Interviewer: All right. This is *** here today, April—May 1st, 2013, end of winter semester. I'm here today with ***. This is the writing develop study. My first question for you, ***, is how would you describe yourself as a writer?

Interviewee: I would describe myself as a writer as someone who really likes delving into the research side of things and really kind of coming up with a thesis and finding the research to back it up. I don't usually do a lot of creative writing; some blogging here and there. Mostly research is my favorite.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Great. Let's see, can you talk a little bit about some of those research projects that you've done?

Interviewee: I would say at [the University of Michigan] I've done a lot in the Com [Communication] Studies Program because we do so much with statistical works and different studies. My passion for research began even in high school when I did a study with—junior and senior year where I had to create a thesis and defend it against the faculty administration of my high school. Junior year I did it on JFK's assassination and then senior year I did it on the Korematsu versus the United States case, […] so I think that really inspired me as far as started with something and then doing the research behind it.

Interviewer: Interesting. How would you describe yourself as a writer when you began at [the University of Michigan]?

Interviewee: Hm. When I began? I would say I was pretty knowledgeable of being able to come up with things, and I would say I was a pretty sophisticated writer. High school prepared me pretty well. I went to a small classical school. I would say yeah, I was pretty prepared and that my writing has only progressed since [the University of Michigan] and learning the different writing styles that different people and professors and fields like 0:02:18.

Interviewer: Okay. You did mention a little bit about how you've grown, but can you mention any other ways? To what extent have you grown and changed, and how—to what would you attribute this growth?

Interviewee: Sure. I would say that a lot of the things I first started off doing, especially in [English course] was the argumentative side of writing, and then working a lot of—about polishing and the grammatics and the punctuation and refreshing my knowledge of that. I would say my communications courses, especially with the prevalence of social media, that I've learned how to kind of take a more casual approach to writing in certain situations, especially with all the blogging that I've done in a lot of my classes and website publishing and things like that. Definitely depicting which kind of writing is right for which field and different assignments.

Interviewer: Interesting. Okay. As you graduate, what are your goals for yourself as a writer?

Interviewee: [Inaudible 0:03:24] but I would say that I think writing is very important, and it's a very important skill to have, especially—I mean, I just think it's really important. Even after talking to alum that have come back about stressing, keeping up on your skills, and keeping that professional edge will really get your food in the door. As far as in the future and because I am a communication major and want to go into journalism and broadcast news, that it's really important for me to know which type of writing styles to use. I think that [the University of Michigan's] help prepare me pretty well for that.

Interviewer: Do you have goals in terms of how to improve your writing within those categories?

Interviewee: I would say learning how to cut down maybe, and not be so wordy in my writing. I know that communication's a lot of wordiness and backing up things, but I think just sticking to explicit and bullet-point info, I think, is where I see most of my writing going towards.

Interviewer: Hm. Okay. Interesting. Thinking about your experiences at UM [University of Michigan], what do you think it means to write well?

Interviewee: Hm. To write well, I think, is able to get your thoughts and your points across on paper as a reflection of you as a writer and getting—being able to stand up for your opinions and your beliefs as well as having a finished, polished product. I think that's really what [the University of Michigan] has stressed.

Interviewer: Which upper-level writing courses have you taken?

Interviewee: All of my Com [Communication] classes are upper-level so all of my 400 level [courses] in com, and then I took a humanities course, […], which was also upper-level writing requirement. I think that's it.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. What were your experiences in those courses?

Interviewee: I found that humanities courses were more about kind of getting in touch with yourself, whereas in Com [Communication] it was a range of things from, like I said blogging or doing statistical and being able to get stats and numbers across on paper, and then as well as creating your own thesis, your own argument, and really finding scholarly research that backs that up.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Okay. What affect did those experiences have on your writing?

Interviewee: I would say it only helped me progress as a writer, and just being exposed to so much upper-level writing in the Com [Communication] Studies Program, and even just I've heard other people at [the University of Michigan], the writing and papers that

they've had to do. I think just being exposed to it just constantly keeps your mind going, and being engaged with the writing.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Let's see. Do you still make use of what you've learned in those courses?

Interviewee: Definitely. I had [English course] with [instructor]. I still remember her name. I definitely went into class thinking oh, this is dumb. I don't need to take this class. I already know everything, but she really helped me polish my grammatics and especially the use of semicolons, which I hadn't' really been exposed to, how to really create or polish a stronger thesis; a lot of my classes have focused on that, and kind of being able to take that thesis and kind of just go anywhere with it, I think.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Cool. What other writing courses have you taken and how have those affected your writing?

Interviewee: I don't know if I've taken any other writing courses at [the University of Michigan] actually, not that I can think of. Yeah I don't think I took any other writing courses 'cause Com [Communication] was so writing-intensive.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. How confident do you feel—speaking of com [Communication Major], about writing in your concentration?

Interviewee: I feel very confident after doing so many papers. I mean, I still get pretty anxious when we get that first assignment because some professors will give you an outline of exactly what you're looking—what they're looking for and clearly outline it for you, and maybe baby you a little bit by giving you all the resources, whereas in a class I just took on political satire and communication, she wanted us to come up with our own thesis for all of our papers that we had to write.

It was a challenge for me because she wanted us to not only create our own thesis but back it up with scholarly research in such a short page count. That kind of forced me to, instead of the normal research paper of 10 to 12 pages, cut it down to 3 to 5. I think that Com [Communication] has made me feel very confident even though I get a little anxious about writing and giving my thoughts on paper.

Interviewer: What does it mean to write well in com, in that concentration?

Interviewee: I would say it depends. It depends what you really wanna go into. I mean, I think it's a lot of things. I think it's the blogging, being able to express yourself in a responsible and respective way on the internet, especially when you have classmates and other people reading your comments, posts; that you really need to learn how to write well and be able to do that in such a short space, in a public space. I also think writing well in Com [Communication] for longer papers is being able, again, to communicate your thoughts, back it up with research, and really just having that strong thesis is really important.

Interviewer: How often have you used—thinking about the writing that you took.

Interviewee: Okay.

Interviewer: How often have you used those strategies or skills in other courses?

Interviewee: I would say that it definitely translates over into other courses. I mean, I think writing is so key for everything that being—even being able to write makes you be able to read well, pick up on things faster, pick up on what authors are trying to relay across or what their thesis is, and what their research is. I think that even helps with teaching style, so if being able to adapt to different professors and being able to take notes well, and learn exactly what they're looking for as far as the outlines of their lectures and things like that.

Interviewer: Okay. Now are there any other ways that you could think of that those writing classes affected your writing in the concentration?

Interviewee: I don't think so. I think that's about it.

Interviewer: Cool. Thinking back over the last two years, what experiences in or out of the classroom have had an effect on your writing?

Interviewee: I would say that a lot of my internships have helped with my writing, but I also think that I've been an athlete for all of high school and then even coming to [the University of Michigan] I was [an athlete on a University of Michigan's sports team]. I think that taking that part of my experience at [the University of Michigan] of being athletic and being time-managed and really persevering through blocks has really helped with writing of—not knowing where exactly to start but having an end-goal in mind and being able to kind of chip away at it, and keep persevering and—yeah.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Good. Any other experiences you can think of? You talked about internships.

Interviewee: Right. The internships I did were for some local news places, so I had to do some script writing and dealing with clients, or writing—even like emails back and forth between professionals and bosses, I think, have been influenced by the writing programs at [the University of Michigan], and learning how to present yourself well to other people that may not see you face-to-face.

Interviewer: How so?

Interviewee: I mean, if you get an email or are able to correspond with the person that you're talking to that you can't see face-to-face, you want to represent yourself as well as possible. As far as looking—being able to edit and self-edit yourself for punctuation and run-on-sentences and things like that were really important.

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

Interviewee: Reflective writing, I would say, means more journaling to me or even kind of meditative. I think it really calls on you to kind of step away from something and really kind of get in touch with yourself of how you're feeling, how things are going, and that's kind of a you-time for reflective writing, so journaling, writing a diary, even having a blog; all the stuff like that.

Interviewer: Cool. Okay. Have you recently used reflective writing in your own writing process?

Interviewee: For a class or just in general?

Interviewer: Either way.

Interviewee: Okay. For a class, kind of, for the blogging that we do—I mean, it's reflective as in read something or watch something and then kind of reflect on how this relates to you and relates to, I guess, other citizens and people in general. I mean I used to do a lot more reflective writing than I do now. I think that's just because I'm pretty busy with other things, but I have used it in the past as far as blogging online or writing in a journal or even doing poetry sometimes, but not so much as I used to.

Interviewer: What are you recent experiences in working with other writers in your courses or in other contexts?

Interviewee: Okay. Well, I do use peer editing as a huge thing, and working with other people and kind of getting their insight of am I getting the main point across? Am I using sufficient evidence to back up what I'm trying to say? Is it a cohesive? Then just little things like is the punctuation good and am I using run-on sentences? I don't really enjoy using peer editing in class that we've done in the past where you break down into groups and then everyone reads your paper. I like using people who I know I can trust as far as peer editing, which usually happens to be my mom a lot, or my friends that work at the Daily or past teachers. In other contexts I would say—I mean, I had to work with producers of scripting and learning how to kind of bounce off ideas and peer edit them—with them of how to get a good point across in such a short amount of time, but other than that—that's about it.

Interviewer: Have you ever done workshopping or peer review in classes?

Interviewee: Yeah. They did a lot of workshopping in [English course]. We did a lot of that. In a women's 0:17:06 studies class I just took last semester—I think it was [Women's studies course], we did some workshopping in class, I think. I'm kinda torn about workshops. I like them and I don't because I think that you get a lot of feedback at once and sometimes that's too much, and I mean, it's good to get—to be able to kind of

see all of the things that some people think that you need to work on, but sometimes I kind of find it overwhelming. I would rather just have one or two other people read it.

Interviewer: Have you done any collaborative writing projects or group projects at all?

Interviewee: Collaborative writing?

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: Yeah. In communications, for a lot of our group projects that we do, I guess our collaborative writing is mostly in the form of PowerPoints. We have done papers in the past of—well, a couple of my classes, like handing in a 15-page paper of collaborative writing of thesis and arguments. Usually we just kind of meet, outline it, split up who's gonna write which part of the paper, but I think that's the extent of collaborative writing that I've done.

Interviewer: Okay. How was that for you?

Interviewee: It depends. If I get to choose who's in my group and who I know in my class then it usually works out fine. I'm not a huge person with group writing. I mean, I love working within a team and working within a group, but it's hard when you know that some people are taking the class past-fail or aren't pulling their weight , and I guess in that sense I'm more of a team leader when it comes to collaborative work. I don't mind it, but I don't—I haven't really had any terrible experiences with writing collaboratively in the past. Sometimes it's nice 'cause it takes the weight off your shoulders a little bit.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Right. Now that you're about to graduate what advice would you give to college students about writing?

Interviewee: What advice would I give? I would say really pay attention to the basics and don't ever stop writing. Writing is so important in society today, and I mean I've talked to so many alumni that have come back and talked to students here, and they cannot just stress the importance of writing and being able to write well in order to present yourself. Whether that's journaling or reflective writing or just doing writing for fun, I think it's just something that you need to keep practicing and not lose habit of.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Okay. How about specifically, as you think about individual papers, how would you start a paper? How would you progress? Things like that.

Interviewee: It depends for the class, but I found that I kind of move start with thinking of all the material at once, and thinking that about what interests me most, and then once I can figure out what interests me most then I come up with my thesis. Then I usually email my professor or whoever I'm writing for and say this is my general idea of what I'm thinking of, and this is my thesis. What do you think? Then kind of go from there, and then once I have my thesis I usually like to outline my paper and kinda just throw in bullet points of where I could see the research for that class fitting in, and—'cause I

found that if you're not really writing about something that interests you it's just gonna be a hassle to write the paper. I think that starting off with finding something, finding the niche in that class of what really makes you tick is gonna be—make for a good paper.

Interviewer: Let's see. Have you had any experiences with new media writing? You talked about blogs, websites, electronic portfolios, digital portfolios; what were those experiences for you 0:21:35?

Interviewee: I think it was English—now that I think of it I guess I had to take another writing class. It was some professional writing class and it was [instructor], and he was phenomenal. He had us do a whole bunch of different things; even helped us draft our first—my first resume. Then had people come in and talk to us about how to create an online resume of—that will speak to people. I've done my resume. I have an online resume of my experiences and pictures, and then blogging as well for classes. I think that's the only new media that I've used for classes. Yeah.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. How did you learn from those experiences? What effect did they have?

Interviewee: I would say that especially for the resume online, that that is really important because we're such in a digital age that learning how to communicate and represent yourself online in such a public space is really important. That class definitely helped with that. Learning from blogging, I don't know, I guess that just is one thing that comes naturally, especially for our generation. Yeah.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Okay. Have they affected your sense of writing at all?

Interviewee: I think that it just kind of makes me more aware of what I'm saying because I know other people are going to read it if it's in—online. That kind of makes me double, triple, quadruple check things, and also be aware of what I'm saying while still being kind of sensitive to other people's feelings 0:23:52 or topics.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Okay. Let's see. You've been uploading pieces to the CTools [learning management system] site.

Interviewee: Right.

Interviewer: How has that process been going for you?

Interviewee: It's been really easy. The directions are easy to follow. I think I've done it maybe three or four times, and so I found it pretty easy.

Interviewer: Okay. Let's go ahead and look at what you've done here.

Interviewee: Okay.

Interviewer: Okay. Okay. We're gonna go into artifact records?

Interviewee: Yeah, probably.

Interviewer: Okay. Okay. Cool. All right, so talk a little bit about what these pieces are and why you chose them.

Interviewee: Let's see. I think I mostly chose pieces that represented which paper I thought was best from each semester, or even a paper that really interested me the most and that I had the most fun doing the research for. Yeah or maybe sometimes that I receive the best credit on [laughter].

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Could you walk me through kind of what all these essays were?

Interviewee: I guess I'll kind of go in chronological order. The first one was [English course], the UGL [University of Michigan Shapiro Undergraduate Library] descriptive 0:25:37 essay. I guess I didn't really have that much fun writing it because it was more of like a very wordy, fluffy, get in touch with your senses type writing, which isn't usually my favorite to do, of where I described each floor of the UGL and progressively, as you go up, it gets quieter and quieter and more serious. I guess looking back, I appreciate that paper now because I have been in the library so much, but when I first wrote it I'm—this is dumb, I don't want to be writing this. Then the second one I think I submitted was the Witnessing paper, and that was for my [communication course] with [instructor]. That one I got to analyze my own TV show 'cause it was reality TV, and kind of look at it of myself as a witness, and kind of break down some of the different elements that we learned in class and be able to apply it to a paper, which I like doing. Then I think I submitted the midterm paper. That was with [instructor].

That class was a lot about social media and how the digital age has progressed over time. I can't really remember exactly what the paper was on. That class was really rough. I think he was the first—maybe one of the first professors that really pushed me to format my papers differently with kind of subheadings and things, and I think I struggled with writing some of his papers, but I ended up getting A's on both of them, which is probably why I submitted that.

Then I submitted the [Classical Studies course] paper Three Of the Coliseum 0:27:37. I submitted that paper from that semester because I love the classical studies here at [the University of Michigan]. The classic has always been super interesting to me and it's always come super easy. I just had a lovely GSI, and I just enjoy really writing about Roman archeology and Greek and Roman life. That was that one, and I think that was all for that. Then for this last one I submitted, it was for my [communication course] that I took with [instructor] this past semester. That was really interesting because it was the first time that I had to watch and kind of come up with clips of my own and create—or, I followed The Office and kind of spoke to the different elements that we talked about in class about humor and its imposition on society, and how it affects politics, prejudice, stereotypes of people.

I took a lot away from that class, and especially she pushed—was the professor that pushed me from writing those 10 to 15 page research papers and having a strong thesis and backing up with writing to cutting it down to 3-5 pages. She's very picky about thesis statements, and so she definitely helped put—give me that last push before graduation, and of—we still need to write well so you need to have a good thesis in mind.

Interviewer: Hm. Okay. Looking at all these pieces and going back through them, what was that like?

Interviewee: Actually it's amazing how much I remember about each piece. Yeah. Even from [English course]. I guess it's amazing how you can—no matter how many papers I write at [the University of Michigan], there's always going to be those ones that you remember from each class and how much of an impact that they made, or even that the professors made and helped stylize your writing.

Interviewer: What impact did these different papers make?

Interviewee: I guess I kind of fine out—found out what writing I liked and didn't like. Then I would say some of the professors definitely helped push my stylizing, and just polishing the writing skills that I had acquired through [the University of Michigan].

Interviewer: You mentioned that one professor in terms of cutting it to the three to five pages. Can you think of any other professors or classes that kind of, like, you learned how to do something in writing that you hadn't known how to do before?

Interviewee: Not off the top of my head. I know [instructor] in that one class really pushed the cutting down. Even for some other classes they had us cut things down, but I mean none of those really stick out to me. I guess for the [assignment] with [instructor], learning how to use subheadings and headings within a paper. That's something that I had never done before. Other than that I don't think so.

Interviewer: Okay. Did you feel differently about the actual writing? How did you feel about the quality or what did you—what were your impressions about yourself as a writer?

Interviewee: Now looking back at this?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: I mean, it's funny 'cause I just went through and put all of my different class folders into one big folder yesterday. I think it's amazing to go from the [English course] descriptive essay to just even a paper I just submitted, my last Com [Communication] paper, of how much I have progressed as a writer; of being able to kind of stick to the point and represent myself in a polished manner. I know this because I sent that [Engish course] paper to my mom and a lot of my papers from [English course], and she just

ripped them apart freshman year. She knew I was a—she knows I'm a pretty decent writer. She knew I would develop into one, but she's very good at grammar and very good at being critical.

I would send maybe—she would send back maybe three or four different revisions of—just back and forth and email, and now I'll send her a paper and she will be like, wow, that looks great, and maybe like a few punctuation things here and there. She goes, you know, it looks like you got the main message across. It's cohesive. I understand what you're trying to say, looks good. I think that's a major difference of looking back at this to now of how I've developed as a writer.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Interesting. Lastly, what do you think instructors should know about teaching writing at the undergraduate level?

Interviewee: Hm. That's a hard question. I guess don't expect that students know too much or that they don't know too little because even though some things that they teach might seem repetitive as far as going over grammar and punctuation, it can sometimes be really helpful, especially after coming off a summer of senior year and really starting in those introductory course classes. I also think that they need to stress to incoming freshmen, even sophomores, that each professor in each class and each field is gonna be different as far as writing goes. For com, sometimes it can range from doing the research to being more numbers.

I know engineering, I've read engineering papers and that's definitely more numbers than it is grammar. For psychology it's a lot of wordy things of being able to explain yourself and breadth. Same as anthropology and things like that, so I think that being able to stress that different writing techniques are skills are really important across the board, and to tell their students that if you get a bad grade on one paper don't freak out because that's only gonna help you in the years to come of what professors are actually looking for.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Great. Any other comments about your experience writing or what's helped you or what's helped you learn?

Interviewee: I would say just constantly keeping up with writing and being pushed by faculty has really helped me develop my writing skills, of keeping it fluent in my mind and just refreshing every now and then, and even being exposed to different types of writing.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Great.

Interviewee: That's about it.

Interviewer: All right.

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