Interviewer: This is *** and I'm interviewing ***—

[...]

Interviewer: It is Wednesday November—

Interviewee: 7th.

Interviewer: 7th. [...]The first few questions I'm gonna talk to you about are just how you see yourself as a writer and I'll ask some follow up questions if it's confusing for any reason or you can ask me for guidance as well.

Interviewee: Okay.

Interviewer: In general, how would you describe yourself as a writer?

Interviewee: That's actually kind of a difficult question. I knew I would be asked this question, so you would think I would have something prepared, but I really, I think of more of writing as a process, as something I do. My identity as a writer, I guess I would say I think of myself as a pretty competent writer. I think I'm pretty aware of context. I'm pretty aware of who I'm writing for and why I'm writing it. For me, a huge part of writing is when I have to figure out what exactly I'm writing. Like I'm in sociology right now and I've never taken a sociology class before, so part of my writing process is weirdly 0:01:35.3 figuring out what I need to do for my paper and what's required and what the professor expects.

That's sometimes the hardest part because professors are not always clear and then I have to try and incorporate all that thinking into my writing. For me, I think it's kinda difficult for me to think of myself as a writer because so much of it is like—when we think about writers, we think about them trying to express themselves and self-expression and for me, a lot of my writing is fulfilling a necessary role or task. Like even when I write things that are not for courses, like I'm highly aware of that so I think when you say you're a writer, that's a part of your personal identify. For me, it's more of a role that I'll do.

Interviewer: That is really interesting. If I were to follow up on that just a bit, when you talk about role, are there sort of specific roles for writing in your life, even if you're saying I don't sort of maybe identify as a writer right now? What do you see as the kind of roles of writing in your life?

Interviewee: Well, it's a means of obviously—like the obvious answer is a means of communication when I wanna tell someone something. In another sense, for me, writing is a means to an end. Not just in a critical to get an A or to get a good grade in the course, but also for me when I start writing, a lot of the times, the holes in my knowledge appear, what I'm interested in appears and so for me, it's kind of an explorative process a lot of the times. I'm not one of those people who sits down knowing exactly what they're going to write, which has caused me many problems in the past. I think I've accepted since I'm

a junior now and I'm still doing it that I'm not going to change. I think the different roles of writing for me it's just a general way to engage with the knowledge and try to produce something new. As in like my personal life or as in like my school life? What do you mean?

Interviewer: It could be in—I mean, it's in probably a range of things, right? I thought it was interesting you started by talking about communication, which would be obviously not just confined to school, right?

Interviewee: Right. Like so much of what I do, I don't know if this is true for a lot of other students, but I'll have all these plans of all I'm going to get done that day and then I'll have to spend an hour on emails, like writing emails, reading emails. I just got an email from an internship person and right now, I'm currently in my figuring out what I need, what this person wants from me, what I wanna communicate to this other person. I guess the role in my life is it's very crucial. It's weird that I—I do identify as a writer, but it's weird that I don't really think about that too much considering like even my schoolwork, my grades, my success in a course is dependent on my writing. In my internship search, in a lot of the other things that I've done, it's been dependent on my ability to express myself, especially through writing.

Interviewer: Sure.

Interviewee: I would say like it's a pretty important role because it has a lot to do with my success since I'm in the humanities and social sciences. I feel like if we're talking more holistically about me as a person, writing for me is sort of a way of releasing some of my ideas and getting the tension out. This is sometimes true when I'm doing personal writing, too, kind of a way to vent. My best papers and sometimes my worst papers come out of topics that really get me going and then writing's a sort of way to relieve the pressure and organize it into something that can—you take a mess and then you make something out of it. I don't know.

Interviewer: Yeah, that's a great way to think about it. The next couple of things I wanna talk about are sort of about your growth as a writer. You sort of referenced in the first question, I'm a junior now and I'm still grappling with some of these things, which is true for all of us, I'm sure. Think back to when you first came to the University of Michigan. Were you a freshman here or did you transfer in later?

Interviewee: I came in as a freshman.

Interviewer: Okay. If you think back to that first year, how would you describe yourself as a writer, both your abilities and your interest when you first came to this school?

Interviewee: Honestly, I have some mixed opinions about it because I was in one of the RC [Residential College] 0:06:38.8 core courses, which are essentially like first year writing requirements for the residential college. I really have mixed feelings about that class and about how it made me think about myself as a writer.

Interviewer: We're going to talk about your first year requirement in just a minute, so think now just about how you sort of felt about yourself, if you can to pull them apart.

Interviewee: I felt very confident. I was used to getting back papers with one hundred percent on them, so when I had to revise papers for extended periods of time, it was very shocking to me. I think I was much less thesis oriented than perhaps I should have been, but I was at the same time very formulaic. I pretty much—I'm sorry. What was the question again?

Interviewer: Just how you thought about yourself as a writer when you first came in, and you indicated that you felt like you were a pretty strong writer based on—that it was a strength, it was an interest for you it sounds like.

Interviewee: Yeah, it was and like that gradually became more complex, but I was fairly confident. I was very used to being successful at writing without trying.

Interviewer: Okay, great. I'm not cutting you off. We're going to talk a little bit about the first year writing class so for now, I just want kind of your impressions, like when you got to [University of Michigan] how you felt and this is very useful. You've been here—the start of the third year, right?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: It goes fast, doesn't it? In your own view, whether it's from feedback from teachers or just kind of how you feel about it personally, to what extent would you say you've grown as a writer, matured, changed in some way over the past two plus years now?

Interviewee: I feel like one of the main ways I've changed is I do a lot more revision and rewrites than I did before. I think the ideas have gotten more complex and less cookie cutter and so it's been a struggle for me to adjust my writing. How do you convey something that's complex and multi-faceted in a simple and clear way? Another problem with this is my formulas that I used to have become less and less useful the more complicated the argument because basically those formulas are like state your thesis, give evidence, relate evidence to your thesis in a topic sentence, repeat three times and then write a conclusion. Once you have to write long repair papers where the thesis isn't so clear-cut and you have to do other things in your paper too, it gets far more complex.

Interviewer: Yeah. Do you see that as growth as a writer or frustration as a writer? If you were comparing it to the person who came into the university two years ago, how is your sort of view of yourself as a writer different now with those things in mind? I thought those were all great points to draw.

Interviewee: I would say I'm much less confident. I would say I'm much more concerned with fulfilling the requirements of my professor and making sure that my paper is clear

and concise because I used to think that the ideas were the most important thing and they still are, but I've seen the ways presentation can really affect how a paper is received. I also sort of—like I have written good papers and not gotten good grades on them, well, a good grade for me, which means an A. I feel like that's kind of shaken my confidence, but it also made me realize how subjective writing is and how unlike maybe at the high school level, professors aren't filling out a checklist and even if they are, that checklist, their interpretation of what makes something clear, what makes an idea important, is different. For me, I'm just less confident because I've realized that there's not an ideal paper, like it doesn't exist. Even if I wrote it, a professor wouldn't think it was the ideal paper. I feel like having to write for professors, for academic settings, has made me less empowered as a writer and less—I don't know—less passionate about it because it's not really for me.

Interviewer: No, that's really interesting feedback. Are there some goals that you have for yourself as a writer as you're heading into your last two years of school?

Interviewee: Well, I guess—like in general, I'd just like to write clearer and write in shorter sentences and break down my ideas more. I'm hoping I can do that in a more concise way and a faster way than I've done in previous years, but I don't know. To give you some perspective, I just finished a paper which literally involved four rewrites and now I have to make more changes to it. Now I also have another paper coming up, which I don't think I'm gonna have to rewrite it, but I feel like I'm probably going to have to make significant changes to it in order to complete it. I'm like, I'm bogged down in the process right now.

Interviewer: That kind of revision work, are those revisions you've been asked to make by an instructor or that you personally are thinking that you need to do or a combination maybe?

Interviewee: In my general experience, I've found very few instructors who are willing to work with you at the level you would want and look over your paper and revise them, even if they're supposed to be writing courses. The professors who were willing to do that, those were my better courses. Like [Writing course], I worked very closely with my professor and that made it so much easier and so much more fun. The first three, for the first paper I was doing, I did all those by myself because I sort of did a reverse outlining process because it was a research paper so I had to come up with my own thesis and my own topic.

My first draft had a very weak thesis and then I realized that that was because I actually wanted to argue the opposite opinion, so I wrote another draft. After I wrote that draft, I realized that it could've been organized better and there were also some other goals in it that I wanted to express better, so I had to do it. I had to rewrite it again because there were these huge paragraphs with a lot of different ideas. I sort of had to go and be like okay, this idea here and this idea here, put them together, put a topic sentence, wrap a little bow on it and then do it again because I couldn't get all my ideas out to prove my thesis at the end in one paragraph. After I did that, I came to my third draft where I was

like this isn't as clear as I want it to be because it's talking about a bunch of different things. It's talking about a bunch of different things and I think some of it too was just for—a lot of it was for clarity and a lot of it also was just because like I guess I could've cherry picked sentences and paragraphs from my previous one, but once I had made those structural changes, a lot of the actual material I couldn't use.

Interviewer: Right. You just had to go back on it, right?

Interviewee: With this paper, too, I'm realizing I didn't really realize what my thesis was until after I had wrote a couple of pages and I really reused a lot more material in this second draft, so it wasn't a complete rewrite/rewrite. A lot of times when I rewrite, a lot of what I do is look at the old paragraph, write down what I was trying to say and then write more according to that line. Usually, the ideas can be somewhat similar. It's a really long process. It's part of the reason why I joined the writing minor. I was like I've got to stop doing this. This takes too long, but I've kind of accepted it in my old age.

Interviewer: Well, I appreciate what you're describing, your writing process, and it kind of ties in to the next question which was about—so if you think about your writing experiences at UofM [University of Michigan] and without thinking about a specific class yet because we will talk about those also, so what does it mean to write well? You've talked a bit about the process already, but when it's working, when you're writing well or when you're reading someone else's work, what does it mean to write well?

Interviewee: I feel like that's kind of a two-pronged question.

Interviewer: That's a good way to think about it.

Interviewee: What does it mean to write well? Well, when I'm actually writing it, what it means to write well is when I have a good plan in my head and I can stick to that plan. I have a good thesis and things kind of fall together, but to actually produce something that is good, most of the stuff that I've produced that is good came out of struggle, came out of intense revisions. While I was doing those revisions I would not say I was writing well, but my product was better and when I had this clear idea in my head of what I was doing, like sometimes that meant that I was actually writing well, but other times that meant that I wasn't thinking the ideas through. I don't know.

Interviewer: That's a great answer. Yeah. No. Other thoughts?

Interviewee: Well, it was related to a class.

Interviewer: Well, the next question is about the first year writing class. Were you headed

there or to a different course?

Interviewee: To a different course.

Interviewer: Do you wanna just throw it out there?

Interviewee: Sure. Part of what's really informing what I'm talking about is the fact that I spent a lot of time thinking and writing about writing because I was in the writing minor and right now I'm studying to be a peer tutor. I think about writing a lot. I often think about helping other people's writing process but that usually—because we're all self-centered—that usually comes back to me in some way.

Interviewer: That's okay. Let's talk a little bit about the first year writing course. You started to describe it to me, but which first year writing course were you in?

Interviewee: The RC [Residential College] because it's so special has its own system [...] 0:18:52.3 [Residential College course] and then you're in a particular section and the sections are all different topics. For me, I was in [Residential College course]. I don't remember the section number. It was about—well, it wasn't really about, but it was ostentatiously about African American literature.

Interviewer: Okay, okay.

Interviewee: Do you want the professor's name?

Interviewer: Sure.

Interviewee: I think his name was 0:19:17.6 [instructor], which really shows you how bad my memory is.

Interviewer: That's okay. That's okay. The course was [Residential College course]?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: And it's the RC's version of [English course]?

Interviewee: I wouldn't say it's exactly the same, partly because I've never taken [English course] so I wouldn't know, but also because the RC is very focused on humanities and sometimes I think the RC tends to have people who don't conform to the mainstream of their industry, of their academics. Sometimes that can make them really interesting and really great and other times it can cause a lot of confusion because I entered in having gotten a five on my AP [Advanced Placement] English exam, like pretty much like got this. Then he had us write papers on his—he gave us a thesis. He gave us definitions of what things like motif and theme were, but these definitions of motif and theme contradicted what I had learned before in AP English and what—like my sister is an English major. They contradicted what she had learned through her entire career too.

I think that's when I first became really aware of how you have to, how you're forced to tailor for a professor because I would get really frustrated because I would be writing things that I knew—not that I knew, but I believed not to be true because if I remember

the particular one, he was like themes are like trees. I was like, in my experience a theme is like a sentence like God is good or God is evil or love is bad or live is unfair. Those are very simple themes.

Interviewer: I'm following.

Interviewee: For me to have to do that really frustrated me and made it difficult for me to do it well. I feel like he did do a really good exercise where we talked about how to plan a paper together and how to write an outline and how a paper could be composed well, perhaps even should be composed well, but we did it at the very end of the semester so I had already written two papers, which I hated. Then we finally got that. For me, it was a very humbling experience because I was kind of taught that oh, what you had learned in high school was useless and childish, but in the end, I feel like some of that stuff served me far better in my later course careers because it was much more—there was a structure to it. I don't mean to sound like a snob or anything, but I came from a really good high school, so what a lot of my English teachers were doing was at the college level. For me, like I really learned how to revise in that class. I spoke with my professor a lot. I sort of got a humbler opinion about writing from that course and I ended up getting a good grade in it, but I also ended up being sort of like disengaged. My last paper, I feel like that was when my current writing process kind of emerged and that paper was more successful than my other two papers basically where I wrote basically almost three fourths of my essay and then reanalyzed it and then came up with an outline from that and then rewrote/--I'm not even sure rewriting is the right word for it, but like reformulated it, wrote a lot of it. A lot of it was technically new words, and I don't know, I feel like it was mostly centered on literature papers, which was part of the course, like it was taught under that lens. I feel like it didn't serve me well when I had to write papers for other disciplines.

Interviewer: That's interesting. My next question actually is about what affect thee experiences you had in that first year of class have had on you as a writer and are you making use of what you learned in that class in your writing now. We can break those apart, but maybe the second question is more useful. Do you feel like there are things from that course you're still using or what I hear you say is almost the opposite?

Interviewee: Well, I still revise. We've talked about this.

Interviewer: And that was an emphasis in that first class?

Interviewee: It was an emphasis. I do try to make outlines. Before I came to that class, I had never made an outline because I had never needed to and I still got A's. I think about this sometimes and I'm like, how did I get so stupid. I feel like I know why the RC did what it did because the RC's centered on humanities and it kind of assumes that people within its umbrella are going to go into humanities. By teaching first year writing through the lens of the humanities, they probably weren't thinking they're doing that big of a disservice, but in a way they kind of were because when it was from the comparative literature aspect or English, which is different from history or definitely some of the other

humanities. Also, it just kind of assumed a pathway for me and like right now, I'm Asian studies and sociology so learning how one man's interpretation of how to write in the humanities was not as useful to me as learning a bunch of different approaches. I feel like it didn't—because I was very aware of professor opinion, but at the same time, because it was only really one form of writing, I was not as aware of different genres in writing and different approaches, if that makes sense.

Interviewer: Do you have thoughts about what that experience then, how that sort of shaped you, influenced you as a writer in terms of either practices or kind of your view of writing?

Interviewee: I feel like I always try to talk to my professors about my essays, even if they are not the paper reading type, though as I said, many of them are just not—they don't see themselves as teachers in writing, even if they evaluate you one hundred percent through your writing. It's kind of like they're trying to critique you on your understanding of their discipline, but the only image they get of your understanding of their discipline comes through your writing. Sometimes I think it comes off as very skewed and if you're not an effective writer or you're not effective in their discipline in presenting the information in a way where they can be like, oh, she gets it or oh, she doesn't. I feel like another way it affected me as a writer is I do tend to think of my writing more critically and there's this process that I like to do but I sometimes don't get a chance to do it because of the time. I like to write my paper at least two weeks ahead of time if I can. Sometimes I can't, and then not look at it for a week or two and then come back to it so that I can see it with fresher eyes.

Interviewer: Was that pacing something that you were able to do in the first year writing class?

Interviewee: He encouraged it and he taught us how to do it, so that's the pacing he gave and I still feel like it's useful because it gives you distance from your writing, which is very hard. I feel like there are some merits to being close to your writing. You can get the details. At the same time, when you get too close to your writing, you think about motivations that are unrelated to the product, so you use—for example, I used a particular article in my paper, the first one I was talking about. I did a lot of research on this topic and I wanted to use it, but it wasn't necessarily the best for the paper so now I have to look back at it and interpret what I should do next with that research.

Interviewer: You said this just a moment ago, so your concentration, your major area now is—

Interviewee: Asian studies and sociology, though I have taken some English classes. Actually, I'm taking a surprising number of English classes for someone who's not an English major. I quit English after—I quit thinking about English as a major after I wrote a paper and I thought it was really good and I was really proud of it and then she took off points. [...].

Interviewer: Was that a course here?

Interviewee: Yes. I was like done.

Interviewer: Do you remember what class it was?

Interviewee: It was like [Writing course], [Title of course]. [...]. It was just like am I going to take class after class where I have to write what the teacher thinks and write what the teacher's opinions are. I feel like English gets a really bad rap for doing this and sometimes I think it's deserved in my biased opinion. I'm sorry.

Interviewer: Sure. No, no, no. Let me just ask a question to kind of contrast it then, so in sociology or Asian studies, have you had an opportunity to do some writing in those disciplines, in your courses yet, in your upper level courses?

Interviewee: For Asian studies, it's different because it's far less of—it's very interdisciplinary so I can talk a course in almost any subject and as long as Asia is even remotely involved, it counts as Asian studies. It kind of deserves its reputation. A lot of my credits for it come from Japanese classes and [cross talk 0:31:35.5]. Yeah, so like Japanese composition, like my professor worked a lot with me and was very good and part of it too is they're more interested in your language than your content or your argument, even though in the upper levels, that became more important. To put this in perspective, Japanese is different from all the other languages because it's harder for American speakers to learn, so in the RC, you can take accelerated French and you take two years and you get to a certain level where you can read and write in French and then take a literature course. In Japanese, you can only do that after taking three or four years, so it's much harder. Within Asian studies, it's less of a—

Interviewer: Less kind of writing focused.

Interviewee: It's less writing focused. It's more [inaudible 0:32:38.8] focused, though I have written big papers and a lot of papers for Asian studies.

Interviewer: Thinking about the papers you have written in Asian studies or on the sociology side, how confident do you feel about writing in your concentration, in your major area?

Interviewee: For Asian studies, it depends from class to class. I would say like it's very, very hard because I am taking an art history class in Asian studies. I've taken a history class in Asian studies. I took a religions class in Asian studies, so there are all these three disciplines so it's hard to say I'm confident within the spectrum of Asian studies just because of the nature of the major. I would say I'm fairly confident when it came to the second two, religion and history; absolutely hated the art history class I took.

Interviewer: So it's something that maybe sort of your sense of yourself as a writer varies partly on topic or content?

Interviewee: It varies on topic and content. I would say if I'm most confident within a concentration, I would say I'm most confident when I do writings about museum studies, which is my minor.

Interviewer: Oh, okay, okay.

Interviewee: Because in my general experience, museum studies classes tend to focus more on content over presentation. If you have good ideas and if you can do a good thesis—I wrote the longest paper I have ever written for a museum studies class—22 pages, got it down to 17. I don't know. I just feel like those classes because the professors covered so many topics and all of them really encouraged you to state your opinions, it gave me the freedom to say what I wanted to say and to really impose an argument that I was passionate about. That's why that paper got to 22 pages. I had a lot to say.

Interviewer: Sure. That's interesting because one thing I was curious about was what affect you thought—you had the experience of writing in your major and those longer papers—what affect do you think that's had on you as a writer more generally?

Interviewee: Effect on me as a writer?

Interviewer: If you're thinking here—the minor in museum studies is maybe a good place to think about that, how that's maybe influenced your thinking about your own writing or yourself as a writer.

Interviewee: Honestly, it's very hard for me because I kind of think of writing as a means to an end. I feel like that's part of the reason I really liked the museum studies classes. I wanted to prove my point. I wanted to make my argument because that class was an—my favorite museum studies class was an ethics class and I disagreed with like everybody always. Well, that's not true at all, but I disagreed a lot. Part of it was just the writing was just a way to get all my thoughts down and then prove my point and prove myself right. I feel like what I learned from those longer papers is that sometimes you have to do other stuff before you establish your argument, so sometimes you have to establish your context, sometimes you have to go into more detail.

If I remember that paper, I had sort of organized it into I guess two sections with, of course, the intro and conclusion is the bread on the sandwich. I think the first part of my thesis was people compel museums to return objects out of the sense of social justice, so then I set about proving that in the first part of the paper. Then the second part of the paper, museums respond to these claims of—what do they call it? I can't believe I've forgotten it. [Inaudible 0:37:28.8]? No. Repatriation and restitution. Museums respond to demands for repatriation and restitution in different ways depending on the mission of the museum, so a different way and then the mission of the museum. My thesis had three parts. The first part was only addressed in the first section, and then the two other parts were addressed in the second section. What I was used to doing was all three parts in every single paragraph.

Interviewer: Oh, right. In some ways, it sound like your experience, for instance, just writing this paper gave you a sense of how sort of alternative structures, different ways to kind of build your argument.

Interviewee: That's a good way to put it. I wish I could've put it that way because then it would have been a much shorter explanation. [Laughter]

Interviewer: I just wanted to make sure I'm following along.

Interviewee: Yeah, so different structures, different ways of proving your argument and just in general being careful about trying to prove too much in one part. I feel like there's a temptation when I write that I still have that if I don't bring it back to the thesis every single paragraph, every single part of my thesis every single paragraph, that the professor won't get it. that's part of the issue 0:38:53.4 of writing, which I think develops most heavily when you're in college because you're writing for far more professors so you're far more concerned about your different audiences than you are when you're in high school and you have one English professor and maybe one social studies professor—professor, a teacher.

Interviewer: Sure, sure. Yeah, that shifting sense of audience is a good thing to note. We've been talking kind of generally about your experiences at the university, but the last questions really concern your experience with the Minor in Writing program and the Gateway course, [Writing course] or [Writing 200 level course].

Interviewee: [Writing course]. Yeah, it's still [Writing course].

Interviewer: Okay. You took that course last—

Interviewee: Winter semester.

Interviewer: Okay. What impact would you say it had overall on your writing?

Interviewee: I think the main thing I learned was that there isn't one genre. It was one of the first classes where I had ever written anything besides an academic essay for it. I took [English course] before then. I wrote narrative essays for that. For me, switching between genre and thinking about expectations definitely affected me. I really, I kinda hated—no, I didn't hate it at the time, but it was very stressful at the time having the remediation project and the repurposing project.

For me, the repurposing project was this whole ordeal because once again, I wrote a really good paper that didn't get a good grade, but I understood why it happened because I had written—I intended to write a news article, but what I instead wrote was more a piece of creative non-fiction. More like I wrote for the wrong audience. I wrote for the wrong genre, and so after working on this paper for so long, I went to the Sweetland Peer Tutoring Center and they told me that it was the best piece they have read about

something like that. I was up here. My ego was involved and I turned it in and when I got that grade, I was frustrated. Then I realized oh, it's a great pizza, but ice cream was ordered, so I remember it being like 3,000 words. I cut it down to 1,000 and rewrote it very simply in one afternoon where I guess I was writing well both and that the process was working well.

Once I was done with it, the product was good and then because it was portfolio style, which I think any professor who has a huge part of your grade comes from essays should have it be portfolio style because I don't think it's fair that you can have a paper that is 20 percent of your grade and you have no idea what the professor's expectations are for it. Back to topic, so when I finally got where I needed to go, even though it was really convoluted and I understood through that process what you need to do for genre. Then when I remediated it, I had to change the way I wrote because I was doing it for a podcast and I guess I'm kind of an exception because I usually talk in really convoluted sentences so I usually write in really convoluted sentences.

Being forced to write in short sentences and focusing on clarity and once again, cutting things out and getting to the bone and using interview skills, I feel like the writing of that script was really, really great for me as a writer because sometimes—once I got the advice from a professor. This wasn't advice to me in particular, but like if you write too flowery, try to write like Hemingway, so I tried to write like Ira Glass and that's how I think it worked out better. I feel like I know—like in peer tutoring, this is a word you're not supposed to use but I really feel like imitation is very important and I feel like it's a great way to learn. For me even, I feel like imitation is almost impossible, like exactly copying it is impossible, so it's not as much of a breach on values. Like if a professor showed an example essay, I could look at it and see why it worked and then adapt it for my own writing and then a better product would result than if I have to just take stabs in the dark.

Interviewer: These are great point. When you think about the [Writing course], the [Writing 200 level course], and you take away all those different experiences, the script writing, sort of recognizing things that worked, things that didn't work, did that course specifically change your sense of self as a writer in any way?

Interviewee: I think so. I enjoyed writing when I was in that class. I thought of myself as more of a writer. I've kinda been beaten down by term papers at this point, just affecting my brain, but—

Interviewer: I understand.

Interviewee: Also, election night. Tiredness. I feel like there was something incredibly freeing about being able to—now that I think about it, both my remediating and my repurposing projects were imitations of different essays. The first one was an imitation of an article I had read on CNN [Cable News Network], even though the structure was probably different, the words were all different. The second one was an imitation of "This American Life," which I still listen to like every week. I feel like you can become—you

feel like more of a writer when you're doing what everybody else is doing, when you're doing what people you think are writers are doing.

Interviewer: As opposed to?

Interviewee: When you're just trying to like write stuff down, like when you're thinking of yourself as a student.

Interviewer: Sure, sure, identity kind of.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Interesting. In the 200 level course, you had some group projects or some kind of work with others in the class, other student writers.

Interviewee: We talked with other student writers and we helped revise each other's work. For me, that was a frustrating process because I feel like it didn't have to be a frustrating process. In [English course], I worked with two other writers to revise my work and get feedback and it wasn't such a frustrating process in the previous one. Like this really has not much to do with the course material and more how it was run, but for me, it was highly frustrating because the people in my group didn't focus and two of them were friends outside of class so they just messed around and they did stuff that was, to me, incredibly immature. I feel like—

Interviewer: It was group of three?

Interviewee: It was a group of four.

Interviewer: Four, okay.

Interviewee: I feel like in order for group projects to be successful, there has to be give and take and I felt like there was far more take. Like I gave more than I actually received feedback on my own work. Honestly, I don't feel like I can have good feedback on that subject too much because I think for one thing, I didn't have a good example of a group that would work. For another, the group that I did have that worked was in creative nonfiction and creative writing is tutored and treated differently than pretty much almost any other form of writing in that you give really directive advice and you critique it. I would say that you do and you do not want me in your group when I'm critiquing because I will be honest with you and I will give you really direct suggestions and I'll break it down, even though I'll try to be nice [...]. if you want honesty, that's valuable, but I feel like when you're talking about a group in other forms of writing, you really want to be working together, not working on a cross purpose.

Interviewer: And that was the experience in the [Writing course], that it wasn't working as well as the experience you had like with peer feedback in the 300 level, the non-fiction class?

Interviewee: Well, I just think—I think an example of good group work, which could happen in [Writing course], is where everyone's talking about writing and topics that come up in writing—writing as a process, not writing as a product. This is my peertutoring showing up. In [English course], because it was a much more focused group, we talked about each other's writing and we gave evaluations and stuff like that, which isn't really working together. I just feel like it has to be in good discussion and everything needs to be facilitated so it can be a good discussion. Sometimes like when I think about the layout of that room, I know this is not something we think about when we think about making courses better, but it has a huge effect on how well the course goes. The professor was on the other side of the room, well—what is it? What do they say? While the—

Interviewer: Cat's away—

Interviewee: While the cat's away, the mice will play.

Interviewer: So you felt like if the person wasn't right there, discussion got off track.

Interviewee: And in general, too, I feel like our classroom, like she deliberately chose a classroom with a lot of computers and honestly I think it would've been better if we had just been all seated around a round table and brought our laptops because everybody owns a laptop.

Interviewer: Yeah. Computers are a tricky thing to navigate. I'm sorry. Keep going.

Interviewee: I know it sound superficial, but that would've really helped group work because then everyone could sit in a circle and see each other. I'm sorry. I'm trying to be helpful.

Interviewer: No, the computer lab is always a real challenge because people are then looking at the computer.

Interviewee: That's like there would be a row of people in front of me that it would be very difficult to communicate with them or to talk with them or to even hear what they're saying sometimes.

Interviewer: No, that's good. In the Gateway course, they emphasize reflective writing and so I would like you to describe sort of your experiences with the reflective writing in the course and whether that's something that you've found useful, whether you continue to do it, if it influences your practice in other courses now.

Interviewee: I feel like for me, reflective writing is kind of like airing out all your frustrations. A lot of the time, it was a way to make them concrete, which helped make me understand them better.

Interviewer: They, meaning your frustrations about writing?

Interviewee: My frustrations about writing. My frustrations about a particular. Like I feel like sometimes writing can be incredibly hard because you get so wrapped up into what you're trying to do that you're not seeing what you're actually doing. I feel like reflection, if it's going to be good, can really only come once you're after that what I was trying to do phase, like once you have that to one side so that's no longer so much a part of you. You have, on one hand, you're aware of what you were trying to do when you wrote that piece, but on the other, you're not necessarily trying to do those same things with that piece anymore. I feel like that's when you get your best creative writing because you're not just airing out your—creative or reflective writing because you're not just airing out your frustrations. You're looking at your piece and you're trying to see it from an outside perspective and you're looking at what you did and why and then evaluating what happened, not necessarily the why in your mind as much or thinking about okay, this is why I did it. Was there maybe a better way to do it?

Interviewer: Was that a process use in other classes now, either formally or informally, it's in your mind?

Interviewee: Very informally. Whenever you revise a paper, you're looking at what you did and you know why you did it and then you're trying to see how a step outside of that, a step outside of the fact that you understand your argument because of course you wrote it and trying to see it from someone else's perspective. I'm kind of hesitant to talk on and on and on about seeing your own writing from an outside perspective because one, I don't think ever entirely and possible and two because I think your perceptive on your own writing is valid. I just feel like with reflexive writing, the main point of it is—reflexive—reflective—Ah.

Interviewer: No, I've almost talked you dry. I know.

Interviewee: No. I'm sorry.

Interviewer: These are really useful and in a minute we'll pull up your portfolio and if there's anything in there related to reflective writing that you wanna show me, that's great. before we pull this up though, and you referred to this a moment ago about the other genre, about the new media writing you all did, so you weren't just writing academic essays you referenced earlier. What were your experiences like working with other genres, other medias? The remediation project, we already talked of it that you found it difficult.

Interviewee: It was good difficult though. It was good difficult.

Interviewer: Okay. Good to know.

Interviewee: Back to what I was talking about, but hopefully in a more coherent manner, I have this tendency to talk too fast and then I lose track.

Interviewer: Oh, no worries.

Interviewee: When you are forced to remediate or repurpose, you kinda take the heart of the old essay and then you try to put it into a new body.

Interviewer: That's a nice analogy.

Interviewee: Then you see what happens when you do that. In order to do that, you have to figure out where the heart is. For me, this was most true when I was doing the remediation project because the repurposing project was taking like the lungs of my old essay or something that was sort of on the periphery that I didn't get to talk about as much as I wanted to and then making it the heart of the second one. The hearts of my remediation and my repurposing were the same because they were both news things. When I took out that heart and I was forced to put it into something that was simpler and more linear, something that—when you're listening to something on the radio, you have to take it step by step and make it simple rather than when you read, which is like a pure—like you can see the whole paragraph at one time. You actually—I think there's [inaudible 0:55:37.0] chunks. You don't read it word by word. That made me appreciate what was at the heart of my essay. I had to find it and then I had to translate it. that was really—that I think really helped me because it kinda shows you how you have a message and you wanna tell it to everyone, but the instant you choose what way to tell it or who you wanna tell it to, you have to change the way you tell it or you have to change your audience. I feel like remediation project was much easier because I had an audience in mind, like I knew who they were.

Interviewer: Oh, how interesting.

Interviewee: That actually guided my decision to make it into a podcast and I think it worked well even though, to be honest, the worst thing about the entire remediation project was that I had to learn how to use Garageband [digital audio workstation], which I now call Garbageband. That's why—one of my frustrations within the course is I feel like that one should have gotten far longer, far more time to do as compared to the first and second ones.

Interviewer: [Cross talk 0:56:52.7] to learn the technology partly.

Interviewee: Yeah, having to learn the technology, plus when you change something from—like it started out as a narrative essay to a newspaper article. You're still dealing with print medium and so there are more commonalities than there are between—

Interviewer: Right, right, the whole new, right format.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah, that makes sense.

Interviewee: Like I know people—

Interviewer: As you're talking, I'm just gonna call up the portfolio link.

Interviewee: Sure. I know people who like they did a podcast because they thought it would be easier and I know people who did PowerPoints because they thought it would be easier and I don't—PowerPoints with narration. I feel like you need to have an audience and you need to have like a particular—like mine was designed like this could appear on "This American Life" as a story. I know people who just sort of tacked on, like oh, I have this thing and it could go here, it could go here. I feel like you should know what you're aiming for cuz usually you do when you're writing an essay or when you're doing what you're doing. Like I'm writing personal statements right now. I know where they're going, so I need to be aware of that and not just write something and then hope it suits this thing. I feel like one of the most important things about this class, which it did that my RC core class didn't do is that it really—

Interviewer: Still thinking about the Gateway course in comparison?

Interviewee: Yeah, it really emphasized how to tailor your writing, how to be aware of the different contexts because in so many academic classes, there's only one context, the academic world, or even smaller than that, the academic discipline as imagined by so and so went to Harvard. I just really enjoyed that part of it and in the end, I am far more proud of those projects I did than of a lot of other things I've done here that were equally academically successful.

Interviewer: Right, right. Interesting. Well, as you were finishing those last thoughts, I called up the portfolio site, so this is the Gateway portfolio site. You've uploaded some pieces somewhere so let me give you the driving controls here.

Interviewee: I think to put into some perspective, this pretty much contains almost every piece of writing I did from my sophomore year that survived when my laptop crashed.

Interviewer: Okay. Oh, then it's nice that it's here.

Interviewee: Yeah. I should probably add all my essays from this year, too as sort of preemptive strike.

Interviewer: Let me just start something out here to kind of guide our conversation about what I'm looking like, so you have the title here, learn to write like a tree grows, which I like a lot, and there's the tree image in the background. As you think about the portfolio in particular, can you tell me what might be like the most memorable aspect of the work that you've done here, whether constructing it, making choices about what you wanted to include?

Interviewee: My most memorable thing I guess was coming up with that slogan because I know—

[...]

Interviewee: Because that's like the thesis statement of the entire thing. Do you mind if I show you?

Interviewer: No, go right ahead.

Interviewee: This is an introduction, so it talks about why I chose this and I tried to—

Interviewer: This is the introduction on the page?

Interviewee: Yeah, it's about learning to write and then it's about how different branches can be like different genres and so you can develop a stronger core by branching into different forms of writing. This was really important to me because I wanted my eportfolio to be thematic and so I have this slogan and then I have the trees in the background. Then I talk about each academic genre that I've been a part of and I should probably write one for sociology at some point, and how it relates and how it strengthened my writing, writing in that discipline.

Interviewer: The way you have this structured, I can see across the top Asian studies, creative non-fiction, first year writing, museum studies. You're thinking about adding a sociology tag. Was that one of the goals you had for the portfolio, to be able to showcase your sort of specific genre and specific discipline area works?

Interviewee: Yeah. I wouldn't put it as a goal because part of it was—like once again, it was choosing my genre and choosing my audience so originally, I was planning to do this like I would a grad school e-portfolio. I feel like this is—I'm proud of it and I really like it. At the same time, it's far too informal. This is my "About" page. It's about my love of fantasy. Then in other stuff, like where is it. Let's see if I remember.

Interviewer: Was the idea of a grad school portfolio one of your aims for the—

Interviewee: It was originally my aim, but then I didn't wanna write it. I know that's weird—

Interviewer: No, no.

Interviewee: I just—it was kind of coming out like a resume, like I did this which makes me qualified for this. In this, I discovered I wanted to talk about writing and how you develop as writer 1:03:11.2. It seemed a very salient topic because you're in [Writing course]. That's a lot of what you talk about. Then, it also allowed me to do more personality. Like my audience was my peers, which allowed me to incorporate far more fun stuff. I'm trying to find, if I can find it—

Interviewer: What counts as more fun stuff?

Interviewee: Like—I'm trying to find it to show you. I guess here. This is one of my favorite poets [Inaudible 1:03:44.3].

Interviewer: A German poet?

Interviewee: No, that's just the name of the particular—and then in another one of these, which is somewhere—just somewhere. Oh, there we are. Including the video and including Real Time Media because I knew that was what my audience was.

Interviewer: Make sure, so we're looking at a video here [...] 1:04:08.3 [...] is it a musical artist?

Interviewee: No. Basically he talks about his writing, and I really only care about like the first five minutes of this where he talks about how there are two different types of writers, or I guess there are two different ends on the spectrum of writers. There are gardeners and there are architects.

Interviewer: I'll have to watch this. [Cross talk 1:04:35.2].

Interviewee: He probably explains it better than me, but I think he talks about how he's a grower, how you have some ideas and then you put them in different places and then you see how they sprout and mature and sometimes you go in there with the weed whackers and sometimes you have to especially nurture it and you have to leave it to see what happens. Then there are people who are architects, which means they know exactly where everything's gonna go. .

I think the difference between that and a gardener is a gardener has an idea, but it allows it to develop, like maybe I planted the pumpkins here but somehow they ended up over here. Like maybe I need to repot this. Maybe I didn't really think that this would grow and develop the way it did but it turned out better than I expected. I guess an example of that would be an essay I wrote about—I wrote an essay about—in [Creative Writing course], I wrote an essay about my problems with my vision. I meant to write about like I was born with one eye turning in, so when I was younger, one eye was far weaker than the other and because of the way your brain works, that could've led me to having really weak vision in one of my eyes, potentially going blind in one eye. I thought I was writing about that. I thought I was writing about a flaw [...]. I turned in a draft and I got feedback and people were like this is the really interesting thing about this.

Interviewer: Interesting. And this is the kind of garden analogy that you develop in the portfolio, the idea that things sort of come up in unexpected places sometimes.

Interviewee: Yeah, and you have to be open to them. Also, I probably couldn't be an architect if I wanted to. [Laughter] Another thing I did, which was pretty memorable to me, was—

Interviewer: [Cross talk 1:06:51.8] still looking at the portfolio?

Interviewee: Yeah, so I did blogs on making my e-portfolio.

Interviewer: Was this reflective writing about the creation then?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: This is some airings and frustrations and—

Interviewer: Good, good.

Interviewee: Basically just a lot of meta writing, meta thinking and I think part of the reason I included this was in case my instructor had any objections. It's like look at this. I thought of that first, but here's why you're wrong. I also enjoyed writing these because I feel like a lot of the times we don't get a good behind the scenes of what happens in a writer's world.

Interviewer: And that's kind of how you saw the reflective component here?

Interviewee: Yeah, like I've especially noticed this now that I've taken peer tutoring, but we look at finished pieces and we try to imitate them, but we don't think about—or maybe we don't even necessarily try to imitate them but we try to understand them. We don't necessarily think about why they're working or try to apply those things to our own writing. We don't really think about what these writers did to produce that object.

Interviewer: Do I see five different entries here that are all the making of e-portfolio, so each one is sort of your reflective thinking, your kind of meta thinking, meta writing?

Interviewee: Mm-hm, pretty much.

Interviewer: About the portfolio process.

Interviewee: The first—it's kinda funny. There's a kinda bipolar tone 1:08:32.2, so like

these ones—this one is like—

Interviewer: And this is part?

Interviewee: Part three.

Interviewer: Part three of making an e-portfolio.

Interviewee: These two are more like—is it working right? Okay.

Interviewer: I think. Oh, part two. Okay. What's going on? There is part three.

Interviewee: Okay, basically, these are like progress reports and then at the end, they get to be like oh my God, I tried so hard on this. I'm not sure if it's still doing what I want it to do. then there's a lot of—and this is what I found most frustrating about my e-portfolio—was essentially the last few days most of what I did was just linking stuff and making sure that my website worked the way I wanted it to and that was the hardest part. When you first asked me what stuck out the most, I'm ashamed to say that's what I thought of. I was like those last few days [cross talk 1:09:33.4].

Interviewer: Technical aspects.

Interviewee: Yeah, the technical aspect of checking every link to make sure it went where it was supposed to go and making sure that it opened up in another tab so that you were still linked to this. I feel like that's some of the stuff that you don't think about as much as you probably should because when you're writing an academic essay, like you have MLA [Modern Language Association], it's certain what you have to do. I feel like when you write for other contexts, you have to think outside that. Like for my internship, I have to write a worksheet, my internship for museum studies. I have to write a worksheet for children, so I have to think a lot about presentation and a lot about what it looks like.

Interviewer: There's not like an MLA for children's worksheets.

Interviewee: Yeah, and another thing that really frustrated me making this was that I—

Interviewer: The portfolio again?

Interviewee: The portfolio, sorry. I keep going over different topics.

Interviewer: No, that's okay. I just want to make sure we can remember what we're talking about later.

Interviewee: This is something I put a lot of thought into, but like of course, I didn't really get the opportunity to talk about a lot of my thoughts outside my making the eportfolio, so excuse me if I'm being a bit effusive now, if that's the right word. Basically, when you transfer something to the internet, like for example, this is my first paper and it's a very serious academic paper and it really bothered me having to put it in online format because I didn't feel like—it is very hard to read if you put something in MLA format online.

Interviewer: Interesting.

Interviewee: There's a standard—not standard, but basically this is what I've encountered in most outlets. Basically, no indent, shorter paragraphs, spaces between them, so you take everything in a bite-sized chunk, which makes sense because you don't have pages.

Interviewer: Again, thinking about online writing versus formal kind of academic on the page.

Interviewee: Yeah. It affects how you write because you put less thoughts and you have to be clear in shorter bits and you don't—I don't know how to put this, but you don't put as much into each paragraph.

Interviewer: Yeah, it's interesting you bring that up at the end because you talked at the beginning of the conversation about sort of thinking about concision and clarity as kind of one of your writerly 1:11:58.9 goals right now. It was interesting to kind of walk through some of the ways you got there, too.

Interviewee: I feel like writing online requires more [inaudible 1:12:08.2] and it's actually prospected more. Like with this, if I were just surfing the internet and encountered a paper structured like this, I would not read it.

Interviewer: Like the academic essay?

Interviewee: Structured like an academic essay or even like this. like these paragraphs are huge. Like even if it's technically a longer page—

Interviewer: Again, we're looking at something that you initially wrote as a traditional essay, but then just copied it over to an online format.

Interviewee: Yeah, and I really didn't like doing that because I don't see this as online writing. Like if I were writing it for the online—from the online—for the internet, I would expect different things. I would expect it to look more like—let's see.

Interviewer: Even like some of the reflection pieces.

Interviewee: Okay, so let's see if I can find it and it's where it's supposed to be. Okay, so like this—shorter paragraphs.

Interviewer: Shorter paragraphs. I'm seeing a lot of images, photographs.

Interviewee: Photographs. Like you could not do this in an academic essay and I really feel like it's an effective way to show a particular sentence.

Interviewer: And you're highlighting here, just for when we listen later, you're highlighting here where you've used one sentence as an entire paragraph. On the page, it looks clean type, concise, on the online page. Right?

Interviewee: It emphasizes the point. Like I could never do that in an academic paper and I sometimes feel like that's a weakness of them cuz you just sort of have to assume oh, it's at the end of the paragraph so it's supposed to be what you're getting out of this. Also

like hyperlinking, [moving papers 1:14:03.9] people are more interested in different things.

Interviewer: True.

Interviewee: Like oddly enough, I think making this table took longer than this entire essay to rewrite.

Interviewer: So the creation of the some of the visual kind of the functions.

Interviewee: Yeah, cuz you have to think it through and for me, it had been a while since a math class so I was like which side does it go on, X or Y? Another thing that comes up with online writing, which especially came up with my e-portfolio and I honestly think that there are portfolios which did not consider this and I'm not sure if it's good or if it's bad, but every single image here is for use 1:14:48.3. All of these came from Wikipedia 1:14:49.7.

Interviewer: Right, right.

Interviewee: This was made by me. I have a works cited, which includes every single image they were cited for 1:14:57.9. All of the—

Interviewer: So still documenting the sources, making sure things are fair use.

Interviewee: Pretty much. I feel like other people's portfolios, from what I have seen, did not concern themselves with that and part of me is kinda like, ah, cuz this took a lot of time. Look at it, how there are one, two, three, four, five, six, seven different pages and then every single one you can get back to the website in this link and then attributes to all of the images.

Interviewer: Right, and so we're looking here at essentially your works cited, but in the online format, so it links back to the original site or the original article with the hyperlink.

Interviewee: Definitely, and I sort of had to make up this format because now that I think about it, I really should have just borrowed what Wikipedia does, which I know is—

Interviewer: Like what you see at the bottom of the entries?

Interviewee: Yeah. I think I had reasons for not doing that. I'm sure there were good reasons. Then it all got so complicated that I had to make sure—I wanted to make sure that people would be able to understand my site, so I tried to do it in a non-annoying way with humor by—

Interviewer: So you've offered a little kind of how to use, how to navigate what I've put up here.

Interviewee: Yeah, and I feel like that's something you don't have to think about with an academic essay.

Interviewer: Oh, very thoughtful, yeah.

Interviewee: Both are really focused on trying to get your audience to understand what you're doing and I feel like that's something that [Writing course] really helped me think about, like making sure the audience understands what you're doing.

Interviewer: Yeah, and this sort of brings us to a close. I certainly kept you longer than what I promised. I apologize for that. As you kind of think back to the 200 level class and some of our conversations, we started talking about kind of your thoughts about yourself as a writer. Are there ways that your work in that Gateway course and in putting this portfolio together have contributed to how you see yourself as a writer and I think especially a writer in different formats?

Interviewee: Well, I liked being a writer more when I was in [Writing course] because I could choose what I wrote and how. I could choose what form and what type of writer I wanted to be. I feel like academic writing, like of course once you've appreciated the rules of the genre you can bend them appropriately and manipulate them to what you wanna do. I've never really been able to do that as well with academic writing, I think in part because that's writing that is not as concerned with form. It's more concerned with like showing your knowledge and then the writing is secondary even though the writing really affects how intelligent you come off and how well your ideas appear to be linked and how long your argument is done. I guess [Writing course] affected my image of myself as a writer because it allowed me to think of being a writer as more than just being a student or writing as a student, but writing as, I don't know anything—a reporter, writing as an author, writing as a radio person. I feel like when it's not so situational—well, in a way, it's more situational, but it's not so—

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: I'm taking on the role of being a student and a writer rather than I'm a writer and I choose what role I wanna take as a writer. I think it helps you to be more confident and actually establish an identity because you're not just writing in this context. It's kind of like the people—or I'm probably one of those people—who used to be big readers and consider themselves readers, but then they had to read for class and so they're only really a reader when they have a class. I feel like a lot of people, and I feel like this is the way a lot of writing classes teach it, you're only a writer when you're in that class.

Interviewer: Yeah, the reading analogy is really a nice one to make. Probably worrisome, right, but—

Interviewee: Well, certainly better than my weird, Halloween themed heart transplant analogy. [Laughter]

Interviewer: I like it. What else did I not think to ask, ***? What else do I need to know?

Interviewee: What else do you need to know? Honestly—

Interviewer: Writing in your life at this point at the University of Michigan.

Interviewee: I feel like it's constantly changing, so it's really hard to pin it down and say, oh, I think of myself as a writer, oh, all this stuff. I think it's especially—like I would probably give you different answers tomorrow when I'm hopefully better rested and less caffeinated, unless full of victory. [Laughter] I feel like—to refer to my idol, I guess, even though I do not like everything he's written and sometimes I don't like what he says, but George R.R. Martin once said, "I don't like writing. I like having written," and I think that really influences how I think about writing too. I wanna have an excellent project, but I realize in order to do that, I have to struggle.

I don't know. I feel like a lot of classes, that struggle is behind closed doors, so if you feel like you're struggling through your concepts you're not doing it right. I feel like when you talk about writing as a process in the classroom it can be freeing because you realize everybody else is not doing it right either. I encountered some like—I don't know if they were sophomores or they were juniors in my peer tutoring class who were just like, well, I usually write it the night before and I don't revise much. I'm like, I hate you so much. I feel like everyone should just have read [inaudible 1:21:34.1] shooting for stress, be freed. I don't know. I feel like it's a complicated topic because it's really tied into how you feel about your academics at the moment, at least for me as someone who has to write a lot for her academics. I feel like sometimes when we ask people how you feel as a writer, we're really asking how you feel as a student and I think you need to be careful about that, but I don't know.

Interviewer: Because they're so closely linked?

Interviewee: Because they're really linked because in college, that's how they evaluate you, with your writing.

Interviewer: All right. Well, too many good ideas.

Interviewee: Too many. I'm sorry.

Interviewer: No, no, no. Thank you so much. [...]

[End of Audio]