Starting Out: Houa Vang

Houa Vang (Design and Visual Communications) almost didn’t join the Honors College when she enrolled at UWM.

“When I came in, I had an impression that everyone was going to be super serious and studious,” she explains.

Now completing her third semester as a member of the Honors College community, Houa is glad that she took the leap of faith and joined.

Houa says that her Honors College classes and professors have been some of her favorites at UWM, and she appreciates how the courses focus on how students fit into the world.

In Professor Benjamin Schneider’s “Growing Up,” she especially enjoyed how the course introduced her to new material.

“I wouldn’t go and seek these things out,” she says about the media she encountered in class, “but now that I have read and watched them, I have it as an influence on my art career.”

As a Design and Visual Communications major, Houa enjoys doing art and making graphics. She even aspires to start her own company someday.

In her current Honors College course, Professor Lindsay Daigle’s “The Art of Truth/The Truth of Art,” Houa has discovered that connections exist between her coursework and her future career.

“I love the class because we get to explore creative writing in new and unique ways,” she says.

She acknowledges too that the writing skills she has developed in the seminars will benefit her in her future as a graphic designer. “I love incorporating words as a visual form in my artwork,” she says.

In addition to graphic design, Houa also has a love for poetry. Since joining a poetry club in high school, she has found that poetry is one way to connect with people of different backgrounds.

“It’s interesting to see different perspectives from different people and feel what they’re feeling,” she says.

Professor David Southward’s “Poetry and Empathy” course helped Houa hone her own poetry skills and learn to better understand the poetry of others.

Despite her initial reluctance to join the Honors College, Houa is thriving in her classes and sees their value.

“I think one of the main things that keeps people from joining the Honors College is the thought that it’s harder and more work intensive,” Houa shares.

However, she has found that her Honors College courses have been the most interesting. “The fact that it is so discussion-based and so engaging is what makes it worthwhile,” she says. “It kind of counters what work there is.”

According to Houa, the professors and discussion-based seminars make the Honors College so special.

She encourages students considering the Honors College to give it a try.

“In the long run, the classes you take here are going to live with you,” Houa says. “I think it’s worth it.”