

# South Dakota

(Source: *South Dakota Social Studies Standards, June 1999*, South Dakota Department of Education and Cultural Affairs)

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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 document partially meets Criterion #1 for clear and specific civics and U.S. history topics, but apart from ancient civilizations in sixth grade, it has no content in world history or Western Civilization and, thus, no realistic common core of learning for American citizens. On Criterion #2, grade eight U.S. history needs paring down to be teachable in the time schools have. The document meets Criterion #3, listing a kindergarten to eighth-grade course order. For grades nine to twelve, three courses appear: U.S. History, world geography, and civics/government. A “Technical Guide” lets districts set the high school course order and alter course orders within grade spans kindergarten to two, three to five, and six to eight. On Criterion #4, current and planned state tests suggest that standards are required of all students. On Criterion #5, civics and economics, but not geography, are linked to grade five U.S. history. All three are inserted into the grades six and eight history courses. The topic lists for grades nine-twelve imply separate courses.

### Particulars:

South Dakota offers an extreme case of the common disparity between the quality of U.S. versus world history standards. The former is not perfect. Many topics in grades five, eight, and eleven are too general; the grade eight course (from Revolution to 1920) is too long a time span to be imaginatively taught and the Jacksonian era, pre-Civil War reform movements, Populism, and Progressive reforms are missing. But even fifth grade’s U.S. history course includes the Old World sources of American political ideas, the Magna Carta, the English Bill of Rights, and the Mayflower Compact. Grade eight has Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address and grade eleven examines today’s contrasting liberal and conservative economic and political ideologies.

The one world history course is ancient civilizations in sixth grade. Under its general topics, the specifics vital to the education of American citizens could be taught: the political implications of the central ideas of Judaism and Christianity; the forces behind the fall of Athens, Rome’s Republic, and the Roman Empire itself. In regard to ideas, the teachings of Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism are specified, but only the “origins and spread” of Judaism and Christianity, without the ideas influencing the American founders.

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Topics include the Mayan, Aztec, and Incan societies, through their defeat by the Spanish. It would have fit the chronology to include Islam, the feudal origins of constitutional government, and even the Renaissance as a revival of Greek and Roman arts and learning.

The document ignores all history of Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East from about 400 A.D. to the present. Feudalism, the Renaissance and Reformation, the English and Scientific Revolutions, the Enlightenment, the French (and Latin American) revolutions, nineteenth-century Europe's Industrial Revolution and its social effects, the nineteenth-century "isms" (still at the core of American debate), and reforms based on them are all missing. South Dakota's twentieth-century U.S. standards include certain world events, but only from an American point of view. Without knowledge of the world beyond our shores, students cannot decipher the realities and issues of political life today. This is a major flaw in South Dakota's standards, one that hopefully will be addressed during a process of review and revision scheduled for 2005.