Interviewer: This is xxx. I'm interviewing xxx on—is today the 23rd?

Interviewee: Yeah, 23rd.

Interviewer: 23rd of April. […].

Interviewee: Yeah.

[…]

Interviewer: You're at this point where you're concluding—you were at [University of Michigan] for the full four years, right?

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: As you're wrapping up that experience now, a really general question to start: how would you describe yourself as a writer?

Interviewee:[Pause] I would say that I'm [pause]—at the point where I feel like I understand writing enough that I'm actually more focused on my ideas. [Pause] This semester particularly, I've done a lot of different projects for the writing minor capstone. I did a podcast which turned out to be 50 minutes and a really long thing. I loved doing it. Then I did an honors thesis, which turned out to be around 75 pages, which not that big, but considering that my major is so funny, they were like, "Oh, just do 30 pages." That's the minimum.

Then I was also in a creative writing class, and I did a lot of creative work for that. For me, I'm almost less concerned with what I think—I have skills. As a writer, I'm creative. I know how to draft so that the first draft might be bland, but the next draft will have more turns of phrase, will be more lyrical, more sophisticated in terms of language. I also feel like I have a better understanding of form. [Pause]

I've done all these different forms. Also mostly through being a tutor and seeing so many papers and seeing so many things people have issues with, I feel like I get what an academic paper is supposed to do. I feel like I get what a podcast is supposed to do. For my creative work, having an understanding of what makes a particular thing great and how the form reflects that is important.

An academic essay is about arguing a point, or ultimately to show your knowledge. Mostly for students, it's arguing a point. That's why it's important that you have a thesis which states the point you're arguing, your main bit of knowledge, so that the rest of the paper is mainly just supportive of that. As a

writer, I would describe myself as capable. I would describe myself as varied. [Pause]

Interviewer: That's interesting. We're talking about how you're seeing yourself at this point leaving school. If you think back to when you arrived in Ann Arbor and were just starting as a first-year student, how would you describe yourself at that point in time? Would this characterization look similar to what you've just described?

Interviewee: The biggest difference is now I'm self-confident in myself as a writer. Before, I was liable to listen to professors and listen to jargon. My first-year writing professor, he didn't teach us how to write a thesis. He didn't teach us how to write a good thesis. Then also, he was going too fast too quickly. He thought he was, because he was like, "Oh, these three sentences will describe what you're doing."

No, a thesis is one sentence. Then also, I find too when people worry and stress about transitions, it's really because they don't have good topic sentences or summary sentences. When people walk in and be like, "Oh, my professor's hassling me about my transitions." I'll just be like, "Oh, okay, I see what they're trying to do, but not doing well. "Other than me being obnoxious, I would say that before I didn't know. Before I didn't know, I felt confident because I had a strong high school foundation. [Chuckles]

Then I was instantly confused when I was bombarded by jargon, having to do assignments that—I don't know why first-year writing courses do this. They need to stop. They assign assignments that do not reflect what you will actually write in college. They'll have you do things like, "Here's a summary paper." No one's gonna assign you a summary paper after [English course]. I get that they're trying to teach people how to dig into a text, but if they wanna do that, then be honest about it and just ask questions about a particular text.

Don't have them write a five-page paper about it, because it teaches them to summarize. Then the other thing too is what is it with professors being like, "This isn't your typical five-paragraph essay. This isn't gonna have your typical thesis…" it's like, wait a second. One, if you wanna make someone into a confident writer, don't insult their previous experiences. That's not cool. Two, most papers—writing my academic thesis, my advisor was like to me, "[…], it's not a murder mystery. Make it clear very early what your point is."

This whole thought of, "Oh, let's not include a thesis," you have to be able to walk before you can run. Yes, more sophisticated papers in the New Yorker don't, but for the purpose of college, for the purpose of the next step, learning how to write a thesis and state your point explicitly, and then moving on to more subtle ways to do it I think is a better way to teach it.

When I was a freshman, I was very not confident about my writing. I didn't know how to focus my writing. Since then, I've done so many different types of writing. I've tutored so many students and seen the same issues over and over again. For me, the most important things for my writing development were actually tutoring. Then when I—the Asian Studies capstone course, [Asian course], basically has you read all the U of M [University of Michigan] Asian studies professors' big papers.

Interviewer: Oh, interesting. Was Asian studies part of your major? Are you a dual major?

Interviewee: I thought I was. I'm just an Asian studies major.

Interviewer: I'm sorry to interrupt. You were saying you were reading the professors' prominent works.

Interviewee: Yeah. All we did was talk about them. Talk about what didn't work. Talk about here's the thesis. Here's where his argument breaks down. Doing that really helped me understand the structure and also gave me—people and models to look up to. You know? It was also really interesting too, because they were like, "You know, my friend is taking a class with that professor. I know that professor." I would say the biggest challenge for me has been learning more confidence in myself and in my abilities, but also understanding—not that professors don't know what they're doing, but sometimes we're bad about talking about writing.

Interviewer: As you're graduating, what are some goals that you have right now for yourself as writer? You mentioned actually—to sort of clarify where you're headed next, you mentioned before I turned the recorder on that you're gonna be teaching English, right?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: In Asia. Maybe these things are connected, maybe not.

Interviewee: Oh, well I'm not gonna be teaching writing.

Interviewer: Oh, I'm sorry. I misunderstood.

Interviewee: [Pause] No, no not at all. The thing about it is, when you teach English in Asia, typically you're teaching conversation. [Pause] I actually was thinking, I was like, "You know, if I needed a little money, I could tutor English essays for application essays." Because tutoring is something I really enjoy doing. I really enjoy tutoring ESL [English as a Second Language] students.

Interviewer: Great.

Interviewee: There's that.

Interviewer: Maybe thinking more broadly then, not just about the next step career-wise. What goals you might still have for yourself as a writer.

Interviewee: When I go to Asia, I want to make sure that I can keep a blog. That's what I'm hoping to do.

Interviewer: Interesting. Great idea.

Interviewee: [Pause]I can record my experiences. The other thing is, I have a lot of projects in my head, and creative work that I wanna do before I'm too swamped to do it. [Pause] I'm really excited about that. As for in the broader scheme of things where my writing will be, [coughs] I wanna be in some way involved with multicultural or international education, which sounds like jargon. Mostly what I mean by that is I'm torn between being more on the administrative side and working for programs that involve that, or being more on the "Should I get a master's in ESL [English as a Second Language] linguistics and then see if I can teach English, but maybe more to older students and more related to writing?"

Interviewer: Really interesting.

Interviewee: You don't wanna get me talking too much about that. I can talk endlessly about that, because there's a lot—it's interesting to me. Anyways.

Interviewer: As you were describing some of your goals, you mentioned the idea of a blog project in particular is a really specific goal. Is there any particular reason that you've identified a blog as what will be a useful thing while you're recording what you experience working in Asia?

Interviewee: For me personally, having a blog will give me some accountability. Because I'm going to share it with my friends and family so that we can keep track of each other. If I don't have that accountability of, "Oh, I'm going to do it next week," I'm really bad at keeping diaries. Because if I'm actually doing stuff, I'll be doing it. I won't be necessarily writing about it as much. For me, writing is more this reflective time where I set up in my coffee shop, […]

Interviewer: [Laughter] True. You see the blog as somehow different from that kind of diary reflection?

Interviewee: I do, because it's something that's public.

Interviewer: [Inaudible 13:21]

Interviewee: It's definitely going to be highly personal. At the same time too, you have to be aware of your audience and who could be looking at it. I'm planning to make it available only by—I'm probably just going to ask my family and friends to get Wordpress [content management system] accounts and then specifically allow them. You do have to be careful, because I have no intention of bad-mouthing my program or saying anything that can come off in the wrong way. You never know. When something's public, it's public. There's a limit to how much you can control it. If you start out more private, you can figure out where you wanna do it.

Interviewer: Right. Now, really interesting thinking. Thinking now about your writing experiences ac[Ross Business School] U of M [University of Michigan], and we've started to talk a little bit about it already, but ac[Ross Business School] that collection of classes and experience what would you say now that it means to write well?

[Pause 14:32 – 14:40]

Interviewee: How do I phrase this? To write well is to understand your purpose. It's to understand your purpose and to fulfill your purpose. Academic paper. Find new knowledge. My podcast, it was more about just an exploration of different topics. Some humor just to keep it engaging. Setting out your goals, and then making sure that you have specific ways that you achieve them. One thing I tell students even if they're writing creative work, even if you don't put that sentence in your essay, have some sort of thesis.

Because a good thesis has what your main idea is, and it also has what the purpose is, why that idea matters. Having those two things in your back pocket can help you see, "Okay, here's where I'm going with this." On the ground level, there's the structural elements, that, "Does it fulfill its purpose?" Then also, I hate the people who are just like, "Being a good writer is being able to have a eloquent, is that even a word? I've seen it, but I haven't said it. [Inaudible 16:08]

Who have excessive metaphors, excessive descriptive language, excessive that kind of thing. We've all read them. They all have the tendency to be like, "Here's why the modern critic still matters, because we can write so much better than these other people." Not necessarily that, but you do on a base level want the pros, the actual language to be engaging and to flow. Flow with quotation marks. That's the thing people—

Interviewer: [Laughter] I'm okay with flow.

Interviewee: Flow and just be comfortable to read. Sentence length, all the basic building block things that we think, "Oh, they contribute to it," but we're never quite sure how they do it. […]

Interviewer: [Laughter] Sure.

Interviewee: That's how I think of it. Also, for me too, I still associate writing with ideas, with having good ideas. I'm not always sure that that association is fair. I feel like for a lot of writing classes, are they grading you on your ideas, or are they grading you on your writing? If they're just grading you on your writing, it's always weird when students always get really freaked out about having a very simple thesis.

Being like, "They probably already know this!" There's a certain merit in the relationship, because a lot of not very good writing is very simple in terms of ideas. They don't complicate it. They don't show a greater implication. I do think good ideas don't necessarily make great writing. In order for there to be good writing, there has to be some good ideas. They don't have to be entirely original, original. [Pause]

Interviewer: This next question may actually sort of build on that a bit. It asks which upper-level writing courses you took, and what were your experiences in those courses?

Interviewee: [Asian course], which I already talked about, is an upper-level writing course. I really loved it, because it was a small class. Right now, I'm in writing—actually, no. I'll talk about [Writing course], [Writing 400 level course], whatever it is now.

Interviewer: Is that the capstone course?

Interviewee: The capstone.

Interviewer: There's some really specific questions about that too.

Interviewee: [Ross Business School] talk 19:08] That was where we read the essays. We talked about them, and we talked about the ideas, and we talked about the core about the writing. "I don't think this section had much point. Blah, blah, blah." That was really great. It was really just a friendly class. Then we wrote response papers to them. Then we wrote a big essay at the end, which wasn't as hard to do, because it's like we had been reading other people's big essays. It's like, "Okay." Let's look at what other people have done. They weren't always the same, but I really enjoyed that. It also helped me better appreciate the Asian studies department as an intellectual community.

Interviewer: That's interesting.

Interviewee: [Chuckles] It's like, "Oh, my friend has a class with [instructor]. I've read her paper. I want to meet her. I should've met her before, 'cause her paper

has a lot to do with my honors thesis." I just didn't have the time. When I meet her, I'm gonna be like, "Oh, I loved your paper […]!"

Interviewer: [Laughter] That's great.

Interviewee: Before that, I took as an upcoming sophomore over the summer, I took [English course].

Interviewer: Is that [Title of course]?

Interviewee: [Pause] [Title of course]. I liked that class. I did well in that class. I experimented a lot with revision. Unlike my freshman courses, it was meaningful revision. Changing the order, discussing how things work. I think it was a good class, and I enjoyed it. I know that some of the other people in the class were frustrated with it, because they felt like the grading was arbitrary. I wonder. I don't know. I wonder if part of the reason for that was because I was mimicking. I was mimicking having a thesis without having a thesis.

Interviewer: Do you mean a thesis within whatever essay you were working on, or a thesis like a dissertation thesis.

Interviewee: I mean a thesis as in the main argument of a point. Other individuals aren't always as cognizant of how to have a main point. They would just write about an experience. It was mostly—it's hard to know if it was them or if they could've gotten more from the teacher. I got my first professor who wouldn't read my writing but would just talk about it.

Interviewer: In [English course]?

Interviewee: [pause] [English course], yeah. Because he was just like, "We can talk about your essay. That's more effective than me reading your essay and talking about it." At the same time, I feel like that makes it harder to incorporate those structural elements and issues. That's why I feel like what I meant by saying, "I have a thesis without having a thesis." I understand the structural elements as part of my prior knowledge. [Pause] I didn't struggle as much in that class as other people did.

Interviewer: I just wanna make sure I understand that last experience you described. You would meet one on one with the instructor to talk about the work, and you weren't receiving any sort of written feedback, comments, or?

Interviewee: Basically, it's a three-credit class. Meets twice a week for an hour and a half. A lot of it is reading creative non-fiction works and talking about them. Then there's writing a draft, submitting it, and then as I recall, I think I did get some feedback. I don't remember a lot of feedback. Then to the final project,

there were probably two, three revisions. Then the middle part was where he wouldn't actually read it.

Interviewer Oh, okay. He would just talk about the process then maybe?

Interviewee: [Pause] Talk about the ideas. […]. He really wanted me to write about the dying of the American small town and the American dream, which is this weird obsession of so many professors. "Okay, was there ever really an American Dream?"

Interviewer: [Chuckles] Great question.

Interviewee: [Pause] Oh gosh. It's gonna be so awful reading the transcript, and you'll see "But, um. But, um. But, um." Anyways.

Interviewer: Don't worry about that.

Interviewee: I wanted to write […], which is in part difficult, because we come from such different places. Also because we come from such different times. That's what I focused on. It was more discussing that kind of thing than it was discussing, "Oh, where should this paragraph go," or, "Oh, is this description effective?" To be honest, that was my earliest upper-level writing course. I don't remember it as well. I wasn't as confident in my abilities so that I could take a step back and evaluate it.

Then upper level writing course? I took [Writing course], the peer tutoring course. I enjoyed learning about tutoring. I thought that it was a little strange how we did academic papers. We had to do a big research paper. I ended up having to dumb down my research paper, because I think he had in mind—there was a divide between what kind of research paper would go into an academic journal, and what kind of paper would go into a writing centered journal. A writing centered journal would be more focused on practical applications.

"Here's how we can do things differently." Well, I think a lot of students wanted to do more academic, "Here is this cool idea I found." I wish that had been made more explicit, and maybe even shown more examples of the paper we would write. I thought that honestly, I think a lot of people were surprised coming into the class that it was actually writing intensive. [Pause]

Interviewer: Because?

Interviewee: Because typically when you have a class that's training for a job, typically it's more focused on the doing, on action. I'm just thinking, I don't think writing so much hindered me in learning, but I don't think—mostly, I learned how to tutor by actually tutoring. Too, there's this tendency to be overly analytical and reflective. Reflection and analysis are great. At the same time, when you're

going—it's like when you're tutoring, you don't have the space to analyze and reflect.

Often times too——you have to be—a lot of it's about being super friendly and responding to the needs of the students, which may have nothing to do—I was telling a guy, "Go talk to your academic advisor about [Ross Business School], okay?" [phone rings][Pause] I feel like sometimes, there's the thought that by reflecting on writing, by reflecting on how to tutor and analyzing how good tutoring works, that's a step. At a certain point, you have to write. I feel like at a certain point too, self-consciousness is not a good thing. Because it's like how they say good leaders, they don't second guess themselves constantly.

Well, what the super-reflective writing asks you to do is to second guess yourself constantly. It encourages you to be down on yourself because it's like, "Oh, look. She's being critical! She's being self-aware." That really hindered me in my first semester of tutoring. Then my second semester, I tutored eight hours a week. I had so many papers that I was just like, "Whatever with the rule book. Here's how I'm doing it."

Interviewer: [Chuckles] Right, that's interesting. Are there other writing courses that you've taken that we haven't touched upon?

Interviewee: [Writing course]. [Asian course]. There's my honors thesis, which also qualifies as upper level writing.

Interviewer: We talked about [English course]—was it [English course] that you took as your first-year writing course?

Interviewee: It was RC [Residential College] Core.

Interviewer: RC Core. Okay.

Interviewee: [Residential College course]. Let me think. [English course]. Sorry, I spoke wrong. [English course].

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: Then [Asian course]. [Writing course]. Then there's my Asian studies, and then there's [Writing course], the capstone course.

Interviewer: We'll talk about that in just a couple minutes. We've covered all the writing-focused—

Interviewee: Yeah, unless you wanna talk about the capstone course. I think you're asking—

Interviewer: We are definitely gonna talk about the capstone course. Let's just hit a couple other things before we turn there.

Interviewee: Sure.

Interviewer: In your concentration, the Asian studies major, the question asks, "Did you take writing courses in your concentration?" We've already spoken to at least [Writing course], right? Were there others at all that you viewed as writing-intensive courses within the concentration specifically?

Interviewee: Well, there's the honors thesis, which is writing intensive. It does depend on your advisor. I didn't really think so. I think there's a lot of writing, but it's not focused on teaching writing. Some classes, like the [Civilization course] are more focused on getting a breadth of knowledge about a country or culture. Then the next classes are more about exploring different topics. Right now, the Asian studies department is basically doing contemporary controversies, which are super interesting classes.

For those, I've done writing, but it's not as focused on the actual writing. It's more focused on the ideas, or what particular topic you're engaging in. to a certain extent, your research, because some topics of those are talked about immensely.

Interviewer: That makes sense. This next question may be what they're driving at, asking about the major—the question is, now that you're about to graduate, how confident do you feel about writing in your concentration specifically, in that major area?

Interviewee: [Pause] Well, I feel like that question doesn't really apply well to Asian studies, because Asian studies is a kitchen sink. A lot of the Asian studies—I don't know numbers, but some Asian studies faculty are trained as historians. Some Asian studies faculty are trained as literature critics. Some are trained as anthropologists. There's a strange number of people who specialize in Buddhism. I don't know why it's a particular fascination here [laughter] or in this department, but so many! So much on Buddhism.

There isn't really—it's very interdisciplinary. I can write well, so I feel like I can write well in my concentration. There's nothing particular about writing well in my concentration. If I were to write an anthropology paper, I think I could research it and figure out how to write it well. My analysis is more focused on cultural studies, which is more theoretical. I can write well in that. I feel like because I've been exposed to so many different genres that I could—if it's a humanity or social science genre other than political science and the more analytical and quantitative social science, I could do it, yeah.[Pause]

Interviewer: This next question may get at that idea a little more clearly too. The question asks, how often have you used some kind of skill or strategy learned in one of your writing classes and then applied it in another course?

Interviewee: [Pause] I've applied what I've learned through tutoring in practically every course. Basically, I read my own papers, and I'm like, "Practice what you preach. Where's your thesis? Where are your topic sentences?" Last semester, I was—this semester has been difficult because I've had two writing—actually, three writing-intensive courses. Then last semester, I was part-time. I basically in the three classes I was taking, I applied that. I did really well without as much struggle comparatively to semesters before.

Interviewer: That's interesting. Can you think of an example maybe? Just to help me see that process?

Interviewee: [pause] Sure. When I tutor people, when I explain the thesis, I use—I have been repeating this so much. That's why I'm laughing. The How, the What, and the Why. What is your argument? How are you argument? Why does it matter? Then usually I come up with some strange example. In my own writing, after learning that—I was doing an essay for an [American Culture course]. I was doing an essay on Thomas—I think it was Bennett, the muralist. It's all about his particular movement.

I was just like, "Thomas Bennett shows the—" oh my god. I've forgotten all the words. Thomas Bennett shows the—what was it called? Basically this form of painting during the '30s that was all about social consciousness. He also shows the limits. By looking at his work, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. That's not exactly how I worded it. I worded it better. That contained all the parts that I talked about. Once you have a good thesis—

Once you have the how, by looking at this, you can say, "Okay. Here's about this mural. Here's race in this mural. Here's gender in this mural. Here's class in this mural." Then throughout it, you just weave in at the ends and the beginnings that why factor. My main thing was showing the limitations of this movement at that time. it was trying, but it was still, you know, not where it should've been—well, not where it could've or should've, but where we want to be.

Then I did this for a class I did on digital media. It was a really fun class. We wrote about the difference between the perception of reality in Toy Story and in Jurassic Park and how CGI [computer-generated imagery] was used. It was all about immediacy and hyper mediation. It was basically along the lines of, through comparing the narrative and the aesthetic of Toy Story and Jurassic Park, we can see that they each desired to create their own reality.

One has a hyper mediated narrative and an immediate appearance. The other has a hyper mediated appearance but an immediate narrative. This is done. Here's why

this was done for different effects. You wanna be comfortable and charmed in Toy Story, so it's not clear. It's very clear that you're just watching computer generated energy, while in Jurassic Park, they want you to think it's real and be scared so they wanted to appear immediate. [Ross Business School] talk 37:12]

Interviewer: Great. Those are great examples of that too. Let's talk a little bit about the capstone course. Did you take it this term?

Interviewee: Yeah, I'm taking it this term.

Interviewer: It's wrapping up right now?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: The first question just asks really generally what impact that course has had overall on your writing.

Interviewee: I was really frustrated with the capstone course. I was really bored.

Interviewer: Ah, interesting.

Interviewee: I'm not even gonna lie.

Interviewer: No, no. That's why we're doing the interview.

Interviewee: Because the class was too big. It was 18 students.

Interviewer: Too many people, okay.

Interviewee: It was too many people, and so many of the things we did in class had absolutely nothing to do with me or my project. I also got really frustrated too, because we were put into groups, and we were always put in the same groups. I found it really frustrating, because I was the media person. I found it really frustrating because I only got two peoples' feedback, one of whom—her project was only loosely connected to my project. Honestly, she didn't really have that good of feedback or anything interesting to say.

It was also hard too, because my project—almost everyone else, their project was in some way related to coming to terms with the college experience. The audience for it was the people in that room, was college students. My project was about media criticism in sci-fi and fantast and cult media works. My audience was not necessarily every single person in that room. I found that very frustrating. I found it frustrating too because [Pause] [pause] I didn't feel like there was any purpose in me going to class. I felt like my time would've been better spent at home, working on my project. Especially because—

Interviewer: Why do you say that?

Interviewee: Well, because if you sit there for an hour and a half and people are talking about, "Oh, here's how we talk about this in creative non-fiction," it's like, "Eh, that doesn't relate to me." A lot of it sometimes too was just so general. We did this exercise, which I thought it was a decent exercise, but it was all about conveying an emotion without saying it. Describe a barnyard from the perspective of a guy whose son died, but never say his son died, or blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.

It's like, "Yeah, that's an interesting thing, but it has nothing to do with my project." More than that, I didn't really feel like I had learned anything from it. I just didn't feel like I had learned anything. There's the developmental essay. I suppose this just shows my turn, but I got so bored with reflecting. I almost felt like it was excessive. Then when I was reading other people's essays, so often they were like, "Why should anyone care about this?" Because they didn't connect well to another idea.

For me, I almost didn't wanna write about myself. I ended up writing a lot about what I talked to you about, about how I was just like, "Here's how professors are doing wrong in college writing," I say from my infinite opinion as an undergraduate who has tutored a year and a half. I just felt like I could've benefitted way more if it worked the way an honors thesis works, where I could get a faculty advisor to meet with me every one to two weeks, depending. Then schedule out my work throughout that. [Pause]

Interviewer: Interesting.

Interviewee: [inaudible 41:49] That way you can find someone who's interested in what you're interested, and knows about what you're doing. I was frustrated too, because I felt like my project was—I had to go up to the , record the vocals, do the audio editing, which takes a lot of time, add music. One of the things I did was I interspersed the audio from a television show. Then I would narrate what was going on. That takes time. That takes effort.

I loved my project, but at the same time, I looked around at the other projects people were doing, and I was just like, "Where's the time and effort?" A lot of them were just like—to be fair, I haven't seen everyone's. One of them was a movie. In my group, one girl, she did an iMovie [video editing software] basically on why she loves Ann Arbor. I didn't think that was intellectually rigorous. I didn't think it was rigorous in terms of creating it, neither in the writing nor in the actual formatting. [Pause]

Everyone's giving you the same grade depending on points. While I like the gamified version for that reason, at the same time, I feel like it lets people do what's comfortable, or at least no one's pushing them to do something

uncomfortable. I just [Pause] [pause] was really frustrated with what I felt was just rehashing basically the same things we talked about in the gateway course, which were new and interesting then about reflection. Not as interesting in a capstone course.

When you've already discussed reflection, you already have an appreciation of reflection. You're more concerned with, "How do I go out and—" many of them are concerned about their professional writing. I felt like [Pause] [pause]—just frustrated with the course. I felt like I didn't get much out of it at all.

Interviewer: Were there ways at all that you think the experiences you did have in the course, even if they weren't wholly positive, may have still had an impact on your sense of yourself as a writer?

Interviewee: [Chuckles] Well, I feel like I was like, "Oh, wow. I'm so much better than a bunch of these people. "No. Well, a little, some of them. For my podcast, I definitely grew as a writer, because I was thinking more about how do I introduce something in a different way? How do I keep something varied, but at the same time keep something understandable? It posed a really interesting challenge of, how do you simultaneously make something understandable to a general audience, but still interesting to the audience I'm looking at, which is a very particular audience.

Interviewer: The podcast, I just wanna be clear 'cause you're addressing the next question, which was about what the experience of that project had on you as a writer. You're way ahead of us. That podcast you're describing, just for the benefit of whoever might be reading, that was your project, right?

Interviewee: [pause] Yeah. My podcast project. That was valuable. As far as learning from the actual course, I don't think there was anything—the only meaningful stuff I did I discovered on my own in working through my own—part of this was because it was such a large course that he couldn't really connect with the students.

At the same time too, I almost wish that we could've been paired with people based—paired with a professor based more on our interests, because professors, he's a really nice guy. At the same time, he's—most of my stuff is about cult media stuff. He doesn't get it. He doesn't know it. In talking about podcasting, I didn't find him as useful either, because he was giving me a lot of very specific feedback about change this thing, change this thing.

I wanted more, "How is it working as a whole? What is your feeling as whole?" Sometimes too, you can't account for personality differences. At the same time, I feel like I didn't get enough feedback. At the same time, I [pause] [pause]—the feedback I got wasn't what I wanted.

Interviewer: Let's talk a little bit more about that project, just so that I'm clear. Just describe what the topic was and also maybe how you arrived at it.

Interviewee: My project, I wanted to do a podcast because I'm a huge fan of podcasts, like This American Life Media Lab, Snap Judgment. […].

[…]

Interviewee: I wanted to do a podcast like that. This American Life talks about creative non-fiction. Radio Lab talks about science. I wanted to do something about media criticism. I wanted to do something based around the ideas that are present in multiple formats. Just turns that I was seeing over a course of all the things I've played. I'm a huge fan of reading reviews and that sort of stuff, even for stuff I've already read, or watched, or played.

Looking at things [Ross Business School]-boundaries, and looking at things from a media convergence level. I would talk about [Pause] atrope 48:05, which in this case is coming back from the dead. Then I would talk about it in different media and how it works. Not only thematically in the story, but also, "Why would an artist choose to do this? What benefit does it give?"

One of the examples is, for video game, they killed off the main character and brought him or her, depending on—not gonna go into that. Back from the dead in the beginning of the game. They did this because thematically, it makes it more urgent. It makes the bad guy much more powerful if they killed off the first person. It places the player who in the past game was at the top, places them back down at the bottom in terms of skill, and also in terms of you're in a feeling of vulnerability.

You're no longer the hero, so you're sorting out who you are. Then I talked about Lady Lazarus, the poem by Sylvia Plath. I talked about the story Lazarus from the bible. I tried to do it in a fun way, you know? Talked about Game of Thrones, Battlestar Galactica, and then Frozen and Mass Effect two. Just a breadth of media. They all feature this. This is how even though these things are so different, this is how this common works. [pause]

Just in why they chose to kill someone and bring them back, but also thematically, how it affects the person and how it affects the themes in the book. With Battlestar Galactica, it was a lot of discussion of, "Does technology obliterate the soul?"

Interviewer: That sounds great. You've expressed some of the concerns you have about the feedback you got on the project, the peer work that happened on the project. Are there ways that the experience of working on the—I mean, a really sophisticated and broad project changed your sense of yourself as a writer, or allowed you to see anything in a different light, maybe?

Interviewee: [Pause] What I associate with this project, one, it was another one of those projects with—writing projects with that classic problem of, "I need to say something really simply that is actually really complicated." How much information does the reader need to know? Engaging with that question was something that I think encouraged me to grow, encouraged me to think meta-ly. For me too, a huge part of the project was about things that are not necessarily—do they count as writing? Choosing what music to back my voice to. Choosing my delivery.

Interviewer: Oh, interesting.

Interviewee: [Pause] Choosing how to put the recorded video against my voice. Choosing am I gonna—what clips do I show? How do I show them? The huge struggle for my project was, on the one hand, me talking about, "Does technology obliterate the soul?" but then how do I still keep it light, and funny, and engaging, and not have too much gravitas. Dealing with that challenge and all the weird things I did to try to deal with that challenge. I'm just thinking about—this is exactly why my project isn't for a general audience. Part of it—have you ever heard of Flight for the Concords?

Interviewer: Oh yeah.

Interviewee: Robots? I sampled from that song.

Interviewer: Oh, that's really funny. That's great.

Interviewee: [Chuckles] To explain some narrative.

Interviewer: Those same kind of choices that we might make on the page, you're having to think about them in other media form?

Interviewee: More than that. There's more to think about. You don't choose the soundtrack to your words. You don't choose the vocalization of them. To some degree, when you're quoting from a text and you're giving description, you're sort of interspersing your voice with the events. At the same time, I feel like since it was a multimedia project, it was more vigorous than something that wasn't.

Interviewer: is really interesting.

Interviewee: [Pause] I feel like you can still have a very vigorous—my thesis compared to my podcast, both very difficult. My thesis, my honors thesis.

Interviewer: Right. The next couple questions are about your portfolio. As you're talking, I'm just gonna bring the computer back to life.

Interviewee: [Pause] Sure. I wish all in all that—we were supposed to get a faculty advisor. Just a mentor.

Interviewer: As part of the capstone project, or for that last class?

Interviewee: As part of the capstone project. I just wish that I could've just worked with her one on one. She was busy, so I wasn't at the top of her plate. She was doing me for fun. God, that sounds awful. She was working with me for fun. If it could've been set up where she could've had the incentive of having like, "Oh, I'm teaching this group, selecting from them, and then meeting with them one-on-one," every other week, and then having things due each week to keep people in check.

Then you pick your mentor, and because you pick which time you meet with them, they're more available. Then you get more of the feedback you want. She was the one who gave me the best feedback. I know in part, that would make some students have a more difficult time, because my faculty mentor and I had worked together on—I took my gateway course with her, but also, I had done some extra credit stuff for with her. We were more—it wasn't like, "Oh, I took a class with you, please—" she knew me. [Sweetland Writing Center] 54:36

Interviewer: A different relationship to go into that.

Interviewee: Yeah. I just didn't feel like talking overly much about the developmental essay or just doing writing exercises to write something that I wasn't gonna write, especially considering I just felt like the projects—from what I heard of them, a lot of them are about the end of the college experience. I'm like, "That's a valid thing to talk about."

At the same time, are you really stretching yourself by writing a non-creative fiction essay about that when it's something that you're going through right now? 'Cause you can't really complicate that. You can't really add difficulty to that. I also feel like there's a question of, "Why would someone other than you wanna read that? I know there's the idea of, "Oh, I'll express the pain of endings with the—" some idea on that. At the same time, what genre, what you need is a fulfilling. What is the niche? That's what we talk about in academic research, right? Where is the gap? [Pause]

Interviewer: That is really interesting.

Interviewee: The gap for my podcast. There's a lot of—there are podcast that talk about overarching media. They talk about how the media as in the press corps works, or how media companies work. There are reviewers. By taking such disparate sources and connecting them around a certain concept, like back from the dead. Then I were like, "Ooh, if I were to do another one, I'd do one on revolution."

Interviewer: Interesting. It's interesting to see how that one idea leads to the next.

Interviewee: Yeah. For a lot of theirs, there's no niche. One of the more successful ones I saw was a blog about food as a Chinese American. That one felt like it was fulfilling some sort of niche, and that there'd be an audience for it outside of that room or outside of this college. A lot of them, I was just not impressed. Which I guess—I'm being so obnoxious in my old age.

Interviewer: No, no, no. No, no, no. Why don't we—

Interviewee: Continue?

Interviewer: Still thinking about the capstone course, the next—I'm conscious of your time. This is the last batch of questions. Is interested in the portfolio, the capstone portfolio.

Interviewee: Sure. Oh, sorry, I can talk.

Interviewer: No, no, no. Are we doing okay time-wise?

Interviewee: [Ross Business School] talk 57:22]—I have a lunch thing, but I can talk more ten more minutes

Interviewer: Why don't we move through—go ahead. If you can just pull up your capstone portfolio.

Interviewee: [Pause] Gosh, I'm not sure I know the thing. Actually, mine isn't searchable. Why did I do that?

Interviewer: [Chuckles]If it's possible to call it up.

Interviewee: I can. I'm just not sure—

Interviewer: If you can find it, great. If it's hard, that's okay too. Maybe you can talk a bit as you're doing that, just so that we can get you where you need to go—

Interviewee: Basically, for my portfolio—

Interviewer: Let me just—I'll start you off. How about that? Make sure we hit everything we need to.

Interviewee: Sorry.

Interviewer: The question is, what were some of the most memorable aspects of creating this? If you can just talk me through what stands out about it to you.

Interviewee: [Pause] I feel like I've been creating my portfolio forever. I feel like the things that I remember being memorable about it were more works that I did for other stuff.

Interviewer: For other classes before, right?

Interviewee: [Pause] For other classes before. Most of what I did was focusing on the visual aspects. That was more related to my personal passion for Adobe creative suite.

Interviewer: There it is.

Interviewee: [Pause] I just need—[pause]—

Interviewer: It's interesting that you mention a visual aspect. As you were compiling it, did you notice relationships among the text or artifacts that you were choosing to include?

Interviewee: [Pause] A lot of it is really related. I grouped it under international, personal, and educational. Then I have these images to guide. Then international [pause]—this is where I put my honors thesis. The germ of it. Not the actual thing. It wasn't done by then. Then the educational. Whew, that font didn't turn out as well. [Pause] This was—ooh, that didn't work out the way it was supposed to. [Pause] This was something that I need for an internship.

Interviewer: We're looking at—you've essentially created a catalogue for [local Ann Arbor museum]?

Interviewee: No. It's a workbook. It's a physical—

Interviewer: Oh, more workbook.

Interviewee: - workbook, and it's shown as a slideshow. It's thinking about how to incorporate those things which are so different. Actually, this looks like an earlier version of mine, because there should be a little way to get back home on here that is not working so well. What is this?

Interviewer: Is it my—

Interviewee: Technology.

Interviewer: - computer?

Interviewee: [Pause] Then personal. [Pause] I made that, and I made that.

Interviewer: Neat.

Interviewee: […]. Figuring out how to put my podcast on it, because it samples from a lot of media work, I couldn't put it on posting sites that would take it down. That was what was memorable to me. In the end, for me, the visual was more important than a lot of the writing. When you look at a portfolio, how much of the writing do you actually read? I wasn't gonna write paragraphs and paragraphs.

Interviewer: [Pause] That's interesting. When you think about the process of compiling this though, are there ways that you think that it may have influenced yourself as a writer? Did you see it as a different process?

Interviewee: [Ross Business School] talk 1:01:53. Mostly, it was just using what I already knew. One of the other ways that I learned a lot about form was through making that workbook I just showed you. […]. That self-awareness of, "It has to have a purpose, and that purpose has to inform what it actually does." That is something that I thought about when I made this, but it's not something I learned when I made this. Very quickly, how many more questions?

Interviewer: There's a couple questions about the experience of the gateway to the capstone.

Interviewee: Let's keep going. I have to leave quick.

Interviewer: Okay. Why don't we turn to those now. You actually already referenced some of this. The question is essentially, reflecting back on the gateway course, that first course in the writing minor, how did those experiences compare to the experiences in this capstone course? You already referenced that a bit when you were thinking about—just seems like reflective writing.

Interviewee: The reflective writing in the gateway course was more valuable than the reflective writing in the capstone course. It was something new then. By the time you get to the capstone course, it's not new. There's also the so what question. Who's your audience, and why do they care? When you make that audience, "Oh, it's just your professor, or your Sweetland committee," your paper loses its drive, really. You're just doing it for a grade, then.

You're doing it for a grade in all but name. I liked the freedom to do different projects. I liked how the gateway course forced you to do some sort of media work. Media work beyond [pause][pause] significant revision and significant remediation. Part of it too is my gateway course was with my faculty advisor, and she gave me more of the kind of feedback I wanted, and which it was more looking at the overarching thing. She was really great at always keeping in mind form.

She made me— I think I talked about this somewhat. In my developmental essay, she made me—I said I wanted to do a CNN news report. Instead, I wrote a very lovely creative non-fiction piece. She made me write—she was just like, "No, this is not what you—" [Chuckles]

Interviewer: Come back to it?

Interviewee: "This is not what you did." I wrote something that would be a news article. It was killing my darlings, but it was learning form and purpose.

Interviewer: That's great. That great line from Steven King, right?

Interviewee: Yeah. I think it was Dorothy Parker, but anyways, let's continue.

Interviewer: Did she have it first? King uses it a lot too. That's funny.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Still pushing on this idea of reflective writing, because obviously it's heavily emphasized in the minor, the question is two-fold. One is how you describe your thinking about reflective writing. Especially, is it something that you continue to use in other spaces, in other courses, in other kinds of writing? That you think you might for any reason?

Interviewee: I don't know. I feel like reflective writing, the implication is that you're doing it after the work is already done. For the most part, I do my most reflection while I'm doing it. When I'm writing my honors thesis, I'm reflecting on, "Here's what I've been doing. Is this fulfilling my goals? Is this fulfilling my purpose?" With my podcast, "Here's what I'm doing. Is this fulfilling my goals? Is this fulfilling my purpose?"

That thinking is more of what I do. That is also hard to catch. You're doing it in the middle of a huge project when something's due. By taking it out of there and making me write about it afterwards, that's a good method. It would've been more valuable to do the project, have us write a reflection on the project once it's done. Instead of a developmental essay. That reflection on the project once it's done, that can include a lot of the same things that the developmental essay includes.

It would just include something more specific. I swear to God, I read almost all my classes developmental essays. There are a few good ones, but so many of them were just like tears. It wasn't even their fault. It's just not something we're trained to write interestingly about. It's also not something that has the benefit of having specific ideas and specific core things. The ones that were interesting, one was about how she navigated natural science and social science. One was about

how she developed as a feminist. They were only interesting if they weren't actually about it. Maybe I'm just being obnoxious. [Chuckles]

Interviewer: That's interesting. No.

Interviewee: More, they had an audience outside of that room.

Interviewer: Just a couple quick things. One you've already spoken about throughout. The question asks whether—the minor program is still relatively new, but are there any suggestions you'd have for how the instructors or administrators might improve it? You've spoken to some of these things as we've gone through the idea of a faculty person to work with. The Capstone course for instance, some of the ideas you've just phrased. Are there other things that you're like, "Yeah, I really would also like awareness of this other thing that came up in the minor program"?

Interviewee: I wish there was a—I don't know where it would go, but I wish there was a writing minor class that was solely about making digital media. That is super fun. I know they have the writing 200 courses. Maybe one that focuses on learning Photoshop, learning—the audio I used was Addition. Then how to make pieces through that. That directly had that as a goal. Maybe that could be a class you could count towards your minor, instead of [English course], or something like that.

Interviewer: What's the reason you suggest that?

Interviewee: [Pause] That's something a lot of people are interested in. Also, that's something that I chose to do. It's something that I feel like part of the reason I chose to do a project that was more multimedia was because I already had prior knowledge of how to do it. I feel like having a class like that might help.

Interviewer: That's really—

Interviewee: With the multimedia-ness.

Interviewer: - really interesting too in terms of what you've already said about your capstone project. Here's the last one. You will probably say, "I could talk for the rest of the afternoon about it," but on your way out the door of the University of Michigan, what do you think the professors should know about teaching writing?

Interviewee: [pause] I have been talking about this. You should read my developmental essay. Firstly, don't be that guy who's like, "It's not the five-paragraph essay you wrote in high school." Please, don't. Future professors. What you wanna do is you wanna build on what they already have. Nobody learns

something whole cloth. That's very rare. You're always building off your prior knowledge. Insulting that prior knowledge doesn't help.

Appreciating form. Being aware, "Yes, you want to teach them analytical skills. Yes, you want to teach them reading and summary skills." At the same time, by trying to do that through a writing assignment, you're doing them a disservice because they don't learn what their actual writing assignments once they get into college actually look like. There's certain merit to a response paper. Making a student do a summary paper that also has an argument? No. Have them do just an argument paper. Don't have them do a summary paper, because those are boring.

No one actually wants to read those. Two, I feel like there's this whole denial of form as valuable, because they think it becomes formulaic. Students just model off of it, and they don't actually learn. That's dumb too, because in order to use a form in multiple settings, that takes skill. That takes knowledge. That takes understanding too, more than that, "How do we learn to write at first?" We learn by copying forms. We learn literally by copying the forms of letters.

Once you understand a form and understand what it can do—once I better understood how an academic essay worked, I could better take a look at how my scavenger hunt, how my work booklet I made for the [local Ann Arbor museum], how that had to be different, because it had different purposes, and how form would inform that. Part of that was also looking at models. I feel like they should really take a look at the [Asian course] class. I thought that was really great for teaching writing.

Interviewer: Again, that model of the professor's work, right? That's what you're thinking of?

Interviewee: [Pause] Yeah. Look at the professor's work. Thirty pages. Talk about it. Talk about how it works, how it doesn't work. Then when you go to write your own essay, you have a better understanding of how essays work. Then also too, there's such thing as too much reflection. Make sure the reflection you do remains meaningful. If you're constantly reflecting on something, and you're reflecting on reflections, and writing in a meta way can get very annoying very quickly, because it gets very obscure. The language flattens out because we're not describing anything visual. It's only meaningful if you make sure that you don't do it too much. Otherwise, you have nothing to reflect on but reflections. That's weird. [Chuckles]

Interviewer: These are all really useful points. As you were talking, I know it was something that was top of mind. I'm glad that we had a chance to get to that end point and make sure you had a chance to articulate it. I did not mean to keep you this long. I'm gonna go ahead and turn the tape recorder off.

Interviewee: It’s okay. I remembered, because I was just like, “I talk a lot about this stuff.”

[…]

[End of audio]