

Interviewer: This is an interview with *** by *** on March 25 [...]. How do you describe yourself as a writer?

Interviewee: I guess I'm a pretty brief writer. I don't tend to waste words. I think that's an element. Then, I'm much better with creative writing than I am with scientific writing, I've discovered.

Interviewer: What kinds of creative writing do you like to do?

Interviewee: Well, I like personal essays or anything where I can tell a story. That's a lot better to me.

Interviewer: Okay. Than scientific writing?

Interviewee: Yes. I'm a science major [...]. [Laughter]

Interviewer: How would you describe the role of writing in your life?

Interviewee: What do you mean by that?

Interviewer: Instead of yourself as a writer, what kinds of things do you think writing does in your life?

Interviewee: I mean, I use writing every day in communications whether I have to compose an email to someone or letter or anything like that, including classwork, too. I'd say writing plays a very important role.

Interviewer: Okay, great. How would you describe yourself as a writer when you started here at University of Michigan?

Interviewee: I think I was pretty good. I got a writing scholarship from my high school. I've always kind of had that—it comes really naturally to me. I honestly haven't taken too many classes that involve writing here at University of Michigan. I think the main key is I've gotten a lot faster at it. [Laughter] Figured out how to an essay really quick.

Interviewer: Okay. Can you talk a little bit about that? How did you learn how to write essays faster?

Interviewee: Just having the pressure. [Laughter] You know, being under the pressure where I don't have time to start an essay until a few days before it's due, which is not necessarily the best thing. In high school, I would spend a long time editing my papers, and now I can just kind of like slap one together and then spend a little bit of time editing it. I don't have to worry about it so much, and I still get the same results.

Interviewer: What do you mean same results?

Interviewee: Just grade-wise. I get the same grades in writing.

Interviewer: To what extent would you say you've grown as a writer? You say you've gotten faster, but is there any other things that have changed?

Interviewee: I think I've gotten clearer, too. I used to kind of drag on a little bit, like describing something. I've gotten better at being efficient about it and just making my writing more clear.

Interviewer: Okay. What kinds of things do you do to make it more clear?

Interviewee: Just like I don't use three sentences to describe the same thing if I can do one. That's basically it. [Laughter]

Interviewer: How do you think you learned how to be more clear?

Interviewee: I think it was, again, with being under time crunches. I didn't have time to obsess over how I was wording things, so I didn't have to word it three different ways. I just picked one and then went with it.

Interviewer: Do you think there's anything other than time that kind of influenced you as a changing writer?

Interviewee: Not that I can really think of, honestly.

Interviewer: What are your goals that you have for yourself as a writer?

Interviewee: I definitely wanna get better at writing scientific papers because I'm a science major, like I said. That's the most applicable to what I do. I'd really like to see myself grow in that area.

Interviewer: How do you wanna do that?

Interviewee: I'm in a scientific writing class right now, so that's helping. I guess I just need to get better about—I don't know how to put this into words—I guess being able to put scientific concepts on paper. I really struggle with that. I can explain it, but I can't necessarily write it out coherently. That's one thing I've been having trouble with in my classes, so need to get better at that.

Interviewer: Okay. Can you give an example of a time that you struggled with doing that in a class?

Interviewee: Yeah. I'm taking a movement science class right now that's called [Title of course]. We have to do lab reports for it, and these lab reports end up being 20 pages. They're very extensive. The last time, I just got quite a few points off because I wasn't

explaining my ideas clearly. I went into her office hours. I knew the material, but I just wasn't explaining it correctly on paper, so that's something that...

Interviewer: Okay. What kind of things did she say that helped you in office hours?

Interviewee: She just said to make sure I went into enough detail about the time synapse 00:05:12 and that I kind of integrated more ideas than just trying to explain one specific concept.

Interviewer: Okay, so what kind of concepts were you struggling with describing?

Interviewee: Reaction times is what we were testing. Do you know what that—

Interviewer: Can you explain it to me?

Interviewee: Okay, so reaction time is just basically the time it takes from a stimulus being presented to react to it. We did, with that experiment was at a computer, and a sound came up on the headphones or something popped up on screen, and you had to press a button whenever that came up. It's just a measure of how fast you can do that and does it improve over time or things like that.

Interviewer: You were giving too much detail when you tried to describe it?

Interviewee: No, I wasn't giving enough detail, and I wasn't integrating concepts from—I was just trying to explain it in one way instead of integrating the information.

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

Interviewee: I think it's really subjective. In every class I've had, all the teachers have had a very different idea. My freshman year writing class, it was kinda tough for me because it was writing about writing. That was a hard concept for me to understand and write with. That professor really knew what he was looking for, and he wanted very, very detailed. We ended up having graphs in our paper, and for an English class, that's not what you expect. Then, a recent writing class I took, I took a sociology class, and we had to write papers for that. In that one, she wanted us to be very brief. She just wanted us to simply tell the story and then be done with it. I think it's very different. It really depend on the subject that you're writing for. I don't think there's one formula to write well. You know?

Interviewer: What do you think was writing well in that first year class you were talking about?

Interviewee: Very extensive writing. I think the research for that one was actually more important than the actual writing. What we had to do—for example, one of the papers is we had to find a student taking an upper-level writing class and interview them and then

analyze one of their papers. For that, I think the information-gathering and how we processed it and explained it was a lot more important than our actual writing, I feel like. That make sense?

Interviewer: Yeah. Mm-hmm. Anything else you can think of for what it means to write well? Or any other courses that defined it differently?

Interviewee: Not that I can think of. I think I've covered most of the writing classes that I've taken.

Interviewer: Okay, so it just means it's pretty subjective based on the teacher? Okay. Have you found anything that can be considered good writing across classes?

Interviewee: Yeah, I mean, I think there's certain things you can do. Generally, if you have the five-paragraph essay down and you can write a thesis correctly, that's helpful anywhere you go. I felt like just writing eloquently. I mean, word choices are definitely gonna be different between subjects, but I feel like if you understand the subject and you know how to word things and get your ideas across clearly, then that's gonna be with any class.

Interviewer: All right. Great, so your first year writing course that you're talking about, which required course did you take?

Interviewee: [English course].

Interviewer: Okay, and what were your experiences in that course?

Interviewee: Oh, I failed 00:09:24 that class. [Laughter] I think it was—like I said, it was just a hard concept for me, the writing about writing. Our papers were really extensive. All of my friends in other sections of [English course] were writing like 4- or 5-page papers, and I was writing 13-page papers. It was just a lot of extra work when I'm not an English major, and I don't really plan on necessarily using that type of writing in my everyday life. That's what I didn't like about it. It was useful, I guess, to analyze the different types of writing. We went across genres, is what we did. That was kinda neat to see how you write for different subjects and all that.

Interviewer: Do you remember what kinds of genres you looked at?

Interviewee: We got to pick, and we worked in groups. My group did psychology and nursing. Two very different ones. It's interesting 'cause the nursing papers were very clear and concise, very information heavy. The psychology ones were a lot more eloquent, and there're a lot more hedges. You were never really sure what their opinion was, I feel like. [Laughter] There's a lot of philosophical and kind of like almost like they're debating with their selves, is how we described it, the papers. That was interesting.

Interviewer: How did that class affect your writing?

Interviewee: I honestly don't know. [Laughter] I feel like I haven't really applied much from it in future classes.

Interviewer: Okay. You don't feel like it affected you in any way?

Interviewee: I'm sure probably it did, but just because I didn't like the class, I don't think about it much. I'm not really sure. Maybe it did help me see how to write for different subjects, 'cause that is something that I feel like was a big lesson here. Maybe it started there.

Interviewer: Do you feel like you've made use of that writing for different subjects?

Interviewee: Oh, definitely, yeah. I've learned how to do that much better.

Interviewer: Okay. Can you give some examples of that?

Interviewee: Well, like I was talking about for the lab reports, just being more clear with my ideas and integrating information is important for those ones. Then, in like sociology classes and more of the social sciences, I've learned how to tell better stories and use better descriptive language, which isn't necessarily important for my science classes, so I just don't use that skill in those ones. Was that kind of what you were looking for for an example?

Interviewer: Sure, yeah, yeah. Do you think you learned anything else besides writing for different subjects in that course that you still use now?

Interviewee: I don't think so [inaudible 00:12:28].

Interviewer: Did you take [Writing course]?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: Okay. What is your concentration now?

Interviewee: Movement science.

Interviewer: Movement science. Okay, and have you had an opportunity to do any kinds of writing in your concentration?

Interviewee: Yes. I think I was telling you about the lab reports, and then the scientific writing class I'm taking is a requirement for my concentration, as well.

Interviewer: Okay. What kinds of things do you write in the scientific writing class?

Interviewee: The whole class is centered around making one paper. It's like we had to design our own experiment, and then each paper is a part of what a whole scientific paper would be. We did an abstract, and introduction, methods, results, conclusion. Then, in the end, we just put it all together in one cohesive paper.

Interviewer: Great. How has that experience, writing in your concentration, affected you?

Interviewee: I think it's helped a lot because we got to design our own experiment, which we obviously don't carry out. It is really helpful because it gives me a chance to research a topic of interest within my concentration. For example, I'm pre-occupational therapy, so I chose occupational therapy on children with autism as my topic. That's something I can research, and then I've been able to apply different concepts from my other classes towards that research so I can actually understand what the papers are telling me and then use that information in my own writing.

Interviewer: How else has that breaking the longer paper down into small pieces, has that affected you as a writer?

Interviewee: Oh, definitely. It makes it so much less overwhelming. [Laughter] Yeah, 'cause I mean looking at those scientific papers, they're so long and extensive and detailed. Then, breaking it down, they're really not so terrible for the [inaudible 00:14:34].

Interviewer: Can you talk a little bit about that not so terrible you were talking about?

Interviewee: I think just breaking it down, it gives it a manageable chunk. It's not like I have to focus on this entire experiment and like, well, what am I gonna do when I have to make up my results. What am I gonna say for that? How do I want this to come out? What am I gonna do for the discussion? How am I gonna analyze this? I can just be like, okay, here's my introduction. Here is the background that might be necessary for this. Here's my methods. Here's how I'm gonna do this. I can worry about how it turns out later. That type of thing.

Interviewer: How confident do you feel about writing in your concentration in Movement Science?

Interviewee: I'm getting a lot better with it, so I'm feeling more confident after this semester.

Interviewer: What changed for you this semester?

Interviewee: I'm taking two classes that require lab reports weekly and then my scientific writing class, so it's a lot of practice, which helps.

Interviewer: What kinda things has practicing all the time taught you about writing in your concentration?

Interviewee: Just really what they're looking for because through kines 00:15:48, it's pretty uniform what they're looking for. I think that's just really what practicing has helped me do. It's really helped me fine-tune my skills for it.

Interviewer: Okay. What kinda skills do you have that you feel like you've fined-tuned?

Interviewee: Like I said before, writing concisely for it, the lab reports, because that's really what they want in science. They don't want you to waste words. Also just being able to explain myself more clearly and explain different concepts more clearly and apply the things I'm learning to my writing.

Interviewer: Do you have an example of a time you applied something you were learning to your writing in class?

Interviewee: Yeah, so for my scientific writing class, like I said, it's on children with autism. I'm in a motor control class right now, and we're learning about how the brain controls movements, basically what motor control is. We learn about coordination and how that relates to fine motor skills. I use the information that I took from that class and put it into my scientific writing paper, into—we're just starting the discussion part—so I put it into that and used it to explain how that works.

Interviewer: Okay, and you feel like that helped you to be more competent about that paper? Having that—

Interviewee: Oh, definitely, 'cause I had background knowledge.

Interviewer: Good, good. Okay, so what experiences outside the classroom have had an effect on your writing?

Interviewee: Well, I guess, I think in the beginning of the interview, I do a lot of writing emails and things. I'm the student organization dance marathon. I don't know if you've heard of it. Okay, so I do—I'm on the community outreach committee for that, so I do a lot of the public relations. I'm always sending out emails to newspapers, TV stations, schools, and trying to get more people involved in our organization. I think that's definitely helped me because it's a lot of practice and communication-type writing, too.

Interviewer: Okay. How has your writing process changed as a result of doing that kind of writing for your dance marathon stuff? Process?

Interviewee: Does this mean how I go about it?

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: I don't think it's changed all that much. I mean, I think I still do the same things when I'm writing, it's just more efficient, I guess, 'cause I don't have to—I mean,

in the beginning, I was wasting a lot of time just thinking, like, does this sound right, am I coming across the right way. Now I just have a formula for it. I know I need to say this and this and this, and then end like this.

Interviewer: For the kinds of emails and things you're sending out?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Has having a formula for that kind of writing influenced your writing for your classes at all?

Interviewee: I'm sure it probably has in ways that I'm not seeing. I don't know, honestly
00:19:06.

Interviewer: Okay, so if I use the term reflective writing, what does that mean to you?

Interviewee: When I think of reflective writing, I think of going back to past experiences or past things that you've done and discussing what that means now and how you think of it now and how it was different from it was when that took place.

Interviewer: Okay. Have you used any reflective writing in your own writing processes?

Interviewee: Meaning like—can you explain that one?

Interviewer: Yeah, sure, like have you ever been assigned in a course to write a reflective—

Interviewee: Oh, yeah.

Interviewer: - kind of writing? Can you talk about that?

Interviewee: My [English course], we had to write a reflective paper. We had to pick one of the papers we did and write a reflection on it and what our process was and how we would've changed it had we had the chance to do it over. I honestly don't remember what I said for it. [Laughter]

Interviewer: Do you remember which one of your other papers you wrote about in that one?

Interviewee: Yeah, I wrote about the one I was telling you about earlier where we had to interview a student who was in an upper-level writing class and write about their paper. I really don't remember how I said I changed, though. [Laughter]

Interviewer: Okay, so did that process of reflective writing influence the way you wrote after that? Or—

Interviewee: I think it did because I realized kind of what mistakes I was making and how I could better, how I could improve on that later.

Interviewer: What kind of mistakes did you think you were making?

Interviewee: I guess I'm really not remembering what I said, but I do remember thinking when I was writing it like, oh, yeah, I should've done this and this and this. I had really good ideas while I was writing it. [Laughter] I don't remember now.

Interviewer: Okay. Fine. What have your experiences working with other writers in your courses been?

Interviewee: On most of my classes, we've done peer editing. I think that's really helpful. Then, I've had quite a few instances with writing in groups, too.

Interviewer: Okay, why don't we start with peer review. How has that been helpful to you?

Interviewee: I think it's really helpful because I just, a lot of things that you don't catch in your own writing. You know, like maybe something sounds crystal clear to you but then someone else reading it doesn't really know what you're talking about. Then just like little things like grammar errors that you kind of read over when you're editing your own paper that other people will catch right away. Like that.

Interviewer: Okay. Have you learned anything else from peer review?

Interviewee: I think editing other's papers really helps me, too, 'cause I can see, like, oh, they did this. Maybe I should add that in mine. That's helpful for me.

Interviewer: Do you have an example of something you learned from someone else's paper to put into your own?

Interviewee: Yeah, so in my scientific writing class when we were writing our results. There was another person in my peer review group who was writing about kids, but they had kids with developmental disabilities. In her, I think it [inaudible 00:22:34] our methods. When she was writing her methods, she had this paragraph in it about how they're recruited, the subjects were recruited, and signing consent forms and that whole process that I had just omitted from mine. I didn't even think about putting it in there. After I edited hers, I went back to mine and added in a little paragraph about that.

Interviewer: Great, so then you said you've also done collaborative or group writing projects?

Interviewee: A few, yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah? Can you talk about an experience with that?

Interviewee: What I was saying in my [English course], we did a group project with analyzing writing across genres. We did psychology and nursing. Our professor gave us this database, and we just had to go through and pick some papers from each genre and analyze them. We split up the papers. That didn't work out so well. [Laughter] Then, we just met up to talk about them. When we met up, it turned out I was the only one who had actually read the papers. [Laughter] I felt like it was definitely harder writing in a group because I didn't necessarily trust my group member to do their own work. I feel like I ended up taking on quite a bit of it and just writing it and just sent it to them and asked them if they thought it sounded okay. [Laughter]

Interviewer: Did you have anything positive that you took away from that collaborative group writing experience?

Interviewee: Yeah, I think it's good to write in a group because it does teach you how to work with others. I mean, it definitely did have some really good brainstorming sessions when we were trying to figure out what to write about. Ideas came up that I'm sure I would've never thought of on my own, you know? That was good.

Interviewer: Have you done group writing projects in any other classes?

Interviewee: I took a [inaudible 00:24:36] [Management course]. It's like small group communications. It wasn't necessarily writing like writing an essay, but we did write speeches in groups.

Interviewer: Can you talk about that a little bit?

Interviewee: Yeah. I'm trying to think of one of the projects. Our big one at the end was called at capstone project. I honestly don't remember what we wrote about. [Laughter] I think it was about leadership. That's what it was, and what makes a good leader. We were given this paper, and we were supposed to analyze it and say talking points and what to take away from it, and then talk about our own ideas of a leader. How we structured that was we came up with a general outline as a group and then assigned each person a certain point. They just wrote their part of the speech, and then we kind of like put it all together and edited each other's [mumbling 00:25:38].

Interviewer: Did that influence your own individual process outside of the group afterwards?

Interviewee: Not really in any ways that I can think of.

Interviewer: Okay. Did you learn anything from having to put all the papers together and edit them?

Interviewee: Yeah. Again, like my scientific writing class, it was a thing of I got more ideas from seeing the way other people structured theirs.

Interviewer: Okay, great. Do you have anything else to say about peer review? Have you done peer review anywhere besides your [English course]?

Interviewee: [English course] and scientific writing, we both did peer reviews. I felt like [English course] wasn't quite as helpful. I never got a whole lot of comments back on mine. A lot of it was because we were analyzing other papers, so they didn't necessarily know what I was writing about, so they couldn't have a lot of comments on it. You know?

Interviewer: 'Cause they hadn't seen your sources?

Interviewee: Yeah, exactly.

Interviewer: Okay. Did you learn anything helpful from peer review in [English course]?

Interviewee: No. Most of the stuff I've gained from peer review has been from my current scientific writing class.

Interviewer: If you were gonna give someone advice about writing, what are some things you would say to them about beginning a paper?

Interviewee: I always begin in the middle. I have a really hard time with introductions, so first I kind of make an outline of what I want to talk about. Then, I start with the body paragraphs and then write the meat of the paper, then go back and summarize that for the introduction and conclusion.

Interviewer: That's the advice that you would give?

Interviewee: I'd say—you're talking about how to begin a paper, you said, right?

Interviewer: Some things that you would tell someone as they begin writing a paper.

Interviewee: Yeah, so that's what I'd say.

Interviewer: Start in the middle?

Interviewee: Mm-hmm. [Laughter]

Interviewer: Do you have any other advice about writing that you would wanna share with other writers?

Interviewee: I just say stay true to your style because you kind of have to mold to what genre you're writing for. At the same time, it's gonna be a lot easier and a lot more natural if you just write with your own voice.

Interviewer: Okay. Can you talk about writing with your own voice a little bit more?

Interviewee: I mean, everyone has their own distinct style of writing. It's not something that I can necessarily explain, I feel like. I've read other people's writings and was like, this is so good. How can I write like this? Then I try, and I realize this is totally not natural for me. Then, I have to kinda go back to how I feel most comfortable writing. Which, again, I don't really know how that is. It's just what comes naturally to me.

Interviewer: Okay, great. Have you had any experiences with the new media writing?

Interviewee: What is new media writing?

Interviewer: Writing for blogs or websites, using sound or video, or even like a PowerPoint.

Interviewee: No, I've never written for a blog or website really.

Interviewer: Okay, not in the courses for your concentration?

Interviewee: Hm-mmm.

Interviewer: Or for your [English course]?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: Okay. You've been uploading pieces of writing to the study archive on CTools.

Interviewee: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: Okay. How has that been going for you?

Interviewee: Good. I'd fine, 'cause they're all sample that I've already written for classes. I just pick ones that I thought were good and that I got a good grade on and put them up there.

Interviewer: Okay, so what pieces did you choose?

Interviewee: I chose one from my freshman class, 'cause I think we had to, and I honestly don't remember which one it was 'cause we wrote quite a few papers. Then, for last semester, I only had to write one paper, so that was an easy decision. [Laughter]

Interviewer: Okay, and what paper was that?

Interviewee: It was my sociology class, my [Sociology course]. The class theme was the sociology of inequality and social stratification. We interviewed grandparents and parents

and then just composed an essay about what their social class was and how that goes across generations and how it influenced your lives 00:30:21.

Interviewer: Okay. Can you talk a little bit about that paper and kind of what you learned from it or—

Interviewee: I feel like I learned a lot from that paper because it was just really interesting getting to interview your own family. I mean, asking questions about social class is not something you do. You know? It was a good reason to ask these questions. Then, I really liked getting to apply it to my own life and figure out how that affects me now.

Interviewer: What did you learn by interviewing your family?

Interviewee: I guess I just, I learned more about the background that I came from. ‘Cause, I mean, you kind of have a general idea, but, again, social class, money, is kind of like a taboo topic in society. Especially from my dad, learning about how he grew up and how that influenced how he raised me. Then, we had to kind of think forward like, if we have kids, how will we use those experiences to raise them. It was really good knowledge.

Interviewer: Did you feel like you learned anything about writing or about your writing process through that?

Interviewee: I feel like for that one, I just told the story. For that, I actually never made an outline or anything like I normally do. I didn’t start in the middle. [Laughter] I just started at the beginning and told my grandparents’ story and then my dad’s story and then applied that to me. I just actually wrote it in order. That okay?

Interviewer: Do you think that worked well for you?

Interviewee: For that paper, yes, it did because it wouldn’t have made sense to go out of order for that one ‘cause it all builds off of each other.

Interviewer: Okay, great. Do you have any other comments or anything else you wanna say before we finish up?

Interviewee: Not that I can think of.

Interviewer: Okay, great. Thank you.

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