

# The Importance of Studying Civics

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Studying civics is very important for not only students but everybody in general. Staying updated on current politics and understanding how our government works, even if it's just on a simple level, is very important. Many people are actually uneducated on these topics even though they seem like basic knowledge that everybody should know about. Surprising amounts of people are making random Facebook rants without basic education on these topics. Most Americans can't even answer basic questions on civics and citizenship. With the importance of this topic, even on a basic level, this uneducation would come as a huge shock to most people.

The origins of citizenship and civics dates all the way back to Ancient Greece. In a country like America where we have a form of democracy, like Ancient Greece, it is very important to understand the basics of civics and citizenship. Knowing the fundamentals of government is one of the main things every American citizen should know.<sup>1</sup> Knowing about the three main branches of government and how they work is very important. Facts like the president is only involved within the executive branch and doesn't make many decisions like the legislative branch doesn't important but there are many misconceptions around this and the president receives unwarranted hate. Staying educated and informed on politics and having basic knowledge is also important and can help people over the age 18 vote proactively. Voting can make a difference and if a citizen doesn't vote or makes a misinformed vote it could impact their future negatively. Our government is a republic or a representative democracy. This means that they work for the citizens of the United States. Understanding that we the people have the power is very important. The people can make a change through voting and voicing their opinions. The first amendment allows citizens of the U.S. to voice their opinions and have peaceful assembly

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<sup>1</sup> "Key Reasons Why Students Should Learn About Civics," Public Civics Online, accessed November 1, 2019, <https://www.civics-online.org/civics-education/key-reasons-why-students-should-learn-about-civics/>.

and protest. The first amendment and the twenty six others detail the limitations of government and powers of the people. Learning how the government is limited and how the people have power is another important aspect of civics.

Citizens have also helped to create a better world. People like the muckrakers helped bring the negatives of the U.S. government to light. Upton Sinclair's "The Jungle" detailed the terrible working conditions of the meat-packing industry and the people did not stand for those conditions at all. Later, laws came about such as The Pure Food and Drug Act and The Meat Inspection Act.<sup>2</sup> There are whistleblowers doing work like this even today. In 1996, Jeffrey Wigand exposed the fact that tobacco companies knew they were putting addictive levels of nicotine within their products. He made many enemies from this but many Americans revolted at this fact and tobacco companies witnessed major backlash.<sup>3</sup>

There are also instances where U.S. citizens have messed up. Citizens have created many hate groups such as the KKK. The KKK is the most notorious hate group in American history. Their beliefs that being white causes you to be superior and minorities aren't equals to them is the opposite of true American ideals. Also, during World War Two, citizens became afraid that Japanese citizens were actually spies. This happened because of Pearl Harbor. The results were extreme discrimination upon People of Japanese descent and the government even put them in internment camps.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>"Upton Sinclair, Whose Muckraking Changed the Meat Industry," The New York Times - Breaking News, World News & Multimedia, last modified May 31, 2016,

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/projects/cp/obituaries/archives/upton-sinclair-meat-industry>.

<sup>3</sup> "10 Famous/infamous Whistleblowers," POLITICO, last modified August 10, 2013,

<https://www.politico.com/gallery/2013/08/10-famous-infamous-whistleblowers-001083?slide=0>.

<sup>4</sup>History.com Editors, "Japanese Internment Camps," HISTORY, last modified October 29, 2009,

<https://www.history.com/topics/world-war-ii/japanese-american-relocation>.

Citizenship and civics are very important in my opinion. Knowledge on these topics can result in many good things. Voting with proper knowledge can help make a change in society. Knowing about the limitations of government, that government works for the people, voicing opinions, and peaceful assembly can all result in positive impacts. Knowledge of this is basic civics and it is mainly knowing the twenty seven amendments. I could improve my community by simply voicing my opinion on something such as high poverty rates could result in people coming to the same realization and having the same opinions. This could eventually cause the government to create more job opportunities in the area.

In the end, having knowledge on basic civics is very important for citizens in America. It shouldn't just be a required class for students to take. People of all ages should understand basic topics such as the twenty seven amendments and how the government works. The lack of knowledge on these subjects could result in slowly declining hope for our future. More people being educated can create big changes rather than a small group pushing for certain things. The lackluster amount of knowledge on basic civics in America's society is shocking especially since it truly is an important topic in today's society.

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