Interviewer: Hello, this is ***. I'm here with *** and the date is April 30. It's Winter […] end of the semester and we're about to begin. The first question today *** is, how would you describe yourself as a writer?

Interviewee: Well, here at [University of Michigan] I've spent a lot of time within the history department doing a lot of academic research and writing. Most of my academic work has been focused on that [inaudible 00:33] historical ways of analyzing situations and reporting information. I also really like personal narrative reflections, so I guess I would describe myself as someone who focuses a lot with academic writing, but also as very interested in sharing her own personal experiences.

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

Interviewee: I always loved writing. I was definitely into writing journals, short stories, poems. Whatever I could do when I was younger. I didn't have as much experience and I was a good writer in high school. I got many compliments from teachers and what not but definitely inexperienced with something that I would say—I mean for that age I was fine, but I didn't do a lot of academic writing in high school so that part it was really new to me coming here, so I would say inexperienced.

Interviewer: What do you think you learned here at [University of Michigan]? How do you think you've grown in terms of experiences?

Interviewee: Where have I grown? Well, I mean I got a lot of practice for writing, especially in the classes I've taken. I've really gotten a chance to explore a lot of different types of writing. Even though I've stayed within the History Department, especially taking [English 200 level course]. That was really beneficial in getting to experiment with different things and not being punished for when it didn't turn out well, but being able to take those risks.

I grew a lot in that and due to a minor in writing that also helped me because it makes me take some stuff I definitely would not have taken if it wasn't for that, so even though some other classes were similar to my own concentration, it was like another side to it, another angle, so that was also beneficial in helping me expand my horizons.

Interviewer: When you said you got to try new types of writing, what writing did you try?

Interviewee: Well, so instead of doing like 15, 20 page research papers about important historical issues, topics, debates, whatever, I did like more personal reflection, personal narrative, creative non-fiction, and re-purposing essays. I did an argumentative essay without any research, like you weren't allowed to do anything so you had to just really develop your own ideas.

Which was really interesting because sometimes I feel like I'm really scatterbrained and all over the place, so I really had to organize my thoughts in order to create an essay without any actual research or facts to back it up and they weren't necessarily saying that this is how you should try to persuade someone. Obviously having evidence helps, but just helping develop your own tone and your style like that was really beneficial in just opening my eyes. Like if I view this topic and this is my opinion, I need to be able to explain why I view that before I even start backing it up, like how does that apply to my life, how do I relate to it.

Interviewer: Interesting, and when you said in [English 200 level course] you got to like take—[English 200 level course], you got to take something you haven't taken before, what did you mean by that?

Interviewee: Well like I wrote, we re-purposed a couple of things and I wrote a personal narrative about my relationship with my [sibling] and then I re-purposed it and wrote a collection of poems and most of them turned out horribly but the fact I was able to do that without receiving a failing grade, it was really great because I really got to expand myself. I got to try something new. I learned what I can do, what I can't do, it's probably more importantly for that case, but that was really cool.

Interviewer: Interesting. Let's see, why would you say—how would you attribute this growth? Why do you think you were able to grow?

Interviewee: Well, I had some really great professors who were really encouraging. My [English course] professor was really great. In fact, he gave us the weirdest assignments. I talk about him all the time.

Interviewer: What assignments?

Interviewee: Well, so it was [Instructor]; he's notorious for this [essay] that he gives at the beginning of [English course] […]. As a freshman coming from a school, like I graduated with 100 students, yeah I was terrified. I was like, “I'm gonna fail this," I was gonna fail [University of Michigan] before I could even get started. It was just awful and I was terrified and I would call my mother. It was just really scary, but he was able to let us take risks and interpret things in our own way.

I ended up writing about how I actually went out […] just 'cause I was like “What the hell, might as well,” and went out, just watch around Ann Arbor. I was just looking at different part of campus and the city and just reflecting about how, like [essay] in relation to my new experiences, what I was going through.

I'd only been at school for two weeks and just trying to absorb all that and it was a horrible piece of writing. I'm not proud of it. The ideas behind it are pretty good. The writing is awful but he was really great in assigning things like that to letting you take the assignment where you wanted to go with it. He was also really great with, you could re-write anything as long as you could prove to him why you needed to re-write it. It wasn't

like “Oh, I got a C on this. I need to get an A in the class. That's why I want to re-write it.” You had to sit down with him. You had to go through with—you had to tell him what you did wrong in your own eyes and how you want to fix it.

He just really wanted you to try to be the best writer you possibly could be and I've had lots of professors like that and I think that's really helped because, like I said, it makes me not failing not really an issue. You're allowed to expand and try some new things. I think that's really one of the things that's really helped me grow.

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

Interviewee: Well, I would honestly really love to work for a travel magazine, writing about historical places within the US. I know that's a really long term goal but anything to help me get there. I just love writing about history and those types of things. I mean I'm really sick of doing academic research so I'm over that, but I would really love to be able to contribute to some type of blog or academic journal, those type of things to stay connected with that.

I don't really know exactly how to go about doing that but definitely something that will not leave and I'll keep coming back to as well as this isn't related to my studies or anything, but I love writing letters to people. My friends know me as that, so I know that after I leave and go far away even though we have Facebook and email and Twitter and texting and all that, I'll definitely be making my friends keep in contact via pen and paper sometimes because I think that's really cool.

Interviewer: Wow. How about goals in terms of how you'd like your writing to develop or skills you'd like to develop or things like that?

Interviewee: I'd like to have more of a personal voice without making the story all about me, so not necessarily sharing things that happened to me, but still being able to write about what's going on in the world. If I were to ever write for a magazine or something, being able to incorporate myself into what I'm writing about, not writing about myself and including other things, if that makes sense.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Interesting.

Interviewee: I haven't had a lot of experience with that here because usually when you're doing like a personal narrative, at least the stuff I did, it was reflecting on me and—which is great, because I need a lot of practice with that, but I didn't get as much as like the other way.

Interviewer: Let's see. Here's another question. Thinking about your writing experiences at U of M [University of Michigan], in your opinion, what do you think it means to write well? What is good writing?

Interviewee: Well, I would say, first of all, to write what you know. I know people say that thing all the time. I feel in order to have good writing you need to write about something that means a lot to you because you need to be able to have the passion for it. Whether it's academic, whether it's personal, whether it's for your job, but if you're not into it, there's a chance the results are just gonna be completely different versus someone who is really connected to what they're talking about, so I think that's really important.

I also think it's just very important to have really good grammar, which is not necessarily saying a huge vocabulary or anything. I know a lot of people who have had really great ideas and I've edited some friends' papers. The thoughts behind it are good, but the actual structure, just like the technical parts, can be so rough sometimes. I just feel that by now more people should be able to do that. I mean, I know we're all guilty of making mistakes. That's not it, but I think that's a huge part, at least for me. If someone's writing is technically poor I will stop reading it 'cause I can't personally get through it.

Interviewer: Anything else?

Interviewee: I don't think so.

Interviewer: Cool. Which upper level writing courses have you taken?

Interviewee: I took [History course], which was [Title of course] and then I took [Slavic course] which was—

Interviewer: Writing courses?

Interviewee: - Yeah, these are writing course.

Interviewer: Oh wow.

Interviewee: Which was about—I'm trying to think of like the correct thing, conflicts within Eastern Europe holocaust and afterwards so we had a time period of the holocaust and then Fasi and Muslim religious issues. I don't—I forget what the actual segment was called and then we also did something with gender issues and we watched films and then had to do all this analyzing so both of those were upload writing. They were, we're not supposed to talk about it. I don't know if [inaudible 11:35]

Interviewer: Yes, absolutely.

Interviewee: I don't know if you're asking me questions—

Interviewer: I am. What were your experiences in those courses?

Interviewee: The Slavic class was cool and you had three papers and you wrote the one and then you turned it in and then they would give you a grade and feedback and then you had to rewrite it and I liked that you got a lot of feedback from it. The one thing I

didn't like was that the first paper, they would get everyone a C, like a really bad grade and then you had to turn it back in.

You didn't have a choice, you had to rewrite it as part of the course and you also had to make it longer when you did that and then you could—then they would raise your grade but it was just awkward because sometimes I mean there were several times where I was literally writing for what my professor told me to do because the first time that's not what I did and I ended up like getting a C- on the final paper.

I'm not saying that I always deserve to get a A, but my writing is not at a poor level where in my junior year I should be getting a C- in a paper that I actually put work into. There's no reason for that and so the other two I definitely wrote more to what he wanted and what specifically say so that was a little bit of a downside of the class, however we didn't get lots of feedback and for a time there was readings and movies and using that stuff. That was really beneficial to help me be able to analyze that stuff more and just citing stuff, providing examples, that was really good.

I had already had a lot of experience with that but I know a lot of other people in the class hadn't, so that was really helpful for them as well. In the history class I took, I actually thought that was a lot better for an upper level writing course because we had several different types of assignments that we turned in so we had a couple of smaller essays. We had a mid-term take home, we had a final paper take home. That was a lot longer that we worked on for like the second half of the semester and did, we developed abstracts within groups and did rough drafts.

We got lots of feedback from them. That was really great and the shorter essays we would only analyze like one or two sources whereas in the final one it was open. You had to use so many things what not so that one I liked a lot more because it was just, there was more variety. You still grow a lot but it wasn't just like, “All right, here's three papers of each being 12 pages each,” it was a little bit spread out more and a little different. I liked that one.

Interviewer: Cool. What effect did all of those assignments and experiences have on you as a writer?

Interviewee: Well, the slotted class helped me figure out how to lengthen my argument when there's not a whole lot else to talk about and just try to expand on things. Try to provide more examples and evidence of what I was arguing for or trying to show throughout my paper, and sometimes I would be lengthening it just because I needed to use more space but also sometimes when I would write the first paper and I would get their feedback, they'd say, “You know you need to elaborate on this more, you need to show us an example,” that was really beneficial because sometimes it's easy as a writer to say what you want to say but not show it and it can be hard to pick up on that when you're editing your stuff, so that was really helpful for me.

The other class, it was just really nice like I said to have different types of writing and being able to experience writing shorter stuff versus longer stuff in the same class. That's not something that I generally get to do very much, especially in history classes 'cause it's usually one big paper. You usually don't unless it's a good 200 level class. Usually it's one big assignment you're working on versus smaller things and so in the smaller essays you would pick one or two points you wanted to argue for and that's what you would talk about, but then in the longer essays you develop a thesis, and did all that stuff and lots of draft work, lots of outlines, prewriting, all that stuff which was really beneficial in just developing better writing skills.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Cool. Do you still make use of what you learned in those classes?

Interviewee: Oh yeah. Especially the history one, just because this semester I had a couple of classes where there were smaller writing assignments and that's not something I've done a whole lot of here so having that was helpful just to be able to go back and think about how I successfully wrote those pieces and being able to use that and just challenging the ways in which I cited things and argue for things and the way I set a paper up.

When you have an assignment that's two to three pages, you don't want a huge intro because there's—well you're not talking about a lot so you don't have to introduce a lot, but you also want to get straight to your argument, you don't want to fluff things up and I can do that sometimes so it was nice to get more practice with that.

Interviewer: Cool. Let's see, what other writing courses have you taken?

Interviewee: I took [English course], [English 200 level course], [[Writing 200 level course] level course], I think it's changed to [[Writing 200 level course] level course] now but when I took it it was [[Writing 200 level course] level course]. Then [[Writing 400 level course] level course], those are—I'm trying to think, those are the only—I think those were the only official writing classes I've taken, but then there were a couple of classes in the history department where it was like, it wasn't upper level writing, but you wrote this huge paper.

Interviewer: In terms of the writing classes, how have those affected your writing?

Interviewee: Well, I talked about [English course] a little bit—

Interviewer: [Cross talk 17:29]

Interviewee: -and that was just helpful in really getting the ball rolling here and that class also wasn't quite as serious as some of the other things I've taken, so it was a good way to be introduced to writing at [University of Michigan] and like I said I had a really great professor. He's one of the guys where either you really love him or you really hate him. I've had some friends who's had him and they weren't too fond of his class, but for me it

was a really good fit and it was just a really good way for me to get into the way writing here at [University of Michigan] worked.

We actually had a research paper at the end of the semester and looking back, I did such a horrible job on it, not even just the writing but the way in which I conducted my research It was just awful but I didn't know. I had never been here and people don't hold your hand here, you have to learn through experiences and I didn't have much writing experience as I said in high school.

I didn't fail the course because he gave me chances to learn from my experiences so that class for sure really helped me a lot and for the gateway course, for the writing minor that was really beneficial because we were able to take things that we've worked on in the past and re-purpose them into a larger project and that was really cool. I mean I chose something that I was very interested in personally, but just being able to really find something that you really wanted to work on, that was—I really enjoyed that and going back to the whole like write what, what you really feel connected to.

Interviewer: What was your topic?

Interviewee: I wrote about [topic] […]. I've always been really fascinated in learning about World War II, Germany, the Holocaust, […] so I decided to take it a step further and produce this really big research paper and it's— actually the thing I'm most proud of that I wrote was here.

I spent a lot of time on it, and I wish I could have dedicated myself as much as I did for this to all of my schoolwork because I really enjoyed it. I really love how it turned out, so once again that was a really great way and that was the first time I did it [style] so I really like learned how to do another type of citation.

I did a ton of research so that was overwhelming at times, but also just beneficial for me in developing my research skills and anything from like how to find books and what's at the right level and what's not to like actual, do I want to use post notes, do I want to highlight, do I want to use note cards, those kinds of things just for me to gather my own research and organizing it. That was huge in helping me and I wasn't doing very much writing at the time besides for that class so I was able to give a lot to it so I'm really glad that really worked out to my advantage.

Then let's see, my other writing classes, [English 200 level course] like I said that just gave me a chance to explore things and I took it as a senior so not that it was easy for me, but usually taking 200 level classes as a senior it's know how it's going to work out. You don't usually worry about it or whatever.

My professor was great. She really encouraged you to just do what you wanted to do and so that was really awesome. Then for [Writing 400 level course], I did a project about hard copy books versus all digital publications and that was a cycle of essays and that

was starting me to get into writing about what I know but trying to tell about what else is going on and so one of the essays was all about me.

I was thinking I need to do that for this because that's why I want to write about this so I let myself just completely take over one essay and just have it be all personal reflection and what not but then the rest of them I tried to talk about my experiences and incorporate it with research that I have done and base the issues that cite is basing on, so that class I was able to experiment with that a little bit. They've all been really beneficial in completely different ways and they've really helped me grow in different ways as a writer.

Interviewer: Let's see, did you take these writing courses in your concentration? I think you sort of—

Interviewee: The history one I did, but that's the only one.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. So how did those courses, those writing courses affect the writing that you do in your concentration?

Interviewee: Well, the [Writing 200 level course] where I wrote that big paper. That really helped because I wrote it from a historical standpoint—

Interviewer: The [paper]?

Interviewee: Yes, and I met with my professor and I told her, “you know I want to write something for history.” I hadn't had the opportunity yet to write a 20 page paper for history class.

They'd been more like ten pages, 12 pages, and I knew that I was going to have to, and I was scared that when that history professor was going to come to read it that I would just be really unprepared 'cause I had never done it before, so I took this opportunity to be my guinea pig because I knew my professor wouldn't mark me down for things that other professors would within the history department because that's not where she was from.

Being able to do that, it was a really great practice round for me. The whole experience from starting with the research to finishing the paper off. It just helped me in a lot of ways in just being able to experience and also just getting to write about something I love was really great too.

Interviewer: Cool. How often have you used skills or strategies—learned. I know this question sort of speaks to what we've talked about before. Skills or strategies in one of the writing classes, how does applied in other courses?

Interviewee: Pretty much all of the time, I would say. I do a lot of writing. I mean I wrote a ridiculous amount this semester, over 85 pages, so they just apply in pretty much every

class and some classes more than others. I took a couple of science classes and the writing didn't really apply there at all, but I've since gotten away from that.

Even just writing mid-terms and blue book exams and what not, that also just helps in being able to support your argument with some of the classes that I took and being able to give evidence. When you're sitting there at the exam and you're trying to recall this reading, knowing the correct and effective way to use a source while supporting your argument has really benefited me.

Interviewer: I see. What effect has the minor capstone course [Writing 400 level course] had overall in your writing?

Interviewee: Well, it gave me the chance to explore some personal narrative stuff like I mentioned before. Having the opportunities to explore some topics that I was interested in but didn't really know a lot about and that also was a lot less academically based, so like E-readers taking a place in society isn't the same as like, “Oh in 1944 this happened,” it's completely different.

I really enjoyed that and being able to write from that perspective and place myself within that and some of the research I did was a lot different, so I interviewed a man from a bookstore here in Ann Arbor. I went to [store] and for like an hour and a half and just like played around with the E-readers and so not that that's like research, but it was a way for me to get into this feel then have my own experiences to reflect on, so those types of things were really interesting and just gave me a new angle to write and to prepare for writing in those types of things.

Interviewer: Has it had an impact on your process as a writer?

Interviewee: Yeah, I mean we did the project proposal and different things. We made our own rubric for ourselves, so being able to design what we want. It was focused on how we are as a writer, so I generally don't do a lot of pre-writing pretty much ever. The only time I ever do it is when I’m writing a super long paper and have a lot of sources and just need to be able to analyze where I'm using piece quotes, where these ideas are coming into play, what's the argument against that.

Generally, I don't do a lot of stuff beforehand. I just sit down to write it, and then I go back and revise and what not but being able to plan out our project in different steps we have in other classes was something that was beneficial as a writer because it allows you to reflect on how you like to write and the steps that you take and interesting things like that.

I prefer a detailed outline sometimes, so I created one of my cycle of essays and the four essays that I was writing. At the time it was six, I went down to four, but not titles, but the subject matter and then the types of resources that I wanted for each one.

Interviewer: Four different essays?

Interviewee: Yeah, and some of the main ideas I wanted to put in the first essay is all about me reflecting on my love of books and I just like—I repeat it over and over and over again and the one about E-readers it's just really about how I know nothing about E-readers and how I'm exploring them, and using some research and like really cool fast and really talking them up. Then the last essay, I reflect on the whole thing and I incorporate a lot of research to wrap it up and I'm like, "Well, this is what I say, and this person says this," and then connecting these things together.

Each one is different and it was cool that the project proposal helped me create the outline that helped me write the paper, if that makes sense. I wouldn't have done that if it wouldn't have been for that class.

Interviewer: Any other process changes you can think of ?

Interviewee: Process changes. I wrote out of order, which I don't ever do. I always start with writing the intro, go through the paper and write a conclusion. That's just how I've always been and then for this class I wrote the intro and then I wrote the conclusion and then I wrote the third article and then I wrote the second one, so I went all over the place, partially because it's just what I was feeling at the time, I have these ideas I should write them down before I forget and other times it was like hard, I was stuck.

I need to talk to my professor, so that was a little different 'cause normally I would have just waited and not written anything and just try to stay in order but this time I was like, "Nope, I'm just gonna go for it," so that was weird. I had them framed going a certain way, so after I wrote them out of order I had to go back and weave them together because they were trying to flow in the order in which I wrote them, but that's not how they needed to be presented so that was a little weird, so I had to make some changes with that.

Interviewer: How has it impacted your sense of yourself as a writer?

Interviewee: I'm a little more confident now after doing some peer reviews in that class. I learned about some of the things that I'm decent at but I didn't really know because I'd never done that type of writing before or if I did it was one essay for a class, not my whole class project.

Interviewer:What are some of those things?

Interviewee: Being able to incorporate short, but specific memories was something that I never really thought about being able to do well, but I had several peers who commented on that and told me that I didn't explain it too much, but it was fair enough. I like to use some cheesy metaphors sometimes. I often think they're overkill but I like them so I'll put them in there, but people actually supported them and liked them. That was cool to realize that it wasn't just me thinking I was funny, but having my peers specifically point that out when they were going through my paper. "I really liked this here because of

this," and what not; so I liked that. Also being able to toss around ideas with them and help me figure out where to go within my next essay that I was writing. That was also something that just helped me.

Interviewer: What effect has the experience of the capstone project had on you as a writer? The project?

Interviewee: Well, the project helped me experience this new type of writing. I guess it wasn't new. I've done it before, but really being able to spend a significant amount of time on it and expand on it and start from scratch and then do research. Then I wasn't finding what I wanted so I remade some ideas in my head, how I wanted to go with it. Then write and go through peer editing, being able to meet with my professor, being able to spend a whole semester on it was much better than finals week, cramming to write a paper one night and then realizing it's bad so then scurrying to his office the day before it's due.

It was just nice to have time to develop ideas and to, I don't want to say relax with it. There's was something very comforting about being able to take your time and being able to pursue it when you wanted to and it fit with you when you were thinking about it rather than having two weeks to just write some big paper. I forget the question—

Interviewer: How had that experience, what effect did it have on you as a writer?

Interviewee: That was having that four month period was something that helped me calm down a little bit with my writing. Sometimes I'm in such a rush to write and just being able to take my time and really develop my ideas, change things around. Being able to still really spend time on it I think was really importantt. I saw the value of that and hopefully that's something I can continue in the future. I'm not quite sure exactly in what context but just to remember that being able to spend time on your writing versus just cranking it out is something that could be really beneficial to the actual piece of writing itself.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Why did you choose that project?

Interviewee: Well, in [English 200 level course], I actually wrote a really short essay about my love of Nancy Drew when I was a little girl. Got me thinking about how I would go and spend all my time at the library in the summer and all my friends would be swimming, playing outside. I just would ride my bike to the library every day and stay there. I would go home for lunch, then I would go back or sometimes my Dad would take me to the library before he left for work. I would get a book and I would read it and at lunchtime I was done with the book but I know there is something else about reading.

It wasn't just actually reading, but I love books. I own so many books and I had to bring them with me to school, not all of them but I had to have bookshelves. I have to be able to see my books. I love old books, new books. I think they're beautiful. It's like I have this like weird obsession with them and I want to explore that and see why I had that.

Why do I like them so much? I think it's about more than just reading, but I don't really know. I also hate E-readers with a passion so I wanted to see why that was. After writing the essay about the E-readers and being able to play around with them, I'm like, "Yeah, I really see why they appeal to a lot of people." I probably won't buy one because I don't have money for it and I also just like books. I just don't think I want one of them, but I really, really see the appeal and understand why they're all the rage and what not so that was one of the reasons why I chose to write about it.

Clearly, I have a lot to say about it. I also wanted to educate myself a little more because I often felt like people would say something about like, "Oh, my Kindle this," and I was like, "Do you have [inaudible 34:33]?" No. I'd be turned off from the conversation and just really against it, so I figured I should probably try to introduce myself to the topic a little more.

[…]

Interviewer: Yeah, here we go. Great. Can you tell me about the most memorable aspect of this experience making this portfolio? You can like—

Interviewee: The good or the bad?

Interviewer: Let's start with the good.

Interviewee: I actually really enjoyed writing the reflective essay. That is right here. It's about 750 words. It was required to be about 500 so I wrote a little more, I just went with it and wrote it but it's just me reflecting on my past four years here and what my portfolio is all about.

I really like The Road Not Taken by Robert Frost and that was my journey here at [University of Michigan]. Just in general, I came here and no one else from my high school goes here so I was all by myself and really excited to do something different and that's what I focus my four years around. I talk about [English course] and I talk about the [essay] and what not and how that helped me develop into doing other things and I also talk about [English 200 level course] and [Writing 400 level course].

Those three classes had really, really big impacts on my academic career here, so not just my writing because it's a lot of other things. I incorporated all that into this essay and I didn't really realize that until I wrote this. I knew all those classes had been beneficial to me in many ways but I just never thought about them collectively and being able to relate to each other and the ways in which the things I learned from [English course] directly relate to [English 200 level course] which directly relates to [Writing 400 level course].

That was an interesting way to reflect on my career so I really enjoyed that and just being able to express myself that way and I don't actually know who's ever going to read this, but I really like it and I think it shows a lot about me and who I am and who I've

developed to be academically and just in my own personal ways here at [University of Michigan].

Interviewer: Wow, and you said good or bad so what would be the negative aspect?

Interviewee: Well, I guess my [inaudible 38:05] being a part of this. We talked about this in class actually. There were some things that I've written that I wasn't able to include on here because there wasn't a spot for them which that's always a bummer because I had some things that I would have liked to upload to represent me but there wasn't a place for them so that was a bummer.

For the Slavic upper level writing class I took outside my major. I hate everything I wrote for that class and I don't even know why, I just must not have been thinking when I was writing because in the paper I actually ended up using—I have a paragraph that's extends for a page and a half. I would never, ever, ever do that in a million years. That's just poor writing in my opinion. There were other things. There was another history class and I wrote about the civil rights act and how that impacted education within the United States and the years following and I love that paper and I love that topic but there was no place for me to put it up here because it wasn't for a class for the minor.

Interviewer: Oh, I see.

Interviewee: There was some economic stuff that I've done that I just didn't have a place, so that's just playing a little bit. I mean I guess I probably could have put it up here as extra stuff but there's so much stuff that you have to put up already that I didn't really want to do anything extra crowded.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Interesting. What were your aims for the portfolio? What story did you want to tell with this?

Interviewee: Well, I really just want to talk about how I had no idea what I was doing when I came here and my classes really helped me figure that out and allow me to explore my academic interests and what not so starting with my [English course] and ending with [Writing 400 level course] I talk about the path that I'm writing in so that's the story I was telling here.

Interviewer: Wow, and how do you feel your e-portfolio? Do you think it's meets those goals, those aims?

Interviewee: I think so yeah, especially because of the way I designed it, not only with my story and supporting it with evidence from my classes, but I give some information about myself and just a little bit look into who I am. Then my academic writing, I uploaded it in the order that I took the classes, so you can see here it starts with [English course]. [English 200 level course] was the middle, [Writing 400 level course] is down here. It gives a way to go through it and see, not only the way I've improved as a writer,

but my journey itself and visually also if you went through and read every single piece, which I don't think anyone would ever do, but that was the idea.

Interviewer: I see. Did you design the portfolio to create a particular reader experience?

Interviewee: No, I'm not tech savvy at all but I like this because it—this template is just old and just fit with wanting to talk about me as a writer, with the pen and paper. That's just the look I was going for, so I wouldn't necessarily say that's a reader experience but I was going for that type of look.

Interviewer: I see. Did you notice any relationships among your artifacts as you created your portfolio?

Interviewee: Yeah, so I would say my reflective writing, these weren't so much related. The one was writing about why I write and the other one was about me and my [sibling]. Those—I don't know, they're both reflective pieces obviously. I mean that's my reflective writing, but those aren't really so much related but a lot of these are related and not so much subject matter but ways, like the type of writing they are so like this one, this one, so one, two, three, four, are all heavily research-based essays. Whereas one, two, are not.

In that way you could say they're related and this one for my outside writing those are all completely different things so those are not related whatsoever. One is a viewpoint I wrote for [local Ann Arbor newspaper]. […].

Interviewer: Wow. What relationships do you want your readers to notice?

Interviewee: What relationships?

Interviewer: Between the different artifacts.

Interviewee: Oh, just show from my outside writing show some of the things I've been involved in throughout my time here, so not so much my journey with writing but my journey here. […].

Interviewer: How about in your academic writing?

Interviewee: I guess the whole thing is for them to see some of the things I'm interested in academically and some of the things I like to write about, perhaps ways in which I would pursue these topics more within my future so as in, we don't know what she's gonna write, how she's gonna write when she's after she's graduated, but these are some of things she's interested in and we can see her going into the future with these topics, ideas, discussions, that thing.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Cool. Let's see, do you think that creating this portfolio had an effect on your writing?

Interviewee: Probably not a whole lot. I mean we didn't really do very much writing. I mean being that there's little blurbs for everything you click on just like introducing, like this is my parent writing page and then click here this is my [Title of tab], it's like saying that but I mean that stuff took me like a couple of minutes to write each thing and I mean there was some reflection but as far as my writing I don't really see very much.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Let's see, what did you learn from the reflective writing in your e-portfolio?

Interviewee: What did I learn? Well, a lot of the reflective writing honestly was justifying why it was on there so it was—I felt it was more so writing for my readers, the graders, not so much myself because I already knew why I was putting it on there. It was required. It was like the best thing I wrote for that class.

I didn't want to upload 20 page papers for each thing, so some of the things I tried to do shorter pieces. I didn't really learn a whole lot, but being able to look back on it and reflect a little bit on some of the little blurbs I wrote, not this one so much, but I wrote a couple of things that I wish I would have done differently or that I now know I wouldn't do, so being able to look back and see those types of things.

Like I said, the one where my paragraph sentence is a page and a half and I'm actually a little embarrassed I did that, especially as a junior, I mean I just think I was really over the paper and not caring or something. I don't know because I never would do that, so those types of things I'm able to realize and learn from, but the actual writing there wasn't a whole lot of learning going on, but I enjoyed reflecting on some other things and going back through the stuff that I had done here.

Interviewer: Interesting. Let's see, what can people interested in writing development including program administers, like those as Sweetland learn about writing development from your capstone portfolio?

Interviewee: What was the first? What could they learn?

Interviewer: What could they learn about writing development?

Interviewee: Yeah I would say how I talk about my journey. Starting out with not having any experience with these things, being really nervous about it. That's a big part of my writing experience for [University of Michigan] and that's what I really try to convey through my portfolio and I feel that a lot of people felt that way.

Some people probably felt more experienced in some ways than other ways and a lot of my peers had done a lot more outside writing, like professionally whether it was for a job, an internship, for a newspaper. I haven't done quite as much so I don't have as much to upload in that aspect but a lot of people have a lot outside stuff like that which I think would also that they would benefit from learning about it so that's not mine specifically.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Now we'd like to reflect back on your gateway courses. How did your experience in the capstone course compare to your experience in the gateway course?

Interviewee: Well, for both classes I was the first class, so I was in gateway, I was at the first gateway and then obviously for the capstone, that was the first capstone since this is the first semester it's been offered. The gateway course was like really shaky and guidelines were changing all the time. You never knew what was going on, it was really overwhelming because we just never knew when anything was due and we had more shorter assignments.

Whereas this semester it was just like, "Your final project is due on this date." that was different and my [Writing 400 level course] I was really unsure of everything all the time and writing these smaller things which were, some of them were cool and helped me learn about myself and all that stuff.

[Writing 400 level course] was a little bit more structured but yet we had so much more freedom and I enjoyed that because we were able to work on that one piece throughout the whole time but with [Writing 200 level course] we did some smaller things so we did this piece on why I write and I talked about how I got started into that. We did something else which I don't remember and then we spent time re-purposing something and so that was cool 'cause we did some different types of writing, whereas [Writing 400 level course] was like one thing, got sick of it after awhile. Those are some of the differences [cross talk 48:53].

Interviewer: Yeah. What are your experiences—so which one do you feel like you grew more? Which one did you prefer?

Interviewee: I liked [Writing 400 level course] better. Just because I liked working on one thing, even though I got sick of it I really did enjoy that.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm, interesting. And what have your experiences been working with other writers in the minor?

Interviewee: I actually really enjoyed doing the peer feedback groups. I think since we're all generally interested in writing and I would say we're all pretty decent writers, we're really good at giving each other feedback. Not in every case 'cause not everyone is good at just peer feedback. It could be hard sometimes. I had a lot of help from them and in class and outside of class and that has been really cool. I've had several people that I've met in class write outside papers for other classes because I trust them a lot and I've really enjoyed having those relationships with people so yeah, I forgot what the rest of the question was, I don't know [cross talk 50:06].

Interviewer: Yeah, it was just about peer relationships in general.

Interviewee: Yeah, so I like that. I mean we're not best friends but the class is cool, there's a cool bond between us. I see them on campus on weekends, it's cool to run into people 'cause we're more close than a lot of my other things.

Interviewer: Cool. What are the differences you see between the gateway and the capstone portfolios?

Interviewee: Well, the gateway portfolio is just for that class so there was a lot less to it. More reflecting on that class. Whereas the capstone was whole time here, other things you've done. Also it just seemed like way more important because you're making it for the minor, not actually for the class. I mean we did it in class, we got help in class but it's technically for the minor, to pass the minor. You're not getting graded on it, you're not getting points for your class, so that was a bigger deal.

Interviewer: I see. Let's see, the gateway and the capstone courses emphasized reflective writing in various forms. How would you describe your experience with this reflection?

Interviewee: I didn't learn a lot from it as we talked about from the actual writing, but I did enjoy being able to go back though and see things. I used some of the same pieces from my capstone portfolio that I did for the gateway. To see that those pieces still are important to me almost two years later and valuable in different—in the same and different ways was just fascinating. That I wrote this one paper and I still think it's the best thing I've written since I've been here even though I had four semesters of classes after taking it.

Interviewer: What's so special about that paper?

Interviewee: I just put a lot of work into it and I was really dedicated to it and the subject and I just really enjoyed writing it. I also didn't have as much work going on as I did for—during other semesters so I was able to give a lot more time to it.

Interviewer: Let's see, are you still using reflection in your current writing, either assigned writing or voluntary writing?

Interviewee: Yeah, I'm currently not doing any writing but I’m taking a little bit of a break, but, no, definitely reflective writing whether it's academically or professionally or for my own personal use, that's something I use all the time, so yeah that will never go away.

Interviewer: How so?

Interviewee: Just whether I've seen it in emails or letters to friends, family,talking about my day. I've written a couple of articles […] and reflecting on my past experiences here at [University of Michigan] or for jobs that I've had and what not, so just being able to incorporate all those stories with it.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Has this reflection given you new ways to talk about your writing or new terms or concepts?

Interviewee: New ways, yeah, and being able to see things from different angles. Being able to use the same pieces from my capstone portfolio as I did for my gateway and seeing my gateway portfolio and the reason that I chose that reflective writing because the reasons I chose it. Some of them are similar. but there are a lot of many other reasons why I chose to include such a piece. Being able to see that was cool and being able to reflect on that within writing about my capstone portfolio and saying, "Oh, I used this in the gateway because of this, but now I realize that I used—I want to use it now for these other reasons," so that was beneficial.

Interviewer: I see, and the minor program is still relatively new, so are there any suggestions you would have for instructors or administrators for this program?

Interviewee: One thing that I've always thought would be interesting is that—I don't know how it is now since it's been a little while since I took it, but in the gateway class—there—we don't have a journalism program here. Obviously, there was stuff like that in the communications department, but there are some, just different types of writing that I've always wanted to try out. Not because that's what I want to go into, but I just would like some experience doing it, like short articles for newspapers. Not like editorials but how to write for a newspaper because there's a different style. You do things differently, like doing press releases or just shorter forms of those types of things I think would be really cool.

A lot of us thought that's how the gateway class was gonna be, exposure to a lot of different types of writing. Having a lot of short writing assignments in different genres, which is something I feel that a lot of us would have maybe enjoyed. That's not included in the minor or maybe creating a class like that. Don't get me wrong. I've really liked a lot of the assignments we've done. I've loved that you get to do these two big projects, [Writing 400 level course], that being the whole semester and [Writing 200 level course] was the second half, but I also think it would be cool just to be exposed to some different types of things, if that makes sense.

Interviewer: The multi-genre push, really.

Interviewee: Especially because when we talked about [English 200 level course] and how I have a lot of experiences with that, which I did, but, first of all, not everyone takes that class. A lot of that was more personal reflection, so just having other experiences with the more professional types of writing. I realize you can take [English 200 level course], I think it's—I don't know. I know there are other classes, but it would be cool if the writing minor had some things specific for writing minor students to get that exposure as well.

Interviewer: Great. Any other suggestions?

Interviewee: I don't think so.

Interviewer: More generally, what do you think professors should know about teaching writing at the undergraduate level? Advice for professors?

Interviewee: I would say, going back to a couple of the professors that I've had, to really let you grow a little bit and try not to be so picky about things that they want. I know it varies by class and the types of the assignments you're doing. Sometimes it can be so frustrating when a professor only wants you to write in one style, one tone, in one view and it can be really frustrating. It can make a student not care about the paper, but just allowing them to be able to explore things more., especially in the early stages of writing.

Some of the lower level classes when you first get here, you're really impressionable as a student, but being able to have the opportunity to learn about your own writing and the ways in which you prefer to write. I think that's really important. I had a lot of those experiences, so I'm really thankful for that. I was able to grow a lot, but I'm not sure that everyone gets that opportunity, so I would definitely give that as some advice to them.

Interviewer: Great. All right, anything else?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: That's it. All right. Any other comments in general about writing, about the writing minor?

Interviewee: I don't think so.

Interviewer: All right.

[End of Audio]