

Letter to Future WHAP Students

From now until May, your AP score is entirely in your hands - you're starting on ground zero. No one is predestined to get a five or a one or anywhere in between - this exam, like most, isn't about how smart you are; it's about how well you study, how receptive you are to feedback, and how much effort you're willing to put into this class. Bingham's going to give you the tools you need to do well on the exam and to learn for your own sake. He wants you to succeed, although it may not feel like it when you get back a Strayer test or an essay sometimes. Don't let that discourage you. It just means you need to figure out what works for you. WHAP is different for everyone, so there's no formula for how to do well, but here's a few thoughts to keep you on track as you settle down with Strayer:

1. Don't be afraid to change how you study or to try more than one thing. Bullet point. Mind map. Flash cards. Read it aloud. Write it down. Reading isn't the same thing as studying. If you're studying and still not doing well, try studying a different way. If you're not studying and not doing well, learn to study.
2. If you can't explain it, you don't know it as well as you need to. Get on the phone with a friend and explain the information in as much detail as you can – don't let yourself gloss over the stuff you don't feel like going through. If you're short on friends, acquire a sibling or a hamster or a the guy who restocks the shelves at Walmart to talk through Strayer – you're doing it for yourself, so it doesn't matter who's listening.
3. Give Strayer the time it deserves. If you think you're going to read a chapter in half an hour and be done for the week, you're not doing yourself any favors. This is a time-intensive class. There are going to be days or weeks where you just don't feel up to it – it's all about disciplining yourself to get through it anyway. Come to terms with the quality time you and Strayer will be spending together.
4. Trust Bingham. Believe it or not, he's pretty good at this whole teaching-AP-World-History thing.
5. Don't be afraid to ask for help. Get on the BinghamPlace forums and post questions and answers. Come to any essay tutorials that are offered. Learning the structure and terminology of WHAP essays is just as important as learning the content. Going to tutorials doesn't mean you're bad at essays – it's perfectly common for the scores of people at these sessions to run the gamut, as it's really just about learning to write in the most effective way possible. If you put in the effort, you can almost certainly do this.

If you're doing WHAP right, it will be pretty exhausting. Accept this. And, as crazy as it may seem, enjoy it. Enjoy having a class in which you'll learn how to study in the way that works for you. Enjoy having a teacher who's going to push you to give it your best. Enjoy that Strayer book you're going to hate until the day before the AP exam when you realize it's an absolute gift. You don't have to be crazy about World History to enjoy WHAP or to do well in it – you just have to be willing to listen, to try, and to learn. Stay focused and motivated – it's going to be a great year.

Keep metacognating,
~Steffannie Alter

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