

ERIK DEMAINE: I mean, there's this saying that the best way to learn the material is to try to teach it. And that's definitely then the case in this class. I was learning every week, learning a ton of material, and then figuring out what part of it I should actually teach in a lecture. And I think it's valuable for the students to get that kind of experience, as well.

Where, just by trying to write down the material that I covered, they can think about how would they present it in written form, which is a different style of communications. So it has different, sort of, allowable structures and things like that. And just forcing them to go through the exercise of, how would I write down this material? We just saw it presented one way, maybe I'll write it slightly differently, or maybe I'll try to mimic exactly how professor Demaine did it. Whatever their approach, I think it's valuable to go through that exercise and see what it's like to write these things down. And they scribe just one or two lectures, usually in a group of two or three people. So that gives them just a flavor of what it's like.

Of course, another useful product is that we get these lecture notes at the end. So students can read each other's notes and have this kind of reference material. And good for OCW, as well. So that everyone can read-- have a written form of the lecture if they don't like the videos, or they want to go through it more quickly, or as a supplement to the videos, I think it's also valuable for that. One day this material might turn into a textbook, so it could also be a step in that direction. So there are lots of reasons to do scribe notes but I think mostly it's as a useful experience for the students to actually do the writing, see what that's like.

I guess it also helps them learn the material a little bit deeper. Because by forcing them to essentially teach it in this written form they really have to understand everything that I said, and not just kind of cursorily understand. Follow up on the references and things like that. It's too much to ask everyone to do that for all lecturers but just to get a flavor of that I think is valuable.

So writing is hard. And I think the only way to learn to be really good at writing is by lots of experience and then lots of feedback on it. So a lot of the scribe notes that we get in are poorly written. And it's an area everyone can always improve. So we always-- we give feedback on how to improve the writing, mostly. Occasionally there's some missing parts, like they forgot about one section of the lecture. And so say, hey, you've got to add in this. But mostly we're aiming to improve. Say, oh, we need a figure here, this is not clear just in written

form, or the grammar needs improvement here, or that kind of thing. Or maybe you could restructure it this way.

So we try to help students learn the good ways to organize their writing and that kind of thing. So it's certainly not the main part of the class, but it leads to much better scribe notes, and I think a more valuable learning experience for the writers.