If you asked me, “How would you describe the honors program here at Loyola”, and the end of my freshman year, I would have said the following: It’s really hard, but at least I get priority registration. I’d think about my time in Campion, where the night before a test, the entire dorm would feel like Dante’s Inferno…while we studied Dante’s Inferno. I’d think about the one time my watch stopped working during a test and how I lost my mind in the middle of Galvin Auditorium, quietly of course. My freshman year, I wasn’t sure if it was worth it.

High school students like to say after calculus “well I am never going to use this ever again” As a physics major, I thought, “Well I’m never going to use anything but math and physics ever again”. I wasn’t thinking about the core classes, and the honors classes with 500 hours of reading. I was thinking about the classes that required a calculator and loads of scratch paper. Especially after the rite of passage that is Honors 101 and 102, I felt accomplishment in completing the challenge, but not in what I learned.

But after three quick years, the following stands out to me:

1. I have never thought so critically about my own views. It’s easy to hide behind a Facebook newsfeed consisting only of friends and pages that agree with your views, but it takes huge maturity to stand in front of alternate views and digest it. The Honors program brought a whole new dynamic to my worldview, and I found new sources and ideas that I would not have otherwise been exposed to. I used to be afraid when people disagreed with me, but now I am happy to take the time and figure out why. Believe it or not, I am not always right. If anyone that has ever gone through this program says they were right 100% of the time, they’re lying. Part of the fun of being in this program was being extremely confused for a whole lecture…a whole semester sometimes…but you get there in the end. I am thankful for all of the new ideas that pulled me out of my comfort zone and into unmarked territory.

2. I am actually going to use this again. I have decided to go to law school in the fall, and people have tried to scare me with horror stories about the workload and the work ethic that I need to be successful. I think it would be an understatement to say that the honors program prepared me for that. I have developed a skill in writing (which had to be beaten into me) and the skill to speak confidently and intelligently. Not only am I ready for a challenge, but because of the past three years, I know how to tackle it right away. I learned how to time manage, because fun fact, you cannot read the entirety of the Odyssey in one night. I mean you can, but…never mind. The point is, no matter your future, no matter your path, the honors program is an impenetrable shield to push you to your goals.

3. There’s so much I didn’t (and still don’t know). From little things like knowing that 14 people could eat lunch inside the horse at Vittoriano, to big ideas like how the average person aligns their beliefs and morals…I knew that the world was three dimensional, but in reality, it’s way more than that. In this era, there is an undeniable advantage to actually knowing what you’re talking about. And after all of the tough experiences, I’m proud to have gone through it all. It was great to build strong relationships with incredibly intelligent professors. It was great to have solidarity in the community that we’re in this mess together. The girls that lived across the hall from me in Campion are still my best friends. I vibrantly remember every professor I had, because they were each unique and important in sculpting my college education.

So now, if you asked me, “How would you describe the honors program here at Loyola”, I would say the following: It’s really hard, but it’s worth it.

My dad graduated in the Loyola honors program in 1988, and now I will in 2018, and I couldn’t be more thankful for the past three years. I wish all of my fellow students and faculty years in success, whether it be in teaching the next generation of Loyola honors students, or paving the way for that next generation. Thank you.