewer:* That's really useful. You compare the two the peer group almost more discussion based in the first year and then this more formalize workshop style is what it sounds like. A preference? Did you feel either one worked better for you? Neither one? *[Laughter]*

*Interviewee:* I think both helpful to a certain extent. I think I'm getting more of the now, the thesis workshops, the formalized workshops now just, I think, because everybody has matured as writers. That freshman year people didn't necessarily how to peer edit unless they had done it for any reason in high school. I think that some of the comments that I got freshman year just definitely weren't helpful at all. We were all young and didn't necessarily know grammar, style of rules. I think that the formalized is more helpful though I do miss being able to defend your work just 'cause I don't like sitting there for 45 minutes and have people bash on my *[laughter]* 10-page thesis draft.

*Interviewer:* Workshop is tough. If you were going to give someone advice about writing, what are some of the things they should think about as they begin writing a paper?



*Interviewee:* Probably as unhelpful as this answer is, it's just to write. Just to get words onto the page and know that you can always edit later. That don't worry too much about the flow right now. Don't worry too much about how you're saying it. Just say it. Yeah. I think just take the words in your head and what you want to say and just put it on paper.

*Interviewer:* The next question asks about new media writing and whether you've had any experiences at all with new media writing. That can include blogs, websites, sound, or video presentation. Even PowerPoints.

*Interviewee:* We did PowerPoints in high school. Really didn't like those presentations. *[Laughter]* Let's see. I know we—

*Interviewer:* Anything beyond that?

*Interviewee:* Yeah. We had to do a Google site for our [Title of course] last semester. We did a Google sites that we all chose—it was actually all conglomerate. We had manuscripts that we did group work on and did what—we figured out what manuscript it was from, approximately when it was from. Then we also chose our own topics. I wrote about the history of the typewriter and made a site for that. Then it was all put together.

*Interviewer:* Then the text was also on the website?

*Interviewee:* Yep.

*Interviewer:* How did you find your experiences writing for that medium versus print on the page?

*Interviewee:* I mean it wasn't really that different 'cause our professor—she didn't really make the distinction. She said honestly that the website—to put sections in, but that we could literally copy and paste our final papers into that.

*Interviewer:* The [project] sounds interesting.

*Interviewee:* *[Laughter]* It was fun. I had all of the random books from the library.

*Interviewer:* About [project]?

*Interviewee:* About [project]. There was an 1895 book that was just sitting on the shelf that I had to check out. It was the basement of the grad library [Harlan Hatcher Graduate Library]. I was like, "Okay. Didn't know that that was here." I'm feeling like somebody's going to sneak out *[laughter]* from the shelves.

*Interviewer:* It's unbelievable what they have over at *[inaudible 26:42]*.

*Interviewee:* It was really crazy.

*Interviewer:* Sometimes I'll take something away, and I'll be like, "Really? I can take this." *[Laughter]* It feels wrong.

*Interviewee:* I have that all the time with the thesis. I'm like, "Wait? You really trust me taking me 40 books," and all of these are probably only edition or whatever.

*Interviewer:* They know you're good for it. These last couple questions are about the pieces that you've been asked to put up onto the CTools site through this study. Has that been going okay?

*Interviewee:* Yeah.

*Interviewer:* No troubles?

*Interviewee:* No. The last time I did it was last winter or last whatever. [...].

*Interviewer:* That makes sense. We're just interested to hear you talk a little bit about what you chose and more importantly why you chose it.

[...]

*Interviewee:* I'm trying to think. I think that they asked me for something from freshman year, so I just chose something from Great Books. I think I was talking about *The Iliad* perhaps. I think it was also—I had a computer snafu between freshman and sophomore year, so I think that that was also the only paper that I had from freshman year on my—so that's the motivation for *[laughter]* picking that one. Let's see. I'm trying to think of what else. I might have put on—up the paper actually from *The Fairy Queen* class that I took. It was an Honors English course from last fall.

*Interviewer:* This was the paper that led to the Honors?

*Interviewee:* Yeah. That actually led to my Honors thesis. Yeah. That might be up there. I'm pretty sure that that would be up there somewhere. I'm trying to think of what it would have been in the winter. That was probably a paper from [Title of course] talking about the—let me see if I can remember what it was about.

[...]

*Interviewer:* It sounds like these are not top of mind, but thinking back now that we thinking—

*Interviewee:* [Laughter] Think potentially.

*Interviewer:* Do you have some memory of why you might have chosen the pieces you chose?

*Interviewee:* I think that *The Fairy Queen* essay from last fall very much just—I mean it struck a chord with me. I think one of the first times that something has stuck with me that much from an English class. [...].

I think the second one was really I mean just—it was an interesting paper to write. I think that that was one of the most also slightly disturbing papers that I've ever written. Also, just as far as why I picked that as well is so—that was my only English class that had a formal paper structure. 'Cause I figured that a math—the insurance paper, I don't think was actually done yet by the time that they wanted it uploaded. [Laughter] I think it was going between those two. I was like, "This one's done, so,"—

*Interviewer:* Sometimes that's the decision, right?

*Interviewee:* Exactly.

*Interviewer:* That's great. Those are the primary questions that they identified. Are there any other comments or ideas that have come to mind as we've been talking that you would want us to also bring up?

*Interviewee:* Not particular things. Definitely very thorough. [Laughter]

*Interviewer:* Well, the conversation has been a pleasure.

*Interviewee:* Thank you.

[...]

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