

Interviewer: Okay, my name is xxx. I'm here with xxx, is that right? It is the 24th of May, 2014, and this is her exit interview.

She's finally graduating, so he's happy about that, I think. Okay. The first question is how do you describe yourself as a writer?

Interviewee: Actually, I'm learning a lot better how to answer that question now. I'm in this creative writing class this semester, and up until now, I've been just very straight forward, scientific writing. I'm a science major.

But now I'm delving into more of a creative field, and I don't need a form as much as I did anymore. Before this semester, I was very much—wrote to a form, and, again, very straight forward. Now, it's a little bit harder to say because I'm exploring a little bit more. That's it.

Interviewer: Yeah, great. What would you say the role of writing in your life is?

Interviewee: Sorry, contact problems.

Interviewer: Oh, you're fine. Oh, that's terrible.

Interviewee: It's a little [inaudible 01:10].

Interviewer: You're okay.

Interviewee: Okay. [Laughter]

Interviewer: That's the worst when they fall out, isn't it?

Interviewee: Yeah. I'm sorry. What was the question?

Interviewer: Okay. The question is how would you describe the roll of writing in your life?

Interviewee: Mm-hmm. Mostly I write for academic purposes. It's just very much for assignments. Also writing is a big component of my job, too. I work in an office, so composing emails, writing memos, things like that. I guess it's a pretty big part.

Interviewer: Okay, good. Thank you. How would you describe yourself as a writer when you began here at the University of Michigan? If you can think back.

Interviewee: Mm-hmm. I was not a very good writer. That's for sure.
[Laughter] Coming out of high school, I learned how to write five paragraph essays, and that was basically it.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: [Laughter] Pretty basic.

Interviewer: Okay. Thinking about where you were then, to what extent have you grown and changed since then as a writer?

Interviewee: Let's see. I definitely feel like I'm better at communicating my ideas via writing now. Before, it was, like I said, very basic five paragraph essays, following a form.

Now I feel like I can get my ideas across better and in a variety of manners. I feel like I've improved in my communication skills. Honestly, just my writing flows a lot better. It's easier to write now. It comes more naturally.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Oh. [Laughter]

Interviewer: Okay. They're gonna transcribe this interview, and they're like, "What happened?" Okay. To what would you attribute this growth to this better flow and easier time of writing?

Interviewee: I think it's all just practice. I've had to write for several classes now in several different disciplines. I think that just helps a lot.

The more you do something, the better you get at it. Also, just universities have, obviously, higher standards than high schools do, so I was pushing myself a lot more to get better.

Interviewer: Yeah, good. Okay. As you graduate, finally, woo-hoo—what are your goals for yourself as a writer?

Interviewee: I guess I just want to continue to improve and continue to improve my ease of communication via writing, but I also just wanna write more for

myself. Again, I'm doing this creative writing class this semester, which has been fantastic.

It's shown me the value of writing just for me and to help me figure out my own thoughts just as a another form of expression and an outlet. I guess I really want to delve more into that, and develop that side of my writing more.

Interviewer: Good. I guess we're gonna shift gears a little bit. Thinking across your writing experience at U of M and if you've been at any other institutions besides U of M, what do you think it means to write well?

Interviewee: I think that very much depends on the discipline and the goal of your writing. When I'm writing a paper for one of my kinesiology classes, it has to be very straight forward, you write in—I had to take a scientific writing class to learn how to write in that format and just be very clear.

Then in other classes, more humanities type classes, you can introduce opinions and have more details and arguments and things like that. I just think it varies—it depends on what the goal of your writing is. I mean, there's always general things like flow, and grammar, and all that stuff, of course.

Interviewer: Yeah, that's a good answer. Which upper level writing courses have you taken? Let's just start there.

Interviewee: I actually don't think I've taken any upper level writing classes. I'm in the School of Kinesiology, so I only had to have English 125.

Then we do a scientific writing class, as well, so I took that. I don't know if it's upper level. It's a 200 level movement science class, so I'm not sure what that counts as.

Interviewer: Okay. Let's just roll with that class.

Interviewee: Okay.

Interviewer: Can you talk about—can you just talk about that class generally? What was your experience in that class?

Interviewee: Okay. I didn't enjoy that class very much actually. It's just a little dry cuz it was the same thing over and over again. The style is just very—it's so straightforward and so—you have to do it the same way every time.

I just got a little bored with it. I can see the value in it because if you ever wanna do research or write scientific papers, you have to write like that. A lot of people graduating from kinesiology do. I saw the value in it. It just wasn't for me.

Interviewer: Okay. What effect did that experience, taking that class, have on you as a writer, do you think? I guess maybe we went over this.

Interviewee: Yeah. It helped me in that discipline. For my future movement science classes writing lab reports and stuff like that. Definitely, that's what I needed to do.

Interviewer: What other writing courses have you taken just this—I guess I'll let you answer. Besides that one?

Interviewee: Oh, just writing courses?

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: That one, English 125, and English 223.

Interviewer: 223, and then this creative writing course?

Interviewee: That's 223.

Interviewer: Oh, that's 223. Okay, good. How have these affected your writing do you think?

Interviewee: Definitely expanded my writing more. 125, that was my intro one, and the topic was actually writing about writing, which was abstract. It really helped me figure out different elements of craft that I can include in my writing and that it didn't just have to be the same 5 paragraph essays over and over.

223, I kind of already talked about this, but that definitely expanded my creativity. I'm learning a lot more about how to write for other goals other than to just—not a report.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Some of the questions are gonna be redundant for you.

Interviewee: That's okay.

Interviewer: Okay. How have these writing courses affected the writing you do in your concentration or in your major?

Interviewee: I really don't think the English courses really affected the writing in my concentration that much just because it's very different. With any kind of scientific writing, you just—you have to follow that form, and you have to write in a very certain way. Expanding my fields wouldn't necessarily help with that, but it's more practice, and flow, and wording, and things like that. That's always good.

Interviewer: General things. How confident do you feel now about writing in your concentration?

Interviewee: Pretty confident. Most of my concentration classes have required writing of some sort, so I've gotten a lot of practice with it.

Interviewer: Can you think of any specific examples?

Interviewee: Lab reports, basically.

Interviewer: Lab reports.

Interviewee: Yeah, most of my classes have had some form of a lab.

Interviewer: Okay, good. How often have you used skills or strategies learned in one of those writing courses and other courses?

Interviewee: Outside of concentration?

Interviewer: Yeah. In your concentration or outside of your concentration, so how have the writing courses that you've taken, how have they affected how you write in any other course, I guess?

Interviewee: Oh, okay. I guess I pay more attention to how I write. Before I would just write, and if it sounded good, that was great. Now I guess I understand the elements a little bit better, so I can craft a piece of writing so that it fits the purpose better.

Now I know how to use words effectively to make an argument, for example. I know what kind of words I want to avoid if I wanna say something without an opinion, very straight forward. I guess I just know how to incorporate all of those elements better.

Interviewer: Can you give me examples, or can you think of any examples?

Interviewee: Yeah. For example, for my Women's Studies class that I'm taking, I just wrote a persuasive essay. I was able to incorporate my opinions in there without being, "I feel this." [Laughter] Just kind of figuring out ways we weave it together better.

Interviewer: Yeah. That makes sense. Okay. The next question is thinking back over the last two years, what experiences in and out of the classroom have had an effect on your writing?

Interviewee: In the past two years, you said?

Interviewer: In the last two years, that's right.

Interviewee: Okay.

Interviewer: I know we kinda shifted the time a little bit.

Interviewee: I guess I'll answer in the classroom first. I guess just, again, more practice and having to write different things and for different disciplines. That has helped.

Then also my job, learning how to write professionally, that's made a difference. Then, I guess out of the classroom, I'm involved in this bible study through my church that I got involved in a couple years ago.

They encourage a lot of journaling and more personal writing like that, which I've dabbled in a little bit. I'm still figuring out how to do that. That's definitely changed how I write for personal reasons, too.

Interviewer: Can you just give me more detail on how do you think your writing generally has changed because of those experiences?

Interviewee: I think it's just changed how I write in different contexts. I guess. I don't know if it's changed it overall.

Interviewer: Good. Okay, if I used the term reflective writing, what's this mean to you?

Interviewee: That means, to me, thinking back either on an event or thinking internally about yourself and just writing about that from a very internalized point of view.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: I don't know if that makes sense.

Interviewer: Yeah, it does make sense. Have you recently used reflective writing in your own writing processes whether assigned or just voluntary?

Interviewee: I guess I have. For my English 223 class, we did a midterm portfolio, and part of it was we had to write an authors statement at the beginning of our portfolio.

Part of the prompt was to talk about how you wrote and what you learned through that writing and stuff like that. I guess that was a form of reflective writing cuz I was thinking back on that.

Interviewer: Yeah, definitely. Okay. Next question is what have your recent experiences been of working with other writers in your courses or in other contexts? Do you want me to repeat that?

Interviewee: Yes, please. A little distraction.

Interviewer: Yeah. What have your recent experiences been of working with other writers in your course or in other contexts outside of coursework?

Interviewee: Again, my English 223 class, we do workshops. That's really nice because you can get feedback on your writing. Also just reading other people's writings, it's fun. It gives you an idea of how other people think and how other people express themselves, which is really great.

Also I write lab reports a lot with other classmates in my kinesiology classes, which we all end up just saying the same thing. It's a very different kind of context. *[Laughter]*

Interviewer: Yeah. *[Laughter]* How have these experiences been? Has it been productive to your writing do you think?

Interviewee: Yeah, definitely. I think it's great to get ideas from other people. I think we all have a lot to learn from each other.

Interviewer: Yeah. Why are you taking the 223 course? I'm just curious.

Interviewee: It's just purely for fun.

Interviewer: Okay, that's good.

Interviewee: I had some extra credits. I needed a few extra to be full-time.

Interviewer: Yeah, that sounds good.

Interviewee: It sounded good.

Interviewer: Creative Writing sounds fun.

Interviewee: Yeah. [Laughter]

Interviewer: I loved being a senior. You could always take things. Okay. I guess you already answered this. Have you done work-shopping or peer review? You said, "Yes," in the 223.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Have you done group work collaborative writing projects in any of your course work?

Interviewee: I have not, no.

Interviewer: No, okay. That's easy. Good answer. Now that you're about to graduate, what advice would you give college students about writing? Another way to put this is what are some of the things they should think about as they begin writing a paper?

Interviewee: Mm-hmm. I would just say be open to changes. You don't have to stick with the same idea that you started with. You can always change it, and I feel like as you write and as you go along, you figure out what you wanna say.

You can always go back and tailor. Don't be afraid to edit along the same lines.
[Laughter] I feel like most of the bulk work of writing for me has come from editing.

Interviewer: Yeah. What do you mean when you say editing?

Interviewee: It's just the same idea. You figure out what you wanna say as you go along, so you go back. You realize that what you said first doesn't really match the goal of the paper or the assignment, so just making sure it all fits together well.

Interviewer: Okay, good. Have you had any experiences with new media writing, such as blogs, websites, or making electronic portfolios using M-Portfolio or digital portfolios?

Interviewee: Never done that, no.

Interviewer: No. Have you done just new media writing more generally in terms of blogs or websites of classes? No?

Interviewee: Not that I can think of.

Interviewer: Okay. That takes out a whole section of the interview.

Interviewee: Oh. [Laughter]

Interviewer: Okay. You've been uploading stuff to CTools, is that correct?

Interviewee: Mm-hmm. I did not do it for this semester yet.

Interviewer: Okay, so we need to take a couple seconds to get online.

Interviewee: Okay.

Interviewer: Just so you can see—refresh yourself to what you put up there.

Interviewee: Mm-hmm. I don't remember, either. *[Laughter]*

Interviewer: It's been a long four years.

Interviewee: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: I'm sure.

[Pause 17:24 – 17:40]

Interviewer: Just bare with me.

Interviewee: Yeah, take your time.

[Pause 17:43 – 18:10]

Interviewee: [Laughter] Uh-oh. Technical difficulties?

Interviewer: This computer's always funny. You have to restart it every time you wanna go onto the internet.

Interviewee: Oh, really?

Interviewer: Which I would have done before I got here, but I was a little late.

Interviewee: That's so interesting. [Laughter] I've never heard of that happening.

Interviewer: It's a Windows. [Laughter]

[Pause 18:28 – 18:53]

Interviewer: Say you [fading voice 18:54].

Interviewee: Oh.

[Pause 18:56 – 19:09]

Interviewer: Sorry about this.

Interviewee: No, you're fine.

[Pause 19:11 – 19:44]

Interviewer: Here you go.

Interviewee: Okay.

[Pause 19:47 – 19:54]

Interviewee: There it is, I think.

[Pause 19:56 – 20:11]

Interviewee: Do I need to go to the *[fading voice 20:12]*?

Interviewer: Yeah, I think so.

Interviewee: This. *[Inaudible 20:19]* Drobox?

Interviewer: It's a Dropbox.

Interviewee: Oh, here we are.

Interviewer: Okay. Maybe do you wanna just refresh your memory of what they are?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: It's probably been a while.

Interviewee: Which ones do I need?

Interviewer: I guess just so you had an idea of what you put in there.

Interviewee: Okay, so just all of them.

Interviewer: Yeah, you can just open them, and we'll go from there.

[Pause 20:41 – 20:48]

Interviewer: I guess while this is loading, I can just ask the first question. You've been uploading pieces of writing to the study archive on CTools. I'm just wondering how has that process been going for you.

Interviewee: As in like—

Interviewer: Just generally, how has the experience been? Has it been interesting to do it?

Interviewee: Yeah, I guess it was stuff I wrote anyways, so I didn't think too much about just uploading them again to a different site. Some of them, they're interesting because there was one semester, I remember, where I didn't really have a choice of what I put up. It was literally, I wrote one thing that semester.

[Laughter] That's what went up.

Interviewer: Why did you choose the pieces you chose to upload for the archive?

Interviewee: For the most part, I tried to choose what I thought was my strongest piece that I wrote that semester. Just what I felt the best about or what I got the best grade on, and it was usually something recent that I had written towards the end of the semester.

Interviewer: Yeah. Mm-hmm. Okay. Just a few follow up questions, what was it like looking back over just these four things?

Sorry. I'll rephrase that question. What was it like looking back over your old writing and uploading some of it for the study, so in the past years that you've done it?

Interviewee: I guess it was at the end of every semester. Like I said, I usually chose ones that were—I had written recently, so it wasn't—it was too far in the past.

When I uploaded the first, my first year writing sample, I think that was after I had been passed a little bit, so that took a little bit more digging to figure out what I wanted to bring from that. I ended up taking something from my first year writing class. I think this was my final paper for my first year writing class.

Interviewer: Okay, good. Sorry, I was looking—I'm interested in [cross talk 22:48] writing. [Laughter] Did this process of uploading things make you think differently about your writing at all?

Interviewee: Not particularly. Like I said, they're all stuff that I had either turned in or had to upload to CTools for my classes anyways. I didn't really think that much. I know there's a survey that you have to take when you upload it.

Really the biggest thing I remember from the survey and uploading it is having to classify the pieces of writing. I always had a hard time with that figuring out how to classify things.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Okay, good. Yeah, thank you. Just two questions left. Finally, what do you think your—I can't speak. [Laughter]

Interviewee: It's okay.

Interviewer: Finally, what do you think instructors should know about teaching writing at the undergraduate level? I'll give you this. Thank you though.

Interviewee: Oh, yeah. Thanks. I think it's just good to have an understanding of where each student is coming from cuz everyone comes from a different background.

Personally, I was from a really small high school. We didn't even have AP classes. I didn't know what that was coming into college. I had a very different writing background than a lot of my peers. I just remember that being a really hard adjustment.

My first year writing professor, he was really good. He had one-on-one conferences with all of us at the beginning and at the end of the semester. I think that's really good just to—small class sizes, getting to know your students, and where they're coming from, and what their unique writing style is.

Interviewer: Yeah. That's good advice, I think. I think we always assume, "Oh, everyone's AP."

Interviewee: [Laughter] Yeah.

Interviewer: That's not true. Okay. Are there any other comments you wanna give to the study? Anything you think we should know?

Interviewee: I don't think so. Not that I can think of.

Interviewer: Okay, great. All right. Well, I'll just turn this off.

Interviewee: Well, thank you. Sorry, I wasn't completely articulate.

Interviewer: No, no—

[End of Audio]