

Interviewer: This is ***, and I'm here with ***. It's April 27th at 11:15 in the morning. Okay, so ***, the first several questions I have are really general, and it's to take you back to your first year at U of M. How would you describe yourself as a writer when you began at U of M, and how would you describe yourself as a writer now?

Interviewee: Okay, so when I first started freshman year I put the English class off until the second semester.

Interviewer: Oh, you did?

Interviewee: Yeah, I didn't take it during that year, and I really didn't want to do it because I had to like always handwrite drafts and write things like a million times and then figure out the way I wanted to say it. I could never be wordy or anything because I was used to writing lab reports, and I could never write like wordy sentences. I didn't really like writing, but then I took my [English] class, which was the literature one, because I always liked reading a lot and analyzing it, so I took that one. I thought it was really good. I really liked my teacher, so I got really into it. I just really liked it, so I thought my writing improved a lot from that.

Interviewer: Okay, so you got into writing itself, or got into the content of the course?

Interviewee: I didn't like the content, so I definitely got into the writing.

Interviewer: Do you remember what sorts of things you wrote in that course?

Interviewee: I don't. I remember we did, our final project was about looking at these urban exploration blogs because it's all about like the city and stuff. We had to analyze that and compare them to each other. I remember we read a novel and then we read the graphic novel version. We had to talk about like the different themes that you could take from those and how writing in the graphic novel style is different.

Interviewer: Okay, so you said when you started the course you weren't really that excited about writing. You mentioned lab reports.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: That's mostly what you had written?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: In high school, like your senior year of high school?

Interviewee: Yeah, so my senior year of high school I think I took a banned and censored class where you just read books that are banned at other schools. We read all these banned books like *A Clockwork Orange* and stuff. I liked that because it was interesting and mostly our writing was just projects and like analysis. It wasn't anything intense.

Then I took the second semester AP [Language] because they let me switch into the class. Maybe it helped a little bit for college, but we didn't really do like crazy writing.

Interviewer: Right, okay.

Interviewee: I took a lot of AP sciences and we always had lab reports, and then my first semester all my labs had lab reports.

Interviewer: When you came into U of M [University of Michigan] you viewed yourself as kind of a lab report writer?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: [Laughter]

Interviewee: Yeah. [Laughter]

Interviewer: Previous to that you had written like five paragraph essays and stuff?

Interviewee: Yeah, and I mean, I don't really remember my grade in English in high school, but I remember that I wasn't getting like A+s on essays or anything, but I was getting the A+s on my lab reports.

Interviewer: You decided to minor in writing, so how would you describe yourself as a writer now? I'm just sort of wondering what's changed.

Interviewee: Like what happened?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: I don't know. I guess I really liked my writing experience second semester of freshman year. I actually found that the writing was relaxing in comparison to my other courses. It was just like a nice break to be able to write everything out instead of like studying for a test. I decided to do this because I think writing is so important and I wanted to keep building on it. I don't know exactly how I'm going to use writing in my eventual field. I'm sure I'll use it if I write research papers or something, but I just think it's like a really good skill to have. That's why I did it, and after I signed up for the minor in writing I took [English course], which I loved, so I definitely improved my writing a lot. This year I took some classes that had a lot of writing in them.

Interviewer: Okay, great, so you said you loved [English course]. What types of things did you write in [English course]?

Interviewee: I thought it was annoying at first because you have to pick your own topics, and I never liked doing that. I just liked very strict assignments. I think we had to read an article from anywhere and then write a paper picking out what was like wrong in the

article and develop that argument. I thought it was really interesting how we learned about like [inaudible 05:14] and everything. Now when I watch a commercial I'm like this is what they're appealing to.

Interviewer: Oh, that's great.

Interviewee: It's funny. I read this article, and I had never really understood what female genital cutting was. Then I read this article about it, and I was like wow, this is really bad. Then I wrote my essay critiquing the article. That was my first essay. Then we had to take that essay and the article and then make a huge research paper out of it.

Interviewer: Were all the writing assignments kind of connected to each other in that course?

Interviewee: I think the second two were and the first one wasn't.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: The first one was analyzing a media campaign, so that was different.

Interviewer: Okay. This question is really about how you would describe yourself as a writer, and I'm kind of interested that you said that you found writing relaxing. It seems like when you came into U of M you felt kind of constrained as a writer.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: I guess the question is do you view yourself as a writer now?

Interviewee: Well, I definitely think I do now because—especially from taking all the classes I've taken my junior year, which were all pretty writing intensive—well, most of them I'd say. Most of my friends find that writing is so hard for them, and it takes them so long. I'll read some of their papers, and they're just like not very good at all. I love reading what other people are writing especially in [Writing course], which is really interesting to see their point of view in their writing. For me it's like I sit down and I write, and it just comes so easily. I think I needed to learn more freedom with writing, which is what I learned in college, but also just like learning how to make better sentences and just gaining perspective on not even just writing, but everything that I'm learning so I have more to write about I guess.

Interviewer: Yeah, okay. Yeah, I mean, I like what you're saying. I see kind of a theme that writing is relaxing and that you feel more a sense of freedom.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: It sounds like it's not too difficult for you.

Interviewee: It's like I sit down and I just write and it's not that hard. I don't know, but I like it.

Interviewer: Okay. This next question—I'm actually getting really far ahead of myself. The next question is to what extent would you say you've grown as a writer and to what would you attribute this growth? We may have covered some of that.

Interviewee: I think I've grown a lot because I went from having to handwrite all these different outlines and drafts to like just sitting at my computer and writing. I think that what really contributed to that was my freshman year writing class. One of my essays he said to use I all the time where I had never known that you could even do that in an essay, and it wasn't like a five paragraph essay.

I learned how to structure my writing better, but also my teacher would point out like look at all these themes in your rough draft. Look at the themes in your writing that you weren't even noticing because sometimes when you write there's just like connections that you make that you don't even mentally know you're making, which is really cool.

Interviewer: Yeah, right. Your teacher was pointing out themes in your writing that you weren't aware of.

Interviewee: Yeah, and I found that it was really great how she took the time to really look at all of my pieces and the rough drafts and everything. I think I went to office hours a lot so we would talk about it a lot, and just being able to talk with someone about my writing and to hear the things I was doing right, but also to learn what I could fix and stuff. It's really cool if you read something you're writing fast, you're just writing quickly, and then you go back and look at it and you're like wow, look at these good points I didn't even know I was making.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, and it's great to also have a reader who's able to point some of that out to you.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay, good. Next question, what are your goals for yourself as a writer and have these changed since entering the minor in writing?

Interviewee: I really don't know just because—

Interviewer: I just want to make sure this is working. Yeah.

Interviewee: I planned on writing a senior thesis which was—originally I thought this would help a lot for that, but it turns out for my major you have to take six credits of class. You have senior year to do it, and I don't know if I have the space for those classes because I am taking a lot of science and stuff. There's just—I want to graduate. [Cross talk 09:59] no space, so I'm not going to do that anymore.

I don't know how I'm going to use it as a doctor, if I am a doctor hopefully, but I think like a lot of doctors write research papers and books. I actually took a medical anthropology class, and we read a book that a doctor wrote about his own experience with AIDS and stuff like that, so maybe one day you'll see my name on a book.

Interviewer: Yeah, I hope so. I mean, yeah, if you get into the research side of medicine you'll write a lot.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: You'll write a lot of research papers.

Interviewee: That's what I've noticed because I actually took—I read a lot of research papers this semester for one of my science classes, and I'm doing research this summer. One of the major things is writing. You have to write when you start. You always write your hypothesis up in a paper before you start, and then you write one after. I'm going to be doing that.

Interviewer: You write the hypothesis after you've done the research?

Interviewee: No, you do it before. Your first paper is about like the background and what you're going to be doing and everything. Then you have to get it approved, and then you write like your final paper saying what you've done and you have all your research there.

Interviewer: At the beginning we were talking about your writing in your [English course] and your [other English] class. Do you see connections for yourself doing that type of writing, which maybe we can describe as kind of more creative, and the research writing?

Interviewee: Well, I really prefer the creative writing, and that's why I hope I can write something about my experience as a doctor or something one day. Again, I feel like research writing is more suffocating, but having the background that I've had it helps me write clear and better. One of the things they stress in science is clear, organized writing. That's definitely something I've improved on from all my classes here. I know in my class people were failing the papers and I was getting 100 percent on every one because they really want clear writing. It's not just about your research and how you can make a data table. It's like how you can say what you're trying to say.

Interviewer: Yeah, and I think we'll get at more questions about this. Okay, so the next question is thinking across your writing experiences at U of M, what do you think it means to write well? You've already kind of gotten at some of this.

Interviewee: Okay. Well, I think that the most important thing about writing well is structure in like the sentences. I think that's where most students here are lacking. In most of my English classes you've had to read each other's papers. A lot of times they

just like don't make sense. They don't flow. The sentences are poorly worded or they're way too long or way too short. I think you need to have a sense of like yourself when you're writing because you need to be able to, while you're writing, to think like does this flow. Is it going to flow for a reader or does it just flow for me, and like who's my intended audience.

I think good writing really thinks about the audience. You're thinking about your structure, and is it clear to someone who's not me. Like is it clear if it's not just me reading my paper? I don't think it's about using huge words all the time. I think it's more like the content and the structure.

Interviewer: When you say structure you mean something different from the shape of the sentences, or what do you mean exactly by structure?

Interviewee: When I think of structure I think of flow and how you've set it up, like how are you making your argument and where is it appearing and how is everything supporting it. What is the structure of your essay? How does each paragraph flow, and how does it go back and support the main idea.

Interviewer: Okay, and then once you have that structure and everything is laid out well then on a sentence level too it's really important that the sentence is connecting.

Interviewee: Yeah, you want someone who's reading it to be interested in what you're saying.

Interviewer: Do you think that your classmates, these people you mentioned whose essays you've read, don't get that?

Interviewee: I think most of them don't. I think most people at this school are not good at writing at all.

Interviewer: Because of the reader not being aware that they're writing for a reader or what?

Interviewee: Yeah, I don't think they have any sense of awareness that there is an audience. I think they're writing—like their ideas are present in the essay, but they're never clear. I mean, I can't speak for everyone. I'm just saying a lot of people I've encountered.

Interviewer: Yeah. I have to say I 100 percent agree this idea of awareness of audience. Where do you think you got that awareness?

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Interviewee: [English course] for sure. I never thought about it before. That class is all about who is your audience and how are you going to market your piece to appeal to your audience.

Interviewer: Is that the term used in the course, market your piece, or is that your—

Interviewee: No, but I just like—that's how I would describe it because the whole time I was thinking is this [inaudible 15:25]. This is going to really emotionally appeal to my reader, and then they're going to be drawn in.

Interviewer: Yeah, so do you think before [English course] you didn't like get that?

Interviewee: I never thought about the audience. I never understood it. Even in freshman writing we never—I know that there's [English course] and that might be different, but in my class we never thought like my audience is my teacher, and I know that can be your audience, but I never thought like, I don't know. I just kind of wrote. I never even thought about the audience.

Interviewer: So in [English course] your audience was not your teacher, so who would you say your audience was?

Interviewee: Well, my research paper audience was definitely college educated, but not my teacher. It was a much more broad audience and it was anyone who would care about women's rights.

Interviewer: That research you wrote in [English course]?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: When you wrote other types of things in [English course] did you imagine a different audience?

Interviewee: I can't really remember. I'm trying to think about my first paper. My first paper was before I understood the audience concept. Then my second paper, since it was critiquing someone's article, I was writing to them.

Interviewer: You were writing to the author of the article?

Interviewee: To the author of the article.

Interviewer: I want to try to nail down where you got this sense of audience.

Interviewee: I got it in the middle of [English course].

Interviewer: That's so specific.

Interviewee: [Laughter]

Interviewer: What was it that, where you got it? What shaped your understanding?

Interviewee: I honestly can't remember. I know we read this book, Everything's an Argument, and we had to talk a lot about audience at some point in the class. I think we would have to write reflections saying who our audience was and like who our intended audience was. Having to pinpoint that was where it really like stuck in my mind because I'd never had to say like oh, I'm directing this at my classmates. I always thought it was a given, like this is for my teacher, but it doesn't have to be that way.

Interviewer: Yeah, okay. I should maybe pick up my pace. What do you think is most important in learning to write? It sounds to me like you've begun to already answer this.

Interviewee: Well, I think you have to read a lot in order to learn how to write. Whenever I think about my childhood and why I'm able to write now, I think it's because I read all the time. I think that—I mean, a lot of my friends hate reading, and a lot of those people are terrible writers. Then I have a lot of friends who work at The Daily and stuff and they read all the time and they write all the time. I think there's definitely a very close relationship.

Interviewer: You read a lot before coming to college?

Interviewee: Yeah, I didn't really watch TV. We read in my house.

Interviewer: You did this reading, but nevertheless you didn't really view yourself as a writer when you came here. It's this [English course] course that really got you. It sounds to me thinking—

Interviewee: Well, I think I never—I always enjoyed the writing I did in my interesting classes in high school, like my band and concert class where I was very analytical. I wrote papers in AP [Advanced Placement] [inaudible 18:49] and stuff, but I never like the content. When I didn't like the content, I didn't really like the writing and I definitely didn't identify myself as a writer, but I was capable.

Interviewer: Yeah, okay, so the most important things in learning to write—so reading. Can you say more, like what—

Interviewee: Well, I think that's kind of similar to the audience idea just because when you're reading a book you're thinking about yourself as the audience kind of, but also you're learning how other people form sentences. I know whenever I'm reading, at least in the last year or two, I notice like oh, she uses so many semicolons and I don't like that. I analyze their style compared to my own.

Interviewer: Do you do that consciously, do you think?

Interviewee: I always think about the writer's style when I'm reading, and if I don't like it then I tend not to like the book so much.

Interviewer: I was struck by something you said. When reading you learned to view yourself as an audience or you yourself—or what is it?

Interviewee: I think so because you're—I mean, I can't really think of a concrete example, but when you're reading something like you're in the audience and how well you get into the book, I somehow connect that with how I'm writing because I want my reader to get as into it as I might get into a really good book.

Interviewer: Yeah, that's so interesting. Okay, so a lot of these questions you've already addressed. What did you learn in your first year writing requirement—I think that would be [lower level English course]—that you've continued to use in your writing? You could also talk about [English course].

Interviewee: Well, I really felt that I learned a lot in 124, but now I feel I learned more in [English course]. I think I'll talk about [English course].

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: It's like the idea of audience and learning how to make your writing have a better argument because we always did this like “so what” thing, like what is the point of this? How are you like proving it? How are you setting up everything as a support? Being argumentative and clear when you're arguing something I think is so important, and you need to have a clear thesis. That class really helped me with the thesis, but I also learned that your thesis doesn't have to be just one sentence. It can be a paragraph even. It could come at the end. It could come in the middle. You have so much more freedom with writing than the way we learned in high school where your thesis had to start with “as a result” and then continue.

Interviewer: Yeah, so I like how specific you're being about what you learned like that a thesis doesn't have to be one sentence. It can be even a whole paragraph. Do you remember other kinds of specific things you learned that you've carried with you from [English course]?

Interviewee: Well, this probably sounds kind of rude, but I was a better writer than most of my classmates. I think that kind of gave me more confidence.

Interviewer: Okay, and that's important, right? [Laughter]

Interviewee: Yeah. [Laughter]

Interviewer: Did you take [Writing course]?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: Okay. All right, so now we're going to talk about the Gateway course. The first question is pretty broad. What impact has the Gateway course had overall on your writing?

Interviewee: I think that before—I remember in the Gateway course I was arguing with the teacher that I didn't see how this new media writing and like blogging—well, not so much blogging, but how like a podcast had to do with writing. I think I get it a little better—I mean, I don't fully get it now, but I think having to do something on Photoshop shouldn't be like a new way to write, maybe a way to write that's like more applicable to a career or something. I guess that made me think outside of the box about the medium that you're choosing to write in.

It also kind of reinforced the idea of audience because when you're blogging your audience is unlimited, so you need to be conscious of who could be reading it and what you're saying and how you're portraying yourself. It just like creates more awareness.

Interviewer: Okay, yeah, so this audience piece you're writing new media type documents. Is it fair to say for each kind of document that you wrote that you imagined a different audience? How would you connect the type of thing you were doing with an audience?

Interviewee: A portfolio or the blog I connected with an unlimited audience because that stuff is all out there on the web, and I bet if you Googled my name that would come up. Anyone could read it, like an employer could read it, which is why one of the things on the assignment said you could include music if you want. I didn't want to include music because I wanted to keep it—I mean, it's colorful, but I wanted to keep it professional because anyone, technically, could read it.

Then the essay about why I write, I really wrote it to an audience of like myself and the teacher. It wasn't directed at such a wide ranging audience because it's definitely a more personal piece.

Interviewer: Okay. Did the Gateway course have any impact on you or your sense of yourself as a writer?

Interviewee: Yeah, definitely because I never thought about why I write. Maybe they should do that in the first class you take here because I never even—like it never occurred to me. It's a question that is like something I still probably think about, and it's something that I thought about the whole course, not just for the first essay. I'm thinking about why you write changes over time. It's really interesting.

Interviewer: Yeah. I mean, I look forward to reading what you explained about why you write. Did you address the question in terms of why you write in university or why you write—

Interviewee: No, it was just like why I write in general or why I like to write.

Interviewer: Why you like to write, okay. Yeah, I mean, I'm sort of curious about when students come into U of M, or come into any college, it's never addressed why you write in the first place and maybe even why people in university write. I mean, do you think that—

Interviewee: I think that's something that's so interesting and so personal that everyone gets interested in why they write, so it's something that would be a cool first essay for all freshmen.

Interviewer: Yeah, I'll make a note of that. [Laughter]

Interviewee: [Laughter] Just because it's so interesting and you never think about it until someone says why do you write.

Interviewer: It's assumed that in school-based scenarios, including university, we write, but it's not really explained why we write or how we could take an individual kind of engagement in our writing.

Interviewee: Exactly.

Interviewer: Okay, so in the Gateway course in [Writing course] what have your experiences been of working with other writers?

Interviewee: I loved that part of it because everyone is so different and has such a different view on the same question, or if you are remediating 26:23 something, everyone has different interests because they're all different majors with different goals. It's really interesting. I also love reading other people's writing just because I think it's so reflective on themselves. I don't know. We had close relationships in that class, which was important, because you don't want to share your writing with someone unless you feel comfortable.

Interviewer: Sure, so there was a lot of effort in the beginning of the course to like create a—

Interviewee: We had groups, and we got pretty close to them. We all commented on each other's blog posts and stuff, which was cool.

Interviewer: Oh, cool. This question you've really already gotten at. How would you describe your experiences using new media writing?

Interviewee: Yes, I didn't like it at first. I'm still like a traditional—I'm not ever going to prefer a blog to like a whatever, just an essay for class. I guess it's easier because you don't have to be as formal, but at the same time even though I say I don't like structured writing that's so strict, I still like the format. I like some sort of formality in my writing.

It's like something that I'll never fully get used to, this new media writing. It's just like so much less formal.

Interviewer: Yeah, so do you blog on your own or is your first experience blogging in this course?

Interviewee: No, that was my first experience and only.

Interviewer: Oh, so do you think you'll do it on your own?

Interviewee: I don't think so just because I'm not that type of person. I don't want everyone in the world to be reading my daily life through my writing type of thing. I don't know, but I really like writing for class.

Interviewer: That's interesting. It explains why you're getting good grades, right?

Interviewee: Well, I think I'm very into like structure in school. I like to know what is expected of me and I like to—I mean, I like to have some freedom in my writing, but at the same time I like to follow sort of like a pattern of writing that I've done before. I just—I don't know. Blogs are kind of too much freedom even though I like the freedom. [Laughter]

Interviewer: Yeah, I don't blog myself. I just sort of assumed you guys would find that more appealing. I'm trying to get in your mind and figure out why you—

Interviewee: I thought it took longer. I thought it was harder. I think, again, maybe it goes back to this unlimited audience idea. I'm always thinking about the audience, and I'm always thinking about who's going to read it. I kind of like choosing my audience and not having this—I just don't like the concept of this unlimited audience. It took so much longer to blog because I'm like thinking more about it, and it's not what I'm comfortable with.

Interviewer: Well, what would you say to someone that—the audience is not—I mean, in some ways it's unlimited, technically, because it's true, anyone can log on. Also, as a writer you can shape who your audience is or you can shape who your audience would be through your writing.

Interviewee: Yeah. I guess I didn't really—I don't even know. I just didn't like it. I felt like it took so much longer because it was the idea that anyone in the class could be reading it. I don't know exactly when they're reading it or like how they're reading it, and should I be funny or should I—you know, like how am I going to make them interested. It's just different because we didn't have an assignment. It's like you don't have to try so hard to be funny or to be appealing—like you have to be appealing, but it's different.

Interviewer: Yeah, and if it's academic writing you're constructing an academic audience, and you don't have to necessarily entertain them.

Interviewee: Yeah, I think that's one of the big differences.

Interviewer: Okay, so let's look at your portfolio. How would you describe your experiences creating the portfolio? You talked to me about this before we started recording.

Interviewee: I don't really remember setting this up so much, but I do remember that I wanted to make it all about why I write, and it's further answering this question because it was so interesting to me. I remember talking about audience in here somewhere. Yeah, I know I talk about audience probably in like self-reflection or feedback. I don't know, but I put my blog posts here. I put most of my writing that I had done, and I thought you could really see if you look—maybe if you started at [lower level English course] and went to Women's Health and then science writing in [English course] and FGC writing, you could really see the progression that I made and just how like the projects have become a little bit—I don't know, just better and better written.

Interviewer: Can you take me through the kind of timeline of creating the portfolio? What did you do first and then what did you do second?

Interviewee: Yeah, so I started—I think I did the selected pieces last, so I started with like about me and why I'm doing it. I think I wrote—maybe it's here. I wrote an essay—I think I wrote a couple of like longer pieces about why I write and like the point of this and how I've grown as a writer. Then I did the writing process and self-reflection and the storyboarding and the feedback. I did the storyboard before I did anything because I wanted it to be like all planned out. I wrote the theme that I wanted to do, and like the different themes and how I was going to do that. I made like a diagram of it.

Interviewer: Did you get feedback on that?

Interviewee: I don't remember, probably.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: Yeah, I don't know. It's kind of a while ago. Then I did the writers I love, and then I did the selected pieces.

Interviewer: How long did it take you to do this? Did it take the whole semester?

Interviewee: A long time, no. We should have really started it at the beginning of the semester because I remember being like crammed in like one week sort of to do it at the end. It was during finals, and it would have been beneficial if we had been creating this the whole time.

Interviewer: Were you given instruction on the technological side of this or did you figure it out for yourself?

Interviewee: We were told like you can use WordPress. There were a few different choices, and we played around with them a little bit, but we kind of had more freedom in like the website we chose and the layout we chose.

Interviewer: Was the logistics of the technology, did that create time for you?

Interviewee: Well, went over—we had technology presentations in class, so we went over like photo editing and different things, so that, I guess, we kind of set up for all year. It wasn't overwhelming.

Interviewer: Okay, so you weren't—that week in which you were pulling everything together it wasn't just trying to figure out how to do the—

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: Okay. What, if any, impact would you say the experience of putting this portfolio together has had on your writing?

Interviewee: Well, I think it shows kind of trends in my writing and trends in my interests. It was kind of fun to really explore why I write through this because it was kind of like closure to the class because we started out thinking about why we write, and I finished up that way. I thought it was cool.

Interviewer: Were there other things you created for this portfolio that you could kind of take—the experience of writing those you could take with you to other assignments or to other types of writing in college?

Interviewee: I don't think I really understand the question.

Interviewer: [Laughter] I know. I'm trying to get you to maybe point to some specific examples of documents you put in your portfolio where you leaned to do a certain type of writing that maybe you hadn't done before.

Interviewee: Oh, I think the only documents that I put in here—they weren't like PDFs or anything. They were like this, like not exactly blog posts, but sort of blog posts. I remember it went by really quickly, and I think I just learned how, like again, how quickly you can write, but it can be good.

Interviewer: Okay, so it sounds to me like for you one of the most important things with this portfolio was really tackling this question of why I write. Is that fair to say?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay, so apart from the portfolio, since taking the [Writing course] how would you say your writing process has changed, if any?

Interviewee: Well, I think we learned about the storyboard thing and like laying out what you want to say and figuring out how you're going to say it, but kind of planning it quickly but efficiently. I definitely—I mean, I'm a planner, so I don't know if I learned that here or if I was already doing it, but I definitely like to plan out my papers and my essays kind of like in that format or something. I don't use the blogging part of what I learned, but I think in general writing a lot improves your writing, so I definitely improved my writing. The portfolio assignment taught me like how to write quickly because we didn't have a lot of time.

Interviewer: Okay, interesting, so is it kind of planning for how to write quickly? Is that fair to say?

Interviewee: Yeah, like how can you best plan to write quickly, but like nice writing.

Interviewer: Yeah, so you were already a planner.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: You drafted out what, like outlines or storyboards or whatever before starting a piece?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: In here you were forced to write more quickly?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: You had to learn to plan to write quickly.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: I need to learn that one. [Laughter]

Interviewee: I know, but this definitely paid off because I now—I just took a, after that mixed course I had to write like a 27 page paper or like a 30 page paper for that class, and we had a week to do it. It required reading three books and stuff and research, so I had to—

Interviewer: Reading three books and—

Interviewee: Well, I read three books and did the research in one week and wrote the second week.

Interviewer: The writing was what, 25 to 30 pages?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah, that's a lot.

Interviewee: Being able to like do this and have it all planned out, like I knew exactly what sections I was writing and I had my research planned out and I just wrote, so like writing quickly is important too.

Interviewer: The planning part was planning out the sections of the paper?

Interviewee: Yeah, and maybe kind of like how I planned out the sections of this.

Interviewer: Yeah, so I'm curious with that longer piece, so you planned out the sections and then did you write section by section or how did you write the—or did you crank out a 25 page draft?

Interviewee: It was interesting because I actually did the writing over two days, the research part took a while to like figure it out. I was talking about past perspectives of polio and like patient treatment and care, so I researched old newspapers and stuff. It was all about the past. I kind of framed it by starting out with this lengthy introduction saying like why it's important and what was the historical context that we now see from a present perspective. Then I went into the past and I had treatment separated from experience, or I had like each treatment separated and then the experience as a separate part of each treatment. It was kind of interesting.

Interviewer: That structure you had, did you plan it before writing or did that kind of emerge while you were writing?

Interviewer: Well, it was different than I had originally planned, so I guess it kind of emerged when I was writing, but I did have like an overlying structure that I was following.

Interviewer: And you stuck to that?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay, so just to reiterate, what you got out of this portfolio that you transferred was this idea of writing or planning quickly—no, planning for quick writing?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay, and that's how you kind of think of it to yourself, like I need to plan more because I don't have much time?

Interviewee: Well, I think of it as if I plan this and I know what I'm going to say it's not going to take a lot of time.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: Like I'm going to be able to write something I'm really proud of in a short amount of time if I have everything ready to go and planned.

Interviewer: Okay, great, and again, I need to learn that lesson myself. [Laughter]

Interviewee: [Laughter] It's like [Writing course].

Interviewer: Okay, so this [Writing course] course emphasized reflective writing in various forms?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: How would you describe your experience with this kind of reflection?

Interviewee: Well, I have it in my portfolio. I talk about reflection and self-reflection, and I thought self-reflection was the most important thing that I had never really done before. I think maybe—in [English course] we had to talk about our audience, but I never [inaudible 40:42] and write essays and said this is why I did this and this is why I didn't make the change that you told me to make because I thought it was—like one time in an essay [instructor] said, "You talk a lot about this and not a lot about that. You should fix that." I said, "Well, no, because I think it shows like my emotional state. If I'm like somehow subconsciously not speaking about something, I think that like shows more about me than talking equally about two things." It was like about why I write, so that's why I did that, but being able to comment and say these are the choices I made and here's the reasoning is definitely really valuable.

Interviewer: Would you continue to do that type of reflection in other assignments?

Interviewee: I think doing it out loud like that makes me do it in my head now all the time, like why am I making this choice and then what is my choice saying.

Interviewer: When you say out loud do you mean actually writing explicitly the comment?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. Yeah, I think the idea is being forced to be explicit like that.

Interviewee: Yeah, or to really think about every choice you're making, which is important. It's just adding to your awareness, just like thinking about the audience is important.

Interviewer: Okay, so this question is has your writing process changed as a result of all of these experiences in [Writing course]? That's a broad question too.

Interviewee: I just think it's faster. I think because I came to college and it was like I had to write numerous drafts and like write stuff by hand, but then when you don't take an English class you're really not writing drafts of papers. I've learned to really make it right the first time, and to do it productively. It's not like such a chore. I don't have to sit here and think like how am I going to possibly write this paragraph. It's just like more natural now.

Interviewer: That seems to me like such a valuable lesson as to learn how to plan to write quickly. I hadn't really thought of it in those terms before talking to you, but I mean it seems like in [lower level English course] or [English course] that would be a good lesson to learn, right?

Interviewee: Yeah, because in those classes I learned a little bit that I was still struggling to do all these drafts, and like it took me more time to write than it does not. It's like it was harder to write a five page paper than it is to write like a 25 page paper now.

Interviewer: That's interesting. There's a sanity piece to writing effectively. If you have to do lots of writing you've got to learn to do it pretty quickly, right, without going insane?

Interviewee: Right.

Interviewer: If you can plan for that then that's important. Okay, so wrapping up just some questions pointing toward the future, and we talked about this a little bit. What kinds of writing do you think will be most valuable for your career? It sounds to me like research writing.

Interviewee: Yeah, that sucks, though, because I really love all my writing about academics and disease and stuff, so maybe I could still do that. I kind of want to be—well, I like my teacher who's a historian and read all these books about like the past in diseases and eugenics and stuff. I thought that was fascinating, but it's like not a practical career for me because eventually I got bored with it. I was like take me back to physiology because I just like—I can only take so much in these non-science classes before I go crazy.

Interviewer: Why, because you don't see the direct application?

Interviewee: I think it's because I just kind of like physiology and stuff like that better. It is more interesting to me, but I don't really like research papers for science whereas I love—writing is like the thing about my non-science classes that I love the most, but there's like a lot more to those classes than just writing. Eventually I get bored with them.

Interviewer: Do you identify yourself as a scientist then?

Interviewee: I don't know. I think I chose to do this minor because I wanted more of a well-rounded background. I didn't want to be just like a research—because I do a lot of research on campus. I didn't want to just be like the science person in the lab. I think writing kind of keeps me like human.

Interviewer: You see your future work going into medicine and maybe doing medical research as kind of separate from yourself as a writer.

Interviewee: Yeah, I'm hoping that I could write books, hopefully. Well, I think writing is valuable for the MCAT [Medical College Admission Test] just to get into medical school, and I know if I ever have to write like a grant proposal—I've done a few of those before, not like real ones but project ones. That's something I could do. That's something you need to understand audience. You need to understand how to appeal to your audience, and that's one thing I've learned a lot at Michigan.

I kind of think that the implications of writing on my career are not so much like—they're not explicit. They're not like I'll be writing all the time sort of, but like writing kind of makes you have—it's like a memory thing. You have to remember what you've written already. You don't want to repeat yourself, and when you're writing 25 pages you have to have like a really good memory. It's like an exercise. I feel like that memory stuff is like what I do in my science classes too, so I think that connects kind of.

Interviewer: I don't quite get the memory part of writing.

Interviewee: Well, like I don't—so this is probably bad. I don't always go back and like reread everything I wrote like 25 times. I just kind of remember it. I don't repeat myself because I kind of remember these things well when I'm writing them down. When I study for anything I write because that's how I remember it. I can like picture my writing in my head and remember it. I will use writing in my career to like remember my patients or to remember like what I'm doing or learning or discovering.

Interviewer: When you're writing a 25 page paper you remember pretty much what you wrote like on page two or page three?

Interviewee: Like I remember if I've already—yeah, like I remember if I wrote something already.

Interviewer: A lot of writers, myself included, will go back and kind of constantly reread what they've written, but it sounds like you don't really do that.

Interviewee: I do it a few times, but not excessively.

Interviewer: [Laughter] Okay, but I was just thinking that may be one of the things that helps you to write quickly is that if you can more or less remember what you've written then you don't need to go back and reread it.

Interviewee: Yeah, I have a good memory with writing. Like that's how I connect my memory and stuff, so I think that's probably a part of it too.

Interviewer: Yeah. Okay, a very different type of question, if you could tell your teachers one thing about writing or how to teach writing, what would you say, so advice for teachers?

Interviewee: Okay. They need to give feedback quicker.

Interviewer: [Laughter]

Interviewee: They need to be doing it more often. The self-reflection, those self-reflective comments are really great. The first thing they do should be about why I write. That should be the first assignment. Interesting reading assignments are helpful because it kind of inspires you to write, and maybe some more grammar lessons.

Interviewer: More grammar lessons?

Interviewee: Yeah, these classes are all really lacking in grammar. [Laughter]

Interviewer: [Laughter] That's so interesting. That doesn't quite fit with other things you've said. I didn't expect for you to talk about grammar.

Interviewee: Well, I mean, I think that you need to know how to use commas. That's so frustrating when I'm reading other people's essays and they can't like use a comma properly. I think the idea at Michigan is like you're getting all these grammar lessons by writing because that's where you should be learning it. When you have to edit people's essays as a class assignment and like the grammar is all off it's like hard to even focus on the content.

Interviewer: You think the way it's handled here is that by doing the writing you're supposed to figure it out for yourself?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: You think it should be more explicit?

Interviewee: Definitely, because we learned in [English course] the way you present your piece and like how it's well written, that's just as important as the actual content. You're not going to be credible in your eye and his eye if you're not writing something that's actually like well written.

Interviewer: Yeah, so some type of reflective writing about the question of why I write, feedback more quickly, more often. It sounds like you had to wait for feedback.

Interviewee: Yeah, especially in [Writing course]. It took like months for feedback.

Interviewer: I think some instructors, the reason they don't give feedback right away is because they want to give lots of feedback, and it takes time to do it. Would you say it's more important to get sort of minimal feedback—like if you had to choose between minimal feedback right away versus lots of feedback a month from now?

Interviewee: I mean, I understand waiting like a couple of weeks, but once you've reached a month it's just been too long. I don't know. I just think that you need regular feedback, or maybe it involves office hours and checking in or something. I expect when I have a teacher that if I'm doing the work to prepare for their class, they should do the work to prepare for me to come, you know?

Interviewer: Yeah. That's something I've always wondered about is do students want fairly minimal feedback right way, which I can provide the next day, or do they want to sit around and wait. I can basically write a whole essay full of wonderful feedback, but they'll have to wait for it. Sometimes I don't know what—

Interviewee: I think I would like that, a lot of feedback thing, if it was about a week or two after. Once you've passed like the two week mark it's just like what is wrong with this teacher and why aren't they taking it seriously if they expect me to take it seriously.

Interviewer: Okay, good to know. [Laughter]

Interviewee: No offense. [Laughter]

Interviewer: No, none taken, no. It's interesting that you draw a specific time. What suggestions do you have for the minor Capstone course that we're developing this summer?

Interviewee: The [upper level English course]?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Well, I guess have to do the final portfolio because it's like the point of it, but I think that it could be really helpful to have a lot of interesting and inspiring short essays to read. We read some really bad ones in [Writing course], but it would be cool if you could read interesting ones.

I like the groups a lot, the blogging groups or the peer review groups, whatever you want to call it. Those are really helpful, and definitely like more regular feedback. I think the smaller the class is the better, so if you have a lot of people maybe like splitting it into

two classes would be good. A lot of discussions are good, the discussions about what you're writing.

Interviewer: About what you're writing? Okay.

Interviewee: Maybe some like shorter writing exercises.

Interviewer: That's great. The last question is do you have any other comments?

Interviewee: No, I'm happy I did it. I think I really learned a lot. I've definitely grown as a writer.

Interviewer: Okay, great. Thank you very much. [...].

[End of Audio]