

Interviewer: Okay, this is ***. On Tuesday, December 17th, 2013. It is 03:54 p.m. I'm interviewing ***. ***, my first question for you today about your writing experiences at Michigan [University of Michigan] is, "How do you describe yourself as a writer?"

Interviewee: [Pause] Argumentative. When I write, I usually try to argue something.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: This semester is probably a little bit different 'cause I was taking [title of research course].

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: Then my two psych [Psychology] classes; the type of writing was—we read a paper, and then we had to kinda do a review on that. It was very different than the writing that I've done before. I definitely prefer having a thesis, and then having my paper follow from that.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. What kind of writing were you doing before?

Interviewee: What do you mean? Paper assignments?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Our professor would give us a prompt, and we'd have to argue one way or the other. I'm a soc [Sociology] major, and a psych major.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: I'm taking more psych classes this semester than soc [Sociology courses].

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: Soc was a little bit different.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: With my soc classes, they would ask us to write about a topic, and we could pick the—our thesis.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: Yeah. Usually, I create my—I write my thesis. I argue my point.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: This semester I didn't do much of that.

Interviewer: I see. This semester you've been doing more of what?

Interviewee: Lit review. Literature review.

Interviewer: Okay. Okay. You describe yourself as argumentative now, or in the past?

Interviewee: In general.

Interviewer: In general. Okay.

Interviewee: I prefer that. Yeah.

Interviewer: Anything else? Any other traits about yourself as a writer? Weaknesses or strengths?

Interviewee: [Pause] I usually try to write premise, premise, conclusion.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: Sometimes the way I write; I usually write the way I would speak.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: A lot of times my sentences have clauses within clauses. They're very run-on.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Okay. Great. How would you describe the role of writing in your life?

Interviewee: It's important. I mean, I don't mind it as much as some other people do. [Laughs]

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: I enjoy it. Yeah. I don't keep a diary, or anything. Yeah.

Interviewer: Why do you find it important?

Interviewee: ‘Cause I wanna be a lawyer [*laughs*] so I figure writing’s pretty important for that.

Interviewer: Oh. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. You say you enjoy it?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: What is it you enjoy about it?

Interviewee: I like giving my point of view. I like putting that into my writing. Usually when you write, it’s more organized than when you’re just speaking to someone. Yeah.

Interviewer: Cool. I see the argumentative thing working with the “lawyer” goal.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Let’s see. How would you describe yourself as a writer when you began at the U of M [University of Michigan]?

Interviewee: My writing was more—it would follow a rubric. The really only writing we did in high school was—I mean, we did write but it was all to prepare us for the SAT [Scholastic Aptitude Test, a standardized test]. For the writing section on the SAT.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: We were taught to do a five-paragraph essay. The paragraphs didn’t exactly have to flow.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: It was very, just—a topic sentence, and then you offer three different examples. Then a conclusion paragraph. It’s really different. It’s kinda different. Some of the stuff is still structured that way. A thesis and then point, point, point, conclusion. I mean, I like to think that my writing is a little more sophisticated then it was before. [*Laughs*]

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. What kind of assignments or classes do you think caused that change when you were at the University of Michigan?

Interviewee: My sociology classes much more than psychology.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: Sociology requires you to analyze. I don't really see much of that in psychology. Or, I haven't.

Interviewer: Hmm.

Interviewee: Yeah, with sociology; either you'll analyze demographics, or you'll analyze statistics—like, statistics with the demographics. Or, I've done things where I read a book, and then analyzed the book sociologically.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: In one of my religion class—one of my sociology in religion classes; my only *[laughs]* sociology in religion class—we just had a take-home where we had to read news. Read a news article, and then analyze that.

Interviewer: Hmm.

Interviewee: In that, I feel like I get to offer my opinion a little bit more.

Interviewer: Okay. Great. Anything else? Any other ways that you've grown and changed at U of M?

Interviewee: I definitely feel more comfortable writing. A ten-page paper doesn't feel as daunting as it used to be.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. What classes would have had you write those ten-page papers?

Interviewee: I mean, my research methods class. 'Cause I've taken both psych and soc research methods. Those are definitely ten-page paper classes. 'Cause I used to be in honors. In my text and ideas class, we had to write a 15-page paper.

Interviewer: Hmm. Wow.

Interviewee: Most of my classes, it's like six to eight pages. It's really not that hard *[laughs]* anymore *[laughs]* to just crank out.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Wow. As you graduate, what are your goals for yourself as a writer?

Interviewee: I mean, I hope to be able to structure my arguments better. To be more to-the-point.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: To be able to articulate myself better. Because sometimes there's an idea floating around, but I don't really know how to put it in words.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: I hope to be able to do that better.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Anything else?

[Pause 06:25 – 06:32]

Interviewee: What do you mean?

Interviewer: Any other goals? Or ways that you wanna improve your writing?

Interviewee: Not really. *[Laughs]*

Interviewer: Okay. Thinking across your writing experiences at U of M? What do you think it means to write well?

Interviewee: To be able to be coherent. To be able to give as much information that you wanna say as possible, while not being repetitive or saying extraneous stuff.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: Being concise.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Anything else?

Interviewee: *[Pause]* I mean, obviously, with argumentative writing; to be able to convince people of your point. Or, at least make them see how you came to your conclusion, and understand it.

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

Interviewee: I'm actually not sure. I know I filled mine so I didn't consciously look for one. I think sociological research methods, and then psychological research methods twice.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. The psychological research methods you took twice?

Interviewee: They require us to take it twice.

Interviewer: Wow.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: What were your experiences with writing in those courses?

Interviewee: I mean, for both of the classes, there was so much writing. For all of them, we had five assignments. For both soc, and psych. We had five assignments, and then we had a final paper. It was literally just a paper due every week. I didn't get to put as much thought into a paper, as I would for another type of paper.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: I definitely didn't give as much thought to the writing as I would usually. I didn't even proofread 'cause I was on a time crunch.

[...]

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. How long were these papers that you had to do on a weekly basis?

Interviewee: I think they started at four to six. Then at the end it was ten to twelve.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: It just got longer and longer. For both the research methods classes, obviously we had to design our own study.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: The bulk of the paper was just presenting the data, so it didn't even feel like I was writing ten pages.

Interviewer: Hmm. In all of those papers?

Interviewee: Especially sociology 'cause I had graphs in there. My paper was like sixteen pages, but three pages were graphs. It wasn't as rewarding.

Interviewer: I see.

Interviewee: I took a political psych class. That was a ten-page paper, and it was just writing. That felt a lot more rewarding than the research methods class. I really didn't like them.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. How did all those papers change the way you wrote? You mentioned that you wrote more quickly. Could you talk more about that or other ways?

Interviewee: I mean, I definitely didn't pay as much attention to construction, as I did—as I would on another paper. It was more about getting the data there. Then, following the rubric. Just making sure I mentioned everything. It probably didn't flow as well. It probably wasn't as good; didn't sound as good.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. What was the rubric?

Interviewee: They would just tell us stuff that they wanted us to mention. *[Pause]* Like independent variable, dependent variable, analysis of results.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: Sometimes part of the rubric was how you constructed your study. Making sure that on your survey you ask certain questions.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Could you talk about that poly psych class? That one paper; that ten-page paper that you felt was more rewarding?

Interviewee: It was political psych.

Interviewer: Oh, political psych. Okay.

Interviewee: It was the same professor as the one that teaches research methods.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: It was just a ten-page paper at the end. I think you could write it on anything that you wanted. I can't even remember what I wrote about anymore. I know at first I was really worried 'cause it was ten pages. Once I figured out what I wanted to write in each paragraph, there was a lot of information to draw from. I write my papers in Notepad; WordPad without formatting. Then when I copy and paste it into Word I realize, "Oh, I'm pretty far along."

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: I think I wrote mine on evil. Human nature.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: It was a topic that I was interested in, and it was *[pause]* fun. More fun to write.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Interesting.

Interviewee: It flowed better, I guess.

Interviewer: How much time did you have for it?

Interviewee: He told us at the beginning of the year that we were gonna write it. I probably gave myself a week to write it.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: A week or two. I definitely started it a month in advance. I figured out my paragraphs. I figured out what I was gonna write about. Then, the actual writing maybe just took about a week.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Wow. How did that change your writing style, or your writing growth?

Interviewee: Oh, I mean, I don't think the paper changed it that much. *[Laughs]* It was just a paper that I would have noted if you were asking about long papers. I don't think it really changed my writing style that much. I think it was the first time I actually used Notepad though.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: To write the paper. 'Cause before that, I feel like I just typed it right into Word. Now I use Notepad.

Interviewer: Hmm. Interesting.

Interviewee: 'Cause I don't have to worry about format, and stuff.

Interviewer: How else does the Notepad step change your writing?

Interviewee: I mean, everything's on one screen, right? There's no page breaks, and stuff. If I have an idea, I'll just stick it at the bottom. I'll press enter a couple times and stick it on the bottom. Then I can just—it's more almost like a wipe board. I can scatter ideas all over the place.

Interviewer: Hmm. Fun. Let's see. In terms of any writing classes, did you take any upper level writing courses at U of M?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: No? What other writing courses have you taken at the U of M?

Interviewee: I've never taken a writing course. I took Great Books freshman year for honors. I've never taken a class where they taught you to write.

Interviewer: Okay. What did you say you took? Great Books? Okay.

Interviewee: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: Let's see. Well, let's talk about that class. How did that affect your writing?

Interviewee: I really didn't like it. *[Laughs]* It was required. I'm not interested in literature at all.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: I mean, it was my first writing class where I had to turn in writing assignments outside of high school. I didn't do very well on the writing assignments.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: It was a first-year writing class, but I don't feel like the GSIs [Graduate Student Instructors] helped very much with writing. They were grading on writing, but they didn't help. They didn't tell you why they graded you poorly.

Interviewer: I see.

Interviewee: If they did. I feel like the class that I learned from most was my sociology class.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: I didn't think I learned very much from Great Books.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Okay.

Interviewee: I think one disjoint—I didn't really understand what they were asking us to do—was *[pause]* the paper prompt. The professor talked about it in class. She gave her interpretation of it. In high school, if we were ever given a paper assignment like that, and they asked us something that the teacher had explicitly said; like this is her opinion? We would have to basically just repeat her opinion. Say, this is what the professor said, this is what I learned.

With Great Books, I think they wanted us to come up with our own interpretation. I didn't really know that until later. My writing got better once I realized that. We

only had two papers, and the first one I didn't do well on. Because I basically quoted—said back what the professor said.

[...]

Interviewer: Right. Right. Have you used any other—any skills or strategies in that class for anything in your other classes?

[...]

Interviewer: Okay, let's see. Kind of doing this out of order. Let's see. How confident do you feel overall about writing in your concentration?

Interviewee: Sociology? Confident. Psychology; because it's so much like research and your writing has to be very, very concise and very clear. It has to be not opinionated with psychology. I don't think I'm as good at it. I don't know. I mean, this has been a kind of rough semester in general. I don't know if I'm actually not as good at psychology, or what?

I think I'm just not good at research. Objective writing, I guess? Like doing research and stating the data. I don't know. I'm just not as good at that, I think. I like doing other types of—I like all the writing I've done in sociology. I feel way more confident turning that in, than I have in psychology.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Hmm. Let's see. If I use the term, "reflective writing," what does that mean to you?

Interviewee: Writing either about yourself, or about something that you've read.

Interviewer: Okay. Have you ever used—have you used it recently in your own writing process?

Interviewee: [Pause] I don't think so. Not recently. Not this semester. This semester has been very objective writing.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

[Pause 17:41 – 17:47]

Interviewee: Yeah. I've only done [pause] I mean, I had to do it in French this semester. That was it. French [laughs] I don't really count as writing because that's more like language. Other foreign language. [Pause] I think I've only ever

done one reflective paper. It wasn't even like—it was more like—in my intro to sociological theory class, we were learning about Bourdieu and his ideas about what shapes individuals. Our professor had us write about how our own lives were reflective of that idea. How our own experiences have shaped us as individuals. That's the only thing I've ever really written about myself.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: 'Cause I don't really take literature classes, so I've never written a paper where we read something and talked about how we felt about it. How I felt about it.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Okay. Have you had any experiences outside of the classroom? Over the last two years; that have had an effect on your writing?

Interviewee: I mean, I just applied to law school, so I was writing a bunch of personal statements and stuff. That was a really long process.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: I'm not sure how I did. We'll see in a couple months, I guess.

Interviewer: What was that like?

Interviewee: It was a long process. I started over the summer. It was very rough. If you look at my first draft, compared to the one I turned in; they're drastically different. I thought the first one was good, but looking back it was so rough and unsophisticated. *[Laughs]*

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: My dad helped me proofread it. My advisor kind of gave some suggestions, but obviously she didn't help as much as my dad did.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: There was a lot of having to look at it through fresh eyes.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: To put myself in the reader's shoes.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: Think about what they would think, if they read mine. Like if they have any unanswered questions, or if they would get the wrong idea from what I

was saying. *[Pause]* ‘Cause they look at that and they judge you. I think it’s really different from other writing where they—where, I mean, I guess it’s kind of like argumentative writing. You’re trying to convince them to admit you. It’s still different because they’re judging you. From your writing, they’re looking at your writing style.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: They’re looking at your perspective; your maturity. Whereas with writing papers in school, it’s less like, “Oh, this is—” They’re not looking at your writing to understand you, they’re just grading your papers.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: It’s definitely more intimidating to turn in the personal statement, than it is for just a paper.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. How many did you write? Personal statement?

Interviewee: I mean, I wrote one personal statement. I wrote about why I wanted to go to law school, and the journey that kinda brought me there. Then, there was a little paragraph in there where I had fill-in-the-blanks; where I would just put in the law school, and then a little bit of research that I did on the law school to talk about why I liked it.

Then I wrote a diversity statement. That was like a page long. Then, if I liked the school, sometimes they have optional essays. I wrote the optional essays. Those, I definitely didn’t put in as much time as I did for the personal statement. I spent the most time on the personal statement.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. How long is a personal statement?

Interviewee: Two pages.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: You spent how long on it?

Interviewee: Since the summer. Maybe June, to—we turned ‘em in on Thanksgiving—to November.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Wow. How did that experience change, or grow you as a writer?

Interviewee: I mean, that's when I really realized that I tend to write run-on sentences. *[Laughs]*

[...]

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. What other ways did you revise that paper over the course of those months?

Interviewee: *[Pause]* I mean, if we're getting into specifics; in my first draft—'cause like, the way it is, I wrote stuff that I wanted the admissions committee to know about me. Then, I would try and find ways to put it in there. I had this paragraph full of dialogue. I was describing a conversation that I had with my old manager at work. I had basically a paragraph of dialogue. Then I took that out because it just doesn't sound that good. I don't know. It ended up sounding a lot better, I think; without the dialogue.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: Then, some things are just like—I changed some words to sound smarter.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: Then, sometimes wording can be—not like callous, but it might not give them the impression that I want them to have. 'Cause I didn't always wanna be a lawyer. I wrote about that, but it's really hard to do that, and at the same time let them know that I'm sure that I wanna be a lawyer now. I had to change the wording around to make myself sound like I'm sure of this decision. I don't know. Not that immature? *[Laughs]*

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Great. Let's see. What have your recent experiences been of working with other writers in your courses? Or in other contexts?

Interviewee: I don't really like it. *[Laughs]* I mean, everyone has a different voice, you know? I've never actually written a group paper. I've done group presentations, and I feel like it'd be kind of like that. I've done presentations where everyone's slides were different.

The formatting was different. It just drives me crazy. Like writing styles probably really similar. You can tell from the syntax and the structure of the sentences who's writing what. I feel like that would really bother me if it's not unified. Yeah. I would rather write the whole paper, than work with someone else on a paper.

Interviewer: Have you worked with other writers? Okay. Have you ever done workshopping, or peer review?

Interviewee: Yeah. This semester for my psych paper we had to do peer reviews. I don't know. I think they're kind of pointless. *[Laughs]* In my cog-psych class, we did peer reviews. In my research methods class, we did drafts.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: With the drafts, we turned them into our GSI and they reviewed them and gave them back. With the peer review, we gave them to three students, and they reviewed it and then gave it back. I would've rather given a draft to my GSI because she's the one who's gonna be grading it. The suggestions that she gives me, I know are actually helpful.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: Whereas with peer reviews; our peer reviews are graded. The reviews that we give other people. A lot of times, like when I was doing my peer reviews, I was just making stuff up so I could say something and get the grade for it.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: I feel like sometimes it could be destructive, rather than constructive.

Interviewer: Hmm. How did you feel about the feedback that others were giving you?

Interviewee: Some of them were really critical. *[Pause]* Then, some of them were really, really nice. It's hard to know how my paper actually is.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: Like, I tried to change some stuff to—I took feedback that I got, and I tried to edit my paper. It's really hard to do that when someone's telling you, "Oh, it's good." Someone else says, "Take this out." Or, "Add this in." Then sometimes you even have two peer reviewers who give you conflicting advice. I don't know. I think peer reviews are pointless. You end up writing it to fit what your peer reviewer fit—like how another student would've written their paper. What would they have done? You know? Rather than how the GSI would've wanted you to do it.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: I don't know.

Interviewer: [...]. How about; did you ever feel like you learned from giving others feedback?

Interviewee: I mean, just like reading other people's papers gave me ideas for my own. I don't think I learned from actual feedback giving. Because, like I said; a lot of the suggestions that I gave—I'm not generally not too critical about other people's writing. 'Cause I get; it's their writing, not mine. I'm not gonna tell them, "This is what I would've written." Because a lot of times, it's just like—the way I would have organized the paper, the way I would've written a certain sentence. I'm not gonna tell them what I would've written.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: A lot of times, I was just nitpicking, and silly things like grammar.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: That you forgot an apostrophe here, or something.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. You enjoyed reading others' work?

Interviewee: Yes.

[...]

Interviewee: It gave me a better idea of whether my paper was going in the right direction. The paper was a review. We had to read a research article, and then talk about it.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: Describe it in course context, then talk about the implications of the article. The article was really, really hard to follow.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: The experiment was very abstract. I don't know. It just wasn't clear to me. In my paper, I tried to summarize the best I could but reading other people's papers gave me verification that I was in the right direction.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Okay. That was the only time you've done peer review? Have there been any other times where you've done peer review?

Interviewee: I mean, I think I might've done it before but I just can't really remember it.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: Yeah. *[Laughs]*

Interviewer: Let's see. Could you re-state what class that was for?

Interviewee: [Psychology course].

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: [Psychology course].

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

Interviewee: I mean, learn how to do it. It's really important. *[Laughs]* Especially if they're in LS&A [College of Literature, Science, and the Arts].

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: I mean, I tutor people [...] whenever they bring in their papers, or we go over papers together. The first thing I do—the first thing I tell them is to figure out a thesis. I mean, I guess if I talk to other college students I'd say the same thing. Write a thesis.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: This semester I learned that that might not apply to every single paper that you write. I mean, *[pause]* yeah. I'm not really sure anymore. *[Laughs]*

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: I still think that a thesis is important though. It ties your paper together. Most of the professors that I know look for one.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Anything else that people should think about as they begin a paper?

Interviewee: I mean, yeah. Write a thesis. Organize everything around your thesis. Talk about things that support your thesis, and then be able to *[pause]* contradict things that don't. Then, don't add everything you know in there just so that the professor knows that you know it. Add it in there if it's relevant to what you're talking about.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Great. Have you had any experiences with new media writing? Such as writing for blogs? Websites?

Interviewee: I wrote for a blog last semester.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: We had to write three blog entries over the course of the semester; like one-page things. Just a response, I guess.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: To what we were learning. If we were learning—it was a sociology class. If we were learning about something in the class, then we would have—like, your blogs could be a reflection of that. Or in my case, a lot of times I talked about current events, and how it reflected that.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: I mean, I guess that's kind of reflective writing.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: I mean, they were very casual. They weren't supposed to be too long because they're blog writings. They're supposed to keep the readers' attention.

Interviewer: Right.

Interviewee: I mean, I didn't mind doing it for the class. I don't think it's something that I would enjoy doing; just like on a regular basis.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: Yeah. My old roommate kept a blog. I don't think I could do that.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Why did you enjoy it?

Interviewee: Why did I enjoy it?

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: I just liked how informal it was. Finding an application of the concept that we talked about. We didn't have to exactly construct a—or, construct a thesis. We could just say, this is a relationship between the two of them. What do you think?

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: With blogs, you open it up to what other people think.

Interviewer: Hmm. Okay.

Interviewee: I think that was interesting for the purposes of the class to start a discussion. Yeah. Like I said, I wouldn't start a blog on my own.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: Like, open it up to the public. *[Laughs]*

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Did you ever get any comments?

Interviewee: We had to. We all had to comment on each others'. Usually it was just like, "Oh, I agree with you. Oh, think about this, too." People would talk about other things.

[...]

[Beginning of Second Audio File]

Interviewer: Okay. This is *** again with ***, again. [...]. We were talking about using new media writing. Using blogs. Responding to comments. Have you done any other new media writing? Such as, making an electronic portfolio? Or a digital portfolio?

Interviewee: I haven't done a portfolio. In my sociology of religion class, we just had to do PowerPoint presentations.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: We didn't actually present them. They were just online for other people to look at. They were supposed to be structured kind of like a paper.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: It was PowerPoint, so we could use pictures, and links and stuff. Videos, if we wanted to.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Did you do that on your own, or was it like a group thing?

Interviewee: We could do it in a group, but I don't like working in groups.
[Laughs]

Interviewer: Okay. What was that like? With the PowerPoint?

Interviewee: Well, what we had to do was, look at a religion.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: It didn't have to be a conventional, or traditional religion. It could be anything that you could argue that's—I don't know. Fans of a certain actor, or a religion.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: Basically, for my presentation, I just argued that television; like certain people who watch television and get really, really into it. I argued that they were basically in a cult.

Interviewer: Hmm. *[Laughs]*

Interviewee: I provided evidence from the class from the sociological definition of that a religion is; what a cult is. How they are to each other. Then, I analyzed it functionally. Like, Durkheim functionalism. *[Pause]* One of the things that made it a lot—I thought was really different from what I'd done before was—I went on Tumbler. A lot of people are really weird on Tumbler. *[Laughs]* They're really into these T.V. shows. *[Laughs]*

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

[...]

Interviewee: The presentation was a lot more visual. The way it was structured; it was a lot of information in a couple short slides. Everything was very, very concise. I talked a little bit about a couple things. I didn't go as in-depth as I would've in a real paper.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Any other ways that the PowerPoint changed your process?

Interviewee: I mean, I didn't spend a lot of time on it. I forgot it was due. *[Laughs]* I didn't spend a lot of time on it, but I had fun doing it.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: I don't think it changed my writing process.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: ‘Cause I kind of had it separate from a paper in my head. Like, he told us to structure it like a paper, but I still structured it more as a presentation.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: The only thing he said to treat it as a paper, was to have a thesis. My thesis was basically that these people are a cult.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Hmm. That sounds like a fun paper.

Interviewee: It was interesting; the research.

Interviewer: Yeah. The last question is, that you have been uploading pieces of CTools [learning management system]—or *[laughs]* pieces of CTools? Pieces of writing—

Interviewee: Pieces of papers. Yeah.

Interviewer: - onto CTools. *[Laughs]* How has that process been going for you?

Interviewee: I mean, I just uploaded my last one before I came out here. Normally, I think I usually just pick a paper that I did really well on.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: Then, this semester, I haven’t gotten any papers back yet.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: Other than for that research methods class. I really didn’t wanna turn those papers in. I don’t think they were representative of my writing.

Interviewer: For the psychology?

Interviewee: Mm-hmm. I didn’t have much to choose from. I did a lot of writing this semester, but not like the type of writing that I normally do. I ended up submitting a paper that hadn’t been graded yet. I don’t know how I did on it. I don’t know how good it is. I wrote it over break.

Interviewer: Huh.

Interviewee: The paper; the wording is probably really different than my older papers.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: How so?

Interviewee: Just because it's one of those literature review papers.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: It's one of those papers that I just cranked out. I did it over Thanksgiving break, and I didn't proofread it. I just sent it in.

Interviewer: Okay. What made you choose that one?

Interviewee: Out of all the papers I wrote this semester, I feel like it's probably the one I'm more confident in.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: Yeah. I had a rough time with writing this semester. *[Laughs]*

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: I didn't like it.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Why do you feel more confident about that paper?

Interviewee: I mean, for one thing, I understood the experiment that we were supposed to be reading about. That's a plus. That said it better than cognitive psych where I didn't really even understand the experiment.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: The way it was structured, it was something I'd never done before. I didn't mind it that much. It's called QuALMRI, or something? It's a way of analyzing psych papers, I think. It's a format. QuALMRI; question—I can't remember what A stands for. L stands for logic. M stands for methods. R stands for results. Then, I stands for implications.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: I'd never done that kinda writing before. It was very organized. We had a rubric for that, too.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: I feel like of all the papers I wrote this semester, that's probably one of the longer ones that I knew what I was doing. *[Laughs]*

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. What else did you upload for the CTools site?

[...]

Interviewee: Mm-hmm. This is the one I submitted today.

Interviewer: Okay. This is the one that you submitted in the winter? Got it.

Interviewee: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: What was it like going through all of your past writing assignments, and sort of figuring out what ones you wanted to upload?

Interviewee: I mean, normally, I just pick the one that I did well on.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: For the first-year writing requirement—'cause before this, my freshman year I don't think I was in the study.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: I've done this since high school. I usually just clear out my entire hard drive after a semester.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: I thought I didn't have anything before that. I had to go back in my email and find a rough draft that I submitted to my professor before—

Interviewer: I see.

Interviewee: - actually getting it graded. I didn't have much choice which one I submitted for that one.

Interviewer: Oh, interesting. That was for this one?

Interviewee: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: The first-year writing requirement?

Interviewee: Yeah. That was in 2010 fall.

Interviewer: Got it. Got it. Looking at your pieces, did you notice any changes in what they were like, or how you viewed them?

Interviewee: I mean, I think you can tell when I'm interested in something and when I'm not.

Interviewer: Okay. Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: Because when I'm not interested in something, my writing is very objective. It doesn't flow as well. It's very stunted.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: Then, when I'm interested in something; when I have something to say about it, it just sounds like you can tell I'm more interested in it, I think.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Great. Alright, let me take this back. Finally, what do you think instructors should know about teaching writing at the undergraduate level?

Interviewee: I mean, *[pause]* I think the biggest benefit I've gotten from my writing here; was going to office hours.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: Before I even started writing the paper. [Instructor]; she's one of the sociology professors. She's my favorite professor. *[Laughs]* My freshman; winter semester freshman year, maybe? I took a class with her. That was the first time I went to office hours, just to make sure my paper was on the right track. She was the one who told me to not just re-state what she said in class.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: To try and tie it together into one coherent thesis.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: That probably made the biggest difference on my writing ever in college.

Interviewer: Sure.

Interviewee: I mean, I think going to office hours really helps getting feedback on your paper before you start it. Letting you know you're on the right track.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Anything else?

Interviewee: What?

Interviewer: That you think instructors should know?

Interviewee: Oh.

Interviewer: Some of those; what students should know? *[Laughs]*

Interviewee: What instructors should know?

[Pause 11:02 – 11:07]

I mean, they should make their assignments very clear, I think. About what they want. If it's a very general assignment, say so.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: Because I like to know exactly what I'm gonna be writing about.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: My political psych professor, he told us that we were gonna have a paper. I'd never written a prompt-less paper before.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: He literally said we could choose any topic in—during the year that we talked about, and write about it. I'd never done anything like that before so it was really intimidating.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: He didn't even really talk about the paper. He never told us what he wanted. He just told us to write a paper; turn it in. That was it.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: He didn't tell us what he was grading for, or anything. I ended up doing well on it, but it was still the scariest *[laughs]* thing.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: I think professors should make themselves more clear.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: About what they're looking for. I like the rubric, but at the same time, that could potentially lead to just writing off of a rubric and losing the flow of the paper. If you're just listing; did I talk about this, did I talk about this?

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: If professors tell you what they're looking for, what they're grading on. If they talk about it in class; they should talk about it at least a little bit. Tell you it's coming up soon and that *[pause]* I don't know. I think my best papers have always been the ones where the prompts were not just one little thing at the top. Front and back.

Interviewer: Huh. Interesting.

Interviewee: Sometimes they'll talk about some things to get your mind going, you know?

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: I mean, it's hard to just come up with an example. With my sociology papers, usually the professor will say—they'll give you the context of what they want you to talk about. They'll kind of talk about what so-and-so sociologist said. What some other sociologists say. Then they'll say, "Write about what you think." 'Cause it's not very specific. There's no right or wrong answer. At the same time, they make it very clear what they wanna hear from you.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: I think that helps a lot. Whereas if they're just like, "Write a paper. Make it eight to ten pages, include so-and-so."

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: It doesn't help much.

Interviewer: Got it. Great. Okay. Any other comments about writing at Michigan? Or your experiences here?

Interviewee: *[Pause]* Not really. *[Laughs]*

[...]

[End of Audio]