

# Mississippi

(Source: *Mississippi Social Studies Framework, 1998*, Mississippi Department of Education)

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## The five criteria: An overview

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Are the essentials of a civic core specified clearly?	Are the topics teachable within the allotted timeframe?	Do the documents provide a scope and sequence?	Is the essential content required of all students?	Are the important facts and ideas presented coherently across subjects?
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Standards that largely meet the criteria are designated with a full star [★]; standards that partially meet the criteria are designated with a half star [☆]; and standards that do not meet the criteria are designated with an empty star [☆].

### Summary:

The framework does not meet Criterion #1. It has no core of specifics for history, politics, and civics. Its standards in each grade, called “Competencies,” are vague. “Suggested Objectives” under them are general and not mandatory. Each grade has “Suggested Teaching Strategies,” but without priorities. They are also far too many and too demanding to fit into the school year, as Criterion #2 requires. On Criterion #3, the document sets a course order: Mississippi studies in fourth grade, U.S. studies in fifth, Western Hemisphere studies in sixth, Eastern Hemisphere in seventh, U.S. history to 1877 in eighth. Required in high school are one term of Mississippi studies, a term of U.S. government, and a year each for world history since 1750 and U.S. history since 1877, the latter subject to a statewide end-of-course test. Since this implies at least some common expectations for all students, Criterion #4 is at least partially met. On Criterion #5, each strand of history, geography, civics, and economics has one or two “Competencies” in each grade, with fairly good linkage among subjects.

### Particulars:

Grade five U.S. studies’ “Competency” says only “Investigate the causes and nature of various movements of large groups of people into and within the United States, past and present.” It has no narrative. Of fifth grade’s 24 objectives, history has but five (to geography’s nine). They are migration, colonization, immigration, and Westward expansion, but suggested teaching activities run through the twentieth century. Grade eight U.S. history objectives are general (e.g., “Identify causes and effects of” the American Revolution, Industrial Revolution, Civil War, and Reconstruction, etc.). Civics is a bit more specific, focusing on values and principles as found in the nation’s founding documents. But neither cites leaders or roots of ideas, crises, or turning-points. Grade eleven U.S. history’s competency is “Explain how geography, economics, and politics have influenced the historical development of the United States in the global community.” Its objectives are also general and leave out race conflict, forces for industrialization, World War I, the Great Depression, World War II, the cold war, and the war in Vietnam. The 63 teaching activities vary from the childish to a level of complexity that would take weeks to explore honestly.

In grades six and seven, Western and Eastern hemispheric studies represent a long step backward from a prior framework with history courses on the world to 1750. Geography is

the main “framework,” with 21 of the 36 total social studies objectives over the two years. By contrast, history has four and civics has six. High school world history since 1750 is said to be “based on prior knowledge of ancient history to the Industrial Revolution,” but the skeletal history described in the standards for grades six and seven is far from adequate. The objectives contain nothing on the ideas of the major religions, of the Greeks and Romans on politics, on feudalism, on the Renaissance or Reformation, on the English or Scientific Revolutions. High school world history since 1750 is just as weak; its listed objectives leave out the Enlightenment, the French Revolution, nineteenth century “isms” and reforms, World War I, fascism, communism, Nazism, and World War II. The 83 teaching activities are not prioritized, allowing schools to provide different students with a differing quality of education.

In short, Mississippi has yet to do the work of defining a real civic core that is required of all young citizens.