

Interviewer: This is *** and today is what, February 24th and I'm interviewing ***, is it?

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: For the Minor in Writing. Okay, so we have to start off a couple of more general questions for you. How would you describe yourself as a writer when you began at the University of Michigan?

Interviewee: I think I had a pretty strong background in writing but it was very—even though I was good at it, I think I was good at it—I'd only written a limited amount. Like one kind of thing, so it wasn't really a diverse background.

Interviewer: How would you describe yourself as a writer now?

Interviewee: I definitely have written more diverse things. I don't—I think I've improved, because I've written a more diverse—like different kinds of things. That it's just worked in kind of tandem to improve my writing as a whole I think.

Interviewer: What new ways have you developed to talk about yourself as a writer or how you learned to write since you've been here?

Interviewee: I don't really talk about myself as a writer.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: Yeah, I don't know, I don't really do that.

Interviewer: Okay, all right. I think maybe you've already started to address this. To what extent would you say you've grown as a writer?

Interviewee: Again, I think just because of the diversity of things that I've written and the different types of things have made myself grow as a writer.

Interviewer: Okay. I think you already answered this. In case you want to add to it, I'll just ask again. To what would you attribute this growth?

Interviewee: Writing a lot of different things as opposed to sticking towards the same five paragraph essay structure that you learned in high school and middle school.

Interviewer: Okay, all right. What are your goals for yourself as a writer at this point?

Interviewee: I don't know if I have any particular goals. I just write because I like to write. I don't—it's not necessarily—it's important for every career but it's not the main focus of medicine which is what I want to do. I think the goals, I don't really know if I have—I don't really have any specific goals, I just want to continue writing because I like it.

Interviewer: Okay, have these changed at all since you entered the Minor in Writing?

Interviewee: No, not at all.

Interviewer: All right, so thinking across your writing experiences here at U of M [University of Michigan], what do you think it means to write well?

Interviewee: I think making—like writing concretely—and making your point without fluff in the paper is an important thing. I also think that—after taking that Minor course, like the Gateway course—we did a lot of technology based writing and to me that takes away from the essence of writing. Writing well is making a concrete argument on paper to me.

Interviewer: Okay. All right, well we have some more questions about the new media so I really want to hear your perspective on that when we get there. What do you think is most important in learning to write?

Interviewee: I don't—it's hard to be taught how to write I think. I think for me the most helpful thing is to write something and then kind of revise it a 100 times and get someone else's feedback on it. That's the most helpful thing. Because other than that I don't—it's hard—I've had teachers in the past who try to teach you how to write and it never—the only thing has worked for me is to keep going over something until it clicks in my mind of how I want it to be.

Interviewer: That kind of revision that you're talking about. What courses have you had here that gave you a chance to do that?

Interviewee: Well, we've done it in all my courses. I took [English course], [English 200 level course] and the Minor course. The most helpful one was [English 200 level course]. I don't know why, it might have been the matter of the teacher but the acts of revising that she had in place really—I thought that was the most growth I had as a writer, was in that class.

Interviewer: Okay, great. This actually relates to what you were just saying, but what did you learn in your first year writing course the [English course] that you've continued to use in your writing?

Interviewee: I think my [English course] class, it was one of my favorite classes but I felt like it was almost less about the writing and more about analyzing things that we did. Then writing the papers to mirror the analysis. I think that class was very helpful in terms of taking an idea or taking an article or whatever it was and really finely breaking it down. Then putting it into an essay. I don't know if that really helped with my writing skills but it definitely helped me be able to plan out what I wanted to write and write everything down.

Interviewer: Okay, great. Did you take [Sweetland course] or no?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: Okay, all right. Now we have a few questions that are more related to that Gateway course for the Minor. What impact has the Gateway course had overall in your writing would you say?

Interviewee: I think it had a positive impact. I know that for my class, the first two assignments were written relatively quote, unquote normal essays. Like you could—like I did—experiment with my tone and the type of thing I was writing and the other half of the class was more technology based.

I think that the technology stuff was not necessary. I don't think that improved my writing at all, but I definitely think that the first two, kind of playing with my tone or the type of thing I was writing really helped me a lot. I wrote a magazine article which you have to go about that completely differently than writing a five paragraph essay. I ultimately would make the same point no matter how I wrote it so that was really helpful in terms of synthesizing my ideas.

Interviewer: Great. What impact has the course had on your sense of yourself as a writer?

Interviewee: I think it had a positive impact. Again, though, because of the fact that I was able to diversify my writing that it had a positive effect.

Interviewer: You've already touched on this in a few ways, but if there's anything you want to add—how would you describe your experiences using the new media writing part of the course?

Interviewee: Yeah, so I definitely—I think that—well, I know—I was not expecting there to be that emphasis on technology part of the Minor. I know the class is called [Title of course] but I didn't expect it to—the essays would be integrating technology into that. I think—I personally didn't like the technology aspect because I'm in the Minor to improve my writing and I understand that today that includes technology but I don't think there should have been emphasis on the technology at all.

Interviewer: Separate from the blogging and the remediation project and that sort of thing, how would you describe your experiences creating the portfolio?

Interviewee: I actually—I didn't like making the portfolio. I do see the importance of having a place with all of your writing and I do see the importance of self-reflecting on it but I thought that there was too much emphasis placed on the design of it. That at the end, creating the portfolio became more of an art project than a way of reflecting on my writing. I do see why having a portfolio is important, but you could use something like Importfolio where you just upload and you write a quick blurb, but it's not—you don't have to really design everything.

Interviewer: Okay. What impact would you say creating the portfolio has had on your writing?

Interviewee: None. Again, just because the portfolio became more of an art project than a way of reflecting on my writing.

Interviewer: Since taking the Gateway course, how would you say your writing process has changed?

Interviewee: I'm—well I actually haven't written anything since I took the class, but I think that I don't know if it really changed my process because I still—I like to write an essay and then put it away for a long time then go back to it and revise it a 100 times. Even though it didn't affect the process it just affected the way I see my writing as a whole I think.

Interviewer: Can you tell me a little bit more about that?

Interviewee: Yeah—just like—kind of how I make my point within my writing, it doesn't have to be that traditional way. It can still be a good piece of writing and sometimes works better if it's not that traditional.

Interviewer: Right. Are you—what's your major?

Interviewee: International studies.

Interviewer: International studies, okay. Are you—what other courses are you taking this semester—it sounds like—is there no writing assigned or is it that it's all at the end of the semester?

Interviewee: Well, I'm also Pre-med so the majority of my classes are sciences. Which there's no writing in. I do take Hebrew for my minor and we do write essays there so some of the concepts kind of overlap. It's just writing a Hebrew essay is very different than writing an essay like this. Partially because the nature of the assignments are very different. Then I'm taking a medical anthropology class which does have two papers in it. I haven't got them assigned yet so I don't know what they entail.

Interviewer: Yeah, okay. The Minor Gateway course emphasized reflective writing in various forms as you've sort of mentioned. How would you describe your experience with this kind of reflection?

Interviewee: I definitely think reflective writing is—a reflection on your writing is important. I don't think that—we had to write paragraphs reflecting on the writing process—that I don't think is necessarily helpful but I think that as you go and as you revise the paper that's kind of a form of self-reflection on your writing. That I think is very important because it allows you to see where you are and where you want to go.

In terms of the reflective writing—the paragraphs, or even what I did for the portfolio I think it was just more of a matter of me wanting to write a paragraph and be done with it. Because I'm done with the paper. Even though, technically you can go back and revise it, I'm turning it in for a grade; I'm done with the paper. I don't—reflecting on it at that point doesn't really do me any good.

Interviewer: Were there other forms of reflection that were more in process that you found useful?

Interviewee: There were like—when we would hand in our rough copy of something, we would put the Microsoft Word comment things a few times if we had questions. Which is helpful because we had to do that—we had to put questions in—I found myself making up questions to put in there whereas if—what was more helpful for me is that when we turned it in and got the teacher's feedback, then you kind of have to take a step back and think "Oh, I see where she's coming from." Or "Oh, I don't agree with that." That's kind of a more valuable tool of self-reflection, I think.

Interviewer: Considering the feedback and reflecting on that is—

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay, great. You've already said you're not doing any—we have a question here about whether you're using reflection in your current writing but it sounds like you haven't had a chance to do that.

Interviewee: I haven't written anything since, so—

Interviewer: Okay, all right. Looking forward, what kinds of writing do you think will be most valuable for your career?

Interviewee: Because I want to go into medicine, a lot of it is—there's a lot of case study based and journal article which is another completely different form of writing that I've never done. I think that will be the most important.

Interviewer: Are you planning on going into the academic side of medicine, is it?

Interviewee: No, I want to be a physician, but even now I was just recently talking to a physician who's writing a case study of a case that he was presented with and then submitting it to a journal. That is kind of what I guess I'd be doing.

Interviewer: If you could tell your teachers one thing about writing or how to teach writing what would you say?

Interviewee: That it's important—getting feedback from the teacher is important. I don't really think so much from your peers, but from the teacher. It's important and it's also

important if they're stressing self-reflection then it is important to kind of start the essay and then get the self-reflection kind of mid-way through. Then have a substantial amount of time to put it away and then go back to it again. Which is partially—I think this happens in every class but due to the condensed amount of time in a semester you don't really have time to put something away for a long time.

When I get assigned an essay I try to kind of write it quickly and put it away just because I think that that—it's like an internal self-reflection I guess in a way. I think if teachers would stress that importance of putting something away so it's not always on your mind it would be beneficial to everyone.

Interviewer: Great. Since we've got you on the record at this point, do you have anything else that you'd like to say about the Minor or your experience in the course or how things are going with writing?

Interviewee: Well, I've only really taken the Gateway course, I took that and then the [English 200 level course] which I guess counts as the Minor. The only thing I have to say is that the technology I thought was not necessary because even the remediation became more of an art project than anything else. I think that when you have all these kids from different backgrounds and want to go into different things in a class, technology is not necessarily a focus of all of them. I just thought that was not necessary in the course. But other than that it was great.

Interviewer: Okay, all right, well thank you so much [...].

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