

# South Carolina

(Source: *South Carolina Social Studies Curriculum Standards, March 8, 2000*, South Carolina 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:

This document partially satisfies Criterion #1. It has very few specifics on government and U.S. and world history, not nearly enough on which to build a common civic core of learning. On Criterion #2, its mainly general standards in history cannot be taught within the time teachers have, especially with the many, often repetitive, items in all grades for economics and geography. On Criterion #3, South Carolina does set a kindergarten to twelfth-grade course of studies grade-by-grade for all students. On Criterion #4, statewide testing is planned for grades three through eight, with an end-of-course U.S. history test in high school, implying that there is common content required of all students. Under Criterion #5, on integration of the four main social studies subjects, lists of topics appear in parallel columns on the same page, but apart from the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution under government, there are no specifics on historical periods being taught in the given grade.

### Particulars:

The four columns for history, government, geography, and economics seem written by four different teams, none attentive to the overall issue of classroom time. The geography and economics overload begins in kindergarten and runs through high school. The history overload begins in grade five, U.S. studies 1877 to the present (e.g., on 1945 to the present, “recognize how events, people, and various cultures influenced the United States during this period”). Grade eight U.S. and South Carolina studies run from “earliest human settlements” to 1900. Items remain general (e.g., “discuss American industrialization and its impact on the economy, society, culture, and public policy”). U.S. and South Carolina studies return in grade eleven, Reconstruction to the present. In order to meet the demands of the 26 sweeping items in history, teachers would have to treat at least 100 substantial topics, plus exercise the 35 “Process Standards” for the history strand alone. But with some paring down and the selection of vital specifics, with which tests could be aligned, effective middle and high school courses in U.S. history could still be carved from the general headings here.

World history has worse problems. Grade six’s “Early Cultures through 1500s” tries to do too much, “the beginning of time” to the Reformation, with vague items (e.g., “Describe and evaluate life in the European Middle Ages”). Grade seven, instead of bridging the years from

feudalism to c. 1750, is wasted on an incoherent “Contemporary World Regions” course. History topics wander from “explain the transformations in Asian, African, and European societies” to “examine the implications of Communism and its effects on world history.” Grades nine and ten are called “Global Studies (world geography/world history).” Topics listed seem to divide the two subjects into separate courses, another wasted chance for their mutual reinforcement. In a single year, world history teachers are expected to cover from “beginnings” to the present, an always impossible task exasperating both teachers and students, bound to slight political history and to fall short of the present.

Unlike most states, South Carolina has a clear and common kindergarten to twelfth-grade scope and sequence on which sound curriculum could be built. Unfortunately, its current flaws make it less than useful for the serious education of young citizens for democracy.