

Utah

(Sources: *Social Studies Core Curriculum: Grades 7-12, 1996* {currently under revision}, and *Social Studies Core Curriculum: Grades K-6, 2000*, Utah State Office of Education)

The five criteria: An overview

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?
☆	☆	★	☆	☆

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:

These documents (now being revised) do not currently meet Criterion #1. Specific civics/politics and history topics appear in the middle grades, but are scarce in high school. On Criterion #2, topics required to fill the broad social studies headings would overflow the available teaching time. On Criterion #3, Utah suggests an order of courses: in fourth grade, Utah studies; in fifth, U.S. history from origins to the present; in sixth, a survey of world and European history, from ancient times to the present. In grades seven to twelve, a year of U.S. history, of U.S. government, and of geography for life are required as are semesters of Utah studies and world civilizations. Technically, Criterion #4 on requirements is partially met, however a true common core is out of reach. Among the seven strands—process skills, history, geography, political science, culture (sociology-anthropology-psychology), economics, and life skills—there is too little integration to satisfy Criterion #5.

Particulars:

The grades five and six courses on U.S. and world/European history have a fair number of the topics (though many in too-general terms) for good civic/political education. However, artificial “themes” fragment the narrative, slicing topics into pieces better taught together. In U.S. history, the American Revolution and Constitution are in three themes, separated by topics on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, including the Civil War and World Wars I and II. Exploration is splintered among themes one, four, six, and nine. Seasoned teachers can, of course, figure out how to work around these problems, but standards should make their work easier, not more difficult.

The grades seven to twelve courses are also fragmented among the seven strands. Of 87 topics for the grade eight U.S. history course (not counting “Life Skills”), history itself has but fourteen, all in general terms (e.g., “Analyze and compare the causes and outcomes of various wars involving the United States in the 18th and 19th centuries”). Grade eleven U.S. history has only nine topics of 67, all general (e.g., “Determine how actions of political, economic, educational, social, and cultural movements have influenced the development of the United States with emphasis on the 20th century”). Both courses together have but two specific terms or events, “Manifest Destiny” and the Holocaust, and no named persons.

World history fares worse. The grade six course, like its U.S. history counterpart, is splintered and jumbled by its “themes,” but carries fewer important topics. Missing are major religious beliefs, Athens’ fall, Rome’s Republic, feudal politics, the English and Scientific Revolutions, the Enlightenment, nineteenth-century European “isms,” reforms, nationalism, imperialism, and all the world outside Europe. In the grade ten course (a single term on “World Civilizations”), history has only ten topics of 72. None of the items missing above is mentioned, nor do any sixth-grade specifics appear at all. Typical is “Identify and explain major themes in world history; e.g., social, political, cultural, geographical, economic.”

In sum, there is nearly no Western or world history. Hopefully, this will be regarded as a promising first draft, to which a team of experienced teachers and scholars could be called upon to add needed substance and direction.