

Our social science program focuses on the core of the discipline: human identity, community, and relationship. At the youngest level, our classes support kids' questions about interpersonal communication, identity, society, and history through play, reading, and conversation. Older learners are offered more traditional social science courses (such as geography, world and U.S. history, comparative religions, etc.). Additional learning opportunities (for example, participation in The Attic's Model United Nations group) give teen learners even more ways to engage social science.

Quail & Snow Goose

At this level historical and social science topics are addressed as they naturally occur in the classroom community as the students gain more awareness and begin to question the structure or purpose of their surroundings. Children will naturally question why the day is structured how it is, as well as who holds the authority in the classroom and why. They will also naturally gain practice in non-violent conflict resolution from the inevitable disagreements of classroom community life. Working through these and other social experiences provides the foundation of critical questioning that will be integral in future explorations of history, social science, and government.

History guiding questions/core topics:

- What is history?
- Why is history important?
- Why learn about history?
- Who decides what was written down/recorded?
- How can we know history?
- Early world history (Ancient)

Geography guiding questions/core topics:

- What is human geography?
- Why do people live where they do?
- Why do people migrate?

Civics/Government guiding questions/core topics:

- How do decisions get made?
- Who gets to make decisions?
- How should decisions be made?
- What are humans?
- What is our role?
- What is freedom? Who decides?
- Why should I listen to you?
- How do people interact? Why do people interact the way they do?

Psychology guiding questions/core topics:

- How do our minds work?
- How do we think?

Looks Like	Sounds like
Read-aloud Community Leader: responsibilities, privileges. Discussions about holidays Map-making World Building Non-violent communication Community rule making General explorations of broad concepts	Concern Jar "Give Me Five!" Who is in charge? Why? Read-aloud How do we know this? Talking through disagreements Questions about current events Beliefs vs. science

Merganser & Raven

At this level of social science and history students begin to be exposed more formal and traditional social studies topics, focusing on more advanced and sometimes controversial topics. Discourse is led by questions like:

“Why is it this way?”

“How does bias impact my opinions?”

“How should things be?”

“What would the best version of this look like?”

Students quickly learn that answering these kinds of questions requires them to make their own values-based judgments and that other people may reach different conclusions from the same content or information. This, in turn, gives students the opportunity to work on respectfully discussing topics in a way that allows everyone to feel safe, respected, and heard.

History guiding questions/core topics:

- What is bias?
- What role does bias play in history?
- In what ways are you biased?
- US History: Pass #1 (traditional)
- Ancient empires (Rome, Greece, China, Mongolia, etc.)

Geography guiding questions/core topics:

- Why do populations decrease?
- Why do populations increase?
- Who “owns” land?
- What is the role of water in the formation of civilizations and cultures?
- Why are cities where they are?
- Where, regionally, do most humans live?
- Where does one “region” end and another begin?
- Why would some regions be considered “better” than others?
- What makes a region “better” or more desirable?

Civics/Government guiding questions/core topics:

- What is a government?
- What powers do governments wield?
- How do governments work?
- How are governments formed?
- What should government do?
- What shouldn't government do?
- Explore competing visions of freedom.
- What is war? Why do we have wars?
- Liberties/rights
- Social contract
- UN/NGOs/Non-state actors
- NATO/Alliances
- NAFTA/Trade deals/commerce
- Nationalism
- Imperialism – legacies of imperialism
- Colonialism – de-colonialism
- Religion and government

Psychology guiding questions/core topics:

- Nature vs. nurture
- Hierarchy of needs

Looks Like	Sounds like
Questioning preconceived notions Researching their own interests/questions Learning about bias Non-binary world Pointed explorations of more advanced concepts – exposure to academic language and subject specific vocabulary	Why do I think this? Why am I acting this way? Attempted use of discipline-specific vocabulary

At the Merganser and Raven level students have an opportunity to select from a variety of social science classes. In the recent past, course offerings at this level were:

Introduction to Geography – Merganser ages 10-12

This course focused on providing a space for students to naturally develop a foundation and interest in geography. Students explored the physical, political, and human geography of our planet, working on a continent-by-continent basis until the entire world was covered. The primary emphasis of this class was on making geography accessible and fun. This was primarily achieved by using games, scavenger hunts, and independent geography-based interest projects to make the subject more accessible.

Fundamentals of Geography - Raven ages 13+

This course included a broad survey of the fundamentals of human, physical, and political geography. Students explored physical geography, including questions such as why and how continents form, why mountains and rivers are where they are, and how one can account for the massive diversity of flora and fauna in a myriad of habitats. Students were given the opportunity to study human and political geography, including explorations of why humans live where they do, how they impact and change the environment, and how that physical environment impacts the creation of political borders and identities.

Social Studies Explorations - Raven ages 13+

This course broadly explored social studies and the humanities, including elements of human geography, history, politics and law, and the evolution of different human societies. The course was based on the reading of books that are somewhat controversial for some of their assertions (such as *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, by Jared Diamond and *The Clash of Civilizations*, by Samuel P. Huntington), as well as criticisms of those assertions and counter narratives. These differing points of view were further explored and questioned during class discussions.

High School

High schoolers have the option of choosing from a wide variety of social science classes, and students have a voice in which classes will be offered from year-to-year. The social science content at this level is complicated and multifaceted; involves debates and value judgments; and includes topics that are more tangible/more real world, as well as current events. We expect that students at this level are mature and able to handle adult content.

History guiding questions/core topics:

- Modern World History
- US History: Pass #2 (Zinn)
- “Difficult History”
- Slavery (American)
- Holocaust – anti Semitism
- Racism
- Current Events

Geography guiding questions/core topics:

- How should border disputes be resolved?
- Africa – EU immigration issues – Catalonia independence
- Climate change

Civics/Government guiding questions/core topics:

Current Events:

- Elections
- Court cases
- Government shutdowns
- Conflicts
- Laws
- Catalonia (self-determination)

World Views

- Comparative religions
- Comparative political beliefs and ideologies
- Cultural Diversity
- Philosophy
- Debate
- Self-reflection

Psychology guiding questions/core topics:

Current Events:

- Current psychology research
- Psychology journals (peer reviewed)

Looks Like	Sounds like
Debates Detailed deep exploration of difficult, controversial, and multi-faceted issues Use of respectful language for vigorous debate/discussion	Regular comprehension of and use of discipline specific vocabulary

At high school level students have an opportunity to select from a variety of science classes. In the recent past, high school social science course offerings were:

Modern World History: 1750 - Present

This course began its exploration of history during the Age of Exploration when European expansion and colonization were only just beginning. The course explored concepts such as the Columbian Exchange and Mercantilism before moving into the American and French Revolutions. From there, the class moved on to the Napoleonic Wars and the spread of concepts like liberty and nationalism and their impacts across the world. The class' exploration of nationalism eventually led to the Unifications of Italy and Germany, World War I, and World War II, which led to the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union. Ultimately, the course concluded somewhere on or about the Fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Overall, this course focused on broad historical patterns and concepts with an emphasis on enabling learners to reach their own reasoned conclusions regarding historical events.

Required Text:

Traditions & Encounters: A Global Perspective on the Past, Vol. 2, 5th or 6th edition.

Fundamentals of US Government

This course explored the government and politics of the United States of America. The course began with an in-depth examination of the events, motivations, and participants in the founding of the United States, culminating in a critical analysis of the United States Constitution and the failure of the Articles of Confederation. With our foundation established, the course went on to explore the different branches, departments, and functions of the United States Government, including (but not limited to) topics like jurisprudence, elections, the electoral college, international relations, etc.

Required Text(s):

1. Any Pocket-Sized Constitution of the United States (Including the Bill of Rights and Amendments).
2. *The Federalist Papers: A Collection of Essays Written in Favour of the New Constitution*.
3. *How Democratic is the American Constitution?* Second Edition, by Robert A. Dahl.
4. *United States Government: Principles in Practice*, by Holt McDougal.

United States History

This course explored the history of the United States, primarily through the book *A People's History of the United States*, by Howard Zinn, but was supplemented with readings from *A History of Us*, by Joy Hakim, and other sources to provide both the traditional story of American history and Zinn's interesting and compelling alternative story of the United States, where he focuses on the untold stories of history's silent and oppressed.

Required Text(s):

1. Any Pocket-Sized Constitution of the United States (Including the Bill of Rights and Amendments).
2. *A People's History of the United States*, by Howard Zinn.

Comparative Religions

This course broadly explored major religions and worldviews of the world. The course began with the book *When God Was a Woman*, which explores the religious practices of humans before the advent of many of the religions we are familiar with today. From there we moved into an examination of individual religions, focusing on the history, teachings, and ways of living for each religion. Additionally, content was supplemented by text from *The Universe Next Door*, which explores major worldviews such as Christian Theism, Deism, Naturalism, Nihilism, Existentialism, and many others.

Required Text(s):

1. *Invitation to World Religions*, Second Edition.
2. *When God was a Woman*, by Merlin Stone.
3. *The Universe Next Door: A Basic Worldview Catalogue* Fifth Edition, by James W. Sire.

The World Wars

This reading intensive and discussion-based course explored the approximately fifty-year span in which humanity witnessed two devastating world wars. This course explored the culmination of issues and factors that led to the outbreak of the First World War, the revolution of industrialized warfare, and especially the Treaty of Versailles, which left none of the original issues of the war resolved. The course progressed into an examination of the interwar period, including but not limited to the Russian Civil War, the rise of Fascism in Italy and Germany, and the Great Depression. Ultimately, the course concluded with an overview of the Second World War and the foundations it laid for the Cold War, which dominated the second half of the 20th century.

Current Events and Civic Engagement

This class examined complex, divisive issues that permeated the news. Throughout the year, learners called attention to local, national, and international events that inspired their curiosity and were relevant to their lives. They read and watch the news, discussed its nuances, determined what makes sources more or less reputable, and analyzed it in their writing.

Additional extensive reading included topics like public discourse in mass media, practical ideas for social change, and even some fiction. These texts varied from rigorous analysis to easily digestible text.

Civic engagement was be another thread of exploration. Learners contemplated what it means to be civically engaged and what it means to transform their awareness into action.

The class culminated with independent civic projects in which learners applied their knowledge and understanding to take concrete steps for causes they support.

Required Texts:

Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business, by Neil Postman.

The Everything American Government Book, by Nick Ragone.

The Hate U Give, by Angie Thomas.

Ancient History

This reading intensive and discussion-based course explored the history of humanity from the advent of settled, agriculture-based societies through to the period commonly known as the Middle Ages. This broad course explored the dawn of civilization in Mesopotamia, the grand building of the Egyptian Pharaohs, the scientific inventions of the Ancient Chinese, the conquer of the Persian Empire by Alexander the Great, the rise and fall of the Roman Empire, and much more.

Exploration of Current Events and Model UN Support

This course was designed with two primary goals in mind. The first goal was to provide students with a forum in which they could discuss political, governmental, moral, philosophical, and cultural questions in a respectful and polite manner. The primary vehicle driving this discussion was the presentation of current events and news stories for critical group discussion. The second goal of this course was to provide a time and place where participants in the Model UN Program could receive any support and resources they required to achieve their goals as it pertained to Model UN.