

Interviewer: -going. Great. This is \*\*\* and I'm interviewing—

Interviewee: \*\*\*

Interviewer: -on March 28 [...]. That should be fine there for us. Okay, so I've got some general questions and then some more specific ones, so I'll just start at the beginning and go from there. How do you describe yourself as a writer?

Interviewee: I'm definitely one of the people that like to sit down and just hash it all out right there; like, I like to write my rough draft all the way through, and then step back and then kind of wait a period, like between 8 to 24 hours, and then look at it again. I never understood people who were able to write things in pieces because once I, like—I start to develop my ideas, I start thinking I might write about one thing, then like halfway through my writing, I'm like, "Wow, actually this is a really great point," and then I have to go back and edit my thesis statement to reflect that. I could never imagine sitting and writing in pieces; I have to write everything down right when I start. I would say, maybe, like a momentous writer; that I develop my thoughts as I—they kind of, like, start pouring out on the page before I can write them down fast enough.

Interviewer: All right, all right. How would you describe yourself as a writer when you began here at the University of Michigan?

Interviewee: I definitely was somewhat of a writer; I liked to write in my free time, but I never had done anything like extensive academic writing. I mean, I had AP [Advanced Placement] English in high school, so we did do a lot of essays, but those were always short. I think the longest paper I did in high school was my senior presentation; I think that was maybe ten or twelve pages. Before that, before I came to school, I definitely wasn't a developed, like, academic writer, where I could sit down and develop thoughts long-term instead of trying to get them all rushed on the page within a five to six-page scan.

Interviewer: All right. What are your goals for yourself as a writer?

Interviewee: I always wanna constantly improve. Always, my goal is to try and finish it within a decent amount of time; that's where I have the biggest trouble. Obviously, as a student, procrastination comes into effect, but to be able to write efficiently, so that way I don't waste time like sitting there, thinking and contemplating, you know, "Should I use this word, or this word?"—blah, blah, blah. I wanna get efficient at knowing what I wanna say and how to say it, so that way I don't have to waste time.

Interviewer: Okay, so thinking across your writing experiences at the university, what do you think it means to write well?

Interviewee: Well, that definitely is varied across different studies. I was starting as—I'm Communications rooted, and I started Political Science, which was writing way

differently than I am now in my Screen Arts and Cultures class. I think that really dictates who you're writing for, so the ability to communicate your ideas to the audience that you're going to be writing for, I think, makes you a well writer, because you can be the most phenomenal writer in the world, but if your audience isn't tailored to what you're writing to, then it's not gonna get across.

Interviewer: All right. Which first year writing requirement course did you take?

Interviewee: [English course].

Interviewer: What were your experiences in that course?

Interviewee: My teacher was actually fantastic; of course, she had to do like the—everyone's least favorite was the grammar and all that stuff, but she actually had really engaging topics like picking out a problem we saw in society and then returning it back to it on how we'd resolve it. She didn't quite give us more information on the problem, cause I didn't realize we'd have to resolve it cause I picked homophobia, and I was like, "How? I'd have to kill half the population for me to actually resolve this; so I either have to kill all the gay people or all the people who hate the gay people." That was kind of interesting, cause she tried to help me develop it, but it was actually really, really good. I really liked that class; it was my first A in college, so of course then I was like, "Yeah, look—I can get an A at the University of Michigan! It's not all extremely hard," you know, suffering through long hours.

Interviewer: What effect did those experiences in that class have on you as a writer, do you think?

Interviewee: I think that definitely prepared me for what was coming, because—especially for the Communications degree—most of my requirements were upper-level writing classes; I think I've taken about four or five now. I didn't realize in college I'd have to write so many papers because that's not exactly how it is in high school; high school is built on a lot of small assignments, while college is built on like—your three main grades are papers and tests, and then participation. That class definitely prepared me for what it was going to be like in my future classes. It also taught me how to interact with my professor because she was the first professor I went into office hours with, and actually cared about trying to revise my paper because I really got involved with the subjects that she asked us to write about.

Interviewer: All right. What is your concentration?

Interviewee: Yeah, it's a double major of Communications and Screen Arts and Culture.

Interviewer: You've talked about it a little bit, but what kinds of writing—have you been doing writing in those classes, and what kinds?

Interviewee: Uh huh, uh huh—tons in Communications. That’s all I feel like I do, is every single semester I have at least two or three papers due. For certain classes I wrote research papers, so I attacked a research question and then wrote about statistical analysis and stuff like that. Then for other papers, like for right now in my [Communications course], I’m writing a paper about television history, like I pick one television show and analyze it, so it’s a lot of opinion. Then I also do a lot of opinion-based papers, like whether violence, I feel, like what evidence—does violence affect children, should we take it out of the media—stuff like that. It’s really a variety of range from scientific papers to, like, opinion-based papers.

Then, for my Screen Arts and Culture, I’m just now—this is definitely more of an analysis; I’m watching this film, I’m describing this film, and I’m telling what it has to do in the historical context of whatever time period it was in.

Interviewer: What effect do you think those kinds of experiences have had on you as a writer? Is it the same as your [English course], or different?

Interviewee: Yeah—no, definitely different. Now, especially for COMM [Communications], I no longer—I used to do a lot of creative writing, which I love to do—I do it in my free time, and that was kind of more based in my [English course], but now I do more of like, analytical reading, where I read something and then analyze what I’m seeing and then talk about that. It’s definitely been different because it’s two different kinds of papers, cause like this one was an opinion or like an argumentative paper, and then this one was like I have to analyze this and read this. I would say they’ve definitely been different.

Interviewer: All right. How confident do you feel about writing in your concentration?

Interviewee: I’m almost totally confident, like almost a little bit too confident, to the point where I now have it down to a scientific method where I know how much time I need and all that; which is good because I’ve always gotten like low As or high Bs on my papers.

Interviewer: All right. What experiences—you’ve talked about this a little bit, too, also—have you had in and out of the classroom that have had an effect on your writing?

Interviewee: Definitely I would say out of the classroom—which I haven’t really talked about—is going to the library and writing papers. I cannot count how many times I’ve been up the night before and just like, almost in tears, like, “I’m gonna fail this so hard! It’s gonna be the worst paper I’ve ever written!” Then it always surprises me because I get my paper back and they’re like, “Oh, this is really great analysis; this is really good insight,” and I’m like, “This is the worst paper I’ve ever written in my entire life!” I guess outside of the classroom, just constantly being under pressure, but then being rewarded with that pressure kind of continues me to encourage me to write. Cause then all my friends are like—they have now grown accustomed to like, “\*\*\*, come on—

you're not gonna fail this paper. You said that about the last three papers and you got Bs on 'em, don't worry."

That's definitely influenced my writing, cause I always think that I'm gonna do bad, but I think that pressures me into caring more about the paper, so then I actually put more time and effort and actually create my thoughts instead of just being like, "Oh, this is gonna be super easy," and then blowing it off.

Then inside the classrooms, the professors really just make the difference. I have a professor right now who she is like, she mandates that we come in and talk to her about our final paper, which I think helps immensely, because a lot of students won't put forth that effort to go to office hours. You don't realize how like, handy—and then they're gonna be the people that are gonna be grading your paper, so like if you get feedback directly from them, you cannot go wrong, because you just follow what they say. Like, if they're like, "I think this is too broad," it's probably gonna be too broad in your paper.

I think that, in the classroom, is definitely when professors—as much as like, it kinda sucks to try to find time in your busy schedule, it's better that they mandate it cause then you have to go. Then, once you go, you're like, "Wow, this is a really great opportunity for me." That definitely influenced it.

Interviewer: What about the creative writing that you mentioned that you do, sort of in your free time, or in your spare time?

Interviewee: Yeah, in my free time—well, usually that now it's delegated to the summertime—but I used to write a lot of, do a lot of—I can't remember what the name of it is—conscious thought writing? Where I write whatever comes to my head, no matter what, if it changes like, halfway through; I still do that. That was more to relieve pressure like when I was going through things, and I would just write it all down and then save it, and then read it later and be like, "Wow." I also do this really cool thing. Every year on my birthday I write a letter to myself and send it to a website that saves it, and then emails it to me on a certain date; so, every year on my birthday I get a letter from my previous birthday.

It's just like I do a lot of non-fictional, I guess would be writing about myself—about life, and what might I take—what would be my take on things at the moment at the moment, and then read it again a year later, and then see how I've grown either as a writer. Cause from like ninth grade it was like, "Oh god, atrocious—I can't believe I wrote like that!" Now it's like I can see myself developing in different ways, so I can see what I've worked on and even how my views have changed about certain things.

Interviewer: Do you think that experience has changed your writing process or influenced your writing process?

Interviewee: Yeah, definitely; I mean I can see, like I said, when I look back and I'm like, "Wow, I can't believe I would do that." There are things where I didn't capitalize any

letters, then I'd capitalize all the letters, and then I went through all those phases. Then it's really just like when you reread yourself a period after you've already, like—you wrote it, you kinda see—like especially when you read it out loud, you're like, “Oh, wow, I awkwardly phrase a lot of sentences,” or, “I do a lot of run-on sentences.” I have a problem with really long sentences, like complex sentences, that sometimes just need to be chopped up a little bit. It definitely helps to reread yourself year after year to see how you improved and where you still need to improve.

Interviewer: All right, and this question's sort of connected to that: if I use the term “reflective writing,” what does that mean to you?

Interviewee: Reflective writing really just means—I guess it's kind of like, hard to use the word without—use the word in the definition—but reflecting upon yourself. It can be anything, depending on what medium you like to express yourself; like if you like poetry, then you can write a poem about something you saw that day or something that was bothering you. It's really just writing about something that profoundly affects you or that you see in life, and then being able to put that on paper so it's like a reflection of what you see.

Interviewer: Have you used reflective writing in your own writing processes, either in courses or outside?

Interviewee: Yeah, definitely outside, [...]. I definitely use personal experience a lot to strengthen my essay, cause I feel like for my young age, I have seen a lot and I have dealt with a lot.

It's always good for people who have maybe never experienced stuff that you're trying to talk about to like see it through an eyes of somebody who might be their own age, or might be talking more directly to them than like, “This historian, in 1649, blah, blah, blah,” cause then it makes it more relatable.

Interviewer: Yeah, it sounds to me like you're saying it has something to do with your personal experience, but also something to do with making connections for other people, or demonstrating for other people unfamiliar things. All right. What have your experiences of working with other writers in your courses been?

Interviewee: Okay, other writers—I would say I've only done a couple peer editings; for the most part, I'm either usually blown away, or kind of disappointed, which is kind of sad, because I feel like I've always felt like I've kind of laid somewhere in the middle, and it always just reaffirms that. Because there's some writers in my class that I've been like, “Wow! This is absolutely amazing,” but then there are still some writers that I'm like, “Wow, how did you pass [English course]?” I would definitely say that, especially in my foreign language class—I had to write papers for French, and the peer editing helped the most because I wasn't as grasping of knowledge as other students in the class, so when they knew how to phrase things better, especially in French, I was really grateful for that. Cause I was like, “I know this is not exactly how you would phrase it, but this is

a literal translation. Can you help me?” They would be like, “Oh, well this is how you would say it.”

I would say it was probably the most helpful in my foreign language, when I took French cause I’d have to write page-long French papers, which I’d rather write ten pages in English than one page in French. [Laughter]

Interviewer: Have you had any group or collaborative writing projects in any of your classes?

Interviewee: Yeah, actually, in my [Communications course], we had to write—we had to analyze a whole bunch of data and then write a report about it, so we had different people write different things and then come together, and then synthesize them all. Which it was like—it was an experience; it’s hard because like none of us could get together, and the teacher recommended that we wrote it all together, but ya know, it’s hard when everyone’s busy and traveling for the summer, and stuff like that. It was definitely an interesting experience cause a lot of people’s ideas didn’t mesh very well, so we had to actually go in and rework a lot of the stuff that we wrote, cause some people would like, write this section this way, but then it would not transition well into the next section that someone else wrote. It was definitely an experience.

Interviewer: All right. If you were gonna give someone advice about writing, what are some of the things they should think about as they begin writing a paper?

Interviewee: I would say try to get it to as many eyes as possible, and not to be afraid of getting criticism, because that’s the biggest thing. I always hate at the very end of my paper when professors’ write, and I—cause I don’t like to read it; I don’t like to read what they thought of my writing, cause I always think like, at the time, it’s like, “Wow, this was so horrible.” Then I don’t want to see that reflected, like if there’s certain parts that I need to work on, but it really does help your writing to actually read what they have to say. Being able to take criticism is definitely—even when you start to first write your paper you have to realize that; because someone’s gonna read it somewhere down the line, and you have to know for the next time you write that you have to read that, and see what they thought you did wrong, cause they could actually help you in the long run.

Also, take away any distractions, cause it really—like if you just think, “Oh, I’ll just take a quick break,” you could seriously be interrupting yourself from like—you could be right around the corner from your next great, “Wow, if you would have just kept writing for five more minutes, something would have come to you.” As that type of writer I am, just take away all distractions and only take breaks when you absolutely have to, cause otherwise you could be interrupting something seriously profound, or something like that. Cause I know I’ve done that quite a few times, where I was like, “You know, I kinda wanna do—you know, I’ll just keep writing for like 10 more minutes, get one more half page out, and then I’ll go take a break.” Then later I know it’s like an hour later and I’ve gotten three more pages.

Interviewer: Have you had any experiences with new media writing—writing for blogs or websites, or using sound or video, or even PowerPoint presentations? What have those looked like?

Interviewee: Yeah, well being in COMM [Communications] and SAC [Screen Arts and Cultures], pretty much all I do. Yeah, I've done a lot of blog posts; I've done a lot of videos and filming, so I've worked with those mediums a whole lot. I would say I don't mind PowerPoint; I don't like creating PowerPoint because I end up just putting the bare minimum on there and then elaborating more myself. I like when teachers use PowerPoint, I just don't like using it myself cause I feel like I have to take whatever I thought down to the bare minimum, cause if I really wanted to write what I said, it would be like huge blocks of text, and nobody likes to read those.

For blogging, I just actually have a class this semester where we have to blog. I've actually really enjoyed the experience; I'm normally very opinionated anyways, but to interact with all my classmates—it's very like, non-threatening or aggressive kind of interaction. We disagree, but it's a like a pretty tight-knit, close class, especially cause in the Screen Arts major there's not a lot of us, so everyone usually takes classes with each other. By the time you get to the 300 levels, everybody knows each other, everybody's friends with each other, so it's never been like any negative reactions, especially—we've been talking about feminist portrayals in TV shows, and ya know, race portrayals, which can get pretty heated pretty quickly. Yeah, it's a really great open discourse; we can post whenever we want, she just—actually, we're probably supposed to post once a week, but people have been posting multiple times. She's like, "I'm really impressed with you guys; you guys really have taken the blog above and beyond."

It's an open place for like—people have brought in media in from like France and Germany, that's like commercials that are comparatively to the United States, and we're talking about sexuality. It's crazy how nice it is to see all these nice—like these different views. I really like it; I think the blog is probably one of the coolest parts of our class.

Interviewer: Well it sounds to me like that is a single blog that everyone contributes to, and they contribute once a week, and not like separate blogs that you follow each other, or whatever.

Interviewee: No, no; and then I had to create a blog for a couple classes, when we do studies about our studies—but that doesn't have anyone else interacting with them; we just create it and put it out there for people, like if anyone's interested in this research, to read. I've done both interactive blogs where like everyone interacts with each other, and then I've put out blogs where it's just for if people want information in the topic we're talking about.

Interviewer: Do you feel like those have had an influence on your writing process—those experiences?

Interviewee: The interactive blog, absolutely. Things that I might—I might think are not offensive might offend other people, or vice versa. I've learned that what I say and how I say it, in the context of what's being said, is enormously important, and how to interact with other people's ideas, and then take those and then incorporate them. Someone else would bring up a point that like, is kind of on the fringe of what I was saying, but I didn't quite know how to say it, and then they would say it and I was like, "Wow, yeah—that's exactly what I mean," you know?

That definitely influences my writing cause it encourages me to go out there and show someone else my ideas, because they might know what I'm trying to say without me being able to be like, "I just know what I wanna say, but I don't know how to say it." And like self-censoring, and really just trying to tone down to my audience; like, I might think that this is appropriate, but some other people might not like that, or I might think that's not appropriate, but some other people might think that's appropriate for my paper, or something like that.

Interviewer: You mentioned video projects, too. Do you see any connection between those and your writing process, or are they separate?

Interviewee: A little bit, only because it's different because for most of my writing for my video classes, it's script writing. It definitely feeds into my creative side, and I like being able to do colloquial language, and like instead of just always being focused on heavy academic things. It's nice to be able to put, like, "What's up?" and stuff like that in my script without it being like, "Oh no, it's too colloquial."

I would say just it helps feed my creative side; it's cool because I can express myself in a medium other than words, but I can still express the same ideas that I'm writing about. I mean, I'm like—for my [Screen Arts and Cultures course], we are doing black and white 16mm silent film, so it's really cool cause we had like somebody playing chess—two guys playing chess—and it looked really, really gorgeous. It was like, "I could write about this, but it's so much cooler to see it in this medium," and the way I choose to cut the angles, and where I'm cutting for continuity, and stuff like that that is kind of like writing in itself.

Interviewer: Oh. You've been uploading pieces of writing to the study archive on CTools [learning management system]; how's that been going for you? How's that process?

Interviewee: It's pretty good; it's hard because I feel bad just uploading pieces, cause I'm like, "You guys don't get the whole context of like, my seven page paper!" I try to include as much as I can into the description about what my piece was about, and like trying to include why I chose this exact segment. That reminds me, I was just thinking about it the other day—I have to upload it for this semester. It's fairly easy to understand. It was kinda hard, because for my first piece, I had to upload something from [English course] and I was like searching through my archives trying to figure out. I was like, "I need to find something." I really wanted to find the homophobia piece, but I don't think I ended up going with that; I think I found something else.



Interviewer: What pieces did you choose for the archive, and why did you choose them?

Interviewee: Well I think—I really wanted to choose, for the [English course], I really wanted to choose the homophobia piece, cause that was like my crown jewel. That was the first 14-page paper I wrote, which is the first time I've ever written that many pages for one assignment. She really loved all of my ideas, and I really wanted to find that one, but I, for some reason, I don't think I could find it. I can't remember exactly which one I went with; I think it was one of my other papers. I think it was the argumentative paper, and that was just because, out of pure like, "I need to find something."

Then I think last semester I chose a piece from an analysis that I got an A on, which I was really proud because I started with—that was really rough; it was my very first SAC class that I started. My first paper—like short paper—I got a C+ on, and I had never gotten one of those, and I was like, "Wow, obviously my style, like writing has to change." I took feedback from the professor, and then my final paper I got an A- on, so I was like, "This is awesome!" I think I chose from there not just because I was really proud of the fact that I was able to go from like such a low place for me—cause I'm a perfectionist when it comes to academia—to like, all the way to where I wanted to be. I wanted to display my end result, and also it's really cool cause it's like an analysis of a short video clip[...]. I had to choose between two; I both got A-minuses on them, but either one of them it was like I was really proud of the fact that I was able to go from a place I had never been, being like, "I got a C+ on my writing," to getting an A- in this class for my writing skills.

Interviewer: So improvement played a factor in there?

Interviewee: Yeah, it was definitely that, it was like I was so proud that I had figured out how to cater my writing to where I needed—I had to express my ideas better. I was like, "I'm really proud of this; look at this. I wanna frame it! Yay!" Especially cause I loved the class, and it was my very first class in this major, and I was like, "I got a C, I'm gonna fail this major! I'm gonna be so mad at this!" Yeah, improvement was like a huge factor, and just because the stuff was, of course, was interesting; I mean people love reading about movies and clips, and stuff like that. It's like something you can relate to cause you've probably seen it, or at least heard about it.

Interviewer: Do you have a method for archiving your work for your classes?

Interviewee: I usually keep 'em—I'm really, really organized most of the time; I have folders for each year. I don't know why I didn't have anything for my freshman year, that's really puzzling. I always keep everything I have, like even readings that I have to save to—like PDF [Portable Document Format] readings that are flipped, so I have to save them to un-flip them—I usually keep those. I don't know why I didn't have 'em, but yeah, I have folders for freshman, sophomore and junior year, which is divided into like winter and fall semester, and then divided by class. Usually, I just keep them, and then I have a locked folder on my computer that has all of my—like when I did conscious thought writing, and writing about how I felt about past events, just because I didn't want

anyone messing in that. I mean it's not a big deal because it was a long time ago, but at the time I was like, "What if somebody I wrote about reads this, or takes offense to the fact that I'm probably writing about something in their life?" or something like that.

Also, I guess for archiving, I did have an online diary for a very long time. I don't really write in it that much any more—I don't have time to—but I visit the site every once in awhile. That's actually a very interesting way of archiving writing because you can see it, like the date, the layout, and add nice effects to it, and see what people thought about what I wrote. I would also—I would write mostly about my life, but I would also sometimes put pieces that I had personally written in there and got feedback from people. That was pretty cool.

Interviewer: Right. Any other comments you wanna add?

Interviewee: [Pause] Let's see, I really like the way the writing is set up here. I definitely was prepared by taking AP English, so I wish that would be a mandatory thing for anyone thinking about coming to an accredited four-year university, cause that really—I remember my first day, my teacher was like, "I want you to take"—I think they call it the Hamburger Model, was like what they usually teach, and they're like, "Just throw it out—stop. Don't ever use that in here." I was like, "Wow!" Then she taught us how to write, and then that transitioned into being here, and I was able to get, like I said, an A- in my first writing class, which I know a lot of students transitioning probably won't be able to achieve because it's such different writing.

I wish they would mandate that more, but you know you can only go so far. I definitely think the writing—at least the tools that you guys give us here are very vast and expansive, like with the whole writing center that will pretty much reply—read anything you ask them to and like give you feedback. Then, professors—

Interviewer: Have you used the [Sweetland Writing Center] much?

Interviewee: I think I used it once for a class; I usually never have, I usually—which is horrible—but I never have the time to by the time I actually get to writing the paper, that like I never really have time to. The time I did use it, I mean it was very helpful. Wish I could adjust my habits more well—or, well, so I could be able to have more time to do it, but I've already been stuck in my ways, I guess.

Interviewer: All right. All right, well thank you very much, \*\*\*.

Interviewee: Yeah, no problem.

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