*Interviewer:* All right, this is \*\*\*. It is December 2nd. I'm here with \*\*\*, and \*\*\*, the first question today is how do you describe yourself as a writer?

*Interviewee:* I would describe myself as kind of a, I would say I like to find facts kind of, like I like to do research article writing. I like to kind of do more research paper versus creative. I like creative, but a lot of the time I'm not exactly on top of it. A lot of the time I would just write because I'm assigned writings. I don't really write in my free time. It's a lot of last minute writing.

*Interviewer:* Okay. What would you say your strengths or weaknesses are in terms of that research-based writing?

*Interviewee:* I'd say my strengths are finding the research. My weaknesses are maybe pulling out the key points of it sometimes and just citing sometimes kind of gives me a hard time, and maybe organizing it all into a paper form rather than just putting facts down.

*Interviewer:* Interesting, okay. How would you say you've changed over your time at [University of Michigan] as a writer, or grown?

*Interviewee:* I would say I'm getting better at organizing the papers in terms of formatting, and I'm getting better at finding articles, I think, and using—I would say just writing coherently versus quickly writing something down, and I'm revising more, and I'm learning to kind of find help when I need it. It's like the papers are coming together more. They're developing a little more than they used to.

Interviewer: Where do you find help?

*Interviewee:* I go to my GSIs [Graduate Student Instructors], or I went to the Sweetland Center once or twice.

*Interviewer:* Great. What other factors would have contributed to this growth as a writer?

*Interviewee:* I don't understand that question. *[Laughter]* 

*Interviewer: [Laughter]* What else would you attribute your growth to? You talked about going to GSIs, going to Sweetland, what else do you think helped cause this growth over the course of your time here?

*Interviewee:* I think I'm writing a lot more papers than I used to. In high school I'd say I wrote one a semester maybe, and this time I may be writing two or three. Even in the English classes we wrote four. We write four per class, and sometimes it's just a lot more writing and possibly just I'm trying to write to a

higher level, and so I'm putting more focus into it. Just because before I knew I could kind of get away with not putting too much effort into it, but now I want to try harder.

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

*Interviewee:* As a writer not too many goals. I really just kind of write to get my grades and move on kind of thing, but I'm going into a science major and so if I'm—I wanna keep learning how to write research papers just because a lot of the—you can submit papers and articles and things. I'd say my ultimate goal would maybe be writing articles and research papers for my area of focus.

*Interviewer:* Great, any goals related to your field in terms of writing or publishing?

*Interviewee:* Not too many yet because I'm not 100 percent sure of my direct field yet. *[Laughter]* 

Interviewer: I see, okay.

Interviewee: Yes.

*Interviewer:* Interesting. Now, 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 means to write well by I'd say finding or using books or articles to back up your facts and putting them together so they kind of flow smoothly, but at the same time not putting too—you have to bring your own voice into the paper. You can't just put all the facts—and you've kind of got to bring in opinions, like not opinions, but backed-up opinions, I guess, backed-up opinions, so just being able to put together different sources into a coherent, smooth paper.

*Interviewer:* Great, anything else? Any other criteria for a good paper or good writing?

*Interviewee:* Well, just like grammar and stuff. No more grammar mistakes. I'm a little too old for that now.

Interviewer: Yeah, true.

*Interviewee:* Having a great thesis is a lot of the times what—I know everyone looks for the thesis. Everyone that I get graded by and everything, they always look for the thesis, and so the thesis is important. Being able to, even in the introductory paragraph, showing what your argument is going to be early so the reader kind of understands what you're arguing, versus guessing throughout the paper so they don't feel like you're on the fence. You could be on the fence back

and forth, but if they're reading and they're not exactly sure what you're arguing for it's kind of harder for them to think of what you're doing.

Interviewer: What in your opinion makes a good thesis?

*Interviewee:* I would say a good thesis kind of just shows what you're arguing again. It explains maybe the main points of the paper, not the points but what the paper is mainly going to revolve around and showing what side of the argument you're on.

*Interviewer:* Great. Now, which first year writing requirement course did you take?

*Interviewee:* I did the—well, to start I did the [Writing course] course, the introductory or whatever that one was. Then I took [English course].

*Interviewer:* Okay, so let's talk about [Writing course] first. How did that affect you as a writer?

*Interviewee:* Well, that course—I think I was really glad I took that one before I took English. I think it really helped me understand what was expected of me 'til right now, and it helped me—we did a lot of—we had—it was like a 20-25 person class. We did a lot of—we took the papers, and we looked at each individual person's papers. We kind of edited them together, and so it helps just to see that everyone was having the same problems.

I would say that—I would say it was just helpful because they—you—help you she really helped me get to the argument points. Before having a direct argument in the paper maybe was a little bit of a hard part for me and getting it to specific points. At the same time, we also did some creative writings. Those are always like a different—like looking at writing from two different perspectives, and it was kind of just interesting to see the many ways you can write, and it sometimes doesn't have to be exact. It can be—kind of you can make it your own style.

*Interviewer:* You mentioned when you were doing group critiques there were a lot of similar problems. What were some of those problems that people were having?

*Interviewee:* I'd say similar problems were—organization was a lot. A lot of them were miscellaneous facts or miscellaneous points in the paper like we kind of went off on different tangents off to the side that weren't really relevant to the paper. Maybe we thought they were. It helped eliminate a lot of the excess baggage onto the papers, and so that helped a lot. I'd say that was probably one of the most common points. Past that just other—making sure we have a good thesis, topic sentences kind of thing and just the paragraphs kind of went into it smoothly. That's what I remember at least.

*Interviewer:* Any other ways that you grew or things that you learned in [Writing course]?

Interviewee: I'd say not too much that I can remember.

Interviewer: Okay. Then you took [English course].

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: Talk about that. How did [English course] affect you as a writer?

*Interviewee:* [English course] helped me—we did—I remember—we did a long novel summary or critique, and then we did a research paper one. I know we did two other ones, but I don't remember what those other ones were. [English course] really helped me kind of take the—we read *Frankenstein*, and it really helped me take the book and the articles that we read for the research paper and find relevant details into the books to form an argument.

For *Frankenstein* it was really finding—making an argument around *Frankenstein* was like a whole story. You had to pick out a certain point, and it was kind of—it made it easier to understand how narrow of a topic you can write about and still find information. You can still revolve a whole argument around it. When you do that for the reader it's kind of more interesting or more—you can tell their argument is backed up by a lot more because if you find a narrower point you can focus it a lot more. I would say that that class really just helped me focus my argument.

Interviewer: Great. Anything else about [English course]?

*Interviewee:* Not too much. I enjoyed it. I liked reading the books and everything. I thought it was like a—I took it with—they were all going into pre-med. It was like science and pre-med students, and so we read about science articles. We read some book about all these new science things, and that was really interesting.

*Interviewer:* Cool. Are you still making use of what you learned in [English course]?

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay, how so?

*Interviewee:* I would say mainly looking at the—I took anthropology classes, and we read books, and we had to make an argument from the book. I think that what we learned during the *Frankenstein* writing was helpful. My biology classes and my other—I'm a PitE major, the Program in the Environment.

Interviewer: Oh, okay.

*Interviewee:* In all my environment classes or my chemistry classes or my biology classes, any papers I have to write I have to back them up with research. I think learning—that [English course] taught me where my—the MLibrary and everything, and it really helped me learn where to get articles from and where to, how to pick out the best articles.

Interviewer: Right, so the research portion?

Interviewee: Yes, I think the research portion of [English course] helped me a lot.

Interviewer: Cool. Your concentration is technically what?

Interviewee: My concentration is Program in the Environment.

Interviewer: Okay, that's the concentration?

Interviewee: Yes, that's the concentration.

*Interviewer:* Okay, and have you had an opportunity to do writing in this concentration?

*Interviewee:* Nothing too extensive. I'd say we've had a couple one to two page short papers, but nothing—no real—they're more just short assignments or short answers rather than papers, so nothing too much. We've written maybe a page and-a-half about wind energy and renewable energies. I've written—I've done a PowerPoint presentation, but it wasn't any writing, so so far I'd say mostly no writing.

*Interviewer:* Wow. In what subjects were you doing all those papers you mentioned?

*Interviewee:* The papers? The one class I'm taking is [Political Science course], and those are just like a couple—one and-a-half to two page short answer responses.

Interviewer: Okay.

*Interviewee:* Then I took [Biology course]. We wrote a research paper that was maybe three or four pages long. From what I can remember that's all my science-related writing right now.

*Interviewer:* Wow, okay. Even just from those papers, though, the short papers, what affect have writing those papers had on you as a writer?

*Interviewee:* As a writer they're kind of teaching me how to write through a different background because I'd say writing for science is maybe a little different than writing for English. In writing for English it's—I want to say it's more of a story kind of thing. I'm in history classes right now too and I'm writing—it's kind of more like a story with a timeline, and the science kind of—it's more based around like responding to the facts versus finding a point and making an argument about it. I'd say the science ones kind of—as a writer I'm learning how to change my style into a more factual style.

Interviewer: You are taking history classes at the same time?

Interviewee: Yes, I'm taking [History courses].

Interviewer: Okay. How is the writing in those classes affecting you as a writer?

*Interviewee:* The [...] one is—I'd say I'm learning how to—we're reading, what do they call them, direct sources, the older books from like—the ones that were written at the same time [...]. In the class we're learning how to pick out what the real information in the books are versus just fluffed up information because they kind of—they didn't write exactly truth, and so we're learning how to pick out what to use there and then to put it in—make sure when you argue your point in the history papers that it kind of is realistic and you don't expect anything too much. It's really helping me with my, I'd say my organization in the papers, and kind of just my timeline in making sure that everything makes sense in the papers.

Then the [Culture course], it's a lot of—it's again, responding to readings. All the papers I've written by now are responding to readings, and so it's—and those are mostly, they're mostly opinions. It's kind of this is the first time in maybe since [Writing course] that I kind of just wrote my own style versus—and kind of like my opinions and just what I thought in kind of more of a creative approach.

*Interviewer:* Okay, great. How confident do you feel about writing? First, let's talk about in science.

*Interviewee:* In science I feel pretty confident. I'm comfortable finding period articles. I'm comfortable with writing through them. I'd say the most I've—the first semester last year, I did one or two research papers science-related. I was probably most comfortable then, and I kind of got a little less comfortable now because I don't remember—but every time—whenever I look at the articles, whenever I get to articles, the articles plus or whatever on the [University of Michigan] library page, I get pretty comfortable with them pretty fast. I like writing for science.

Interviewer: Okay, great. How about in humanities, history?

*Interviewee:* Humanities not as much. I feel like, sometimes I feel like I'm making arguments that aren't there maybe, like I'm just kind of forcing arguments to write a paper. A lot of the times, like especially if I'm not interested in the topic, it's kind of just hard to write and kind of just like a task to write. Especially a lot of the times it's a lot of not opinions, but—I don't know, opinionated arguments kind of about the histories maybe, and so I feel like there's not as much to write about occasionally unless I read a lot of background knowledge about it. I don't have enough background to write extensively on it, and so it just kind of feels maybe overwhelming. I just don't find too much interest in it because of that.

*Interviewer:* Right. Any other experiences in and out of the classroom that have had an effect on your writing?

*Interviewee:* I'd say not too much. Mostly just those classes I'd say are the main points.

Interviewer: Okay. What about-okay, changing tracks.

Interviewee: Okay.

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

*Interviewee:* Reflective writing means to me would be—my first thought was reading a book or reading like a writing and then writing what you thought about that writing, just kind of like your opinion and what you thought about, not too much in-depth writing, but just immediate reactions.

Interviewer: Have you ever used reflective writing in your own writing process?

*Interviewee:* I would say maybe to brainstorm. I wouldn't really do a reflective writing, but I would reflect—like write what I—I would write like maybe what the words I remember are or some key points I remember are right after reading just so I can remember them later. Maybe not too much immediate reflective writing.

*Interviewer:* Could you talk to me about your writing process, like how it works *[cross talk 18:23]*?

*Interviewee:* Usually my writing process I will read the item—get all—I'd find what I'm writing about, and if it's—I would go through my topics and kind of write—I'd brainstorm, like not *[inaudible 18:38]*, but I'd just make a list of everything I want to write about. I'd have like five or six points I want to write about, and then I would decide what order I want to put them into the paper just to make sure I have it flowing kind of smoothly.

Usually then I just go at the writing. I write it from beginning to end, and then I'll read through it once to proofread, and then I'll pretty much be done with it. I don't really go through it very much. I don't do drafts or anything, and this is generally the night—it's kind of like a fast writing because it's usually the night before it's due or maybe two nights, maybe. That usually doesn't happen. I usually—once I get it done, it's usually kind of late and so I don't—maybe towards the end I don't focus as much on it because I'm just kind of getting it done.

Then, yeah, not too much proofreading goes into it. The quick brainstorm at the beginning is probably the best I have for the process.

*Interviewer:* How much success have you had with that process in terms of how you feel about those end products?

*Interviewee:* Usually I feel like I can write a better end product, but when I get them back I usually get a grade I wanted *[laughter]*, and so it doesn't—I don't have any motivation to change it I'd say because normally I get what I want for the grades.

*Interviewer:* Okay, okay, so you learned kind of what's expected and just to meet those expectations—

Interviewee: Yes.

*Interviewer:* What are your experiences of working with other writers in your courses or in other contexts? What have those experiences been like? You mentioned a little bit doing peer reviewing in [Writing course], anything else?

*Interviewee:* I would say the [Writing course] peer reviewing was helpful. I'd say we tried to help each other a lot more. We edited our papers, and we helped each other with organization. We kind of tried to understand each other as to where we were coming from with the writing.

When we did the [English course] reviews a lot of the time people just had different opinions on how you should write things, and so they thought each others were bad—not bad, but not very well written. They tried to change chunks of it, or explain to you how to write. That was probably just the specific classmates. It probably wasn't like an overall class theme, but I just noticed in [Writing course] it was more constructive. In [English course] it was more, "I don't think you wrote this as good as you could have. You should look at mine," kind of paper.

Interviewer: Were the classes organized differently or formed differently?

*Interviewee:* Most of the time the [Writing course] was kind of—we worked in groups every day, or read together, or worked together on the papers. We talked with each other more maybe than the [English course]. We still—we talked, or we read—excuse me. We talked, we still talked together and everything and we still—maybe just a little less working together, but I'd say they were pretty much the same.

Interviewer: Just the classmates?

Interviewee: Yeah, I'm guessing it was just the classmates.

*Interviewer:* What was your experience in terms of your feedback to others? To what extent did you learn from having to critique other's papers?

*Interviewee:* I'd say it helps when you're writing, especially when you're writing about the same topic as others, when you're doing the same topic, then it really helps—when you read their paper and don't understand how they're getting to points it kind of helps your paper in terms of making sure you don't make the same mistake. If you see a mistake in someone else's paper it's easier to find it in your own.

When I'm reading my own papers I don't—I might read through it and say this makes perfect sense, but when others read it or when I read other's papers I get confused at theirs, so I can see why people would get confused at mine. I think that helps with just understanding where bumps in your paper could occur.

*Interviewer:* Great. Have you ever done any group or collaborative writing projects?

Interviewee: No.

*Interviewer:* Okay, and if you were going to give someone advice about writing, what are some of the things they should think about as they begin writing a paper?

*Interviewee:* I would say before writing get all your facts—not your facts, but your—I think brainstorming helps me a lot, just getting your key points down and what your arguments, making sure you know your argument. Then whatever you're writing about kind of gather the information about it. If you're writing about a book, read about—make sure you read the book thoroughly, or if you've got articles, read the articles. If it's creative writing, maybe just kind of like brainstorm what you remember or something like that. If you're making something up—a lot of the time I think a lot of the troubles that I may have is just thinking I know the information enough, and then I kind of like can't remember. I have to go back and forth a lot, which is not a bad thing, but maybe if you just understand it a little better to start it would help move the process a little smoother.

Then brainstorming helps, and reviewing it, or I think writing rough drafts helps a lot. I mean, I don't do it often, but I know when I revise my papers it always—I always make them—I always change a good number of things, so writing rough drafts will help.

*Interviewer:* Have you had any experiences with new media writing, that's like writing for blogs or websites using sound or video or PowerPoint presentations?

Interviewee: In [Writing course] we made a blog.

Interviewer: Okay.

*Interviewee:* I don't remember too much about it. I remember we responded to other people's blogs sometimes, and so we posted, they were like paragraph long summaries of our writings, or writings about—we had like assigned topics. She would say pictures—or she would give us a picture, and we'd have to write about that picture, or we'd have to write about maybe just a personal experience or something like that. I don't remember exactly. I know we responded to those blogs and responded to other people.

Then we presented a blog in class and kind of read it to the class, and then they critiqued it in person. That was fine. I liked that.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: PowerPoints?

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

*Interviewee:* I've done one or two PowerPoint presentations. The one I remember is from my [Environment course]. We presented about renewable dorm rooms. It was so we could find the most energy efficient things in dorm rooms, and we wrote—made a PowerPoint on the information with that.

*Interviewer:* Interesting. What affect have those experiences with a blog and with a PowerPoint had on you as a writer?

*Interviewee:* I'd say the blog at the time was kind of like—it was a different kind of writing because I was writing for other people—I was writing for my classmates and not for like a grade. I mean, it was for a grade, but it was kind of writing for a different purpose. Overall, I don't think they had too much effect on me. At the time it was good, but right now I don't think it had any effect on me right now, two years later.

Interviewer: Okay.

*Interviewee:* Then the PowerPoint, I don't do very many PowerPoints, but I know presenting is always helpful. I believe the more PowerPoints that I'm assigned it will kind of help me out as I go along cuz I am not the best presenter or speaker, and so having a good PowerPoint always helps. It maybe helped me get my points down and make sure I get all my information together.

*Interviewer:* Okay, so the last piece on the agenda, you've been uploading pieces of writing to the study archive on C-Tools [learning management system].

Interviewee: Yes.

[...]

*Interviewer:* Right. What was your kind of thought process as you were choosing pieces?

Interviewee: Well, I think I've done two pieces by now.

Interviewer: Okay.

*Interviewee:* Last semester I didn't do any writings, and so I was told I could submit a previous writing or an earlier writing. For that one I kind of picked one of my favorite writings that I did, which was the—I believe I submitted my [English course] writing, which was like a longer eight or nine page research article. That was interesting to me to write about that, but the first writing I submitted I wrote two that semester and I just chose between the one that I thought sounded better. It was kind of just like putting my best one into the uploading.

*Interviewer:* Okay. Why do you consider that eight or nine page English paper your best writing?

*Interviewee:* I would say it was one of the longer ones I did. Usually a lot of papers I write are like three or four pages long, and it was a topic I was interested in. I was able to put my own opinion, or my own twist, on it a little more versus something that I don't have too much knowledge about. I kind of am just a lot of filler. With that paper I kind of was able to—it went a lot faster when I wrote it, and it was—it wasn't as strenuous because I was able—I knew what I writing about since I liked it better.

[...]

*Interviewer:* Cool. As for the other piece, what was your thought process in choosing that second piece?

Interviewee: I don't remember which one I picked to be honest.

Interviewer: Okay, let's-you can open it up on CTools.

Interviewee: Okay. Dropbox?

Interviewer: Yeah.

*Interviewee:* Okay, this one was my—I wrote it for anthropology class last year. It was a book—or not a reflection. I don't know. A book argument—it was an argument based on a book that we read through the anthropology class [...]. [...].

This was like a long—I enjoyed that book a lot. It was more interesting than I thought it was going to be. It was an easier read I would say, and so writing about it I kind of had an opinion about it the whole time. When I was writing that paper it was—I found that I wanted to say stuff about the book, and so the paper kind of went better. I submitted that paper because I thought that the paper sounded good, or well, sounded good because I was interested in the topic again.

[...]

Interviewer: Okay, the anthropology one?

Interviewee: No, the other one, this one.

Interviewer: Okay.

*Interviewee:* That was the first. I submitted anthropology first, but I wrote that one first.

[...]

*Interviewer:* I see. Did you notice—do you think one or the other is stronger? Do you find that it shows your growth or—?

*Interviewee:* I would say the anthropology one is stronger just because I'm getting more used to writing a solid thesis statement, and I'm getting used to my organization better. I think every paper I write I'm getting a little more—like maybe I'm not that good of a writer, but every paper I'm getting a little more developed with my formatting and just making sure my argument is precise.

*Interviewer:* Great, any other ways that you find your writing has changed from paper A to paper B?

*Interviewee:* Nothing too major I'd say, just I think I'm doing better with key points and making sure—just there's no extraneous information. I think the best thing I've done probably is making sure that I don't have extra information.

*Interviewer:* Great. Let's see, any other comments on writing, your experience at Michigan writing?

*Interviewee:* From my classes I've taken there's not too many opportunities to just kind of make your own writing. I guess maybe like when I'm writing maybe a research paper later I can write my own writing, but a lot of the writing I've done by now is kind of writing for a grade. It's kind of a specific, narrow focus and everything.

Interviewer: Okay, anything else?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: All right, thank you so much.

[End of Audio]