

Why Study Social Studies?

Social Studies is often thought of simply as history. However, Social Studies is comprised of many different subject matters – government, geography, economics, psychology, sociology, US history, world history, and so much more. Even with the wide range of subjects that fall under the umbrella of Social Studies, the importance of the content within those subjects is regularly overlooked. Maybe I have a bias as a Social Studies teacher, but I would argue these topics are the most important topics to study.

“What makes these subjects so important?” A question that I have heard asked in many different ways by many different students. If you think about it, all of the subjects that fall into the Social Studies category affect your life *every day*. For instance, **government** plays a role in virtually everything we do. Beyond the basics of elections and the three branches of government, the impact of government is all around us in our daily lives. Whether it is funding for public education allowing for schools, police officers enforcing the laws created by a legislative body, or simply being able to drive on a paved road in a vehicle that has government imposed safety standards, government is constantly impacting our lives. As **history** has shown, having an awareness of how our representative government can grant us the ability to have the freedoms we desire is essential to our ability to maintain those freedoms.

By looking back through **history**, we can gain an understanding on the reason behind so many of the “whys” and “whats” in the world. For instance, understanding the beliefs and culture (also known as the **sociological** influences) of ancient civilizations allows us to gain an understanding of the **economic**, **religious**, and **geographic** influences that impacted each of the unique civilizations. We can look back at the linguistic, mathematical, and scientific discoveries that came from the ancient civilizations and we can continue to expand on them. Looking at and understanding the successes and failures of the past helps guide us to making informed decisions for the future.

These examples are merely a tip of the iceberg look at how important Social Studies is to our lives and the world around us. While I could continue to go on with the connections between our daily lives and Social Studies, it would take a full dissertation to fully address the importance of learning Social Studies. I challenge you all to think of an aspect of your life that is not impacted by an area of Social Studies, after all, even your dreams fall under the realm of Social Studies through **psychology**.

--- Mrs. Dani Olsen, 6-12 Social Studies Teacher