

**Competency 1.0 Understand key historical terms and concepts.**

The disciplines within the social sciences, sometimes referred to as social studies, include anthropology, geography, history, sociology, economics, and political science. Some programs include psychology, archaeology, philosophy, religion, law, and criminology. Also, the subjects of civics and government may be a part of an educational curriculum as separate from political science.

**ANTHROPOLOGY** is the scientific study of human culture and humanity, the relationship between man and his culture. Anthropologists study different groups, how they relate to other cultures, and patterns of behavior, similarities and differences. Their research is two-fold: cross-cultural and comparative. The major method of study is referred to as "participant observation." The anthropologist studies and learns about the people being studied by living among them and participating with them in their daily lives. Other methods may be used but this is the most characteristic method used.

**ARCHAEOLOGY** is the scientific study of past human cultures by studying the remains they left behind--objects such as pottery, bones, buildings, tools, and artwork. Archaeologists locate and examine any evidence to help understand the way people lived in past times. They use special equipment and techniques to gather the evidence and make special effort to keep detailed records of their findings because a lot of their research results in destruction of the remains being studied. The first step is to locate an archaeological site using various methods. Next, archaeologists survey the site by making detailed descriptions of it using notes, maps, photographs, and collecting artifacts from the surface. Excavating comes next, either by digging for buried objects or by diving and working in submersible decompression chambers, when underwater. Archaeologists record and preserve the evidence for eventual classification, dating, and evaluating their find.

**CIVICS** is the study of the responsibilities and rights of citizens with emphasis on such subjects as freedom, democracy, and individual rights. Students study local, state, national, and international government structures, functions, and problems. Related to this are other social, political, and economic institutions. As a method of study, students gain experience and understanding through direct participation in student government, school publications, and other organizations. They also participate in community activities such as conservation projects and voter registration drives.

**ECONOMICS** generally is the study of the ways goods and services are produced and the ways they are distributed. It also includes the ways people and nations choose what they buy from what they want. Some of the methods of study include research, case studies, analysis, statistics, and mathematics.

**GEOGRAPHY** involves studying location and how living things and earth's features are distributed throughout the earth. It includes where animals, people, and plants live and the effects of their relationship with earth's physical features. Geographers also explore the locations of earth's features, how they got there, and why it is so important.

What geographers study can be broken down into four areas:

- (1) Location: Being able to find the exact site of anything on the earth;
- (2) Spatial relations: The relationships of earth's features, places, and groups of people with one another due to their location;
- (3) Regional characteristics: Characteristics of a place such as landform and climate, types of plants and animals, kinds of people who live there, and how they use the land;
- (4) Forces that change the earth, such as human activities and natural forces.

Geographical studies are divided into:

Regional: Elements and characteristics of a place or region

Topical: One earth feature or one human activity occurring throughout the entire world

Physical: Earth's physical features, what creates and changes them, their relationships to each other as well as to human activities

Human: Human activity patterns and how they relate to the environment including political, cultural, historical, urban, and social geographical fields of study.

Special research methods used by geographers include mapping, interviewing, field studies, mathematics, statistics, and scientific instruments.

**HISTORY** is the study of the past, especially the aspects of the human past, political and economic events as well as cultural and social conditions. Students study history through textbooks, research, field trips to museums and historical sights, and other methods. Most nations set the requirements in history to study the country's heritage, usually to develop an awareness and feeling of loyalty and patriotism. History is generally divided into the three main divisions: **(a) time periods, (b) nations, and (c) specialized topics**. Study is accomplished through research, reading, and writing. Specialized fields of historical study include the following:

- Social history – the approach to the study of history that views a period of time through the eyes of everyday people and is focused on emerging trends.
- Archaeology: study of prehistoric and historic human cultures through the recovery, documentation and analysis of material remains and environmental data.
- Art History: the study of changes in social context through art.
- Big History: study of history on a large scale across long time frames (since the Big Bang and up to the future) through a multi-disciplinary approach.
- Chronology: science of localizing historical events in time.
- Cultural history: the study of culture in the past.
- Diplomatic history: the study of international relations in the past.
- Economic History: the study of economies in the past.
- Military History: the study of warfare and wars in history and what is sometimes considered to be a sub-branch of military history, Naval History.
- Paleography: study of ancient texts.
- Political history: the study of politics in the past.
- Psychohistory: study of the psychological motivations of historical events.
- Historiography of science: study of the structure and development of science.
- Social History: the study of societies in the past.
- World History: the study of history from a global perspective.

**POLITICAL SCIENCE** is the study of political life, different forms of government including elections, political parties, and public administration. In addition, political science studies include values such as justice, freedom, power, and equality. There are six main fields of political-study in the United States:

- 1 Political theory and philosophy
- 2 Comparative governments
- 3 International relations
- 4 Political behavior
- 5 Public administration
- 6 American government and politics

**PSYCHOLOGY** involves scientifically studying behavior and mental processes. The ways people and animals relate to each other are observed and recorded. Psychologists scrutinize specific patterns, which enables them to discern and predict certain behaviors, using scientific methods to verify their ideas. In this way, they are able to learn how to help people fulfill their individual human potential and strengthen understanding between individuals, as well as groups, nations and cultures. The results of the research of psychologists have deepened our understanding of the reasons for people's behavior.

Psychology is not only closely connected to the natural science of biology and the medical field of psychiatry, it is also connected to the social sciences of anthropology, and sociology which study people in society. Along with the sociologists and anthropologists, psychologists also study humans in their social settings, analyzing their attitudes and relationships. The disciplines of anthropology, psychology, and sociology often research the same kinds of problems but from different points of view, with the emphasis in psychology on individual behavior, and how an individual's actions are influenced by feelings and beliefs. In their research, psychologists develop hypotheses, and then test them using the scientific method. The methods used in psychological research include:

1. **Naturalistic Observation** which includes observing the behavior of animals and humans in their natural surroundings or environment
2. **Systematic Assessment**, which describes assorted ways to measure the feelings, thoughts, and personality traits of people using case histories, public opinion polls or surveys, and standardized tests. These three types of assessments enable psychologists to acquire information not available through naturalistic observations
3. **Experimentation** enables psychologists to find and corroborate the cause-and-effect relationships in behavior, usually by randomly dividing the subjects into two groups: experimental group and control group

**SOCIOLOGY** is the study of the individuals, groups, and institutions making up human society. It includes every feature of human social conditions. It deals with the predominant behaviors, attitudes, and types of relationships within a society, which is defined as a group of people with a similar cultural background living in a specific geographical area. Sociology is divided into five major areas of study:

1. Population studies: General social patterns of groups of people living in a certain geographical area.
2. Social behaviors: Changes in attitudes, morale, leadership, conformity, and others.
3. Social institutions: Organized groups of people performing specific functions within a society such as churches, schools, hospitals, business organizations, and governments.
4. Cultural influences: Including customs, knowledge, arts, religious beliefs, and language.
6. Social change: Including wars, revolutions, inventions, fashions, and other events or activities.

Sociologists use three major methods to test and verify theories:

- (1) Surveys
- (2) Controlled experiments
- (3) Field observation

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History is without doubt an integral part of every other discipline in the social sciences. Historical knowledge goes a long way towards explaining that what happened in the past leads up to and explains the present.

**Causality:** The reason something happens, its cause, is a basic category of human thinking. We want to know the causes of some major event in our lives. Within the study of history, causality is the analysis of the reasons for change. The question we are asking is why and how a particular society or event developed in the particular way it did, given the context in which it occurred.

**Conflict:** Conflict within history is opposition of ideas, principles, values or claims. Conflict may take the form of internal clashes of principles or ideas or claims within a society or group, or it may take the form of opposition between groups or societies.

**Bias:** A prejudice or a predisposition, either toward or against something. In the study of history, bias can refer to the persons or groups studied, in terms of a society's bias toward a particular political system, or it can refer to the historian's predisposition to evaluate events in a particular way.

**Interdependence:** A condition in which two things or groups rely upon one another; as opposed to independence, in which each thing or group relies only upon itself.

**Identity:** The state or perception of being a particular thing or person. Identity can also refer to the understanding or self-understanding of groups, nations, etc.

**Nation-state:** A particular type of political entity that provides a sovereign territory for a specific nation in which other factors also unite the citizens (e.g., language, race, ancestry, etc.).

**Culture:** the civilization, achievements, and customs of the people of a particular time and place.

## **Competency 2.0 Apply research skills.**

The resources used in the study of history can be divided into two major groups: primary sources and secondary sources.

Primary sources are works, records, etc. that were created during the period being studied or immediately after it. Secondary sources are works written significantly after the period being studied and based upon primary sources. “Primary sources are the basic materials that provide the raw data and information for the historian. Secondary sources are the works that contain the explications of, and judgments on, this primary material.” [Source: Norman F Cantor & Richard I. Schneider. HOW TO STUDY HISTORY, Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1967, pp. 23-24.]

Primary sources include the following kinds of materials:

- Documents that reflect the immediate, everyday concerns of people: memoranda, bills, deeds, charters, newspaper reports, pamphlets, graffiti, popular writings, journals or diaries, records of decision-making bodies, letters, receipts, snapshots, etc.
- Theoretical writings which reflect care and consideration in composition and an attempt to convince or persuade. The topic will generally be deeper with more pervasive values than is the case with “immediate” documents. These may include newspaper or magazine editorials, sermons, political speeches, philosophical writings, etc.
- Narrative accounts of events, ideas, trends, etc. written with intentionality by someone contemporary with the events described.
- Statistical data, although statistics may be misleading.
- Literature and nonverbal materials, novels, stories, poetry, essays, as well as coins, archaeological artifacts, and art produced during the period.

Guidelines for the use of primary resources:

1. Be certain that you understand how language was used at the time of writing and that you understand the context in which it was produced.
2. Do not read history blindly; but be certain that you understand both explicit and implicit references in the material.
3. Read the entire text you are reviewing; do not simply extract a few sentences to read.
4. Although anthologies of materials may help you identify primary source materials, the full original text should be consulted.

Secondary sources include the following kinds of materials:

- Books written on the basis of primary materials about the period of time.
- Books written on the basis of primary materials about persons who played a major role in the events under consideration.
- Books and articles written on the basis of primary materials about the culture, the social norms, the language, and the values of the period.
- Quotations from primary sources.
- Statistical data on the period.
- The conclusions and inferences of other historians.
- Multiple interpretations of the ethos of the time.

Guidelines for the use of secondary sources:

1. Distinguish between facts and opinions. Do not rely upon only a single secondary source.
2. Check facts and interpretations against primary sources whenever possible.
3. Do not accept the conclusions of other historians uncritically.
4. Place greatest reliance on secondary sources created by the best and most respected scholars.
5. Do not use the inferences of other scholars as if they were facts.
6. Ensure that you recognize any bias the writer brings to his/her interpretation of history.
7. Understand the primary point of the book as a basis for evaluating the value of the material presented.

In recent history the way to get noticed in the court of public opinion was to get your name in the newspaper or on the radio. Television began to change all that, with its visual record of events. The proliferation of TV channels has made it very difficult for a lawmaker *not* to get noticed if he or she does something remarkable. And, of course, we now have the Internet, a vast, heterogeneous world of opportunities. Internet opportunities include not just news websites, but personal websites and the eponymous blogs, public opinion pieces that may or may not be true.

The key thing to remember if you are reading things on Web pages is that they might not have undergone the same sort of scrutiny as comparable efforts released by major media outlets to newspapers, radio, and television. Those media processes have built-in safety measures called editors, who will verify information before it is released to the wide world; to be a blogger, all you need is access to a Web-enabled computer and time to write a column. Bloggers routinely do not use editors or run their copy by anyone else before publishing it; as such, they have lower standards of professionalism overall. . What they write might be totally true; the blog, however, is known as a *log*, a chronicle of

thoughts and opinions about the affairs of the day, not so much an account of facts and figures.

### **Competency 3.0 Organize, analyze, and evaluate historical information.**

The practice of dividing time into a number of discrete periods or blocks of time is called “periodization.” Because history is continuous, all systems of periodization are arbitrary to a greater or lesser extent. However, dividing time into segments facilitates understanding of changes that occur over time and identifying similarities of events, knowledge, and experience within the defined period. Further, some divisions of time into these periods apply only under specific circumstances.

Divisions of time may be determined by date, by cultural advances or changes, by historical events, by the influence of particular individuals or groups, or by geography. Speaking of the World War II era defines a particular period of time in which key historical, political, social and economic events occurred. Speaking of the Jacksonian Era, however, has meaning only in terms of American history. Defining the “Romantic period” makes sense only in England, Europe and countries under their direct influence.

Many of the divisions of time that are commonly used are open to some controversy and discussion. The use of BC and AD dating, for example, has clear reference only in societies that account time according to the Christian calendar. Similarly, speaking of “the year of the pig” has greatest meaning in China.

An example of the kind of questions that can be raised about designations of time periods can be seen in the use of “Victorian.” Is it possible to speak of a Victorian era beyond England? Is literature that is written in the style of the English poets and writers “Victorian” if it is written beyond the borders of England?

Some designations also carry both positive and negative connotations. “Victorian” is an example of potential negative connotations, as well. The term is often used to refer to class conflict, sexual repression, and heavy industry. The term “Renaissance” is generally read with positive connotations.

Sometimes several designations can be applied to the same period. The period known as the “Elizabethan Period” in English history is also called “the English Renaissance.” In some cases, the differences in designation refer primarily to the specific aspect of history that is being considered. For example, one designation may be applied to a specific period of time when one is analyzing cultural history, while a different designation is applied to the same period of time when considering military history.

A synthesis of information from multiple sources requires an understanding of the content chosen for the synthesis, first of all. The writer of the synthesis will, no doubt, wish to incorporate his/her own ideas, particularly in any conclusions that are drawn, and show relationships to those of the chosen sources. That can only happen if the writer has a firm grip on what others have said or written. The focus is not so much on documentary methods but on techniques of critically examining and evaluating the ideas of others. Even so, careful documentation is extremely important in this type of presentation, particularly with regard to which particular edition is being read in the case of written sources; and date, location, etc., of online sources. The phrase “downloaded from such-and-such a website on such-and-such a date” is useful. If the conversation, interview, or speech is live, date, circumstances, and location must be indicated.

The purpose of a synthesis is to understand the works of others and to use that work in shaping a conclusion. The writer or speaker must clearly differentiate between the ideas that come from a source and his/her own.

Helping students become critical thinkers is an important objective of the social studies curriculum. History, geography, and political science classes provide many opportunities to teach students to recognize and understand reasoning errors. Errors tend to fall into two categories: a) inadequate reasoning; and b) misleading reasoning. Following are examples of each:

**Inadequate reasoning:**

1. Faulty analogies: The two things being compared must be similar in all significant aspects if the reasoning is to be relied upon. If there is a major difference between the two, then the argument falls apart.
2. False cause (*Post Hoc Ergo Propter Hoc*): after this, therefore because of this. There must be a factual tie between the effect and its declared cause.
3. *Ad Hominem*: Attacking the person instead of addressing the issues.
4. Slippery Slope: The domino effect. This is usually prophetic in nature—predicting what will follow if a certain event occurs. This is only reliable when it is used in hindsight—not in predicting the future.
5. Hasty Conclusions: Leaping to conclusions when not enough evidence has been collected. A good example is the accusations made in the 1996 bombing at the summer Olympics in Atlanta. Not enough evidence had been collected and the wrong man was arrested.