

Interviewer: Okay. So this is \*\*\*, and I'm here with \*\*\* on April 11, 2013. \*\*\*, what we want to do is just talk about the way you think about yourself as a writer.

Interviewee: Okay.

Interviewer: I wonder how you would describe yourself as a writer.

Interviewee: Okay. I like it more than sciences, just in general—

Interviewer: [Laughing]

Interviewee: - which is why I'm a writing minor, because I have a science-based major. It's difficult for me to write creative nonfiction, which I found out in [English course].

Interviewer: [Laughing]

Interviewee: I really like analyzing literature like those kinds of essays, and I really like promotional material. I think I'm better at making things sound good. I really like formal emails and forms and proposals more than anything else. I think if I had to pick a stronger area of academics, I would say it's more towards the language arts-based, even though I picked a major that isn't within my strengths.

Interviewer: What's your major?

Interviewee: Movement science.

Interviewer: Okay. [Inaudible 01:29]

Interviewee: Cuz I wanna be a physical therapist, but I'm also not partial to chemistry and bio and stuff like that, which is why I have this minor to do something that I really like to do.

Interviewer: I wonder if you think that's changed? How would you describe yourself as a writer when you began at school here?

Interviewee: I'm not sure. I always did writing in high school. I did pretty well in it and I really liked it. Then, getting to college I did pretty well in [English course], which isn't really like a real English class, and my [200 level English course] wasn't, really, either.

I think when I took [upper level English course] that was different for me. I think it changed my writing a little bit, just as far as being thorough and that it needs to take time. Because prior to that class, I would write all of my essays a day before and then have my mom proofread them and then turn them in, and it worked for me. I think it was more rewarding to spend a lot of time thinking about things and the structure, and how to present something in the best way. I think that's changed my writing a lot.

Interviewer: Do you think that you would have called yourself a writer when you were coming into Michigan?

Interviewee: No, and I don't think I would call myself a writer now, either.

Interviewer: Okay [laughing].

Interviewee: [Laughing]

Interviewer: What do you think a writer is? Why wouldn't you call yourself a writer now?

Interviewee: Cuz I feel like a writer, you have to be a grown-up—

Interviewer: [Laughing]

Interviewee: - or you have to be a kid that writes books for fun, or an English major. I don't think I'm a writer, as much as I like writing and I'm better at it than I am other things.

Just because I'm not really, I don't want to go on and write books. I just wanna be able to redo people's promotional materials for their fitness centers or something like that.

Interviewer: [Laughing] I wonder, then, you mentioned a few, but I wonder if you have big goals for yourself as a writer, other than this professional career goal that you have?

Interviewee: I want to be able to put together, like in the capstone course for the minor, a portfolio, short-term, that I'm proud of. I think that's a goal which is silly, cuz it's in a year. But that's all I can really see right now. I want to be able to present pieces that I've done that I like to stand behind, which is something I think wasn't necessarily true in the prior class just because I didn't have that much material. I guess a goal as a writer would just be to get more material that I feel like is the best that I can do and be able to showcase it, so if I ever want to be contracted for something random, like grant writing or something, I can show this and be proud of it.

Interviewer: Great. That's an academic goal, but it's also sort of a professional one, too, because you have it in your mind with the purpose that you might bring to that.

Interviewee: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: I wonder about the different experiences you've had at Michigan—

Interviewee: Sure.

Interviewer: - and what you think it means to write well.

Interviewee: Different experience I've had in English classes?

Interviewer: It could be not just English classes.

Interviewee: Okay. Writing well, it's hard because I feel, Michigan, all the classes I've taken everyone wants something different and there's not a consistent "this is good writing, this is bad writing."

I've taken a lot of English classes in all different areas. [English course] was good writing for high school, is what I felt like, cuz it wasn't any different than my AP Lang class. [200 level English course] was just fun, because the professor was pretty easy and we talked about audience a lot, but as far as what he wanted, it was the same as [English course].

Then, [300 level English course], she wanted really connected, creative nonfiction, which is really cool. I think I learned what she liked, but I also am not going to use that ever. I had to write a 10-page paper about my life compared to that of a Beluga whale. That's very specific and not that applicable [laughing].

Interviewer: [Laughing].

Interviewee: In general, that has been a confusing point because I feel like if I write well for one class, it doesn't necessarily work for another one. I'm in scientific writing right now and the [Biology lab] that I've had to write scientific papers for is totally different in the scientific writing that this professor wants, so I feel like I can't do well in one class and then automatically do well in another one as far as good writing is concerned. Just in general, I'm a little confused about that question cuz I don't really know what is good writing, cuz I feel like it just depends on what the professor wants.

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Interviewee: I'm not sure. I don't really know [laughing]. I think, analytically, I've written a good writing essay, but I don't know if that extends to outside of my [200 level English course], you know what I mean?

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: I'm not really sure.

Interviewer: Like either into other classes—

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: - or into other times in your life that you might want to write [laughing].

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah. I think that's such an interesting thing that you're bringing up. I wonder how many people who we're interviewing will feel similarly about that.

Interviewee: Yeah. It's just hard because, you just don't know what they want. Like my [200 level English course] class I thought I would do okay easily, because it's [200 level English course] and I've already taken a lot of English. But she wants something totally different and I was too—I was trying to do it in an analytical stand, so she would be, "This is too colloquial. Why are you making connections down here when you could just say it?" I need to change the way I write for her class, but I don't know if that's necessarily good writing, because I don't know if scientific writing is good writing. It's more like, here's some jargon and this is kind of the way we could say it. I feel like it's just different for everything.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Which is confusing.

Interviewer: It is confusing. For scientific writing you're saying you might use the specific language that's valued in that—

Interviewee: Yeah. And super straight-forward and not necessarily pretty.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: It's not like nice prose or anything. It's just this happened, so this happened. Here's a big word, and this happened [laughing]. Maybe that's good writing in her field. Cuz I believe in all their qualifications, but it's all very different.

Interviewer: Sure, sure. You mentioned that you took [Writing course]—or [English course], right?

Interviewee: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: Was that the first-year writing requirement course that you took?

Interviewee: Yep.

Interviewer: Tell me more about what your experiences were in that class.

Interviewee: It was a little frustrating, cuz I had taken AP Lang. I got a five on the AP exam. I've taken AP Lit and got a four on the AP exam. Then I didn't think I had to take [English course], so then I took [English course] and I think it was a good intro class, just in that I was a freshman.

At the same time, it gave me an unrealistic look at what English classes at Michigan are like because it was really easy and it was—it was easier than my AP Lang class in high school. It was like, “Pick a verb and describe it,” or “Pick a noun and describe it.” “Write an essay about yourself in four pages.”

I just felt it wasn’t—I was, “Oh, this is English. Whatever.”

Interviewer: [Laughing]

Interviewee: I know. That’s how I felt. I also felt that people came in with interesting—we would peer review, and the stuff that people would provide was a little confusing. I don’t consider myself a good writer, but I think that some people are a little lost so I think [English course] works for that purpose, to show you if you’re in the ballpark. If you wrote your own college application essay or if you didn’t, because some people didn’t, I feel like.

I feel like that’s the only thing that class taught me was that some people didn’t write their own college application essays.

Interviewer: You learned something about [cross talk 10:21] our environment at Michigan—

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: - but maybe not so much about writing, itself.

Interviewee: Right.

Interviewer: Did you find yourself—are you aware of times when you draw upon what you learned in [English course]?

Interviewee: No. Cuz I don’t know what I learned in [English course] [laughing]. I don’t know. I don’t want it to sound bad. I liked my professor and everything, but I don’t think I learned anything. I can’t think of one thing. I can think of things from my other classes, but not that class.

Interviewer: That’s interesting [laughing].

Interviewee: [Laughing].

Interviewer: Were there other English or writing classes that you took where you can think of times when you drew from?

Interviewee: Yeah. After that, I was, like, “This is boring,” so then I took Great Books, which was really interesting, and also a freshman thing to do, cuz I don’t need it for anything. I don’t know why I took it [laughing].

Interviewer: [Laughing]

Interviewee: That was helpful. It was helpful in the way that you look at texts and you're, like, "I don't understand anything," because it's all like the Iliad and the Odyssey and the Bible—

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Interviewee: - Exodus and all that stuff. You can understand it. You just have to spend time looking at it, and that's something that I didn't really do in high school because Spark Notes exists. This class is a little less about Spark Notes and a little more like, "What do you think about this?" It's, like, shoot, I really have to figure out what they're saying, so I learned a lot from that class.

Then [200 level English course], I learned some stuff about audience, and that was interesting, and [300 level English course], I learned about creative nonfiction and that was interesting. I learned a lot, even though I decided I don't like that. [200 level English course], I learned a lot about analyzing. A lot.

I think that was the most helpful class for me. [200 level English course], scientific writing, I'm learning a lot [laughing] in that, and then, the 200, the writing for the minor, the first one, I learned about website design, which isn't writing, but it was helpful. I know how to work WordPress [content management system] now and a little bit about blogging and what makes an effective blog, which is something I hadn't really appreciated or understood.

I think I have a lot of take-aways from all the other classes, but [English course], couldn't tell you [laughing].

Interviewer: Not as much [laughing].

[Audio cuts out 12:41]

Interviewee: - presentations on our stuff. People would present PowerPoints that they make, or articles that they wrote or something, but I don't remember reading anyone's stuff and feeling any certain way about it. I know we did it, but I just don't remember. Cuz it's really, I feel like it's only memorable peer reviews is someone is really helpful to you or if someone is really—if they turn in a really good paper and you get to peer review it and you're, like, "Wow," or it's really, really awful and you're, "Wow." I don't remember that happening as much.

Interviewer: One of the things that it emphasizes is reflection, right, in that class; do you have memory of the reflective piece?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: Okay [laughing].

Interviewee: [Laughing] I don't remember that at all [laughing]. Sorry.

Interviewer: [Laughing] that's okay. How would you describe your experiences using new media writing? You talked about blogging a little bit.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Learning how to do that, what was that like?

Interviewee: Um, it was interesting. Also, I have never really appreciated blogs, cuz I feel like it's, like, "Let's talk about yourself and then hope that, it's like an extended version of Facebook posting, is how I felt about it before. I still think that a little bit, but not as much. I learned that you can write whatever you want, which is a new thing for me and everyone in that class. We could just talk about bagels or something.

Interviewer: [Laughing].

Interviewee: But for it to be effective, you do have to think about it, and you have to think about it retroactively, because I feel like blogging is more like stream of consciousness. Then, afterward, you have to be, "Is this effective to an audience of someone just on the Internet?" The other thing is some people make a living doing blogs, which is—that becomes literature, I feel, like well-known, just like how a really popular author is well know. There's a reason, and same with blogging. The people that do the really good blogs, there's a reason why they have so many viewers, cuz you don't just get a viewer talking about whatever you want to talk about without thinking about it.

Interviewer: Right.

Interviewee: I guess I just gained an appreciation for new media writing. I don't know if I could write an effective blog, cuz I didn't really learn how to do that, just what it is to have one.

Interviewer: What are the thing you could say that are characteristic of effective blogs?

Interviewee: I think it depends on the type, because I think there's lots and lots of different ones. I think humor is really important if we're talking about informal blogs. People being about to say what's going on in their life without making them sound too good or too bad, cuz some get a little self-deprecating, and I don't like that. I also don't like, "This is how I perfectly live my life."

Interviewer: [Laughing]

Interviewee: In general, I also don't really like blogs as much, so I don't know.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: They're not my favorite. I'd rather read a book that someone wrote, rather than being, "What did you do with your kids today?" I don't really want to read about that [laughing].

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: I don't know.

Interviewer: I wonder about the portfolio.

Interviewee: Yeah.

[...]

Interviewer: What were your most memorable experiences with creating this?

Interviewee: The course is Gamma five 16:59, which was a huge problem for me [laughing] because it meant that I put it off. I don't know if you want this information [laughing].

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: I did my portfolio the night before it was due. I started at 9:00 and I ended at 4:00 in the morning. Basically, it was really nice to have it done. I like that I had a whole page of all my stuff, but I don't have a huge experience to tell you, cuz it was all very quick [laughing].

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: It was a super speedy process.

Interviewer: [Laughing].

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: What you remember is basically just doing it all in one day; just sitting down and it happened.

Interviewee: Yeah, yeah, and figuring out how to imbed links and stuff like that, which is cool—

Interviewer: Yeah.



Interviewee: - to know how to do.

Interviewer: Just like that, did you have any goals or any aims for creating it, other than just what that class task was?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: Because I know that this one's not professional. I think the second, the capstone—this was great to do for a class, and that's what I used it for.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: I don't think I would show this to anyone in the professional world, but I knew that going in. I know that the [Writing course], my goal is to have it not only for the minor, but just have it to use to show people. I showed my parents that I have a website, but I wasn't planning on using it for other purposes.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. It's not like—you figured out some of the technical skills that you might need and some things.

Interviewee: Yeah. It was interesting because I realized what I need to do to make it better and to make it more cohesive, but that's not necessarily shown in here, you know what I mean?

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: But I learned through that how to do it. Yeah.

Interviewer: Do you think creating this has affected, in any way, your writing?

Interviewee: I haven't really written a lot since then, but I think it definitely makes me keep in mind that I need to make another one of these and I need to figure out what I'm going to put on it. Which, I don't know how the [Writing course] class works, but this class, it was find pieces that you've already written. It's more, "Shoot. I wonder if I have pieces." The problem is that I'm not taking any other English classes from now until then, so I don't really know. I'll probably end up using almost all the same material, which is kind of unfortunate, because I would love to have some good essays before I graduate, but there's no room or reason to have them.

Interviewer: Maybe something from your Scientific Writing class.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: That would be interesting.

Interviewee: I have one. That whole class is based on one essay.

Interviewer: Uh-huh.

Interviewee: I'll have one essay from there, and then I can use an essay from my [200 level English course] class that I like and I spent a lot of time on. Besides that, I don't feel like I have any really good professional writing that I could present in this portfolio, which is a problem. I don't necessarily have time to just make an essay, so I don't really know how that's gonna work out. It needs to happen.

Interviewer: It sounds like, one thing that's striking to me is that it seems like your professional goals maybe aren't totally lined up with your class experiences, or, the tasks within your different writing experiences. You really want to develop professional, technical writing skills.

Interviewee: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: But you don't have very many examples to pull from, from your coursework.

Interviewee: Yeah. Definitely. Yeah. It's not that I haven't taken a lot of—cuz I feel like I've taken a lot of English classes here. I just feel like I want more like the [200 level English course], where I had to try really, really hard to do well. I feel like all the other ones I've rested on my laurels a little bit, because I think I can make things sound good. That doesn't mean that they're necessarily good, you know what I mean?

I think on-surface writing, like [200 level English course] and [English course], it's an A because it sounds nice and there's people in there that don't sound nice. Comparatively, it's okay, but in the real world, I don't think it necessarily is. I just ran out of time [laughing].

Interviewer: Okay. I wondered, thinking that, it sounds like you're aware of areas where you might want to still grow as a writer?

Interviewee: Definitely, yeah.

Interviewer: What are some of those places that you might still want to grow?

Interviewee: I want to get better at scientific writing which, I think, this class I'm taking now is helping me a lot with. I wanna write more literary analysis, because I like it and I want more essays that I am proud of putting on something like this.

I also want to, but I don't know when—it's not gonna happen, but just promotional writing, like my job at home. I work as a dance teacher and all their materials, their promotional materials, are awful. They're really wordy and there's so many commas and

lots of exclamation points. I know it's bad, and I just want to redo the whole thing, but I don't know if I could do a better job.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: In that way, I want to learn how to do a good job so I could go and redo their packet. It drives me crazy, but I don't think right now I'm at a place where I could be, "Hey, I could do this for you." That would be an area that I would want to grow in, cuz I like doing that stuff.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Yeah. It sounds like really important work, obviously.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: [Laughing] [inaudible 23:03]. I wonder are there other things that you have in your mind or that you thought we might talk about today that we haven't talked about?

Interviewee: No. I didn't know there was such an emphasis on [English course], and I feel bad about I just said it was an awful class [laughing].

Interviewer: [Laughing]

Interviewee: It's not an awful class. It just wasn't the best.

[End of Audio]