

[00:00:00.000] - Troy Tien Nguyen

Hello, everyone! My name is Troy, and I'm very honored to be here today to share with you a writing experience of Evy Ngo. She is a first-year student at DePauw University. Hi Evy, can you share a little bit about yourself?

[00:00:16.290] - Evy Ngo

Hi, Troy! Hi, everyone! My name is Evy, and I'm an international student from Vietnam. Currently, I'm taking Professor Sununu's first-year seminar class: "Ruin & Re-begetting." I have a lot to say about the class. Hope you'd like it!

[00:00:35.160] - Troy Tien Nguyen

Today, I would like to hear more about your writing experience. It can be the success or failure and your philosophy of writing. Are you ready?

[00:00:44.260] - Evy Ngo

Sure.

[00:00:45.640] - Troy Tien Nguyen

Okay! Question number one: to you, what is writing?

[00:00:52.780] - Evy Ngo

I believe writing is the kind of output. Everything you read, hear, or see—that's the input. Then, you transfer me it into something of your own, and you express it out by writing or speaking. Writing is a form that you have more time to choose the word and to hone your grammar or sentences—more like a meditation in speaking.

[00:01:21.120] - Troy Tien Nguyen

Oh, my goodness! I love how you illustrate writing as a meditation of speaking. Can you explain more about what you mean by a meditation of speaking?

[00:01:31.230] - Evy Ngo

It means in order to be a good writer, you really have to question yourself—it's the time for you to reflect. For speaking, because of the fast speed, you have to move fast, and you don't have much time to reflect. For writing, you have a lot of time. In order to write well, you have to focus. And that's all about meditation— focus, be in the moment, and reflect.

[00:02:01.880] - Troy Tien Nguyen

Okay, now I guess what you mean! So to you, a good writer is one who can reflect, meditate, and ask good questions. Do you consider yourself a good writer?

[00:02:14.870] - Evy Ngo

I can say that I am a dedicated writer, but I'm not sure that I'm a good writer because there are still a lot of things for me to learn. As an international writer, whose English is not my mother tongue, I can say it's even more difficult than a native student. However, I can say I'm very serious about whatever I write. I cannot stand to submit anything that is so unthoughtful. Everything I write, even though it's not good in terms of grammar and diction, I always give my best to it.

[00:02:56.530] - Evy Ngo

And I spend a lot of time writing. For one essay, I usually spend 20 to 24 hours—it means a week just to write a 3-4-page essay.

[00:03:09.760] - Troy Tien Nguyen

That is awesome! I really admire how you say that you really put your thoughts into the essay because I know that a lot of students let the grass grow on their feet, which means they wait until the deadline to work on the essay or the piece of writing. They just grab all the things they have within one or two hours. I think that's insane! I really like how you said that in order to write well, you have to put your thoughts into it. So for you, who do you like the most about writing?

[00:03:40.770] - Evy Ngo

I actually enjoy the process of writing. I enjoy it and hate it at the same time because it is very painful. As I said, it takes a lot of time, and sometimes, I don't want to write. I want to do something else. I want to cook or hang out with friends, but I can't—I have to stick to the writing only. Hence, it's kind of painful. However, at the same time, because I put a lot of effort into it,

[00:04:12.690] - Evy Ngo

after every essay I feel like I grow a little bit as a writer and a speaker as well. Every time I speak or write, I think carefully about the diction to use, and I tend to do it slowly to make sure that I convey everything I mean in a concise way. Therefore, I like it the best, but again, it's really painful.

[00:04:39.290] - Troy Tien Nguyen

I also have that love-hate relationship with writing. I really love writing, especially the process of transforming our thoughts into those words, which is so powerful. However, I hate it at the same time. For example, when there are too many deadlines, and I have to rush and stay up the whole night just to finish an essay. Therefore, I really have that love-hate relationship. Okay, I'm really curious about your experience right now because you said that you're in professor Sununu's writing class. And you know what?

[00:05:13.550] - Troy Tien Nguyen

Professor Sununu is very famous on DePauw's campus. Do you think that class benefits you as a writer?

[00:05:22.240] - Evy Ngo

It definitely does. Just to give you a brief idea of our second week in class, we already had to submit an essay. That essay was about "own-poems," and we compared two poems. When I came to her and complained: "Oh no, Professor, it's too difficult. If it's only one poem, it's going to be easier." And she said: "Yes, because it's easier, I don't let you do it." After every essay, I feel like I grow because you have to write your essay at least two times. The first time, she'd give feedback, and you have to rewrite it.

[00:06:07.310] - Evy Ngo

And if you are stuck at your rewrite, you have to rewrite-the-rewrite.

[00:06:13.400] - Troy Tien Nguyen

Oh my goodness, that's painful!

[00:06:16.980] - Evy Ngo

Aha, she's very careful. She's so good at what she's doing, so she can tell you what you do wrong—even just a comma, a period, a space, or a dash, not just words. Moreover, if you write three pages of essays, she will give you three pages of feedback.

[00:06:42.360] - Troy Tien Nguyen

Are you serious?

[00:06:44.090] - Evy Ngo

Yes, she does. She spends a lot of time with you. If you have questions, you can come to find her at any time because I feel like she lives in her office. She doesn't have office hours because she led her while you live there.

[00:06:59.410] - Troy Tien Nguyen

I think that Professor Sununu believes that her feedback would help you improve day by day. Do you have any recommendations for people who struggle with writing? I know a lot of international friends. For example, my Vietnamese friends at DePauw just avoid all writing classes. They avoid those classes as much as possible because they just hate writing. They feel like they cannot express their thoughts and words.

[00:07:31.260] - Troy Tien Nguyen

It's just a painful process. Do you have any recommendations for those people who struggle or just think that they are not good writers?

[00:07:40.950] - Evy Ngo

I think I just have to do it. There's no other way. You can convince yourself that you don't need writing, but actually, when you go to work, you will need it a lot. I talked with a lot of alumni, and they said that what makes DePauw students stand out is our ability to write clearly and communicate concisely. In order to become a good writer, I think there are only two ways. First, you have to read more—read extensively. Second, you have to write more.

[00:08:20.230] - Evy Ngo

That's it!

[00:08:21.810] - Troy Tien Nguyen

Thank you so much. I really, really want to deliver your words to those people. I really appreciate how you shared your experiences. The one that stood out to me is "writing is a meditation of speaking." Thank you so much for coming today. I wish you all the best on your writing journey. Good luck, Evy! Thank you.

[00:08:42.480] - Evy Ngo

Thanks, Troy!

[00:08:44.620] - Troy Tien Nguyen

That's the end of our podcast today. Thank you for listening! Goodbye.