Interviewer: Okay. It is April 25th. This is ***and ***, and we're doing an exit interview for WDS 00:00:11. […].

[…]

Interviewer: How would you describe yourself as a writer?

Interviewee: I would describe myself as a very practical writer. During my time here at Michigan, I've taken argumentative writing. I'm a student in the Ross School of Business. I've learned how to write memos and other professional documents. When I think of myself as a writer, I really think of myself as somebody who writes any argumentative piece, or memos, or emails, or documents, not so much as a creative writer, but I think that that's served me well.

Interviewer: How would you describe the role of writing in your life?

Interviewee: Well, I've currently completed [Writing course], and in it we completed a writing minor. I wrote a paper examining how language has changed, [during and after major event in North America], in a linguistic context, and in that, I had an argument. I tried to prove a hypothesis. In that essay, I went about doing that. That's one example of argumentative writing. Then, when I interned at [department store], and I wanted to express my ideas about how much we should purchase of a given item, I would compose memos that outlined my thoughts. That's really how I see myself as a writer, writing for a very practical purpose that's meant to be seen and then, hopefully, acted upon by the audience.

Interviewer: Can you tell me a little bit more about the linguistics paper that you wrote? I'm just curious—

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: - how you did that and what the approach was.

Interviewee: Yeah. Sure. It was for my Upper-Level Writing Requirement, outside of my major. It was [Linguistics course], and in the paper, we had to make a linguistic argument about anything that we chose. I wanted to write about [major event in North America], and the way I went about and structured my approach was I did as much research as I could about already published psychological accounts for people's language after a tragedy, and then actually the website WikiLeaks actually had a lot of—I think millions of the pager and text messages that were sent during [event]. I was able to download that data, probably being watched by the government, and I was actually able to also download another computer program called LIWC, and then follow the same

methods that these other researchers had done to analyze how language changes, both during and after a tragedy, by myself.

[…]

Interviewer: Oh, interesting.

Interviewee: Then, finally, I also used Google's Ngrams, which talks about the frequency of words in books, and I was able to compare words like terrorist and terror with, actually, Hebrew words that mean the equivalent, and was able to find some pretty interesting stuff about that.

Interviewer: Wow. It sounds really fascinating.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: I want to come back to that, actually, if we have time.

Interviewee: Yeah. Of course.

Interviewer: How would you describe yourself as a writer when you began at U of M?

Interviewee: Sure. Coming out of high school, I was the co-editor-in-chief of my high school's newspaper. I'm very focused on journalism, and when I began U of M, I took [English course] and—with [instructor], who is an excellent teacher. There was a little bit of everything in that class. I wrote a personal narrative. I wrote an argumentative piece, and I tended to gravitate towards the argumentative pieces and—throughout my time at U of M. In sophomore year I was admitted to the business school. Then my writing strictly focused on more of a business aspect. I'm currently taking a philosophy class. That expanded my scope of writing a little bit more 'cause I started writing philosophy. Really, because I was able to pick the courses that I wanted to at U of M, I tended to pick those courses that suited my strengths, so argumentative courses, business courses, not so much creative writing courses.

Interviewer: Why not creative writing courses?

Interviewee: I love reading creative writing, but I just never—it never really spoke to me. I definitely think it's a great way to write, but just the creative writing essays that I had done in [English course], I didn't really feel the same passion for as other types of work.

Interviewer: Fair enough. How would you describe to what extent you would say you've grown and changed, since then, as a writer?

Interviewee: Definitely. I think I can write—well, I think I'm very solid with knowing how to formulate an argument, and make sure that each paragraph leads to another, and that the essay has good structure, and that the thesis makes sense. I think I came into college with a pretty good understanding of that, and now, at the end of college, through the minor writing program and all the other writing courses, I think that's solid. I don't even really have to think about it that much. I also know how to get research for whatever essay I'm writing. I've learned how to use the library system. I've learned how to cite scholar resources, and I think that's also changed a little bit, just how I've incorporated those more and more into my writing.

Then, I think the biggest change, though, is that in high school I would write, and I would—so I would have a prompt, let's say, in high school, and then I would answer the prompt by relying on somebody else's argument, and I would just cite it. I think in college they care about what other people's arguments are, but then they also care about what your argument is. I think I've learned to incorporate my own voice and to have my own argument, which I think is special, and it's been great.

Interviewer: Do you remember when or what course that happened in, where you realized that it's not just about summarizing or citing, it's also about—

Interviewee: Yeah. Sure. Definitely [English course]. I wrote an argumentative piece about the death penalty and—where I originally had supported the death penalty. Then I had done a lot of research about it, and then I added my own arguments for why I no longer support the death penalty. That's one example. Then, in [Writing course], I wrote a paper about suicide bombing and exploring why different people decide to become suicide bombers. It was a tough paper to write, but I really made sure to incorporate my own voice into that essay, and my own arguments. I think those two instances.

Interviewer: Interesting. What would you attribute the growth that you were talking about, in terms of structure and your own argument?

Interviewee: Definitely good instructors. I've been really lucky to have really good instructors who have helped guide me. Then, I think U of M—the writing courses here are challenging. I think that they set the bar high, and I'm a driven kid. I always want to try to go for the A, and just because the bar is set really high, I've put in the time. I've put in the work, and I think just knowing that they expect a very well-polished essay, and they expect your arguments to make sense and to be cohesive, I think I've seen that and tailored my writing to suit that.

Interviewer: What would you say, as you graduate, your goals are for yourself as a writer?

Interviewee: Sure. I do know I'll be starting in August at [department store] as a business analyst. In that sense, I'll be starting in a corporate business position, but I know the value of writing and how that's so important. My goals as a writer there, in that position, would be making sure I outline my ideas very clearly, concisely, 'cause in the business world, they really care about things being concise and having the supportive details. The supporting details, in a lot of sense, will be just analysis. It'll be sales reports, and inventory, and turnover. That's really my goal. Then personally, continuing to just journal on my own, I think, would be my personal goal.

Interviewer: You talk about conciseness and details. Can you talk about an example where you do that? How do you do that?

Interviewee: Sure. Over the summer during my junior year, I would write these memos, and I would basically detail how a given item performed. Let's take a [department store] polo as an example, and in that memo, I would—well, I'd first do a lot of research. I'd see how has it performed historically, and are we hitting the forecast? Are we missing the forecast? In the memo I would say, this polo—and I would give the title—has seen sales increase by X percent over this period. The reasons are attributed to one, two, three, and then list them out, and then give my input. When we're buying inventory for next season, here's what I think we should do. We should buy a little bit heavier. I mean, it would be one page, and it would outline how all the polos have performed, and three very clear and distinct points, and then you'd be done. I think that's really the type of writing that you see a lot in the business world.

Interviewer: How is that different from some of the other writing you've done at the university?

Interviewee: Sure. I think that that writing is different because you just jump in. You get right to the point. There's not much of an introduction, as you would see in a typical essay. Everything is supported by mathematical facts, which are different than what I've generally used as supporting arguments in the university. Typically I would quote from a scholar resource, or somebody's research study, or just another book, and this I'm quoting from reports that they've downloaded that have numbers on them. I think that that's really the core difference.

Interviewer: The core difference is around the kinds of evidence or data that you're using.

Interviewee: Definitely.

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

Interviewee: To write well, I think, means a few different things, one, being that whoever picks up and reads your essay, somebody who isn't necessarily familiar with the topic, can read it, and can understand it, and can point out what the argument is and how you supported that argument. That's one thing. I would call that the structure and execution of the essay. Then, I think another thing, what it means to read 00:11:51 well, is that your essay is written in a compelling manner. It's not necessarily boring. People are convinced by the end. They see that you've given thoughtful discussion for how one might critique one of your arguments, and you've addressed that in the essay. That's a strategy that I always make sure to do. Then, finally, that, just, it's written grammatically properly, with no typos. The grammar should be fine. I think that's another important part.

Interviewer: You talked about the idea of critique. Can you give an example of when you did that in an essay?

Interviewee: Yeah. Sure. I'll go back to the death penalty essay, for example. There are a lot of arguments both for and against the death penalty. When I was arguing against the death penalty, people bring up the deterrence argument, and so, namely that having a death penalty helps deter crime and would-be criminals. For that reason, it's a positive thing. In the body of my essay, I brought up that argument and said, "Here's one argument that people give for the use of the death penalty." I can't remember exactly what I wrote after that, but it was basically saying, well, studies have shown that it's up in the air whether or not it deters criminals, and cite a conflicting study that has gotten a lot of attention, and then say that all in all, when you consider all these other arguments, it's best not to have it anymore. Acknowledge an argument from the other side, and then address it.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Interesting. Which upper-level writing courses have you taken, and what were your experiences in those courses?

Interviewee: I've taken [Linguistics course], and I had a great experience in it. It was one of the more challenging upper-level writing courses, though, because it was the first linguistics class that I had taken during college. There was a steep learning curve, but the professor was excellent. What I really appreciated most was the fact that, during this essay, I could choose whatever I wanted to. I could tailor it to my interests, and that's where the [title of essay] came. I'm not really sure if [Writing course] counts as an upper-level writing course, but—

Interviewer: I think it might. Yeah.

Interviewee: Okay. Yeah. That was the capstone minor course, and in that course I had to take all of my writings and make a website, so, an online portfolio of it. That was definitely an interesting challenge 'cause no longer was it just about what I actually wrote, but it's how you can present that as a cohesive argument to the reader. My professor, [instructor], was all about making sure that the tone was

consistent throughout the entire website and throughout the entire portfolio. That's tough. You have to make a lot of decisions about what to include and what not to include 'cause you—as a student, I've written all these different types of essays. I had a good experience with that, as well. Those were the two courses that are really coming to mind.

Interviewer: Who did you take linguistics with?

Interviewee: It was with [instructor].

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: It was [instructor].

Interviewer: How was that? Tell me more about the learning curve there.

Interviewee: Yeah. Sure. My parents had advised me not to take it because it was an upper-level linguistics course, and I had never taken linguistics. Maybe I shouldn't have taken it, but it turned out okay. Just the first six weeks, we were going over phonemes, morphemes, all this stuff that I had never seen before in my entire life. I freaked out a little bit, but it's like any other course in Michigan. If you put in a lot of work, generally, you can make it work.

I checked out a book—I don't want to say it was, but it was a book that was similar to that—and just studied it. I felt like I was somewhat adequately caught up. Then, the bulk of the grade was based on this one paper that we had to write. For the [North American event] paper, I did some of the most substantial research that I've ever done. I incorporated areas of psychology in addition to linguistics 'cause I, personally, love psychology. It was great to bring in that focus as well. It ended up working out really well. […].

Interviewer: Cool. Yeah. I love linguistics too. Hopefully, we'll have time to go back to that, too.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: What effect did those experiences have on you as a writer, those experiences in the upper-level writing courses?

Interviewee: In the upper-level writing courses, I think the way that they distinguish the course—correct me if I'm wrong—is that you're just producing a lot more writing, and that the length of these papers are a lot longer. That was one difference, how to sustain an argument, not just over 7 pages, for example, but the [North American event] paper was 25 pages. That was a substantial paper. In [Writing course], my final paper for that was 23 pages, so a lot longer papers. Instead of taking an argument that you could address and do a solid job within 7

pages, you're gonna take an even more complex argument that you need 22 pages of space to address and really look at from all sides. It was just upping the ante, I think, in the complexity of the argument.

Interviewer: Thinking along those terms, do you still make use of what you learned in those courses in your writing now?

Interviewee: Yeah. Definitely. Because when I'm out in the real world, let's say after college, there's no saying what sort of argument or what sort of thing I'll have to tackle, and how complex it will be. The upper-level writing courses, I think, prepared me to tackle very complex arguments that don't have a clear answer. There's no clear answer to—in my [Writing course] paper, I was comparing public and private funding. There was no clear answer to what public and private funding should do. That takes a lot of time to actually hash out all the issues. I think that's great 'cause it prepares me to see a very complex argument, without a clear right or wrong answer, from multiple angles.

Interviewer: When you think about a complex argument, what comes to mind as something challenging there, or something that you've learned that was important there.

Interviewee: Sure. I'll use the funding as an example. I would say that there are so many—for a very complex argument, there are so many different situations that are in a garea. The government, in general, funds basic research. The NIH is a good example and private corporations. I mostly focused on drug companies fund more applied research, like how can we get this to a drug. Then, there are all these gareas in between that might actually end up becoming a drug or might not, but who should really foot the bill, and who should really be doing the research.

One example was a Pfizer drug for late-stage breast cancer, and it was funded heavily by public researchers, so NIH researchers, but then Pfizer basically went ahead and took that research and is now probably gonna make a blockbuster drug out of it. There's no clear right or wrong answer. Let's say the government hadn't funded that. Maybe we wouldn't have the drug. That would be really bad, but Pfizer's gonna price the drug at two grand a month. That's a lot of money. Is that the right way to go about doing it? That's such a complex argument that that's one instance where there's no clear right or wrong answer, and you have to look at it from all these different sides.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Outside of those upper-level writing courses, and outside the ones you've already told me about, are there any other writing courses you've taken?

Interviewee: Definitely. Philosophy, the class I'm in now. In [title of course], we had to write two essays. I'd say that those have been some of the most challenging papers I've had to write, one, because the arguments that you're

encountering in philosophy are very complex to begin with and, two, because in philosophy every single word really matters. If you miss a word, or you incorporate one wrong word in one sentence, it completely changes everything about your argument. The papers I wrote were just three pages long, but I spent so much time editing them and reading them. It was almost as if I was writing a 20-page paper. I loved doing it, but it—that was a unique challenge.

Interviewer: Can you give me an example of the challenge in terms of the writing of it—

Interviewee: Sure.

Interviewer: - the lexical choices you were talking about or something like that.

Interviewee: Okay. The most recent philosophy paper discusses the problem of evil. How could a perfectly good, all-knowing, all-powerful God create a world in which evil exists? The lexical choice's, just in how I described it to you, were very important. How do you define God? Do you use perfectly good, omnipotent, all-knowing? If I chose different words, it would have a completely different connotation for what I was trying to argue. Then, the lexical choices that I had to use were distinguishing between natural evils: so hurricanes, earthquakes, tornadoes; and moral evils, like murder, theft, things that humans commit.

I was limited to those lexical choices because it was based on the philosopher that I was assigned to read, so Richard Swinburne. Yeah. I think it narrowed the discussion like that, and then I had to use his language. In order to critique his argument, in order to evaluate his argument, I had to go back to what language he used.

Interviewer: Interesting. Did you take any of these writing courses in your concentration? By concentration, I mean any business, or—

Interviewee: Yeah. The Business School doesn't—it's unique in that it doesn't really offer upper-level writing courses in business. I would say the closest that I took to that would be a [Business course] through the Business School. That's [Business course], and in that I would write memos. I would write a cover letter, and I would write a resume. I mean, it's very practical, as you could see, but it's not like anything else than, just, what you would write as a student of business.

Interviewer: What were some things that you learned from that course that you feel like you wouldn't have learned from other courses?

Interviewee: Well, the resume, I think, was the most helpful thing I learned from that course. They taught us to write a resume with the ACR format, which means action, context, result. No other course I've been in has taught me how to write a resume like that, and I think it's—it was really helpful because it really gets a lot

of information to a recruiter in a succinct space, and it shows the impact that you had. I think that that was what was different.

Interviewer: Yeah. Interesting. Now that you're about to graduate, how confident do you feel about writing in your concentration, writing for business?

Interviewee: Sure. Yeah. I feel really confident. I feel good because I had a chance to practice it during my internship and then learn what worked and what didn't work in a more low-stakes scenario. Also, in a [Strategy course]—this is one thing I forgot to mention—we did actually write a comprehensive case report. I wrote about the big auto makers and incorporated a recommendation for [local automotive company]. That was a substantial—it was a 20-page report. I felt confident analyzing companies, and putting that in a document, and making a corporate recommendation. Yeah. I think I feel really confident doing that.

Interviewer: How often have you used the skills or strategies learned in one of these writing courses in your other courses?

Interviewee: In the philosophy course, not so much 'cause it's a very different type of writing. In the [Writing course] course, though, I used it a lot, mainly because in [Writing course] we were allowed to write our final paper about anything we wanted, and the government versus private funding comes down to, also, a business issue. I was able to use the skills I learned in business-type courses and apply that. For example, one of my arguments was an NPV analysis, so net present value analysis. I was able to cite in my report how the NPV of projects really affects whether corporations decide to fund it or not. I think that was a good example of me using a good business-type argument in a course that wasn't really about business, which was [Writing course].

Interviewer: Interesting. Shifting now to a question about the minor capstone course.

Interviewee: Sure.

Interviewer: I think that you've already addressed some of this, but what impact has the minor capstone course had, overall, on your writing?

Interviewee: I think it's encouraged me to see my writing as telling a story. When I'm writing in one class or another, I don't necessarily think about how the essays fit together, but this course really encouraged me to take all of the writing I've done as a college student and try to argue about what type of writing I typically do. I think that's really how it impacted me. Then, also, creating a website was obviously something that I hadn't done before. That was a new skill. I think those two things.

Interviewer: Then, what impact do you think that course had on your writing process?

Interviewee: Well, I would say by that point—'cause I'm taking the course second semester senior year. I'd say by that point, my writing process was pretty much already set. I already knew the writing process. It didn't really change my writing process that much, but it was good practice 'cause it encouraged me to continue writing in the way that I used to write.

Interviewer: What is your writing process in general?

Interviewee: It depends about the complexity of the argument, but if it's a very complex argument, where there's no clear right or wrong answer, which in this day and age, most things are, I first start off doing a lot of research, not going in with a bias or with my perceived answer right off the bat. I try to not do that 'cause then that—if I, let's say, thought the answer was answer X, then I would go and look at research that supported answer X and only research that supported answer X, and I don't think that's an effective way to go about doing it. I try to go in very open-minded, look at research from both sides, read the arguments, think about the arguments, and then come to a conclusion based on the research. Then, that would be my thesis, and then, of course, use my thesis, try to argue to support my thesis, and incorporate my own analysis, as well, in addition to the research I've already read.

Interviewer: What about the actual process of writing itself?

Interviewee: Actual process of writing itself—I try to outline first, before I write, 'cause I think that saves a lot of time. I first write an outline. I tend to start with the introduction paragraph itself, which I find one of the hardest paragraphs to write, to really set the tone, and then it's—I just sit down at the computer and spend hours just writing. At the end of each paragraph, I'll read over it quickly and make sure it's okay. At the end of each page, I'll read over it, and I make sure to have my thesis statement on another sheet of paper just right next to me. I'm making sure it's constantly referring back to that. Then, at the very end of the paper, I'll spend a lot of time looking at spelling and grammar, and then I'll cut out arguments that don't really fit, and then, by that time, I'm almost done.

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

Interviewee: The capstone project, I would say, it was unique in that I took how to analyze business arguments and then applied them to something that I wasn't used to studying, so, the federal government. I even cited a Supreme Court case that was—excuse me—whether or not genes could be copyrighted, patented—excuse me. I wasn't used to reading decisions by the Supreme Court. That was unique. I looked at the business implications of that decision. I would say in

some—I was pretty confident about how to write about corporations, but then I wasn't so confident about how to write about the federal government. I learned about how to write about the government.

Interviewer: Why did you choose the project that you chose?

Interviewee: One of my housemates, and a good friend of mine, is a student researcher here. He works in a lab that's trying to discover [object]. His project doesn't really have any business application. He told me that virtually no company would pay for the results of his project because no matter what they find, if they find anything, you can't really sell it. He's being supported by the federal government. I went and saw his lab. He was showing me how things worked, and I thought it was the coolest thing ever.

I thought, even though this isn't gonna make money, there are students, who are in his lab, that are trying to get PhD, and that they're benefitting from that research substantially, and they'll enter the workforce, and they'll understand how things work a lot better. What my friend told me was that even if the project itself isn't used, maybe a component of the project, like a sensor that they use, could have an application later on down the road. I thought it would be a shame if the only things that were funded were things that would definitely make money 20 years down the road 'cause a lot of discovery is just from pure curiosity. I wanted to address that part. his 00:29:57

Interviewer: Cool. Now moving to questions about the capstone portfolio. Actually, we're gonna pull it up on the internet real quick.

[…]

Interviewer: Okay. Cool. Can you tell me about the most memorable aspect of your experience with the e-portfolio?

Interviewee: Do you mean creating the e-portfolio, the website, or the writing itself?

Interviewer: Either one.

Interviewee: Okay. I'm a tech nerd. I really enjoyed making the website. If you have time, I can show you. I published some YouTube videos for my fellow classmates about how to make a Squarespace website, where I talk through it. I really enjoyed that. In terms of the website, it's pretty simply arranged. I have pictures with each of the writing, and then you can just click on the picture, and then it just takes you to the PDF of the essay. It would download in a second, and then you could just read the essay and return to the home page, as well.

Interviewer: Oh, cool.

Interviewee: I really loved doing that. I thought that was a cool way to design the website. I wanted to make it simple. I wanted to make it attractive and very uncluttered. Yeah. I had a great time working and trying to figure out Squarespace. Then, my favorite part, though, was I did a tiny, little bit of coding. In my annotated bibliography, I embedded it. If we make this screen a little bit larger, I embedded a Google Doc viewer in the page itself so the person who would read it, would read it within this Google Doc viewer. It was just a tiny, little bit of coding, but I was able to use the code to do that.

Interviewer: That's nice. I didn't know you could take pieces of Google and implant them in other places.

Interviewee: Yeah. They make it really easy. When you click on the share button, they give you the link. You use that and add that within a set code.

Interviewer: I see.

Interviewee: It's not hard at all, though.

Interviewer: Yeah. I've seen people do it with YouTube, but—cool. That was the most memorable aspect of—you talked about coding. What about in other terms, the most memorable aspect?

Interviewee: Sure. The other most memorable aspect would be the cohesive story that I wanted to try to tell. If you go back to the home page, I start off with this case report that I wrote about a failed [start-up company]. I have that. I'm showing my business style, and then I go back to this op-ed that I wrote when I was a senior in high school, arguing that the administration shouldn't have laid off all these teachers. There's also a business argument in that, mainly that the school actually had a lot of revenue, and that the headmaster was being paid close to half a million dollars, and so that—we didn't really need to do all these things, and we could have saved a lot of jobs.

It was how do I want to present myself in this website. Even in my evolution essay, a lot of my classmates wrote an essay, but I actually—I had a YouTube video. I narrated a Prezi presentation. I think that that worked well because when somebody's reading something that I write, they don't hear my voice, obviously, but I wanted the reader to hear my voice, so—and to really hear me out. That's why I did this narrated video.

Interviewer: You talked about presenting yourself through the website. What do you think are the important parts of yourself to present?

Interviewee: I think credibility is one important part. I had an About Me section, where I just talk about my accomplishments, and that I'm a student here at the

University of Michigan, and that sort of thing. That's to the credibility lens. Then, I think simplicity is how I also wanted to present myself, in terms of making it easy for the reader to access my work. That's why I did this image concept. Then, I wanted to also present myself, where the reader would see what my real loves are. I love technology. I really love business. My final project incorporated both of those things. I talked about drug companies. I talked about research in science, about exploring dark matter, and I talked about the business implications of that. I think those were the three ways that I tried to present myself.

Interviewer: Cool. What were your aims for the portfolio overall?

Interviewee: My aims were to make a portfolio that was visually attractive, easy to use, and that showcased some of my best writing. I think, to that end, I hope it's visually attractive. I think it's easy to use, based on the feedback that I've gotten, and then I put the essays I'm most proud of, like the [start-up] case report, the [North American event] essay that I referred to, and then the capstone project, as well as other things that I really care about. […]. This is a topic that I care about. It's not related to business or technology, but I wanted to show the reader what sort of things I care about, too.

Interviewer: Cool. We talked about this a little bit, but did you design the portfolio to create a particular reader experience—so, a particular reader experience?

Interviewee: Yeah. I thought about what websites I enjoy going to the most. Google is very easy to use. I don't really like web pages with a ton of text on it. I didn't want to actually—I know that some people—

Interviewer: What's an example of a website like that, with a ton of text?

Interviewee: The New York Times. Well, when you go to a newspaper website, like, for example, I think really hits you with a lot of text. I actually do think that that works for The New York Times, only because you're expecting that, but I think if I, for example, just had my entire "[title of essay]" essay in block paragraph form, going all the way down the page, I think that that would be unattractive. I think it's a lot cooler to see a picture of Jerusalem, a sunset, with a title, and then having somebody click on that and see the PDF, where it's—I think it's easier to navigate a PDF. That was really the user experience that I was going for.

Interviewer: Did you get feedback from users as you designed it?

Interviewee: Yeah. I showed it to my parents. I showed it to my grandmother. I showed it to my brother, who's also in college, and they all really liked it. In [Writing course], we had a day where we showed it to our classmates and got feedback. I changed it based on that feedback. Okay. Originally, when you would

click on this, it would download a Word document, and then you'd have to click on the Word document and open up in Word. The feedback I got, which I was a little surprised about, but makes sense, was nobody wants to do that. People are afraid about downloading files. I found a way to upload it as a PDF, and then, when you click on it, all it's doing is going to a separate link that's hosted on Squarespace with a PDF. People were much more inclined to not have to download things. That was really the main feedback that I got.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Did you notice any relationships among your artifacts as you created your portfolio?

Interviewee: Yeah. We were actually asked to consider that question in our evolution essay. I'll just go through the thesis thing 'cause I think that that's the best way to answer that question. Originally, I wrote to a firm, pre-established belief. I would already have an idea. I would have the answer to the question I had, what I believed was the answer, and I would just write to back up that answer. Then, over time, as I started writing more complex things, I would—my writing would actually challenge those pre-established beliefs.

I would notice that the research is actually challenging the way I believe the world worked, and I would change my arguments because of that, and then, finally, now, I—as I talked with you about it, writing to discover my beliefs in the first place. When I say writing, I mean the research process also, trying to go in with an open mind, without already having an answer in my brain, and seeing what other people have said about it, analyzing their arguments, and then trying to bring my own voice in afterwards.

Interviewer: When you look at the pieces on there, you see that evolution?

Interviewee: [Title of paper]. For example, the first paper I wrote was our directed self-placement essay. It was, I think, before starting at Michigan, right before. It was asking me to evaluate this robot and whether I thought it was a good thing or a bad thing. I had seen the movie, and I was scared out of my mind that robots will look so human, people will not—they'll just love them as a human being, and they'll have less interaction with other humans. I was afraid of that. I didn't want that to be the case. I wrote an essay that addressed that problem. I didn't really look at very much research that supported that, but—so that was an example.

Then, as I changed—so the "[title of essay],"[…]. They obviously had one opinion about the peace process, and throughout college I was exposed to all these different opinions, and I started reading all this different research. My opinions changed a little bit about that. Writing to discover the opinion in the first place, that final component, was my final project. I had no idea whether—how government or private corporations should fund things and what they should fund. It was really the research that gave me the answer for that.

Interviewer: Interesting. Do you think creating the portfolio has had an effect on your writing?

Interviewee: Yeah. I mean, I think creating the portfolio—so it was taking the writing that I've already done, and putting it in one place, and then thinking about how the writing tells a cohesive story of who I am. I think that definitely had an effect 'cause it encouraged me to evaluate myself critically, which I'm not used to doing in courses. I think that was the effect.

Interviewer: How did you evaluate the story of yourself?

Interviewee: Yeah. It was a tough story to evaluate, I thought. I really went back and read all of my writing sequentially, at the time that I wrote it, and I tried to just jot down what the main arguments were, and I tried to see if there were changes over time, especially when I—I've written papers about the [conflict] before. I was able to chart how opinions have changed over time about that. That's basically how I tried to do it.

Interviewer: Your opinions about the conflict there—can you talk about how those opinions have evolved alongside your writing or within your writing?

Interviewee: Yeah. Within my writing—in high school, I really wouldn't have thought of looking at sources from terrorism groups or suicide bombers and reading those as critical sources. I think, in order to write a compelling essay about the problem, I think now, you have to look at those sources 'cause it's what is the other side saying. What is a small fraction of the other side saying? I mean, it's very tough to read those sources, and I read those sources, and I read all these poems by Mahmoud Darwish.

Interviewer: Yeah. I've heard that name.

Interviewee: Those were poems I never used to write, or I never read—excuse me. This was in my other upper-level writing class. It's [AAPTIS course]. I read all these poems in that class, and I tried to look at, what are the poems saying, what is the story saying, and what's the reaction to it. All these different things that I wasn't used to looking at at sources, I started to look at more.

Interviewer: Thinking about your development on your—the evolution of your ideas on that subject, how do you think you—have you changed the way you think about that stuff, and how has that affected your relationship to other people?

Interviewee: [Laughter] Yeah. I think I now think that it's a complicated argument. You know what I mean? There's so many different opinions, and there's so much information out there, and there's also a lot of misinformation out there, unfortunately. […]. [In High school] It was like, here's what we were taught, and this is our opinion, and that's the end of the story.

Then, in college, I think there's a lot more to it. I've changed in the sense that I now looked at all these different sources and all these different sides of the story, and tried to incorporate that within the essays that I'm writing and really address that. That forces me, as a writer, to actually really consider it and to really grapple with those issues. […]. In high school, I would not have written that letter 'cause I wouldn't have seen other sides of the story about that issue.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. What could people interested in writing development, including program administrators like those at Sweetland, learn about writing development from your capstone portfolio?

Interviewee: [laughter] I think they could learn that writing development—well, one, it takes a very long time, two, one of the best ways to facilitate writing development is to ask a student to consider sources that he or she has never considered including before, three, to ask a student—if you really want to help a student develop as a writer, throw that student into a discipline that he or she does not have much experience with 'cause that will really be a challenging—I mean, the linguistics class was a good example of that, but I developed a lot as a writer in that instance.

I think it really comes down to asking a student to try something new in a brand new discipline. I think Sweetland does that, to a certain extent, where they ask you to take a upper-level writing course within your major and then one that doesn't have to be within your major. A lot of people choose out of your major. I think that's a good example. Then, I think asking students to consider all these other sources and other arguments—'cause there's so much research out there. We're really gifted to have the University of Michigan library system that has every single book you could possibly imagine.

I think maybe one thing that they could do is, in a paper, ask the student to do really critical research, where they go to the library, and they read at least four—they study from at least four books that have been written about it, or they study from at least four scholarly journals 'cause that's not really a requirement right now. That forces them to really understand how other people use their arguments, and then it forces them to incorporate it, and to really analyze it, and to ask questions about it.

Interviewer: The focus there is on books. Why books?

Interviewee: Well, I think that—so books have a lot more in them, in general, in terms of complexity. When you look on a web page, right, it's—generally you don't read that much. It's very simplistic and normally focuses on—it focuses you on getting the answer, but a book, you have time to really read how the author formulated his or her argument, what evidence he or she used. Really, you have time to actually go through the journey that the author took. That's what's special

about a book, and then, also, it goes through an editing process. You can generally be a little bit more confident about what you're reading in a book. That's something that I think is useful, that is a skill that maybe Sweetland, or maybe other writing courses, don't emphasize enough, would be citing from books.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Yeah. Interesting. Let's think, now, about the gateway course a little bit, as well. How did your experience in the capstone course compare to your experience in the gateway course?

Interviewee: I'd say the capstone course was a lot better than the gateway course. In the gateway course we also designed a website, but it was using WordPress [content management system]. It was just very, very simple, and I don't really think it was all that useful in preparing us for the capstone designing a website part. In the gateway course, I also wrote another paper at the end. That was a longer research paper, which was helpful. Yeah. The gateway course, I think, just more served as an introduction to what you'll be doing in the minor and an instructor that you might have again for the capstone course, but I think it could have been more helpful if it introduced what you were aiming to do in the capstone course. If it talked about what the end goal is, and that students knew that a year or two in advance, that could be really helpful. If it also tried to prepare students to tackle those upper-level writing courses, both in—within and without their major, that could be helpful too.

Interviewer: Interesting. What have your experiences been working with other writers throughout the minor?

Interviewee: They've 00:50:11 been really good. We did a lot of peer reviews in the capstone course. That was very helpful. It was one way to earn points towards getting a grade that you wanted, and I think I did about 18 to 20 peer reviews. That was a lot. I know my fellow classmates did at least ten. That encouraged us to evaluate arguments and evaluate our peers' essays about a lot of topics we would never have known about.

For example, one fellow classmate was a nanny, and she really went into all this detail about what her job as a nanny entails and about the family that she nannies for. Unfortunately one of the children had gotten very sick, and what that experience was like, and how she was juggling that as a college student. That was interesting to me to just learn about that, and I really didn't know anything about that. Then, one other student was trying to publish his own book, and so to learn about how—well, what goes into making a good book. Something, again, I really didn't think very much about before. I think that those were really cool. I had great experiences with my classmates. They were really nice, really friendly, and really cool people.

Interviewer: What are the differences you see between the gateway and the capstone e-portfolios?

Interviewee: The differences, I think, would be in the level of complexity and how professional they were. The gateway portfolio, I think, was very simple, just presenting a couple works. That was really it. The capstone portfolio was try to present yourself as a writer in one story, and showcase all of your best writing, and have an evolution essay on there, where you talk about how you've changed as a writer. I almost think you can't really compare them. I think, if I were designing the program, I actually probably wouldn't have a gateway portfolio. I would just have the capstone portfolio. In the gateway course, I would get students thinking about what the gateway—excuse me, what the capstone portfolio should look like. That way, at least they're thinking about that ahead of time.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. The gateway and capstone courses emphasize reflective writing in various forms. How would you describe your experience with this kind of reflection?

Interviewee: I found the reflection very difficult. I think, at some points, I almost felt like some of my classmates, and to a certain extent myself, found it hard to make a thesis statement about how we have changed as writers over time. I mean, it's obvious we have changed as writers, but it's very tough to make a thesis statement that's not incredibly obvious, like I've changed as a writer because I write better. You know what I mean? That could be a thesis statement for how I've changed as a writer, and it would be true, but that wouldn't really satisfy the demands of the course 'cause that's such an obvious statement. I don't know.

I think the evolution essay, maybe the goal of it was—it had a good intention, but maybe it wasn't the best way to go about doing it. I think one way that might make more sense, instead of asking a student how he or she has changed as a writer from the beginning of college to the end of college, maybe ask a student how he or she has changed as a writer within one opinion, or within one topic. I think that you would get a lot more interesting responses, and it would be a lot—it would be more interesting to read as well.

Interviewer: What's an example of that? You're saying that instead of trying to get people to reflect on everything at once, to reflect on a smaller piece.

Interviewee: Yeah. Definitely. […]. I think that—'cause that's also answering how you've changed as a writer because when you're writing about those issues, you're gonna use different arguments. You're gonna use different research. You're gonna write it with a different tone. I think you get all the same components that you would get in asking somebody to analyze how they changed over four years in college, just in a lot more manageable—and when you're

asking somebody such a broad question, I think, generally, you get a watered-down thesis 'cause it's almost impossible to answer the question, I think.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Are you still using reflection in your current writing, whether assigned or voluntary?

Interviewee: I mean, it depends how you define reflection. If you define it as are you still analyzing what you've written critically, and seeing if it makes sense, and all the arguments make sense, and the grammar is well-written, then, yeah. I'm doing reflection every single time I write. If you define reflection as are you thinking about how you've changed, then probably no. I don't really do that, which I think is okay because it would be debilitating if every single time you do something you think about how you've changed. I think it's good to do that occasionally, but it's not constructive to do that all the time.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Has this reflection given you new ways to talk about your writing, new terms or concepts—so, terms and concepts, and what would they be?

Interviewee: I guess I'll have to ask, then, how do you define reflection when you want me to answer that question.

Interviewer: I think that the interview protocol doesn't actually give me a way, but I guess, if I had to define reflection, I'd say that it's an awareness of yourself as a writer in terms of your strengths, your weaknesses, and your positionalities as a person.

Interviewee: Okay. In terms of terms and concepts—

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: - it's a tough question. I don't really know the answer to the question. I would say, maybe in concepts, how I've—how, now, the level of complexity in my arguments has changed. I think that could be the only way I would try to answer that 'cause before business school, I didn't really know about NPV analysis, IR analysis. Those weren't tools I could have at my disposal to incorporate them in an essay to make a persuasive business policy argument. I could easily reflect about how, now that I've gotten those skills, and I've taken classes to learn about that, now, how that I can incorporate those as potential arguments, how I've been able to strengthen my paper. I think I could reflect about that. Those would be terms also, like what the term NPV is. What does the term discount rate mean? What does the term cash flow mean? Those are how I see the terms and concepts changing.

Interviewer: Okay. This question is interesting. The minor program is still relatively new. Are there any suggestions that you would have for instructors or administrators for the program?

Interviewee: Mm-hmm. One suggestion is to make sure that the students in the community still stay a tight-knit community 'cause there's always time between the gateway and capstone. I know that the idea is that students, in the time between those two courses, will help each other out with writing, or will contact each other and stuff, but obviously everybody's really busy, and that doesn't always happen. Finding ways to keep that community as one whole community, not just in those two courses, would be my number one suggestion.

My number two suggestion is that a lot of people don't know how to make websites and are not as technologically savvy. I think either that it should be taught in the course, how to make a website. Either their instructor should walk students through how to do it, or students should be given resources that teach them—that they can teach themselves how to do it. I know I helped out a lot of students with how to do their Squarespace websites, and I was really happy to help, but it's more the instructor's place to actually teach how to do the website, if it's gonna be a required component in the course.

Then, the third thing I would say really goes back to that evolution essay. I think if we were to restructure the evolution essay question as how you've changed in one small area, like an opinion about a topic, about an argument, rather than how a writer has changed throughout all of college, I think would be a better way to go.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. More generally, what do you think professors should know about teaching writing at the undergraduate level, so all professors?

Interviewee: All professors. Well, first of all, I think they're doing, on the whole, a really good job. I was really impressed with the writing courses that I've taken and really happy that the instructors would be willing to meet with students in the office hours. I think, on the whole, they're doing a great job. About what students should know—

Interviewer: Yeah. What do you think professors should know about teaching writing at the undergraduate level?

Interviewee: At the undergraduate level. I think professors should know that in the beginning of the course that he or she is teaching, that students aren't always aware of how to tailor writing to that course or to that discipline. In my linguistics course, linguistics has a different form when you're writing a linguistic argument than does a philosophy paper, for example. I think that students don't generally know all these different ways of writing and don't generally know how to tailor writing to a specific discipline than what that student is used to writing in.

I think the only thing that they should know is that if you're a professor of, let's say, philosophy, or linguistics, or psychology, maybe spend some time addressing how writing is a little bit different in that discipline. In psychology, do you have to report about the methods in an experiment? Do you have to use statistical analysis? Do you have to—in linguistics, do you have to use a literature review? Excuse me. I think that those are all helpful things, not to assume that a student already knows that, but to really make sure that he or she is taught that.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Yeah. I think those are all really important, big things, that whole issue of what certain disciplines value in writing. Any other comments about your portfolio, or about Sweetland, or about writing in general?

Interviewee: Yeah. I was super excited. As you said, the writing minor is pretty new, and I was thrilled. When I started college, it didn't exist, and I was thrilled when I saw it, and I was—I'm still thrilled that I've completed it. I haven't changed my opinion about that, and it's been a great minor, and I'm just—I'm thankful for it. I think Sweetland, on the whole, is really good. I think that the writing instructors have been great. I've already given a few suggestions, what I think could be improved, but even if it's—even if those suggestions aren't taken, I still think the goal of the minor is achieved. I still think they're doing a great job.

Interviewer: How do you think that your—when you go out to Minnesota—is it Minnesota—

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: - to work at [department store] out there, how do you think they're gonna view your minor in writing, or how have you talked about that to them, or are they aware of it, or—

Interviewee: Yeah. It's on my resume. I've interviewed with about six different companies, and in every single interview, without me bringing it up, they always ask a question about it. That's a very positive thing. It gets people really interested. They want to know more about it, and writing is definitely a skill. It's something that, if you're really good at it, you have a huge advantage, and in every single interview they've asked me to describe my minor in writing. It's useful that I can point to an online website, showcasing my work like this. It's nice to have some sort of accreditation at a university level that a student's completed courses that certifies that he or she is very competent in writing, and I think that it's a huge benefit for jobs. Yeah. It's great to be able to point to.

Interviewer: When you talk to them about it, how do you—what are the first ways that you describe it?

Interviewee: Yeah. I describe it as a chance for me to focus on the type of writing that I'm most passionate about, so, mostly business. I talk about how I've written all these business papers. I wrote a strategy paper giving recommendations to [local automotive company]. I'm used to writing memos already, and it's the sort of stuff I tell them, and when I'm interviewing for companies, they love that. That's exactly what they want to hear because it means that they don't have to train you to do it. You're not gonna make a mistake and send something unprofessional. You already have skills. You can analyze a company strategy, and you can actually make a conclusive argument about it. If I were applying for jobs that weren't in the business world, I could just as easily tailor it to that. I think that that's really useful.

Interviewer: What's their reaction when you tell them about this stuff?

Interviewee: [Laughter] They generally just take a note, and they smile, and they just write it down. I mean, I think they're impressed. All the interviewers, I think, are really impressed with the University of Michigan in general, and I think that they're excited to see it. I know that my fellow students at Ross—I think maybe only one or two other kids have a minor in writing, and I think I'm the only one in my class. I've definitely differentiated myself from everybody else in my class. That's very helpful when you're trying to get jobs 'cause every little bit counts, and it's something that's so practical. I think that's really what it comes down to. I don't want to say a philosophy minor, if they have it, is not practical, or a minor in something else is not as practical, but a writing minor, that's just—you're gonna be writing in every single thing you do. It's just the most practical minor, I think, anybody could really have.

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah. I agree. It's interesting to think about how writing has changed, too. I mean, we do so much more texting. Some people say, "Oh, people are like—they can't write anymore," and stuff, but actually, I think people are doing more writing than ever. The writing's just changed. Imagine, I didn't used to—I mean, I write. I write for myself, and I write for school, but I also—I'm texting on top of all of that. Right? I didn't used to be doing that. It's still another place where I'm using words that I wouldn't have been doing if texting hadn't—didn't exist.

Interviewee: Mm-hmm. Yeah. I think our generation, just as a writer now, we have to wear all these different hats. I text in a different way, then I send an email to a professor in a different way, and I write an argumentative essay in a different way, and I'll journal in a different way. If anything, that strengthens your ability as a writer 'cause now you can write in all these different ways. Yeah. I agree with you.

Interviewer: Just real quick before we go, the journaling piece—

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: - can you tell me a little bit more about how that works for you?

Interviewee: Yeah. It's just writing down my thoughts after the day, one thing that I learned, or one thing I was surprised to learn, or a happy memory, or something that I want to reflect about later. When I say journal, I don't spend a half an hour writing down, like a diary. It's just writing down something simple. It takes five to ten minutes. It's great because, as people, we forget a lot of things, and it's nice to have that written down. There'll be quotes that I was particularly inspired by and stuff like that, and it's nice to just have that in one place.

Interviewer: Do you publish it online? Is it a blog, or is it just your own hard copy that you write?

Interviewee: Yeah. It's just my own book, and I'll probably look back on it one day, but, no, I haven't published it. I'm always big about privacy. I'm probably never going to have my own blog out there on the internet, and that's not a bad thing, but I'm just—I'm more about privacy. I haven't really done that.

Interviewer: How did the e-portfolio process work with that impulse for privacy?

Interviewee: I mean, as you saw, I do have a passcode. It's not accessible unless you knew the password. I do actually have a bit of 01:07:12 privacy in that sense. Then, I think in general, when I wrote my op-ed about the administration and how the administration should not have fired all these teachers, I put my name to it. Putting your name on something and putting it out there in the world really forces you to own up to what you're saying. That's really important—

Interviewer: It's serious business.

Interviewee: Yeah. In my opinion, you shouldn't write something that you're not willing to own up, but at the same time, I think that the desire for privacy is important, and I think that certain issues are so controversial and so heated, where people just will judge a person so much, like about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is one example. I don't think it's too much to ask to want privacy within those certain things. That's why I have the passcode 'cause I wanted to showcase that writing, too. Because I don't want to be defined by an argument in that essay that I make. I'd rather be defined as me, as a student, as a person, and stuff like that. I think that that's where privacy comes into the question.

Interviewee: Yeah. Thanks ***.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: It was fun talking to you.

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