

Interviewer: Okay, and today it must be April 24th?

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay, so it's April 24th. This is ***. I am meeting with ***.

Interviewee: Yes.

[...]

Interviewer: At the School of Education, and ***, [...]. Congratulations on—

Interviewee: Thank you.

Interviewer: - graduation.

Interviewee: Thank you very much.

Interviewer: It's really exciting to meet with people at the end. They're usually in a good mood.

Interviewee: Yeah, definitely in a good mood.

Interviewer: How can you not be?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Again, we're just revisiting your experiences in the writing minor, but also in your classes across. You have been thinking about your writing experiences.

Interviewee: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: [Laugh]If you're looking back at the whole picture now, how would you describe yourself, as a writer? We'll start big.

Interviewee: Well, so as a writer I've come into my—I've been developing myself as a writer. I wrote about this in my developmental essay, so I think this is fitting. A lot of it was finding my voice as who I am, because I did work—or I started to figure out what creative non-fiction was, and I realized that that's what I really liked as writing. I like that because I'm very good at taking my experiences and explaining them in whatever manner I want to.

I realized that I was taking inspiration from other writers and using their styles. Ultimately, I didn't know who I was as a writer. I did a lot of creative non-fiction because I was thinking that that would help me figure out who I was as a writer. I

would be writing about my experiences, and so my voice would naturally appear in my writing about myself. Then this—it's progressed to where I've found myself as a writer just writing about myself, and only about myself and my family.

I'm very self-indulgent, narcissistic? I don't—it's—yeah. I just—I've become—I think part of that is too that I've become very self-aware of how I'm writing, and what I'm writing. I think that that has been a culmination of every class I've taken; little fragments of writing be—they just become—other than being exposed to me. I think that I've definitely grown in that regard, because in—when I say that, I mean like freshman year, I took a class with . I realized about conveying emotion without saying, "I am angry." [Instructor] 00:02:55

That was basic, step one. Then there was—like when I was with [Instructor] it was—I learned a lot about how to create scene; the difference in a scene when you're writing for a scene, or writing for summary. You approach the writing differently. Then this past year with , it's just been blending those things.[Instructor]

Interviewer: When you were discovering—you were sort of saying now you're doing a lot of pretty deeply personal writing?

Interviewee: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: Do you have a sense of how you got to that point, or why you would describe that as your primary focus now?

Interviewee: Mostly because it's something I like to reflect on. I think that in a [Instructor] vein, who is someone that—again, taking inspiration from using him as a guide; it's something that I really enjoyed writing about. I don't think that—as in terms of fiction I'm not—I don't enjoy sitting and thinking about things. I would much rather take my life, and write it out and put a spin on it.

Interviewer: That's great, so if you think back to four years ago when you were first entering the University of Michigan, how would you have described yourself as a writer, at that point?

Interviewee: [inaudible 00:04:48]I thought I was above average. I thought that I knew a little bit about writing. Yeah, and then part of the—both from the gateway and the course I think we looked at our developmental essays, and you realize just how bad it was.

Interviewer: It's not—it's never that bad.

Interviewee: Yeah, I was pretty confident in my writing. One of the things that college—at least for me, when I was in LHSP [Llyod Hall Scholars Program], and when I took a course with [Instructor]I realized how much I enjoyed writing

when it wasn't an academic paper, and it wasn't the personal narrative section of the English class in high school. It was something beyond that, and that's when I realized I liked writing. I wasn't just—yeah, and [Instructor] was an outstanding professor.

Interviewer: Do you have a sense that that discovery, that there were other types of writing, other genres may have contributed to your growth as a writer?

Interviewee: Oh 100 percent, yeah. That was just exposure, and figuring out what I liked. Like I've said a few times in our creative non-fiction, something I didn't—I knew—I didn't know that it was a sub-genre genre. When I found out that it was, and there was a certain approach to it, that really expanded a lot of writing for me. There was different—

Interviewer: It's different.

Interviewee: Yeah, it was different types of writing within it, and how you approach it and all these things; just—not even writing creative non-fiction. There's just writing about—you focus on a person, and it's not just about the person. It's about so many other things that culminate that it's—and that was all just having a professor tell me to—forcing me to write a paper on it, and write this essay on it. I realized that it's capable—I'm capable of doing something, and then—so I think the courses that I took definitely contributed to that. It was just exposure to writing.

Interviewer: That's great, and as you're leaving school, but not leaving Ann Arbor immediately, it sounds like, what goals do you have for yourself right now as a writer?

Interviewee: Hmm, obviously I'd like to continue doing it. I don't have any plans to make a career out of my writing. I've really, this past year, been into this Moth thing, the Moth—do you know the podcast?

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: I really liked—they have one in ever 00:07:28 so I've been writing some pieces for it. I haven't performed it; I haven't had the opportunity, but they're really short pieces. They're easy to write, because you're not taking on this daunting task. It's like I get an idea, okay, I write. If I can get a five-minute story out of it, then I think I've accomplished something. It's really easy to pound those out, and I think that that keeps me—it keeps writing fun.

Interviewer: Oh that's nice.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Nice yeah, so the next group of questions are asking about your writing classes generally at U of M [University of Michigan]. Then we'll turn to the more specific experiences within the minor. If you're thinking about your writing experiences across the university, what would you say now that it means to write well?

Interviewee: [laugh]To have sources .

Interviewer: That's great.

Interviewee: Yeah, 'cause that is—I told you I have a large science background, and it's all—it constricts me in the fact that I have to think about an idea. I have to—okay, I know this idea exists. I just have to prove it by finding a source, and that's how I write well.

Interviewer: It sounds like here you're describing what it means to write well in your discipline, in your—

Interviewee: Yeah, I guess.

Interviewer: Within medical science, or—

Interviewee: Within medical science, but also other courses, like with Spanish. I'm also a Spanish major. A lot of times—not sources, but citing from the text and explaining an idea. Yeah I forgot; I've done a lot of writing for Spanish.

Interviewer: Well that's interesting.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: When you're thinking about that source material, or citations, what is it that you're seeing as the connection between those and good writing?

Interviewee: I think the connection is that I'm capable of taking this idea that I have, because if you're gonna write on—you're gonna make this argument. I have this argument that I think I have come up with on my own. I know it relates to the text, so it's—to write well is to be able to come up with an idea, but also show from the text, or from the source that it does make sense; that you are creating—getting from point A to point B, and you're establishing something there. I think could say anything, you could word it well, you could write it well, but does it actually make sense with the content of the text and the sources? I think that that's writing well. You have to have both of those components. I think that that's writing well is when you can integrate both of them well.

Interviewer: Talk me through which upper level writing courses you ended up taking.

Interviewee: Okay, so I've taken a few. Within—so in my Spanish major there were several classes that I took. I chose to link the—the Spanish department has you take a one credit course simultaneously with another course, so that was on women's—it was misogyny and the medieval age. That was a course that I took, and that was the upper level writing course for Spanish. I could have also done with this surrealism, [Instructor] class. Those were two big writing classes for Spanish.

I took a writing in biology course with [Instructor] in the MCDP [Molecular, Cellular and Development Biology] department. This past semester I have been taking a bio-chem lab which counted as upper level writing, because we would write very extensive lab reports. We also did projects that involved a lot of sources, so those were lengthy essays. I took [English course], [Title of course] with [Instructor].

Interviewer: Oh right, right.

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: That was a class with [Instructor]; that makes sense.

Interviewee: Yes. I believe there was—there's obviously the capstone, and the gateway. I think that's it. There were other Spanish classes where I wrote a lot, but those didn't count as any upper level writing courses.

Interviewer: This is interesting. The upper level writing classes, I'm sure, a real range of experiences it sounds like.

Interviewee: I've written in several disciplines, yes.

Interviewer: It sounds like it. Can you describe what your experiences were like in those classes, if you want to deal with them as a group, or individually?

Interviewee: It's hard to—yeah, I definitely have to break them up—

Interviewer: I was gonna say—

Interviewee: - because I can't just go across the board.

Interviewer: Want to start with the Spanish class?

Interviewee: Yeah, the Spanish classes I really—I also took one this past semester with [Instructor] in the fall. Anyway, those were a lot of fun because they exposed me to a lot of artists that—artists, authors, the whole gang that I don't think I would have seen taking other classes. My language skills definitely improved,

when it comes to reading and writing. Talking is a different story, but—I can—I feel that having written a 15-page paper in another language is quite an accomplishment. Whether or not my grammar was correct, or anything of that, I feel like that was something that helped me develop as a writer.

It is very frustrating and tedious to correct yourself, and to edit a paper in another language where you have to take one step figuring out, “What am I saying?” And step two is, “What am I saying in this language?” That was—those were—and one of them was about—it was a very complex play that involved plays within plays. It really challenged me, and it was fun because I could—I had some room to run, because it was another language. I could—I was given some leniency. It was just—that was fun, but challenging to write those.

Interviewer: Do you feel like there is crossover between the experience of writing in the other language, and then your growth as a writer writing in English for other purposes? Are they different kinds of—

Interviewee: I would—it’s hard to say, really. I think formulating—it helped me when—it came more through formulating ideas, and figuring out how I’m gonna word something. One of my professors, Spanish professors, told me, he was like, “Never write your paper in English and then try and translate it, ‘cause it won’t work. You’ll spend more time trying to translate it.” It—I don’t really see it right away, but I know that in terms of how I’m developing ideas and working through the different wording that I can use was definitely something that was developed and really utilized with Spanish.

I might not be like, “Oh, because of Spanish I did this. Now I’m doing this in English.” It may just be happening because of something, so that was definitely something I gained from Spanish was figuring out how I’m going to word something utilizing the words that I know, and I’m able to use.

Interviewer: That makes a lot of sense, and so then maybe thinking about the science courses, the biology and the bio-chem [bio-chemistry] lab?

Interviewee: Mm-hmm, yes.

Interviewer: Can you talk a little bit about the writing experiences in those courses?

Interviewee: Yeah the—so the bio-chem lab is very, very much like writing a scientific paper. We actually did for a couple of the labs—as reports, we wrote them as scientific papers. That was good, because I had a little bit of experience with that because of an internship I had. It was good in, “How am I going to present data? How am I going to differentiate presenting results, versus presenting the discussion where I examine the results, and tell you what the results mean and not just show you number?”

That was good for that discipline. It's all—it's very different, 'cause you have to change your mind. When you're writing science, a lot of it's passive voice, or it's almost all passive voice and so then you have to flip back when you're writing anything else. Again, that's just one of those, "How am I gonna adapt myself as a writer?" When I'm writing for a certain audience, how am I gonna adapt myself?

Interviewer: That makes sense.

Interviewee: New Yorker. Yeah, and then that was—the writing biology course was—I feel like anyone that's taking a science—is taking any kind of route in science should take that course. It not only—it taught you how to write scientifically in the scientific paper, but it also taught you how to write when you're presenting something at a conference, or when you're writing a letter to someone. It was very much almost an etiquette class, but we got to write about—we got to interview our principal investigators, and write about that interview and make that into say a story. That was a very—

Interviewer: Like the story of how this person got to their—

Interviewee: Exactly.

Interviewer: - research or study?

Interviewee: Exactly.

Interviewer: How interesting.

Interviewee: Also, there is a lot of technical stuff that you have to be able to be like, "Okay, you know what? None of this really matters to the general public. They're—this is just gonna go over their head, you're wasting everyone's time. You have to pick and choose what's important for the story."

Interviewer: That's interesting, that's great. Then you also had the [English course], which I—

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: - assume is still different, a bit, from even these other experiences?

Interviewee: Mm-hmm, yeah. That's the one where I really found out how much I liked writing about my family.

Interviewer: Interesting.

Interviewee: Yeah, 'cause—and that was—that came out of talking to [Instructor] and realizing I had so much to say about my family, and about myself within my

family. It's really easy to write about because—it's much easier to condense than it is to try and fill when you don't have anything to say.

Interviewer: [laugh]Oh yeah .

Interviewee: Yeah, so that was—

Interviewer: Were the experiences or the assignments in that class structured pretty openly, so that you had that opportunity to explore that?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Were you invited to write on that topic?

Interviewee: Well, the premise 00:18:18 were a person, place—person, place, process, and so that was it; very open-ended. That was—I mentioned, or alluded to it earlier, that was very much figuring out how—writing about a person is not just giving you their birth date, and how many years they've been married and all that stuff. There's so much more to it. That was a lot of fun, because I was like, "Okay, I've got this subject here. How do I make you interested in this for ten pages?" Yeah.

Interviewer: That's great, yeah. The next question is—it may be hard to juggle, because these experiences are so broad. They're interested in whether you feel like you're still using techniques, or examples that you learned from any of those courses in your writing now, or that you anticipate you might going forward?

Interviewee: Mm-hmm, one of them I already talked about was I remember freshman year when [Instructor] had us do this—we had to write about a barn. I remember I wrote something about the holes in the barn give off a sad impression. It was something like that. I remember him just telling me, "You don't have to say that. We get that by you describing the scenery." How do you convey that emotion without explicitly saying, "This is a sad scene?" That is something that I always think about. If I ever use an emotion I'm thinking, "How can I not use this word, and let it be shown through my writing?" Yeah that's one of the biggest ones that's really, I think, improved my writing.

Interviewer: That's great. I feel like we've covered—the next question asks about whether you took writing courses in your concentration. That's what it seemed like the writing in biology, the bio-chem lab would count. Are there others?

Interviewee: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: Writing courses within the concentration?

Interviewee: Well so there was—

Interviewer: Even if they're not upper level?

Interviewee: I had—I don't think any other science ones. There aren't really too many out there, yeah. Well I did—I feel like this one could have counted as one. It was biophysics of disease, and so we had to—it was very—we had to research drugs, and about how they were made, and how they were marketed. That's—biophysics of disease could have been an upper level writing course. The majority of my grade came off of three papers I wrote about three different drugs, yeah.

Those were—those required a lot of—those really tested. You had to use your information you learned in class about how molecules bind, affect the physiological system. You also had to write about how they were working in the market, and how they worked in the pharmaceutical industries. That was a lot of writing, and I liked that. It was something I think that is valuable.

Interviewer: Well, it sounds like an interesting project.

Interviewee: Mm-hmm, yeah.

Interviewer: Absolutely.

Interviewee: Then we had to focus on different parts of them, and then the final paper was everything, yeah. One part was like, "Okay, physiological." One part was pharmaceutical; one part was marketing. Then one was, "You take this drug and you tell me everything about it." That was a very—that class—yeah that had a lot of writing in it.

Interviewer: I guess in thinking about the biophysics class that you just described, bio-chem, writing in biology, as you're leaving and starting—heading on this road to this medical career, how confident do you feel about your ability to write in your discipline, and in your area of concentration?

Interviewee: I would feel pretty confident, knowing that I—if I had someone, like a principal investigator, that would be checking it over—because I feel confident enough to write something that could be published in a journal. Yeah, and that also comes with the fact that I was in an internship, or I had an internship over the summer. We did—I did a lot of writing with a doctor. I was very much a part of the writing process.

Interviewer: Was that just prior to your senior year?

Interviewee: That was prior to my junior year.

Interviewer: This sounds familiar. It may have come up in our earlier interview.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: That's the fun thing about interviewing people twice. I'm like, "That sounds familiar." You were actually—just so I remember, you were actually doing work. He was producing research work that you were helping to write. Is that correct?

Interviewee: Yes, that's correct. Yeah, there wasn't—I was doing the writing portion. He was doing a lot of dictating, for the majority of the part. That—so I wasn't necessarily—it wasn't my work that was being put out there. Having that experience takes away some of the fear of, "What happens when I turn this in, when I submit this?" It's not as intimidating. It's like, "Oh, they have no idea who I am." I could be anyone to them, so as long as I'm confident in my writing, then it doesn't matter. Yeah, so it allows me to be more confident in my writing. I'm not as—intimidating about the process.

Interviewer: That makes a lot of sense. All right, let's do a little thinking about the capstone course.

Interviewee: All right.

Interviewer: Which you're just finishing up. It sounds like you just got feedback on the—

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: - final project.

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: Was exciting, and the first question just asks generally what impact that course you think had on your writing, overall?

Interviewee: It's interesting, because it had a great impact on what I wanted to do with my writing. Like I said, I'm getting into the Moth. I realize that I don't like writing long, long-winded—long anything. I've also realized something I haven't talked about yet is the interest I have in radio and podcasts, and writing for a radio podcast. This, the capstone, my project ended up being a podcast. There was a lot of—it's interesting 'cause you're not writing a lot. You're writing very short, but you have to be very specific on what you're writing.

Whatever you say, whatever you've written and you're now saying is painting the picture for the listener. It gave me a great opportunity to really, really look into what that entails and what that requires.

Interviewer: Did that process change your thinking about the writing process in some ways?

Interviewee: In the writing process for the radio, yes. If I were to make another podcast it—I'm approaching it. I changed my ways halfway through, but it definitely did affect how—the process that I wrote for.

Interviewer: In what way?

Interviewee: A lot of things—I would almost—I think next time—I had this great thing where I would write out entire scripts. Then I'd go say them, and it didn't work.

Interviewer: The same—

Interviewee: Right, so I think I would more focus on—what I did with one of the final pieces I did was I just had an idea, and so I went up in front of the mike and I talked, recording myself for an hour and a half. I don't think I ever even looked at that audio afterwards, but saying stuff out loud made me realize what would flow, what sounds best. It's not even that I used the words that I said out loud. It's just that when I was reciting things, it made—it just made things easier to write and then go back and say it again.

Then to just—you gotta constantly be changing the way you say a word. Even though you're saying a sentence, and you just have to have this weird pause in the middle of it, you have to change the sentence. If you have to take a breath in the middle of a sentence, and it throws all the stuff off, it's just it changes a lot of things when you're writing to read it aloud.

Interviewer: That's true. What was the topic of the podcast?

Interviewee: It was homemade. It was basically anything that was—had a homemade theme to it. I did four stories. One was—I wrote—well I had an—I went and made bread with my Nona 00:26:53, which is the time I worked for grandma 00:26:54, and so that one was really, really pretty hands-off. [...].

Interviewer: Oh sure.

Interviewee: Have you heard of [local Ann Arbor tool rental service]?

Interviewer: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Interviewee: Yes, so I did an interview with him. One project that wasn't included was I interviewed a man that had built this path for his friend's wedding. I thought that was really cool, 'cause he built this whole path by hand. Then the interview was delayed, and the audio didn't actually work out too well. The project ended up being scrapped, but I had to—I wrote all these questions, and that was part of the process. Interviewing someone is what questions are you

gonna ask them, what kind of response are you gonna get from the question you ask? It changes the whole process, 'cause it's not just about writing.

Interviewer: Right, no. A lot of stuff feeds into it then.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: How'd you end up choosing the idea of a podcast for that final project?

Interviewee: I think I knew going in that I wanted to. I did a podcast for [Instructor] at the end of freshman year. I did one sophomore year for Ann Arbor languages program class. It was all about teaching, so I did a podcast for that. I did a podcast in that winter semester with [Instructor] 00:28:21, and the gateway course. I never produced a full-length podcast, and so I was like, "This is what I want to do." I knew that I—I didn't have anything I wanted to write that would be considered the project. I was like, "The podcast is what I want to do."

Interviewer: That's interesting. Do you have a sense of how the podcast production maybe influenced your thinking about your writing more generally?

Interviewee: I'm not sure about that. In a general sense, not really. I don't think it changed that much, but I think writing for that podcast changed—it's like if I was to ever write a short story and I wanted to—and if I thought about reading it aloud, it would actually change the way I wrote that story. If I was just to have it on print, I think there might be some differences. I think—yeah.

Interviewer: It was just interesting. The next two questions ask about the portfolio, so I'm going to bring the computer back to life. It was interesting hearing you talk about the—how the questions and feed—how you're thinking about the final product. It's a different kind of invention maybe from just sitting down to write an essay, but in some ways it's still that generating the ideas you might come to.

Interviewee: Yeah, yeah and a lot of it's—with interviews, whatever comes up along the interview. There's certain things that I went in—part of the reason that project got scrapped was because it ended up being more about him and his friend than it was about the path.

Interviewer: The person building the path?

Interviewee: Well it was interesting—

Interviewer: Well yeah, okay, okay.

Interviewee: Which is interesting, because I went in there thinking, “Okay, this is gonna be all about homemade, how he made this path.” Then I was thinking through the interview that he didn’t really want to talk about the technical side. He wanted to talk about how he hung out with his friend, and how other friends came in. I would have liked to actually put that in the podcast, but there was a lot of work that had to be done. It was just too—it was—I could not. I didn’t have the time to do it, the pod—

Interviewer: It does—

Interviewee: - the project had to be done.

Interviewer: [...]. Yeah, it does sound like an episode, where you start with this theme of homemade, and all of a sudden you’re in this theme of friendship, or something else—

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: - quite different.

Interviewee: Exactly, because of this path that—yeah.

Interviewer: That’s great, interesting. Maybe there’ll be a space for it some other project.

Interviewee: Yeah, that’s what I was thinking. [...] [Pause 00:30:59 to00:31:04] I’ve probably spent more time on this site than anything.

Interviewer: Hey this looks great, and again—so I may do some talking, just what we’re seeing so the folks listening to the transcript later—you’ve been describing that [podcast]. [...].

Interviewee: Yeah this—so this is a piece of art that my friend actually—it’s this picture that she made. [...].

Interviewer: No, it looks terrific. Talk me through maybe what were some of the more memorable aspects of putting this together, getting it online, representing it as you want to?

Interviewee: Memorable was just when it was—when some of the pieces were coming together, and I could listen to them and—I would still laugh at some of the pieces. Some of the jokes in them, they were still funny to me. I think that’s what I liked, because it wasn’t just something that I was finishing to—I wasn’t just throwing it together. It was something that was somewhat polished within the resources that I had, and the knowledge I had. I mean there’s audio things that I

wish I could do differently recording it, but I was pretty proud of some of the final products.

The foresight I had going into this project, and thinking, “Okay, I know I’m doing separate stories, so I’m gonna develop them separately,” really helped me out in the end. It was like—I worked on this one story, and I finished it a month before the project deadline. That’s where it was done; I could just put that out of my mind, and then the other stories, I worked on them. That was nice, that I was able to think about it ahead of time and block out the stories.

Interviewer: Are you thinking of that in terms of just getting the work done? Do you feel like that helps you to tell the story—

Interviewee: It helped me to—

Interviewer: - in a different way?

Interviewee: - tell the story a little bit, because the stories differ in terms of their message. When you finish something, you’ve got a message there. You’re not trying to stream that message around everything that you’re working on. Like, “Oh, I’m done with that phase,” or, “I’m done with that idea.” This is a different idea, so—

Interviewer: No, that makes a lot of sense. As you’re—looking at the design of this portion of the project, the question asks whether the design choices you were making were intended to create a particular reader experience, or viewer/listener experience I guess in your case?

Interviewee: Yeah, definitely viewer/listener. [...]. This is the full podcast; this is the first thing you see. This is what I wanted the focus of my portfolio and my project to be on was the project. I really wanted—I love when I go listen to something, and then you can go find out there are pieces of the story that have—online. These are snapshots that are relevant to the story. I have the story here. This is just the story, so this is—amongst the larger podcast there are some stories. This is one of the stories, so I’m really like, “Okay. This person—if someone liked a single story they could go find it easily.” I really—

Interviewer: Do you include a transcript as well—

Interviewee: Yes, there’s a transcript.

Interviewer: - then, for the text of the story as well—

Interviewee: Yeah, there’s a transcript for—

Interviewer: - as some images.

Interviewee: - everything. Well, you have to download it.

Interviewer: That's okay.

Interviewee: That's one thing I didn't like was the fact that I couldn't figure out how to get that to not download. I think I could have if I just—it was a—it was one of those later steps where the transcript's one of the last things that you finish. You've got your voiceover; you're editing until the last minute, so yeah. All of the pictures are laid out differently, too. I think that they—

Interviewer: We're looking at a different story, but still within the podcast.

Interviewee: Yeah, so this—

Interviewer: The pictures look dramatically different.

Interviewee: Yeah, they're presented differently on the page. They're different sizes, and—yeah and so within the story too. It's just—it was interesting, and then the portfolio, as the reviewer mentioned, is very much second to the project. He said, "That's not criticism, it's just an observation," and I think that I achieved that goal. That's what I wanted.

Interviewer: For some people the portfolio really fronts the portfolio, and here it feels like you're fronting the project maybe in a different way?

Interviewee: [cross talk 00:36:12] Yeah, I was —

Interviewer: What was your thinking behind that decision?

Interviewee: [...] 00:36:17 [...]. It was something that just—I thought about it, and it's like I wrote a great story about—I wrote a great Spanish story. What does that mean to someone who didn't go through that experience, and just is reading my review on a play? It doesn't mean much. I went through a lot to figure out that play, and to write about that play. I received a good grade on it, so I was proud of that.

First of all, it's in another language. Someone's gonna come into that and read it; they're not gonna experience what I experienced making it. I figured that the best experience someone can get out of my work, because my work is pretty specific, it's—it doesn't leave a lot of room for someone to enjoy it as much as I would. They don't have the context, and I can't provide that kind of context within three lines, before I present them the story. I really made it about the project. I thought that the project could convey a lot of—because like I told you, three of these four stories involve my family. That to me was one of those big things about my writing, was that it showed me how much my family meant, and how much

my family developed my writing. I don't know, it's not explicit, but it is the best representation of what has changed; what has come about in the past four years.

Interviewer: Within the portfolio section were you seeking to create any relationship between the text or artifacts that you did include?

Interviewee: What do you mean by that?

Interviewer: Within this tab, so that's not the—

Interviewee: This is the project 00:37:56.

Interviewer: The section that's not the project, the portfolio section. You've put up different pieces of writing. Were you seeking to draw any connections between them, or how were you making the decisions of what to include, I guess, is maybe a better way to think of it?

Interviewee: [inaudible 00:38:31] Yeah, I thought—basically I made it things that I enjoyed writing, but things that were also interesting to people. I made the portfolio with the viewer in mind, [...]. I have this picture of the map that's within the front cover of Travel with Charley, 'cause that's interesting, I think.

The story I wrote was—it's about Americans being rootless, in the sense of—for the majority, everyone that lives in the northern—they're all from Europe, or from Africa, or from Asia. Wherever they're from, do they lose their roots because they're not from—or they're transplanted? I thought that was an interesting thing for anyone that was reading the portfolio. That's one of those stories I included, because there was an image to it, and it's an interesting idea.

This one was—this is a minor gateway course. It has a picture of my cohort, and this the podcast—this is actually that same rootless Americans theme. This is a bit of—I carried some of it over. I also had a podcast to it, and that's ultimately why I wanted to have that story is because it ended with the podcast.

Interviewer: That's great.

Interviewee: Yeah, and then there's Spanish writing. This one, I don't know how anyone—I didn't think it would be that enjoyable. I just wanted to include these images, because there were a lot of images. That's why I included those stories.

Interviewer: Again, thinking of the viewer experience—

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: - rather than just coming to your text on the page, is that—

Interviewee: Exactly.

Interviewer: - some of the ideas—

Interviewee: Yeah. Yeah, this is the writing in biology, 00:40:18 again picture of the principal investigator.

Interviewer: This is the investigator you interviewed?

Interviewee: Yeah, a news clipping about his machine was one of hundreds out there. He's got so much research.

Interviewer: That's great.

Interviewee: Yeah, and then the last one's also an audio essay. This is the one I did for [local Ann Arbor program], and so this one's about teaching. Again, it's an audio essay. It might be more fun to hear my voice for a snippet than to read something.

Interviewer: Then you have this inspiration tab.

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: This is—these are some of the podcast—

Interviewee: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: - audio shows that you feel like you draw from?

Interviewee: Yes, that's—

Interviewer: Radiolab. Great, and we're looking at things like , the Moth again, and This American Life, which we just referenced.

Interviewee: This American Life. Yeah, and so each—for Radiolab I have two stories on here. I show the picture from their website, and I show why I chose to share these stories, what they meant to me. It's the same thing with the Moth and ; a couple stories about what they mean.

Interviewer: In making the decisions that had to be made to create this whole site, about how you wanted the project to appear and then what pieces of the portfolio, how to represent those visually, the whole construction of this; in what ways do you think that that made you think about your own writing?

Interviewee: I think I just went for—it made me think about what writing was interesting; not only to me but to everyone. That's—that was the—thinking about

creating the portfolio, but I think the writing that was interesting to other people was interesting to me as well. I think that was part of it; figuring out what I had found interest in.

Interviewer: An example might be?

Interviewee: This American. It was just like the— one. That was interesting. Although I did—I left out all of my [English course] works, mostly because—well they were just blocks of text, and I don't think that for my—what I was trying to accomplish I would not want a giant block of text there, yeah.

Interviewer: That's interesting. There also was some reflective writing required for the E portfolio. Is that—

Interviewee: The developmental essay?

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: Yeah, so I have that. That is a block of text.

Interviewer: Oh, I see what you're saying, yeah. There's no way around the block of text—

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: - like that.

Interviewee: I have—I mean I've included it in its own—I have a document that you can download. I think we've talked about the developmental essay, and finding my voice and stuff like that.

Interviewer: I was going to say. The question is asking what you took away from that reflection. We've talked a bit about coming to understand both what you were interested in writing about, as well as how you might find your way to it.

Interviewee: Yeah, yeah it's just using influences, and figuring out what to do. Am I copying them, or am I making something of my own that's influenced by them, but not imitating them? That was the distinction that I tried to make in the developmental essay was—before I was imitating; now I'm just trying to be inspired by. There's a piece I have included here with—when I wrote a story [...], and then when I wrote a story and how much it looked like Hemingway. I compared Hemingway to mine, and it was almost identical. That was imitation, whereas not so much inspiration.

Interviewer: That's interesting, so if someone is looking at this project, like someone from [Sweetland Writing Center], or someone from another writing

center at another college, do you think there's a story of writing development, your college writing development that emerges across everything you chose to include here?

[Pause 00:44:43 to 00:44:48]

Interviewee: I don't think it'd be obvious. I think—it's more just the final product of what I've developed. I mean maybe if you look at the audio essays you can see some of these early audio essays weren't that—for whatever reason they weren't that great, yeah.

Interviewer: [Title of paper] You didn't—the piece is a couple years old now?

Interviewee: Yeah, it was written for a semester freshman year, so very much old.

Interviewer: You're showing that arc in that way.

Interviewee: Yeah there is a arc in that way.

Interviewer: That's great, so the next few questions are interested in your thinking about the experiences between the gateway and the capstone course, if you can think back to the gateway course with me. We're pushing towards the end; I want to be cognizant of time too. The question asks how your experiences in the capstone course, working with this project and the portfolio compared to what you did in the gateway course; how you saw them as being similar, different, building on each other?

Interviewee: Yeah, so the gateway course was—there were more assignments to it. That's just the structure of it. This capstone course was very much focused around the project and the portfolio; whereas the gateway was more, "You have to complete these things, and then complete the portfolio." I think that that—'cause I took it when I was a sophomore. That was something I needed. I'm not sure—'cause I know some of my peers have taken it as juniors. I think that that would be—it would definitely be different. That one years is a big—it's a big difference.

I think that the gateway—having those assignments in the gateway were necessary. It was still in that developing stage where it was—

Interviewer: You were thinking they provide a certain structure?

Interviewee: They provide a certain structure. I also needed them, because I was still on a state where I needed to be writing more. I was still figuring things out in terms of writing, whereas the capstone was much more, "Okay, now you've come this far as a writer. Showcase it." I think that that was—it was good that they were different. They had to be different.

Interviewer: It was interesting, you made the comment a few minutes ago when you were saying you wanted this portfolio though to be different than the gateway course. You were concerned about them being too similar.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Do you feel like there was a risk that you could have just duplicated what you had done—

Interviewee: Well I did.

Interviewer: - two years from your—

Interviewee: If you had seen my gateway, the gateway is very similar. I have taken—the layout is almost identical because it's a drop-down menu, and then this thing that collapses 00:47:39. My gateway is very, very similar. [...]. I talked about this with [Instructor], about the difference between it being lazy and being something that I really wanted to work within, 'cause I—I like the—how it was presented.

Interviewer: Initial structure?

Interviewee: Yeah, and so that wasn't really what I was concerned about being the same. It was just having a set number of pieces. I understand that to—for it to be a portfolio I need to have these components to it. I didn't want it to be what I had earlier. Also I had changed, so there was more stuff to add, and so—but the other one was a lot about writing. I didn't really want to focus on—just like I said, the blocks of text. I wanted to focus on more than that.

Interviewer: Are there any other differences that you notice about what you were asked to do between the portfolios for each classes, or how you chose to interpret them?

Interviewee: Well I mean with this one I had the project become part of it. That was definitely—it changed the whole format and perspective of it, yeah. That was definitely—that was by far the biggest difference. Otherwise, they both required to have this, this and this, and make navigation simple.

Interviewer: Okay, so panning out a bit from just thinking about the project and portfolio, so in the gateway and the capstone course can you talk a little bit about your experience working with other writers, with your peers in the class?

Interviewee: Mm-hmm, there was a lot of—I think [Instructor] did a great job with this capstone course, because he grouped us by our projects. I think that that was very smart. The projects really did—dictated who we were as writers. I worked with other people, one, two other girls. One was doing another podcast;

one was doing something similar, kind of like a video thing. It was nice, because the focus wasn't so much on, "We're writing these lengthy essays." It was fun.

How are we going to integrate our writing into what we're doing? I think that that was really great. They gave a certain perspective that I really needed. It's just with the podcast, it's not writing like flowery—flowery I guess—

Interviewer: Right.

Interviewee: - writing. It was how—is your writing effective? I think that that was great. That was like working with other writers that were trying to accomplish the same thing I was. It was something that I really, really liked; whereas the gateway—we were all in the same boat for the gateway. It was—

Interviewer: Your work had very similar—

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: - projects or—

Interviewee: It was much more similar.

Interviewer: - texts?

Interviewee: Which I said was not a bad thing at the time. It was necessary.

Interviewer: There you were doing more traditional peer review?

Interviewee: Yeah, and we were—

Interviewer: Like reading each other's work, responding?

Interviewee: Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: The gateway and capstone course, of course, both emphasize reflective writing. The question asks if you could describe your experience with that kind of reflective writing, and whether you think it's something you could continue to use, or are still using when you think about other writing projects.

Interviewee: Mm-hmm. I think that I've benefitted from it more than some of my peers, because I took the gateway my sophomore year. A lot of them took the gateway their junior year. Having two years to—two years between writing reflectively really changed how I viewed myself as a writer. That whole—the whole being self-aware thing really came into—I really became self-aware towards the end of my junior year, beginning of senior year.

That was different, because I didn't realize that sophomore year, and senior year I did. It made reflective writing a lot more beneficial for me.

Interviewer: In terms of leading you to what you might write about, and how you might focus?

Interviewee: How I've been—the changes that I've gone through, as a writer.

Interviewer: Maybe that gets at this next question a bit, which asks whether the reflective writing gave you any way—new way to talk about your writing? Any sort of—

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: - new terms or—

Interviewee: Definitely.

Interviewer: How would you describe that?

Interviewee: It's—I've touched on it a few times. It's just been—well finding my voice was part of it, because—

Interviewer: This comes partly from that?

Interviewee: Yeah, because it was one of those things, your reflective writing, I was like, "Oh yeah, all these stories sound like someone that I've read. Oh, because I was trying to be someone I've read." That's being self-aware, being knowledgeable to know that—knowledgeable in the fact that I read—this looks a lot like some author that I was trying to imitate.

Interviewer: That's interesting. You've come to realize that through—

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: - that kind of reflective thinking that—

Interviewee: I was doing it at the time, being like, "Okay, I'm gonna write like this." I'm never thinking about the fact that I don't—that's so different from this other paper that I've written.

Interviewer: No, that's interesting. The last couple of questions are really feedback-oriented for the program. The writing minor is still a very new program, and they are still trying to build, and change and adapt, so—really open-ended. Are there any suggestions you would have for instructors or administrators, as they're looking at retooling, going forward?

Interviewee: Yeah, one thing that I talked about with another one of my classmates was just the capstone for us, the project and—‘cause the portfolio was something that we could have thrown together in a month, which is what we did for the gateway. The project, I think, would have really benefitted if we’d had almost a full year to work on it.

Interviewer: How interesting.

Interviewee: We were talking about—things that were feasible were just like a one credit or mini course, or something like that, in the fall of our senior year, to get that project idea, because—

Interviewer: To get it—

Interviewee: - we had, we—I was pretty fortunate in the fact that I knew what I wanted to do going into the course. There were a lot of kids who got this project, and then for the whole month of January, into February, they don’t know what they’re doing. They find—by the end of February they figure out what they’re doing. Now they’re starting to stop and start over, because they’ve hit these roadblocks; just that one mini course to plant that seed, develop that idea.

I don’t know all the logistics that would go into making that, and making it optional, making it mandatory; all that stuff. That was something that we—this class, man I thought this could be really beneficial for future—

Interviewer: That’s a great idea.

Interviewee: - cohorts.

Interviewer: Other things that you encountered in the writing program that you either thought worked really well, or you thought could be made better?

[Pause 00:55:17 to 00:55:25]

Interviewee: I never liked the blog. I think that that is more reflective of me, because I’m not—I don’t enjoy blogging.

Interviewer: Was that a requirement of both?

Interviewee: [laugh] It was very much a requirement in the gateway, but not—I think it was in the capstone, I just—I—

Interviewer: Peeled away at some point?

Interviewee: Yeah, I just—I cut my losses with that one. I feel like—it was one of those things where it just was wasting—I felt like I was wasting my time, and everyone’s time. I felt no attachment to it, and so I have no—I don’t know how to provide constructive feedback on that. Just so much as—I think that what it was trying to do is very good.

Interviewer: In what sense?

Interviewee: That you—it built a community with your classmates; figuring out what everyone else is doing. Yeah, it just may be very specific to me hating the—I just did not like it.

Interviewer: The format or—

Interviewee: Yeah, just the format, just the small answers, just the—yeah. It was kind of—just yeah.

Interviewer: That’s fine. Was there anything that you thought worked really well in the writing minor that you would say, “Don’t change that, I took a lot from it?”

Interviewee: Well there’s—part of it’s ‘cause I came out of it with this piece that I—there was a professor like [Instructor] who was in both. It’s that—it’s a tight-knit community, and so I think having that repetition of professors makes everything great. It—you have someone who’s like, “Oh, who did you have?” When we’re talking about gateways, and people are bonding over their professors. “Our professor knows that professor really well,” so—the communication between the minors is great. Different classes and—that I really liked.

Interviewer: In the sense that you felt like you were able to then just build, not having to re-learn the person, or have them learn you?

Interviewee: Yeah, definitely.

Interviewer: The next question is even broader than just the writing minor suggestions. It says more generally, what do you think professors should know about teaching writing at the undergraduate level?

Interviewee: [Laugh].

Interviewer: Wow.

Interviewee: [Pause 00:57:54 to 00:57:58] Yeah. It’s hard for me to speak generally, but the more feedback professors gave to me, the more I wanted to do well for them. I know that that is demanding, and when you have a class of 20-something people, and you’re reading eight pages for each person it must be

absolutely awful to try and go through and grade them, and give them all extensive feedback, but—

Interviewer: It's not awful, but it's time consuming.

Interviewee: Yeah, so it's just one of those things where professors that gave me feedback really—and actually gave me feedback, not just fix my grammar were professors that I wanted to work for.

Interviewer: When you make that distinction, what kinds of feedback did you find to be most generative?

Interviewee: Just—they could—I know that—and sometimes they could see what I was trying to do. They would be like, “You're trying to do this, but I'm confused because you're not doing this.” A lot of times I'd be like, “That's what I was missing. I did not know that's what I was missing, but that's what it was.” It's just that outside perspective, and so it's not like—I didn't—it was just like that was nice. They—I can tell they maybe had this—because they're coming from a different standpoint that they were able to provide that feedback. That's what I really enjoyed.

Interviewer: It's not—

Interviewee: They weren't telling me something I didn't know.

Interviewer: They were responding more like readers, and correcting or fixing—

Interviewee: Exactly.

Interviewer: Is that fair?

Interviewee: Yeah, that's much—yeah. I mean I understand that they have to give me a grade, but yeah. If they were just coming through and correcting grammar, it was just like I feel detached from the essay at that point.

Interviewer: Were there any other learning experiences that you think inform what works well to teach writing, beyond feedback?

Interviewee: To teach writing—hmm. It's hard, but examples of writers.

Interviewer: That's a good one, yeah.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Are you thinking they are other student writers, or professional—the whole range?

Interviewee: Yeah, the whole range. As long as it's accomplishing something. It's like—I can't remember the last time I had writing coming out of a textbook. There's a huge difference between something where you know that this has been selected, pre-selected for you, or like a course pack that has some of the teacher's notes in the margins. It makes reading it a lot different.

Interviewer: That's interesting.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: How those examples are set up and presented then?

Interviewee: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: That makes a lot of sense, great. Any other comments about any of the issues that we've touched upon today?

Interviewee: Pretty much cleared it out, 01:00:55 yeah.

[...]

[End of Audio]