Interviewer: Okay, so this is ***. It's April the 27th, and I'm here with _____. Alright, ***, so this is pretty informal. [...].

[...]

Interviewer: [...]. What we'll do is, I'm gonna ask you some questions about your experiences with writing. We'll start with some general questions, then we'll think about your experiences here at [University of Michigan], and some of your courses in particular. Okay?

Interviewee: Okay.

Interviewer: Pretty straightforward. [...].

Interviewee: Thanks.

Interviewer: Just to start off, and this is a really broad question, but how would you describe yourself as a writer?

Interviewee: I would—

Interviewer: It's a broad question, I know.

Interviewee: - yeah, that is—yeah. Mm-hmm. I would say I'm a pretty strong writer. Generally if I need to write for class, whether—so I'm in the business school which requires a lot of technical writing—so whether it's technical writing, or for a humanities class, or I'm doing a CASC minor, so those more qualitative courses—

Interviewer: What kind of minor?

Interviewee: Community, action, and social change.

Interviewer: Oh, interesting.

Interviewee: Yeah, so very different than the business school, but when I do writing for either, or kind of like the broad spectrum, I generally feel pretty comfortable doing so. I might have some issues starting or wrapping things up, but for the most part I would feel comfortable writing for a variety of mediums.

Interviewer: How would you have described yourself as a writer when you started here at [University of Michigan]? Did you come here your freshman year?

Interviewee: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: Okay. How would you have described yourself as a writer when you came here as a freshman?

Interviewee: I probably would have said the same thing [laughter].

Interviewer: The same thing?

Interviewee: Well, probably not to the same extent. I think I knew how to write, but it was pretty template style. You write an argument paper. You have a thesis. You have three body paragraphs, and then give the conclusion. I would probably say I would think about essays more in that format rather than structuring the argument as a whole, if that makes sense.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Makes a lot of sense. To what extent would you say that you've grown and changed as a writer since you've been here?

Interviewee: Definitely a lot. I've tried to take a variety of courses. Especially through social science and humanities, I've learned to write more argumentative papers, or critical analysis papers. Then through the business school, I've learned a lot of technical writing which I had no idea how to do beforehand. It's a lot different than writing for an anthropology class, and so—

Interviewer: How would say that the technical writing is different?

Interviewee: Generally if I'm writing an analysis paper, it's a lot of description, and building the background knowledge, and really just understand that your audiences understands what your argument is, how you got to that argument, how you drew the conclusion. At least the technical writing that I've done in the business school, it's very brief and concise. You're really just like summarizing, and getting the main points across.

Interviewer: That makes sense. I know we were talking about this a second ago, but as you are thinking about—I guess you've graduated in December already. As you've just graduated, what are you thinking about in the future as far as your goals for yourself as a writer? I know you mentioned—

Interviewee: That's a good question.

Interviewee: - grad school, and that kind of thing. Are you thinking about how you'll be writing in the future?

Interviewee: A little bit. I think writing is really important—I'm trying to think of how to say it. Yeah. 'Cuz I think—'cuz I've written, especially for technical. I'm going into like a corporate job, I guess. I've read a lot of things that are supposed to be technical, but are very, very wordy, or don't make a lot of sense. I've seen how it can be bad, so I really wanna improve. Then I also think beyond work

writing, I think people who journal or blog—I think that's really cool. I've always—but I don't know if I really wanna do it, or if I wanna try it. I think it's really cool, so just like keeping engaged that way. Maybe not me writing, but reading others's writing.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Makes a lot of sense. Thinking across your experiences here at the University of Michigan, what do you think it means to write well? How would you describe well-written writing? *[Fading voice 04:48]* writing twice, but you know

Interviewee: Just in general-

Interviewer: Just in general, it's a broad question.

Interviewee: - like specific? Okay.

Interviewer: What does good writing look like is kind of the question.

Interviewee: I think it's when you can tell that someone has put in a lot of thought into their writing. You can tell that they have thought about either what their stance is, or what their opinions are on something, or what their conclusion is. Then they make a logical argument, and then have supporting evidence which I know sounds really kind of like template style. I think really when you read writing, you can tell if an author's voice is coming through, whether it's technical, or more like social commentary, or something like that. Really that they took the time to think about this is my opinion, this is why, and these are the experiences that I'm drawing upon for it.

Interviewer: This is really interesting. When you look at a piece of writing, how could you tell if a writer has put a lot of thought into what they've written? What do you as a reader look for when you look at writing to decide if it's thoughtful or not, I guess?

Interviewee: Mm-hmm. Yeah, I think that's a really hard to—I think it's when you really know your audience. Then you are just like drawing on experiences that you think are relatable, or that are currently in the news, so that people know about, and so—I think two contrasting examples is I read this blog. It's really silly. She writes lifestyle tips or something. You know, like one of those blogs? I think she does a really good job because you can tell that she really knows her audience. Even if what she's saying isn't that—it's not like a great, novel idea. People really, really like it, so I don't even know.

She wrote this post about reaarranging your coffee table. To me that—I was like, okay, well this is interesting. I probably don't need an article on this, but people really liked it. I think she really knows her audience. She knew that like, okay, if I'm gonna write a piece about rearranging your coffee table, these are the photos

that should go with it. This is what I should be talking about. Here's some books that I could recommend, different things like that.

Reading about the Black Lives Matter movement, and different racial injustices that are going on—reading personal narratives about that, you can tell that people really understand their audience, and are telling stories from the heart, stories that their readers can relate to, and then tying it into the bigger issue of race in America right now.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Makes a lot of sense. You may have taken more than one of these, but which upper level writing courses have you taken?

Interviewee: I don't know if I have an upper level writing course through the b-school—

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: - but I did take—if I do, I think it was my—I'm trying to think of what it's called. [Women's Studies course], which was [Title of course] or something.

Interviewer: You wrote a lot in that class?

Interviewee: Mm-hmm. It could either be that, or it was my other women's studies class which is [Title of course]. I also wrote a lot for that class.

Interviewer: What were your experiences like in general in those two courses?

Interviewee: I really liked them. My sexuality class, that was really hard for me, I think partly because I really wanted to like the class. I didn't love the material as much as I wanted to, and so to be writing a 10-, 15- page paper about it was really hard. My [Title of course], I really, really liked that class because I liked the material that we were talking about. For our essays—I mean, for both classes, we got to pick what we wanted to write about, but for my [Title of course], I really liked the topic that I was writing about. Yeah, I think it was like some 8 to 12 pages was our final paper. Definitely went to Sweetland a couple times for revisions. I really enjoyed writing it. It's a lot different than anything that I would ever write in the business school, and so I had a lot of fun doing it.

Interviewer: How is it different than what you write in the business school?

Interviewee: For business school, it's a lot of executive summaries, or cover letters, different things like that. It's very short, very concise. You explore why I wanted this argument, why this is my conclusion, but then you don't really write a lot of it down. You just write this is what happened, and this is why you should do things. Whereas in my [Title of course], it was really about exploring the idea,

and what examples can you draw, and how do you tie all these examples together, so I really liked that.

Interviewer: Makes a lot of sense. Do you still make use of what you learned in those two courses in your writing now?

Interviewee: Yeah, I would say so. I don't do a lot of that type of writing, especially I've been out of classes for a semester, but I definitely think I can because there's a lot of—I think something I've gotten a lot stronger in is reading a number of pieces, and then drawing conclusions, and tying them together. It's like supporting arguments, or saying, okay, this author said this. This author said this. How are they related? Are they complementary? Are they opposing arguments? Why? Why not? Different things like that.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Makes a lot of sense. Have you taken any other writing courses?

Interviewee: I took [English course].

Interviewer: Nice. Nice. What was your experience like in [English course]?

Interviewee: I really liked [English course].

Interviewer: You did, or you didn't?

Interviewee: I did. I was with couple of my friends, and my professor was really awesome. The focus was on technology, which I didn't know that every [English course] class has a little—

Interviewer: Different.

Interviewee: - a little different. It has a different focus. I think if I had any recommendations, it would just be to make it more obvious, but I really liked my course. We did some personal narrative writing. We did a multimedia project. Some other things. I don't know. Maybe because it was technology focused, we did do multimedia writing work which I really enjoyed because it wasn't something that I'd really experienced before, or had the opportunity to explore. It was a cool introduction.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. How do you feel like that course affected your writing? Being able to participate in that multimodal writing, or anything else that you learned in [English course]?

Interviewee: I think it was a good introduction just to strengthen your—I don't wanna say basic because that sounds bad—but core writing skills. Then for multimedia—again, it's a good introduction because a lot of college courses use

some type of multimedia, but students might not have done it in high school. It's really good to just get that experience in a setting that's maybe more supportive than a 300 level class might be.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Did you have to take any courses that were about writing in the b-school?

Interviewee: Oh yeah. We did. We took [LHC 200 level course] and [LHC 300 level course]. Those are required, and it's—it's—oh, it's law, history, and communications. That's what L H C stands for. We do technical writing in those, so things like how do you write a concise email? How do you do a résumé? How do you do a cover letter? How do you put together a business memo? Those are really focused on, brief concise writing. Something my professor used to say—she was really—she was like amazing. She would say for business writing every word is worth \$50.00, and is that word really worth it? Would you be willing to pay \$50.00 because you think that word is worth it? [Cross talk 13:29].

Interviewer: That's an interesting way to think about it.

Interviewee: Mm-hmm. Yeah, so she was very strict on no fluffy language because if you are just writing, "We did this market research, and this is our conclusion," you don't need to use really, or just filler words like that.

Interviewer: Yeah. Interesting. Really interesting. Do you think that affected—that thinking about writing as money?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: Did that affect your writing at all?

Interviewee: No. Not really. It's not something that I follow. It's just good to keep in mind when I'm doing business writing, and I realize I'm throwing in just extra words that are probably unnecessary.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. That makes a lot of sense. It's really interesting. Do you feel like you're pretty confident about your technical writing in the b-school [business school]?

Interviewee: I would say so, kinda decently. I think, especially for technical writing, especially in a cover letter or résumé, it's very template style. The more you do it, the more comfortable you get doing it.

Interviewer: That makes a lot of sense. How have you used any skills or strategies that you learned in either your technical writing courses, or your [English course], or the women's studies courses in other classes that may not be a writing intensive course?

Interviewee: Okay. Yeah, I'm trying to think.

Interviewer: It's hard to think back after you've been out of class for a semester.

Interviewee: Yeah, yeah. I think the big skills that I use a lot are just the critical thinking and the analyzing skills. Even though I'm not writing, if I'm reading a piece, I can understand, okay, does this argument make logical sense? Are there missing pieces? If I read—'cuz a lot of professors will give you—there's a theme for the day, or a theme for the week. Then you'll read four or five articles or research papers on it, so understanding how they all fit together even though it might not say explicitly.

Interviewer: That makes sense. Thinking back over the past two years, I would say, so last two years of college, what experiences both in and out of the classroom—so not just what you've done in class, but maybe what you've done outside of class, as well—have had an affect on your writing?

Interviewee: I think writing in the business sense, or technical sense, has definitely had a lot of impact because, again, it is so short and so concise. I worked in corporate over the summer, this past—summer between junior and senior year, so I had some of that. I learned about technical writing in the business school, and then I had to do it over the summer. Then coming back, I think, whether it's intentional or not, my emails or different things that I'm writing are very short, and are very concise, I think. It's beneficial when it's an email or something, but when I'm writing a less technical paper, I think it can not be so beneficial because it is—I don't know. I feel like it doesn't sound as nice, or it doesn't flow as nicely. That is something I think that it has had a lot of impact on the way I write.

Interviewer: If I use the term "reflective writing," what does that mean to you?

Interviewee: For me it means that kind of looking back on different experiences that you've had, or lessons that you've learned in previous year or couple of years. Writing on why did that happen? What have you learned about it? How has it impacted the work I'm doing today? I think for me, I am/try to be pretty plugged into the social justice community around here. Reflective writing is a lot about exploring your identities, and how they have impacted the way people treat you, or the way that you view the world.

Interviewer: Great. What have your recent experiences been of working with other writers in your courses, or maybe since you've been out of school for a semester, working with other writers in outside-of-school kind of experiences or contexts?

Interviewee: Hmm. Can you clarify the question?

Interviewer: Sure. I'm wondering about if you've had the opportunity or any experiences of working with other people on writing tasks, working together to write different kinds of documents, or anything like that.

Interviewee: Okay. Yeah, so business school, almost for every class we have a group project of some sort. Whether it is a summary or a longer paper, we always do some type of writing for it. I guess I do really like to write because I generally am the one who will write a large majority of the paper. If I'm not writing a large majority, we will split up the paper, and then I offer to revise the whole thing. I'll start, sit from the beginning, and just read everyone's work because—make sure that it sounds uniform, so one voice. Then usually will take it back to the group, and then the four to six of us will sit together, and read the whole thing. Make edits and changes that we want. Then usually I or someone else will offer to take it home, and do a final read through.

Interviewer: Some pretty intensive collaborative projects.

Interviewee: Yeah [laughter].

Interviewer: Have you done any kind of workshopping or peer review on your writing?

Interviewee: Not too much. I've done it before, but not-

Interviewer: Not a lot.

Interviewee: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: Yeah. Now that you've had a semester since graduation, you've had some time to sit back and think about it, what advice would you give to college students about writing? What are some things that they should think about before they sit down to write?

Interviewee: Oh, oh boy. I would say—I think a lot of it stems from understanding your audience. Who do you want to read it? Is it your employer? Is it your mom? Is it your sister? Is it the rest of the school? Is it the world, etcetera, because a lot of what you say, and how you say it, and the arguments that you'll make stem, I think, from that. I think big thing is who is your audience. I remember saying like, oh, that's so silly. Kind of like thinking that. Definitely now looking back, it makes a lot of sense. Then from there, I think, just what argument are you trying to make because I think you can make the same argument in a lot of different ways. By adding in a couple of words, you can change the way that people see your argument, so really understanding what your core statement is, or what your thesis is. I would say those two things. *Interviewer:* Great. I know you mentioned that you did a lot of new media writing in your [English course] course. Can you talk to me about what kinds of new media writing you did there, or in other classes 'cuz you may have also had some experiences with writing new media. There I'm thinking about things like blogs, or websites, an electronic portfolio, digital portfolio, if you made any videos, or anything like that, that kind of thing.

Interviewee: Yeah, okay, so we can start from the beginning. [English course], I remember the final project I think just had to incorporate some type of media, but we could choose. Two of my friends and I, we did a video project where we were—the three of us were all in the same learning community. We would go to people in our learning community. We had a big poster, and it said, I think, what does MCSP [Michigan Community Scholars Program] mean to you? We're like, what has MCSP given you this year? They would write down, I think, a word or a phrase. Then we would take their picture with this poster board. Then in the video we cut it, so that it would start with like—so it was a blank poster. Then the first person writes something. Then we would show a screenshot of every person after, so you could see the board growing.

Interviewer: Oh, that's cool.

Interviewee: Yeah. Then we also interviewed the directors of our learning community to understand why did you want this? What are you hoping students to gain from it? Then we inserted interviews tidbits 22:21 into that video, so—

Interviewer: That's really cool.

Interviewee: Thanks. Yeah, so it was a really fun way to be introduced to multimedia writing. Then I have done blogs—oh, we also did blog posts in my [English course] class. I can't really remember about what, but I know we did them. In [Strategy course] class I think I took, we made a blog/a website. The project for that was, I think, explore an organization that you're interested in, and provide some recommendations on what they can be doing better. Something like that. We wrote a blog about—so we did [Topic of blog]. We picked an organization. Our blog, we did a brief introduction about the organization, what they're currently doing, how you can get involved. Then we did some research on food insecurity and food deserts in the world, and then specifically to [city]. Yeah, I had a lot of fun doing that, too. Then I've done two, three-ish ePortfolios. I did one for an internship through the University of Michigan on Digication.

Interviewer: What's Digication?

Interviewee: It's a platform that some places at the University use. There's Digication. There's Google ePortfolio, and then there's CLEO 23:51.

Interviewer: Oh, so you've had to use a lot of different platforms.

Interviewee: Yeah, yeah. Digication, that was the first one I've done. I'd say the platform isn't really conducive because I don't think a lot of people outside of U of M [University of Michigan] use it, or I think like maybe specific colleges use it. Then I made a CLEO for my minor. I think CLEO's a lot more conducive 'cuz a lot of people use it, so I don't'—I think ePortfolios are on the rise, but they're not at that critical mass yet. I think CLEO's definitely the platform to be using.

Then for my third portfolio we were supposed to use Google sites, but I had the CLEO one that I'm hoping to keep as my core portfolio, and so I just put all my stuff on CLEO. I did a personal philosophy. I've done reflective writing on my classes, and also on this fellowship that I'm in, and what I've learned from it, and what the purpose of my fellowship was, different things like that.

Interviewer: Why do you think CLEO's better than the other ones?

Interviewee: Honestly, for the sole purpose that I think more people use it. I think sites like that, there's a term for it. I don't remember what it is, but everyone has to use it for it to be effective. At least from what I have seen, it seems like a lot more people are on CLEO. CLEO is just—it's a very clean platform. In the way that Digication or Google sites looks kinda like old and outdated, CLEO looks really nice. If more people use CLEO, then more people will go on it, and it'll just snowball.

Interviewer: Feeds itself, right?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Do you feel like your experiences writing in digital portfolios have affected your sense of yourself as a writer, or your writing at all? Let me ask again—go ahead, sorry.

Interviewee: Well, [cross talk 25:55].

Interviewer: No, no. Go ahead.

Interviewee: I think, yes, in the sense that most of the digital portfolio writing I've done is more reflective on what I've learned, and what classes I've taken. It's really forced me to take time to reflect on how have I grown as a person, how have my identities impacted the way that I experienced this university, different things like that. Also, because someone is gonna read this hopefully, and so it's like, okay, what am I saying? How am I trying to say it? Does it make sense? Different things like that.

Interviewer: How do you think these experiences would have been different if it had been a hard copy or a paper portfolio versus the electronic portfolio?

Interviewee: I think the fact that it's electronic, it's on the web, I'm more likely to go back to it, or once in awhile take a peak, because something that I hand in for class I generally do not go back in a couple years to read about it.

Interviewer: Right. Makes sense. You've been uploading pieces of writing to the study archive on C-tools [learning management system].

Interviewee: Correct.

Interviewer: Has that process gone okay for you?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: It's been really easy. Very straightforward.

Interviewer: Okay. Yay! How did you choose the pieces that you put in the archive? How did you pick which piece of writing to put in there every semester?

Interviewee: I think I usually put in something that either I really enjoyed writing, or something that challenged me, or something that was different than what I uploaded previously. I think I have some personal narratives in there. Then I have an executive summary that I've written for class. I've also have some really lengthy research papers that I've written for my [Title of course]. Just trying to put in a variety of things I've written.

Interviewer: Sounds like you're really thoughtful about it.

Interviewee: I tried [laughter].

Interviewer: Did you go back and look at the old writing to decide what to put in every semester, 'cuz you're saying you picked different kinds of things, or did you just remember?

Interviewee: I just remembered, and then when you—I always got confused on how to do it, so I would always go to the wrong sign 28:07, and I could see what I had been uploading, so I had an idea.

Interviewer: Do you think that process of going back in the archive and uploading materials made you think about the writing that you had done differently?

Interviewee: Sorry, can you rephrase the question?

Interviewer: Yes. Mm-hmm. Do you think that the process of uploading materials to the archive when you went back to look at—you saw the writing you had done. You thought about what you put in there before. Did it make you think about that writing in a different way?

Interviewee: I guess, yes, in the sense that I was like, wow, I wrote this a year ago. I wonder how it's changed. Do I still have the same opinion?

Interviewer: Did you go back and reread any of the pieces that you had put in there before?

Interviewee: No, but generally, like the semester before—I would kind of know what I had written the semester before, maybe the semester before that, and so—

Interviewer: What do you think instructors—and this is, I think, the last real question—what do you think instructors should know about teaching writing at the undergraduate level? If you were gonna give instructors advice about teaching writing to undergrads, what would you tell them?

Interviewee: That's a good question.

[Pause 29:23 – 29:37]

Interviewee: Oh my gosh.

Interviewer: It's a tricky one, I know.

Interviewee: Yeah. Yeah. I don't know if I'll have a second thought, but my first thought is that I think reflective writing is really important. I don't think a lot of people like to do it in a classroom setting. I know I haven't always—

Interviewer: Liked it.

Interviewee: - been thrilled, but I think it is really important because definitely as students, and I think especially at [University of Michigan], there's a big pressure to just go, go, go. Do everything. You're trying to get into med school. You're trying to get into law school, different things like that. You don't really have time to stop and think unless you're forcing yourself to. You're the type of person who likes to sit back, and reflect, and write. Having students do some type of reflective writing, even though they hate it, I think it's really beneficial because it—even if it's a philosophy statement, or just looking back on your classes, what has been impactful because I think [University of Michigan] is a very unique experience. If you don't take time to look back and reflect on it, I think you're not getting the most out of your experience as you could be.

Then I think writing is just a cool way to explore your identity, either in a social justice sense, or just based on your past experiences. I remember in [English course], we had to write—I don't really know what the top—I don't—I think the prompt was like write about why literature is important to you, something like that. It really forced me to go back and think about why. I wrote about how my dad used to take me to the bookstore, and how that was so cool. It was a really small bookstore back then. If I started reading a book, I would hide it in the corner, so that I could go back and read it if I hadn't finished it. I think writing is cool in the way that with the right prompt it can really force you to think about memories that you might have forgotten about.

Interviewer: Makes a lot of sense. Do you have any other comments, or things you'd like to add that—maybe questions that you thought I might ask that I didn't ask, something like that?

Interviewee: I can't really think of any [laughter].

Interviewer: That's okay. That's alright. Just wanna make sure I didn't miss anything that you wanted to say. [...].

[...]

[End of Audio]