

Interviewer: There we go. This is \*\*\* and I'm here with \*\*\*, and it is November the 30th, 2012 about 1:10 p.m. \*\*\*, like I said, thank you again. What we're gonna do is I'm gonna ask you some questions about writing in general and then I'm gonna ask you some questions about [Writing course], the class you took last winter and what you learned from that class and how it's helped you as a writer and how it's encouraged growth or development or whatever.

Then I'm gonna have you look at your portfolio and we're gonna talk a little bit about your portfolio. I haven't looked at your portfolio, obviously, since I was trying to find it. I'm gonna have you look at it and tell me some of your thoughts about it now that you've had some time to sort of simmer on it. Then I'll ask you a couple questions about future stuff and that'll be it. Pretty straightforward interview, and we're really interested in all of your experiences, so not just positive experiences but all of your experiences, period.

Interviewee: All right.

Interviewer: We really want to see how the writing minor's going and see the ways that we might do this in the future, so any kind of experience you have is really valuable to us.

My first question is a really general, broad question.

Interviewee: Oh, no.

Interviewer: Oh, no. My first question is how would you describe yourself as a writer?

Interviewee: Oh, God. [Laughter 01:36] this question. I'm very careful when I write.

Interviewer: Careful? How so?

Interviewee: I tend to take a long time to think and then when I sit down I don't want to just write and stop and write and stop. I like to churn out a whole draft if possible. I mean if it's a short paper I usually try to do that and then no matter how bad it is I'll just let it sit and then I just have to leave it as it is and then come back to it maybe like at least a few hours later, because if I do it in one sitting it's just not going to happen. It will remain bad and I won't be satisfied when I turn it in, but if I take some time away from it and then I come back to it, it looks completely different. Then I can look at it and see this is where it went wrong, this is where it went right and what I'm gonna keep and what I'm gonna take out of it. That's where I start my revisioning until I have to turn it in or put it up there in the portfolio.

Interviewer: You work until the deadline after that?

Interviewee: Yeah, but then after the deadline I usually see something else that I want to fix. With a paper I can't do that but with the portfolio I've done a little minor change.

Interviewer: You've made some minor changes to your portfolio since you put it up? Have you always been a careful writer?

Interviewee: I think that really developed over the past two years since I came here, because writing to me used to be I would just sit down and come up with something and I felt, "Well, maybe that's okay; that's good enough," but since I came here I realize that you can't always do it right the first time—no one does—so I've learned to be a little more patient, think more. Sometimes it's not just being able to write the certain number of pages; it's more like how much I can think beforehand so that when I write it's more natural. I'm not forcing it out.

Interviewer: Makes a lot of sense. You sort of simmer on things before you sit down.

Interviewee: Yeah. I have to think about it for a long time and actually start drafting in my head so that when I sit down I know where I'm going. I don't like sitting down, not knowing. I'm just staring at the page, like "What do I do now?" Just doesn't work.

Interviewer: Where do you think about that kind of stuff? Are there particular things you do when you're thinking about papers or do you just sort of—?

Interviewee: In the shower.

Interviewer: In the shower. Good ideas always come to people in the shower.

Interviewee: I make the shower like my "no worry" zone, but it doesn't really work out sometimes if I start thinking. I'm like, "If I don't worry, I might as well think of my paper." Then I start thinking about what my teachers would say and then that's pretty much where I get my thinking done. Or when I'm walking; it really helps, yeah.

Interviewer: You said you think about what your teachers would say. What they would say about your ideas for your paper?

Interviewee: Yeah. I think thinking of someone else talking to me about what might work, where I might take it is easier than me just looking at the problem and going "What should I do?" Because I get—I like having feedback because it makes me think more and see things that I don't see before, so I try to imagine what might teacher would say or what my peers would say if they read that. Sometimes I try to pretend it's not my paper and I put "Track Changes" and I'll be as brutal as I can to myself.

Interviewer: It's like you're giving a peer review, but to—

Interviewee: To myself.

Interviewer: - to yourself.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Very interesting. Sounds like you have some really interesting strategies.

Interviewee: That's to force myself to keep improving.

Interviewer: How would you have described yourself as a writer when you came here to the University of Michigan?

Interviewee: I think I wasn't really mature. The way I wrote was the standard, the very boring way, like the high school way of "I'm gonna give you an intro and then here's what I have to say and then I'm gonna conclude it by restating my facts." I feel like even in my first year writing class here—which I took as a sophomore—that kind of challenged to me to see that things don't always work out that way and sometimes when you write it's okay for your thesis to come right at the end. I've had teachers who say they should never come at the end, but I feel that sometimes it's necessary.

Interviewer: You had teachers here or before you came here?

Interviewee: Before, but I've also had teachers who say here that maybe it's best for you to put it up front. I think it's just to avoid people getting confused and getting lost when they're writing because it is easier if you put in front and then work from there, but I found that sometimes when I write I try to put it in front; it doesn't work out. It's nicer when I put it at the end when I've built up to it. I think in a way my two years have helped me gain some sort of intuition about what I can do, what I cannot do. It's not so much as playing by the rules: it has to be this way, this format. When they say "You have to write it this way" I feel like if I wanna reorganize because I feel like it makes my paper stronger, I would just do that. I wouldn't be too concerned. People always say like, "Should I just strictly follow this?" I feel if that is gonna box me in it won't work, so flexibility.

Interviewer: Flexibility. That sounds really good. To what extent would you say that you've grown as a writer since you got here?

Interviewee: A lot.

Interviewer: A lot?

Interviewee: I know that's a horrible description. It's hard to quantify how much have I grown.

Interviewer: It's not something we can measure easily.

Interviewee: Yeah. I mean I think differently. I definitely write differently. Some things stay the same, but I guess the level of thought I put into my writing has changed a lot. I've come to accept the fact that there is no perfect work. Even years after you look back at it there's always something.

Interviewer: Always something.

Interviewee: Always, and it's okay, too, if you realize that there's always something better.

Interviewer: That's very true.

Interviewee: It's hard to accept, but like the eportfolio, it's up there. I've put it in my resume. I feel like anyone can see it now. I'm still not happy; I'm still not completely happy with it. I'm like, "Why did I do this?" but I don't know what else to do with it. It's a long process.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. What are your goals for yourself as a writer?

Interviewee: I wanna keep writing, cuz I'm in a field that doesn't require any writing.

Interviewer: You're a math major, right?

Interviewee: Yeah, but I think the minor was what really changed it for me because I thought, "Well, I could always just do what my major teaches me to do," but now I feel like I have this on the side and I really enjoy it and I think that helped me see where else I could branch into. I've actually looked at publication companies I might wanna apply to.

Interviewer: Oh, wow.

Interviewee: Yeah, so that changed things a lot.

Interviewer: Yeah, it sounds like it. What made you decide to sign up for the minor in the first place?

Interviewee: It was kind of an impulsive move.

Interviewer: Really?

Interviewee: I got the e-mail—yeah—from the math department. It was really rare for me to read the whole newsletter or whatever you call it every week cuz it's just long, but I think this was right on top and I saw the [inaudible 09:09] and I was like, "Well." I don't think I had even been here for a workshop; maybe once or not—but I saw it and I was like, "Well, maybe I could try," but just before the deadline they told me that I couldn't get in because I only had three more semesters left. I spoke to someone on the phone and she said, "I'm sorry." Someone else told me I could just go for it, but someone else called and said, "It's not possible. We need four semesters." Then after the deadline they e-mailed me and said, "We changed it. You can come in now."

Interviewer: Oh, wow.

Interviewee: Yeah, so I was like, “Well, that was a close one. I guess it was meant to be then.” What made me sign up for it was I guess just I kind of missed writing because with my heavy schedules I don’t get to write at all. It’s just crunching numbers day and night and I don’t get to do anything creative with it. It’s just repetition. Then I took my first writing class here and I really liked it and I thought, “Well, maybe I could try a few more; maybe a few more,” and now I’ve accumulated five or six.

Interviewer: It sucked you in.

Interviewee: Yeah, it does. Now I don’t need them anymore but I just take them because—

Interviewer: You like them?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah. That’s a good reason to take them.

Interviewee: Yeah. I mean if something can get me out of the house by 8:00 a.m. it has to be pretty good.

Interviewer: It’s true. That is very, very true. Very true. Thinking about sort of your experiences here at the University of Michigan—and you’ve already kind of touched on this a little bit—here’s another big question.

Interviewee: Oh, so many big questions.

Interviewer: I know. So many big questions. What do you think it means to write well?

Interviewee: What does it mean to write well?

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: That’s really up to the person writing, I think. People always think that it’s only well written if someone else thinks it is, but I feel like you have to believe in what you write as well. I mean you can write what is commonly accepted as well-written, a well-written piece of work but if you don’t like it or you don’t believe in it you’re not gonna think it’s good enough. A more conventional approach would be just to see if something’s well-written if you give it to someone who has no clue what’s going on and if they can read it and understand it, understand where you’re coming from, I think that’s usually my measure of what’s good.

If it’s clogged with like too many technical terms or if you try to be all fancy and people don’t get what you mean, that’s not effective because you don’t get your point across so what’s the point of writing? On the other hand you have writing for yourself as well

where maybe you write something that only you can understand. I feel like there are two parts to it: someone else who sees it and what you think about it.

Interviewer: That's a good answer. Which first-year writing requirement course did you take?

Interviewee: I took [English course].

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

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: Okay. You just took [English course]?

Interviewee: There's a [Writing course]? I didn't know there was a [Writing course].

Interviewer: There is a [Writing course]. It's a class a lot of people—well, not a lot of people—some people take before they take [English course].

Interviewee: Oh, that's like the prep class?

Interviewer: Yeah, kind of, yeah. You just took [English course]?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: What was your experiences like in [English course]?

Interviewee: Eye-opening.

Interviewer: Eye-opening.

Interviewee: We had a course pack where we read a collection of articles from many, many different people. It was really nice because it forced me to look at how other people wrote, because when you buy books, you buy books you like to read—

Interviewer: That's true.

Interviewee: - and you always go to the same place, the same aisle and you know what you're gonna get before you even buy it, but you just like it so you keep going back to it, but being in a class like that made me read things that I thought, "I don't wanna read those things. Those articles, they don't appeal to me," but there's a lot to be learned from reading someone whose writing style is completely different and to learn from that. My teacher said it doesn't matter, that you could just read and you take what you like and you think you can work with and you just disregard the rest. You can just learn from it. I think that changed how I look at things.

Interviewer: How'd it help you as a writer?

Interviewee: It's helped me to look at more of other people's works and see what's working and see how I can use that. It's easy to push away something you—especially something you disagree with, like an article or a book that you disagree with. It's easy to say, “Well, I'm not gonna like the writing because I don't agree anyway,” but if you look at the choices they make you could pick up something controversial and you can disagree with it but when you read the writing if it can convince you even a little bit, there has to be something that's effective there.

Interviewer: That makes sense.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: That makes sense. You said you're a math major. Is that right?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: What kinds of writing do you do in your math courses?

Interviewee: Almost none.

Interviewer: Almost none.

Interviewee: I mean I'm in an upper-level math writing class now and it's a really strange hybrid, because it's not math-y in the sense—I'm doing actuarial math, which is like—we learn about pricing insurance and how people build insurance. The class is about retirement plans and [I'm a University of Michigan student]. I have no clue how Social Security really works. I mean before I took the class—

Interviewer: That would be hard.

Interviewee: Yeah, so this whole thing was really foreign to me but I had to do it for the minor, but now that I'm writing—that's a totally different genre, cuz you're writing for people who know what they're doing and for students like us who are learning to know what we're doing, so that was kind of a challenge. We are currently working on a term paper and I had to pick a topic and plenty of the topics are really technical, about legislation—no clue. Reforms around the world; I don't know pension reforms around the world.

Interviewer: Yeah. You got nothin' there, huh?

Interviewee: That was kinda daunting to pick a topic, but I settled for one that I thought was something I could manage and something I was interested in.

Interviewer: How did you pick that?

Interviewee: I wrote a paper about—I don't know; I don't remember now—something about gender differences before, something like that. I don't know why I keep coming back to it, but for this paper I wrote about how retirement issues affect women differently than they do men because women tend to live longer and then women have historically not planned as much as men do, and they're really conservative in their investments. By the time they hit old age and if their spouse dies, they're left with almost nothing. A huge number of women need long-term care when they're alone and that really sucks up the financial resources, so I did research on how these issues have affected women and how they will continue to affect unless something is done starting now.

Interviewer: That sounds really interesting.

Interviewee: Yeah, and it's really eye-opening because I didn't know it was that bad. I've read articles saying it's pretty bad and that—well, it's understandable. We had a recession; people are not having jobs and they have jobs that pay just enough for day to day living, much less save for retirement, but just reading that, it was kind of like shocking, I guess, to see that something you start—many people don't start saving until they hit their 40s because your 20s and 30s you're supposed to do things for yourself. You earned the money; you gotta have fun, but most people don't save almost anything.

That was interesting, and learning how to do the research was interesting, too. Yeah. I think my writing class has helped a lot in that.

Interviewer: What was that process like for you?

Interviewee: I didn't run around like a headless chicken.

Interviewer: That's great. Had you run around like a headless chicken before?

Interviewee: Yeah. In my earlier classes, yeah, but this wasn't so daunting because I knew that I just had to go to a database and look up relevant things and I knew where to look for them and I knew how to evaluate my sources. I feel like at this point I don't have much doubt about which sources are credible and which are not. Some are really sketchy, but I've seen people use really sketchy sources and they say, "This is legit," and I'm like, "I don't think my teacher would approve of that." My handbook, my style handbook is like my biggest writing tool, physical writing tool that I have.

Interviewer: Which handbook do you use?

Interviewee: The Diana Hacker one.

Interviewer: Oh, yeah.

Interviewee: The green one. That's awesome.



Interviewer: Yeah, that's a good one. Sounds like you got some great strategies worked out for yourself. You said you were an international student?

Interviewee: Yeah.

[...]

Interviewer: [...]. Did you take writing classes at the institution you transferred from?

Interviewee: I took an English course, but the writing is nowhere as rigorous as it is here. It's a lot less rigorous.

Interviewer: A lot less rigorous?

Interviewee: A lot less. I mean I couldn't even transfer as something to fulfill my writing requirements here. That is usually what trips most people up because they say, "Well, I've done one. Why doesn't it count?" Then they come into the writing class here and it's completely different and then they get scared, but I was really excited when I got in.

Interviewer: Oh, yeah?

Interviewee: The [English] class—yeah—my teacher was pretty strict with his grading and what he expected of us, but I really like that.

Interviewer: Yeah?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: You like him to have high expectations?

Interviewee: Yeah. I feel like if my teachers don't set the bar that high there's not much point for you to work towards something better.

Interviewer: Makes sense to me. I have a few questions about the gateway course. That's the [higher level Writing course], right?

Interviewee: Yeah. It used to be [higher level Writing course]. They changed it.

[...]

Interviewer: Okay. That makes sense. You talked a little bit about the things that you found useful in that class, but tell me a little bit more about the impact that that class has had overall on your writing.

Interviewee: The gateway course?

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: That pushed me to not be so scared of other genres because it was a new media thing and I didn't know what I was getting myself into. I mean the first class was like, "Wow, we have to do all this and how am I gonna do that?" Because it's not just writing a paper. Writing a paper and turning it in is one thing and working on a project all semester long and revising it over and over and then putting it up online and working with things like video and audio—I'm not a very good computer person.

I use it, but I don't use editing software or anything, so that part was a little scary, but when I was in the course I saw what other people did.

It was quite amazing to see how people thought so differently and how they convey their ideas, because we had people making—like reciting poems on the video. There was one girl who made a children's storybook about how to behave. I don't know. I think it's something like that. I looked through it briefly and it was really interesting. I never thought that—before the class, my idea of writing was writing in the pure sense of putting pen on paper or ink on paper, not in conveying a message through a medium such as a video, but then when I took this class I realized you do have to write well to make a good video cuz if you can't get a good script it's not going to mean anything, and you have to have good choices.

Your words have to be right; your intonation and where you pause and why you choose to emphasize something that matters a lot in a video. Then of course there's the aspect of determining what background to use to match what you're saying, so thinking about writing in a more broad sense, not just writing words. When you put it in a new medium like that, I think it makes you feel more accountable for what you put out there. Writing a paper and turning it into a professor, there's some sort of safety net because you know that he or she's the only one who's reading it—

Interviewer: I see.

Interviewee: - and maybe just a classroom, but the minor, you blog and you have to feed them to link to your blog and tell—like when I put things on the resume, that's when it really cemented it for me, because I realized my prospective employer was gonna click on it and they're gonna see my writing. They're definitely gonna judge me by that cuz you can tell a lot about a person from the way they write, the words they choose and how their ideas flow. I think the gateway was really helpful in showing how writing extends beyond just the paper side of it and to open up new ways for you to convey your ideas.

Interviewer: Has that course had any impact on your writing process?

Interviewee: Yeah. It's made me think a lot more about when I'm collecting materials to learn. I think that's why it was really impactful, where it teaches you how to read like a writer. I like that because I never realized it was so hard to read something and—to read and understand something is a lot easier than to read and understand why the writer did

this or that. I think maybe the harder part is adapting that, because then you're trying to copy what they did and see if you can do it effectively as well.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Makes a lot of sense to me. What impact has this course had on your sense of yourself as a writer?

Interviewee: I think it has grown. It's helped me see that I can be better than I already am and it's helped me see that you need people around you to help you write. Maybe it's possible for some great writers to isolate themselves and come up with a superb novel or something, but I find that having community really helps because you get people to look at it and give you different perspectives. That's something I really like, because before I came here I never had that kind of feedback. The only feedback I got was from my teachers and they tended to be really nice, so it's always just "Okay, it's good," but there's nothing else to push you; it's just good. Okay, maybe you can fix this and that, but there's not much other feedback to rely on and to see how you can do things differently.

I guess I just got stuck in—just where I was, but when I get constructive feedback from my peers and from my professors that really helps because I get to see—especially with my peers cuz sometimes they give ideas that are really out there, but you take it and then you think about it and sometimes it can help you find something else that you can use.

Interviewer: That's true; that's true. Talk to me a little bit more about your peers. What was your experience working with other writers like in this course?

Interviewee: I really liked that, because we got to give each other the feedback on whatever we were working on and we could also collaborate whenever we wanted.

Interviewer: Oh, that's nice.

Interviewee: Yeah, so we had—we were split into groups and we rotated, I think. For one project you would be with a few other people and then that's your small group for you to discuss with and come up with ideas and see where you can help each other. We also had peer review time in class a couple times, I think, where we just sat there and swapped computers and look at each other's work and then peer reviewed it on the spot and see where you can improve and where—what things you should definitely keep in there. Sometimes I feel like peer reviewing on the spot is actually a good thing because you have to think on your feet and first impressions count a lot.

When they see it and if they don't understand it, that's definitely a big problem, whereas if you have a long time to look at it maybe you go back and like, "I'll try to make sense of this," but I think if you just sit there and just look at it and see, "Well, that sounds funny," then maybe that's gonna be a big problem if you leave it there. I think that spontaneous peer review sometimes give—they come up with a lot more ideas that are kind of out there but that you can probably use.

Interviewer: As opposed to pre-planned peer review where you take it home and like—?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. How come?

Interviewee: Because I feel like take-home peer reviews tend to become very methodical. I like them in the sense that it really solidifies a lot of things for me. After doing so many classes with peer reviews and each class having like 20 peer reviews, I feel like I've come to the point where I'm just looking for things. Sometimes when I do it spontaneously, new things jump out at me. I don't know. Maybe it's me just being stuck in a rut, but—

Interviewer: Well, it makes sense what you're saying. It makes sense.

Interviewee: The workshop process, I like it but sometimes I feel that it gets methodical. We all say the same things at some point, so that's when I feel like the workshop's not going to go anywhere else. Nobody's gaining anything out of it, but maybe that's also because we're working in the same genres. We're all at different levels, so teachers have to do the workshop the same way in every class, but for the gateway we had a lot more leeway with that where we just sat there and discuss and we could do whatever we liked, just discuss and just brainstorm if we wanted to. The freedom was nice.

Interviewer: That sounds nice; that sounds nice. Interesting to think about. The minor gateway course really emphasized a lot of reflective writing in different forms. How would you describe your experience with that kind of reflection?

Interviewee: That was really hard at first.

Interviewer: Oh, yeah?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: How come?

Interviewee: Because, well, I like to think of it as done when I turn it in and try not to just dwell on it—

Interviewer: I see.

Interviewee: - but when you reflect on it you have to go back and see, "Oh, no. That's where it could have been a lot better," and "Why didn't I think of that?" The first run was kind of hard in the way that I think—I was trying hard not to beat myself up over it, but when you see the flaws just staring at you—but it's really helpful.

Interviewer: How so?

Interviewee: It makes you think, like “Why did I do that?” I think reflecting at the end helps you see what you can do better in the next one, so it’s not like something you say, “Well, okay. This is where I could’ve been better and that’s it. I’m gonna stop right there.” The reflective writing helped to make the revision process easier after that.

Interviewer: How so?

Interviewee: Because when you look back at the reflection and you see, “Well, these are the things I identify”—because we have to continually update the eportfolio, revise as we go along, so it’s never really done, in a way. You have to keep improving it, so that reflection helps and it helps you see how you can do things better the next time, but yeah, it was kind of daunting at first, having to point out what didn’t go right.

Interviewer: Yeah. How would you describe your experience with the new media in [Writing course], so the blogs, through remediation projects, the eportfolio?

Interviewee: The blog was fine because I had used a blog before. The remediation, I made a website. I took a paper that I wrote and I expanded it into a website and I didn’t realize how much work went into just deciding what kind of sections you wanted in a website. I thought, “Well, there’s always a certain organizational structure to it. I’m sure I can come up with it,” and then when I sat down to think about the subsections for everything under my paper I realized it’s really hard to take a paper and extract things that you can put into neat little categories, so that took a while.

Learning to cope with the new media is another thing, like the eportfolio. I’m like, “Why is this section not moving over there? I told you to move.”

Interviewer: You had a hard time with the technology?

Interviewee: Yeah, but I started tinkering around pretty early, so time helps. You just have to play around with it.

Interviewer: It takes more time than you think it does.

Interviewee: Oh, yeah. I never realized that. Even just putting a button there takes forever to figure out sometimes. The widget just doesn’t go where you want it to go.

Interviewer: That sounds frustrating.

Interviewee: Yeah, but WordPress [content management system] is pretty intuitive after a while.

Interviewer: Yeah. WordPress is pretty easy to work with.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: The next couple of questions are about your actual portfolio. [...]. I'm gonna ask you to talk about some of the most memorable aspects of your experience with the portfolio and what you sort of wanted to accomplish with it. Feel free to click around and do whatever.

Interviewee: There will be more of both part of this. Oh, I like this part. I remember I had to put like a little section explaining the assignment and how I went about doing it, what it was about. This was kind of my reflective piece about what it taught me, what I gained from it. I like this part because it wasn't just—that means my eportfolio wasn't just a space for me to put up finished works; it was a space for me to show how I think and how I tackled the assignment.

Interviewer: You liked putting up the pieces that sort of correspond to the assignment itself?

Interviewee: Yeah, so I put up all the pieces of it, I think. Yeah, I did. I might take away some of it next time.

Interviewer: The proposal, the storyboard?

Interviewee: Yeah. Some parts I might keep, like the storyboard because that's a new kind of thing that I learned from this course and I liked that. I had my attachment here. I had never done a storyboard before and that really helped me with creating the website. Because I had that reflective writing for everything I did under the minor, I also had creative writing, reflective writing for all of the other ones.

Interviewer: Oh, really?

Interviewee: Yeah, so like this one, like some of the stuff that I wrote in—this is from [English course]. I'm so bad with a Mac [Apple computer].

Interviewer: Sorry.

Interviewee: No, that's fine. I just don't know how to move this thing.

Interviewer: It's always the opposite of whatever you think it is.

Interviewee: Really?

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: Like this one, I actually had a longer description for this but I think I took out some of it.

Interviewer: How come?

Interviewee: Just because the whole paper was really long so I didn't wanna like clog it up further. I just wanted to give every piece a little preamble to show what motivated me to write about this and what I got out of it at the end of it. My creative nonfiction was my favorite part, because these were things that were really important to me so I had prefaces that were longer. This I really like cuz I spent a lot of time thinking about how I was gonna start off this paper and then when I was done with it, when I got back to it—because this was a paper I had workshop in my [English course]. Coming back to it the next semester and putting it up here and writing my preamble about why I wrote it, what I got from it was really—it just wrapped it up really nicely.

I think that gives a lot more context to what I'm writing, because I think when—at least when I read someone's work it's easy to not think of them as part of it, but this is a genre that really puts you in it. This is what the reflective writing really taught me, to remember that the person writing it might be in it. Actually, we're in everything we write because we write what we think.

Interviewer: Sure. Yeah, absolutely.

Interviewee: Yeah, when I read a paper, though, like an argumentative paper, it's easy to not think of the person who wrote it, but if you do then you'll see their motivations and see where they're going, where they're coming from. That was one thing that the reflective writing—that came out from the reflective writing that I didn't expect it to happen.

Interviewer: That makes sense to me. What were your goals for your portfolio?

Interviewee: I wanted it to house all my—all the writings that I really like and to show a diverse set of genres. After this I'm gonna add on the stuff I've done for the retirement class. I have one from anthro that I took in the summer just because; that was fun. I like trying new things and now I'm in [Writing course], so that I'm working—I did my cover letter and now I'm working on a video resume. I like trying new things and what I feel like taught me the most I'm gonna put in there, because this portfolio, the driving theme was supposed to be my growth. That's why I put things from my first writing class in UM [University of Michigan] to the last one, which is gonna be the capstone next semester.

I want it to be kind of like a reminder to myself of how much I've grown through my writing and how much more I have to go. Also, because I put this in my resume, I want it to be diverse. I actually used it to apply for a volunteer position in a non-profit organization to write and edit content for the website and newsletter. The employer was really impressed. He called me and he said, "I like what I see."

Interviewer: That's great.

Interviewee: Yeah, so this has worked. I know it legitimately works and it does what it's supposed to do. Now I just have to find a way to put everything together in a way that makes sense when I have all the new stuff in there.

Interviewer: You'll have to sort of re—

Interviewee: Yeah. I might have to take something out and add stuff in. Definitely taking out some of the drafts and stuff. That was more for the gateway course.

Interviewer: Sure. Now that's over you're gonna make it suit your own purposes.

Interviewee: Or I might start a new one for the capstone. I don't know. I'll see how it goes, but it is doing what it's doing, so I like that.

Interviewer: It's nice that it's that flexible.

Interviewee: Yeah. It's not completely professional; obviously not. I have a piece called "[title of piece]" in there, but that was also my decision to make it not rigid in the sense that they're not all super academy papers in a way, cuz I want to show them a more personal side of me by putting things that I really—that I worked a lot on. My two pieces under creative nonfiction, I put a lot of time in, so I want—even though this is going out to employers, I don't want them to see just my technical writing or professional writing. I want them to see that I have a human side.

Interviewer: Sure.

Interviewee: They can learn from that.

Interviewer: Absolutely.

Interviewee: I want to give a whole rounded perspective, not just the, "I can write like this, so this is why I'm good for your company." I feel like you have to make a personal connection somehow.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. I think you covered that last question there. Do you have any other comments or things that you would like us to know about your experience or comments in general about—

Interviewee: Writing here is great.

Interviewer: That's good to hear.

Interviewee: Before I came here, making writing a big part of my education wasn't in my goal at all because I pretty much abandoned that. After I picked my major, I'm like, "Well, I already know where I'm going. Writing is just gonna be my side thing. I'll do it for fun," but then I came here and I realized that's such a great resource. If you don't use it it's such a waste.

Interviewer: You mean Sweetland?



Interviewee: Yeah. Sweetland really helped, and I've asked around and asked my friends—and they're in really good schools—but when I ask, "How's their writing program?" there's pretty much—it's small or it's obscure. They don't know about it. I'm like, "Don't you have this kind of resources? I get to meet professors and GSIs and talk about my paper if I want for like half an hour," and they're like, "No. We don't have such luxury. We just have to do it on our own," and their writing classes, I don't think they really emphasize the writing so much as we do here. I like that. I'm glad I came here.

Interviewer: I'm glad you came here, too.

Interviewee: It could change my life.

Interviewer: Yay. Well, that's great. I don't have any more questions unless you have anything else you'd like to add.

Interviewee: No. Why did you come here?

Interviewer: Why did I come here? I came here because I wanted to study writing. I used to teach high school and middle school and I'm a PhD student.

Interviewee: Are you gonna be a professor of anything and one of them?

Interviewer: I'm gonna be one of them.

Interviewee: It's a great job.

Interviewer: It seems like it. I really enjoy teaching and I really enjoy teaching writing, so I'm looking forward to being a professor—

[End of Audio]