Internship Log: Student Interviews

This semester I teach ENG 217: Writing Personal Essays here at ASU. I have really enjoyed teaching this class, and I have seen my students' authorial voices develop in really cool ways. This week (the third to last in the semester), I am meeting individually with my students in conferences to discuss their final writing projects. Today, Tuesday, November 17th, two of my students told me that they decided to switch their major to English: Writing, Rhetorics, and Literacies. They are both sophomores. One student will transfer from the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College with a major in Secondary Education: English, and the other will transfer from the Herberger Institute with a major in Graphic Design.

Both of the students, Thomas Buchanan and Grayson Kelly, agreed to answer some of my questions about their decisions to switch majors and had no problem being quoted in the press release. I have included the transcript of our interviews below, as well as discussed the highlights/ most applicable elements of the interview for the purposes of proposing the press release focus to Kristin.

Transcript: Grayson Kelly

K: What drew you to this major?

G: Through this class and various writing projects, I think the… I just, I figured I don't want to do journalism. I don't want to live downtown and that's not for me. That's the only writing part of the English major that's not creative. It said you can pair it with social justice and I'm super into that. And rhetorics. I might want to go to law school, and I think that's a great thing to do.

K: The major is called "Writing, Rhetorics, and Literacies." Did any of those terms throw you?

G: Yeah, rhetorics and literacies threw me. I saw writing, and I liked that, then I saw those terms and I was like, oh wait, what's that? But I thought about it and read about it and I decided it was a good fit. I did my own research on the terms.

K: What kind of job do you hope to get coming out of this major?

G: I want to be a freelance writer. No, I just want to be a writer. Writing for *VICE* is like, my dream. For Writing Project Three, I wrote something I could see in that. I want to do that kind of like, writing. I read so much online writing from places like that. I read *Broadly*- it's the feminist part of VICE. The writing is super interesting writing that is entertaining yet informative. It's edgy. That's what I'd want to do. I read *Gawker* and *Jezebel*. I know a lot of that is journalism,

but I don't think of those writers as journalists. I looked into doing journalism here at ASU, but you have to go through broadcasting and all of that kind of stuff that isn't about writing.

I was thinking about applying to ASU state press, as like an opinion columnist. I think that you know, you don't have to be in the journalism major as long as you graduate with a portfolio. With the WRL you do graduate with a strong portfolio of work. You have a required internship and take all these classes. I don't think lit, creative writing, or linguistics have required internships. It's really exciting.

K: Is it OK to use quotes from this interview in a published article?

G: Yes, absolutely.

Transcript: Thomas Buchanan

K: What drew you to this major?

T: I was drawn to the Writing, Rhetorics, and Literacies program by the interdisciplinary aspect of it. Also I've liked all the English classes I've taken so far—so I knew I wanted some sort of English program—but the ones focused on writing are much more fun for me.

K: The major is called "Writing, Rhetorics, and Literacies." Did any of those terms throw you?

T: When I first of the program, I didn't know what literacies meant at all and all I knew about rhetoric was basic definitions of ethos, pathos, and logos. After some research and talking to you, literacies seems like the thing I'm most interested in. Rhetoric is the most concerning of the three because it is so broad but that's also what I'm looking for.

K: What kind of job do you hope to get coming out of this major?

T: I have no idea. I would like to teach English but since I'm not sure, I don't want to be in a program where, regardless of how true it is, I feel like that is the only option.

K: Is it OK to use quotes from this interview in a published article?

T: Of course!

Highlights:

There were a few things that stood out to me from my discussions with Grayson & Thomas:

1. Grayson clearly stated that he wanted to be a writer, and that he thought this degree would offer him the most options to writing nonfiction pieces and focusing specifically on writing. Despite this clear focus, and his excitement about graduating with a portfolio of work, he also states that this degree opens up possibilities in "social justice" and "law." These are two key themes that seem to be present in many of the discussions about this major. Thomas also talked about the "interdisciplinary aspect" of the program. I think that this is a good draw for students.

2. Grayson is excited about the possibility to focus on what he really wants to focus on in this major. He said the internship and the focus of the major really fit what he wants to do going forward, and he doesn't have to worry about things like "broadcasting" taking him away from his focus on writing and desired career in writing. Thomas discussed how he likes this major because he feels like it opens up more options to him than just teaching English. I think the possibilities that the major offers do work against getting stuck in one track.

3. Grayson does admit that the terms "rhetoric" and "literacies" threw him off a bit when deciding on the major, but he states that he did research of his own to help him understand those terms. The other student who decided to switch to WRL came and talked to me about those terms, so while both had questions about them, neither of them felt that the unfamiliarity with the terms would hold them back in any way. Thomas wasn't as thrown by the term rhetoric since he felt like he had a basic understanding of it. We did discuss the term literacy, which he admits he didn't know what it "meant at all," but now he says "literacies seems like the thing I'm most interested in."

4. Grayson says, "it's really exciting" to be joining this major, and his attention to and focus on tone in pieces he reads clearly plays into his desire to write: "writing [that] is super interesting writing that is entertaining yet informative. It's edgy. That's what I'd want to do." I think both students like the possibilities this degree offers and the way they can make it their own.