



**2006**



**The State  
of State**

**WORLD HISTORY**

**Standards**

by

**Walter Russell Mead**

FOREWORD BY

Chester E. Finn, Jr.

Martin A. Davis, Jr.



**THOMAS B. FORDHAM  
INSTITUTE**

**The State  
of State  
WORLD HISTORY  
Standards**

**2006**

by Walter Russell Mead

**FOREWORD BY**  
Chester E. Finn, Jr.  
Martin A. Davis, Jr.

JUNE 2006



**THOMAS B. FORDHAM  
INSTITUTE**

1701 K Street, NW  
Suite 1000  
Washington, D.C., 20006  
202-223-5452  
202-223-9226 Fax  
[www.edexcellence.net](http://www.edexcellence.net)

The Thomas B. Fordham Institute is a nonprofit organization that conducts research, issues publications, and directs action projects in elementary/secondary education reform at the national level and in Ohio, with special emphasis on our hometown of Dayton. It is affiliated with the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation.

Further information can be found at [www.edexcellence.net/institute](http://www.edexcellence.net/institute) or by writing to the Institute at:

1701 K Street, NW  
Suite 1000  
Washington, D.C. 20006

This report is available in full on the Institute's web site; additional copies can be ordered at [www.edexcellence.net/institute/publication/order.cfm](http://www.edexcellence.net/institute/publication/order.cfm) or by calling 410-634-2400. The Institute is neither connected with nor sponsored by Fordham University.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	5
<b>Foreword.</b> .....	8
<b>Introduction</b> .....	14
<b>How to Teach World History</b> .....	14
What Should be Taught .....	16
Criteria.....	18
What We Found .....	27
Recommendations .....	29
<b>Reviews of World History Exams</b> .....	31
AP World History .....	31
The New York Regents Exam.....	32
SAT II Subject Test .....	33
<b>Reviews of State World History Standards</b>	
Alabama.....	35
Alaska.....	35
Arizona .....	36
Arkansas.....	37
California.....	38
Colorado .....	39
Connecticut.....	40
Delaware .....	41
District of Columbia .....	41
Florida .....	42
Georgia .....	42
Hawaii .....	43
Idaho .....	44
Illinois .....	45
Indiana.....	45
Iowa .....	46
Kansas .....	46
Kentucky .....	47
Louisiana.....	48
Maine.....	49
Maryland.....	49
Massachusetts .....	50
Michigan .....	51
Minnesota .....	52
Mississippi.....	53
Missouri.....	54
Montana .....	55
Nebraska .....	55
Nevada.....	56
New Hampshire .....	57
New Jersey.....	58
New Mexico.....	59
New York.....	60
North Carolina .....	61
North Dakota .....	62
Ohio.....	63
Oklahoma .....	64
Oregon.....	64
Pennsylvania .....	65
Rhode Island.....	66
South Carolina .....	66
South Dakota .....	67
Tennessee.....	68
Texas.....	69
Utah .....	70
Vermont.....	70
Virginia .....	71
Washington .....	73
West Virginia.....	73
Wisconsin .....	74
Wyoming.....	75

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Recent events prove that the United States is no island. Our students are growing up in a globalized world, and their future prospects—and their country’s future, too—heavily depend upon their ability to navigate confidently through a multinational environment. This first-ever thorough review of state academic standards in world history asks: Are we setting the solid, challenging expectations for our schools and children that will equip the next generation with the skills and knowledge it will need?

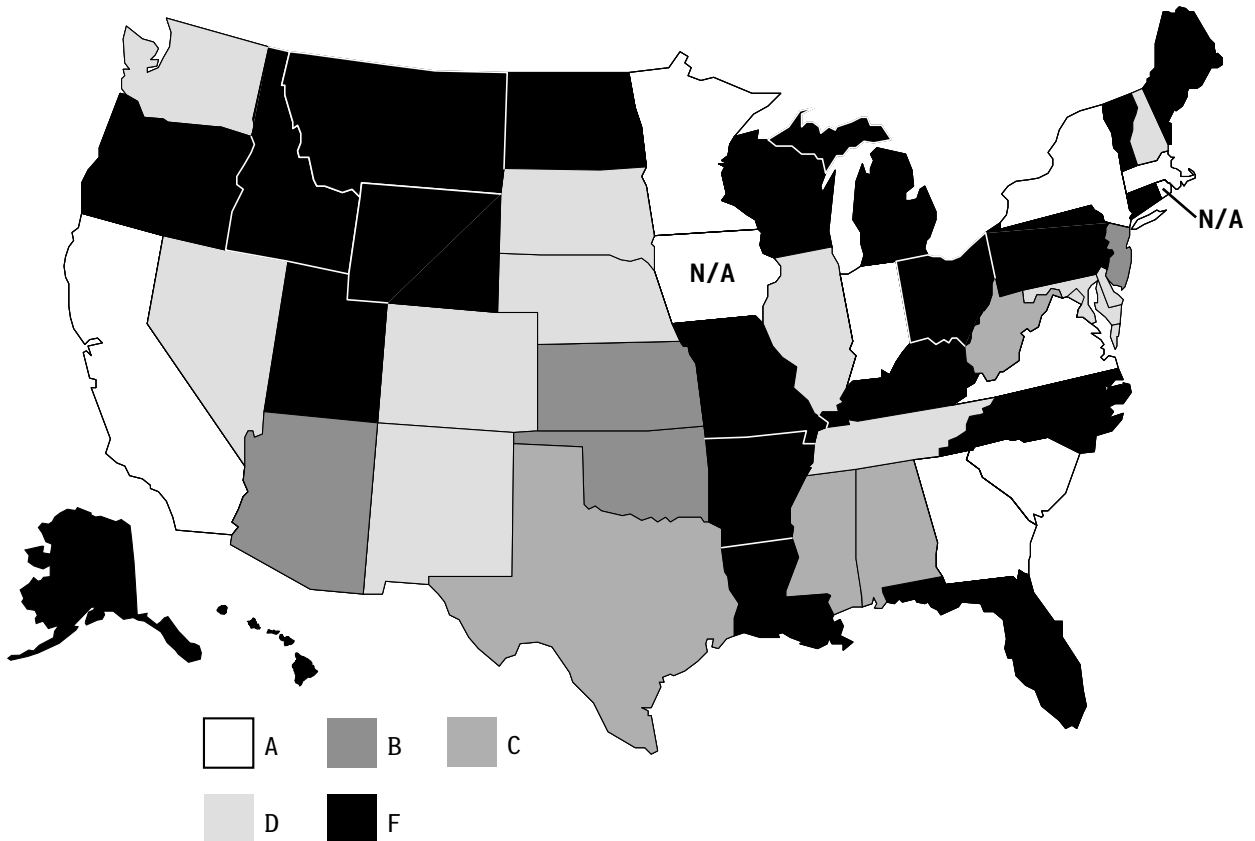
Unfortunately, most states are not. Only twelve earned honors grades of A or B on this appraisal, while 33 received Ds or Fs. This poor result is especially frustrating in light of a recent National Geographic study which

shows students demonstrate little interest in learning about the world, though a small but growing number are taking state and national exams in the subject (see table on page 6). States have a real opportunity to fill the void. But without standards that competently organize the subject’s vast and trackless expanses, textbook writers and curriculum developers will be left guessing, teachers won’t know what to teach, students will be adrift, and parents will be bewildered.

## Common Problems

A few states—notably California, Georgia, Indiana, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New York, South Carolina, and Virginia—developed exceptional standards, worthy of emulation. But most stumbled. Widespread problems include:

**Assigned letter grades for 48 states and the District of Columbia**



1. **Content-lite Standards.** Only a quarter of the states wrote standards with significant history content. Several are so deficient in substance that they're akin to no standards at all.
2. **Kitchen Sink-ism.** Other states succumbed to the temptation to include every culture, region, and religion rather than set priorities. The result is a bulky, unrealistic hodgepodge rather than a coherent curriculum guide.
3. **Eurocentrism.** The opposite problem is found in states that lean toward a traditional focus on Western Europe and slight the rest of the planet. Of the 10 content areas that Mead grades the state standards on, Latin America receives the lowest average score (see page 24). Moreover, most states ignore India, save for its caste system.
4. **Social Studies Swamp.** Instead of treating world history as a coherent subject in its own right, most states tuck their benchmarks and guidelines into trendy social studies documents. Almost without fail, the results do grave damage to world history.
5. **No Clock or Calendar.** Rather than arranging their history standards around a logical chronology, many

organize them under murky themes such as “continuity and change” or “power, authority, and governance.”

6. **Doesn't Count.** World history is further weakened because in most states it is optional. Though many students study it, they're not obliged to learn it. Though it's difficult to quantify precisely how many states require students to pass a World History test in order to advance to the next grade or graduate, most require no test at all. No state holds schools accountable for students' performance in this subject, leaving it at risk of being “narrowed” out.

### Putting World History on the Map

States that are serious about world history can take several constructive steps:

- Rewrite or replace their world history standards with those from A-rated states;
- Require students to pass a test in world history in order to graduate, and/or include world history testing as part of the school accountability system;
- Build the high-school world history program around the excellent Advanced Placement syllabus (reviewed as part of this study).

## Total numbers of test-takers for the AP World History, SAT II World History, and New York Regents World History Exams, by Year

	2002	2004	2005
AP World History	21,000	47,558	64,000
SAT II World History	10,487	15,159	10,988
New York Regents in World History	205,550	205,867	220,479

# State Rankings in World History

STATE	TOTAL SCORE	GRADE
California	167	A
Massachusetts	164	A
Virginia	164	A
Indiana	161	A
Georgia	156	A
New York	155	A
Minnesota	152	A
South Carolina	150	A
Arizona	132	B
Kansas	131	B
Oklahoma	129	B
New Jersey	125	B
Alabama	106	C
Mississippi	99	C
Texas	97	C
West Virginia	96	C
Nebraska	94	D
Nevada	94	D
New Mexico	94	D
Washington	93	D
South Dakota	90	D
Tennessee	83	D
Colorado	81	D
Delaware	79	D
Connecticut	78	D
New Hampshire	75	D
District of Columbia	74	D
Illinois	74	D
Maryland	73	D
North Dakota	69	F
Ohio	67	F
Oregon	65	F
North Carolina	64	F
Utah	61	F
Pennsylvania	44	F
Arkansas	38	F
Hawaii	38	F
Louisiana	38	F
Wisconsin	36	F
Maine	33	F
Wyoming	32	F
Florida	31	F
Vermont	26	F
Michigan	22	F
Kentucky	17	F
Idaho	14	F
Montana	14	F
Alaska	12	F
Missouri	8	F
Iowa	0	
Rhode Island	0	

For young Americans in 2006, world history must no longer be seen as an elective subject. *Everyone* needs to be conversant with the history, culture, and geography of the world they inhabit, including non-Western nations as well as the history of Western civilization.

That wasn't always so. Two decades ago, Americans would nod vaguely in agreement if someone remarked that China was a "sleeping giant," that Iran was a hotbed of radical Islam, or that Mexico was in economic turmoil. Few knew, or cared to know, much beyond these stereotypes and oversimplifications. It just didn't seem all that important.

In the '80s and '90s, Americans became even more self-absorbed and inward-looking. We won the Cold War, making us feel relatively safe for the first time since Pearl Harbor. Our news organizations reduced their foreign coverage, thus shrinking the information coming from outside U.S. borders. At the time, however, such inattention to the larger world did us little apparent harm. Indeed, that twenty-year span saw the greatest economic expansion in our history, as well as one of our longest stretches of peace.

No more. That was the calm before big storms. Perhaps it was an illusion. Nations that were little more than curiosities to most Americans have transformed themselves into places of vital interest and concern to us. The influx of Latinos and Asians has radically altered our demographics. (Hence today's fierce debates over immigration policy.) One of the most-watched TV stations in the land is Univision, a Spanish-language channel. China has become the world's manufacturing colossus, boosting its own economic fortunes from the ashes of Mao Zedong's rule while pushing American firms out of their established businesses. Iran, once a nagging fly that buzzed, then helped to bring down a U.S. president, may now be the key to establishing democracy in the Middle East—and also the planet's foremost security threat. And then, of course, there is terrorism with its many seedbeds from Europe to the Pacific.

Some U.S. students have responded with their feet, signing up for world history courses in record numbers.

Between 1990 and 2000, the percentage of tenth grade students in the United States completing a world history course rose from 29 percent to 42 percent. (Among all high school students in 2000, 69 percent had taken a world history course, versus 60 percent a decade earlier.) The College Board estimates that more than 900,000 students studied world history in 2004.

The number of students sitting for major tests in the subject is also rising, if more slowly. Twenty-one thousand young people took the AP world history exam when it was first offered in May 2002. In 2005, that number exceeded 64,000. The story is similar, if less dramatic, for the New York Regents exam in world history (see chart on page 6).

But these are mostly students pursuing entry to competitive colleges, and they're a depressingly small percentage of America's high schoolers. Overall, U.S. students still show scant interest in the world at large, as a recent National Geographic report showed.

Adults have an obligation to intervene in that situation, to make clear to young people that they are expected, even obligated, to study and learn about the world. State education officials have a terrific opportunity to do this via the academic standards that they set for their states' schools, teachers, and pupils. Unfortunately, most are wasting that opportunity.

Crafting good standards is always hard, but creating them for world history may be the most difficult of all. It's simply not possible to provide students with a course of study in world history—even one spanning several years of school—that covers everything. There's far too much of it. Hence standards-drafters must make choices. For example, they must choose between teaching a few cultures and nations in depth or exposing students more shallowly to as many as possible. (If it's lesson 86, we're touching down in Stuart England. Lesson 93 is the T'ang dynasty.)

Political pressures complicate the selection process. Educators, for example, cannot agree whether to teach



the material chronologically and factually or via the “social studies” approach, which eschews “mere facts” and timelines in favor of themes (continuity and change, for example, jumping around the planet and bouncing across centuries). Outside the education world, special-interest groups of all stripes lobby to ensure that their country, culture, or religion is included in each state’s standards, that their present-day political agenda is given equal time, and that only good things are said about them.

*Nations that were little more than curiosities to most Americans have transformed themselves into places of vital interest and concern to us.*

We don’t envy those who must contend with such forces. Nevertheless, we owe it to America’s students and its future to ask how well state standard-setters are handling the vital field of world history—and whether they are seizing or forfeiting their opportunity to shape what young Americans know about it. Mindful that standards per se are aspirational—they embody what a state hopes its young people will learn in school—we are keenly aware that well-functioning education systems also use them as blueprints. A “standards document” (as these are infelicitously known) serves as guidance for curriculum writers, textbook authors, adoption committees, assessment creators, teacher education and professional development programs, classroom teachers, teacher evaluators, and college admissions offices. It also provides a benchmark by which legislators, taxpayers, and citizens can judge whether those running their state’s education system are serious and competent.

To appraise state standards in world history, we turned to one of the nation’s pre-eminent historians and foreign affairs experts, Walter Russell Mead, the Henry A. Kissinger senior fellow for U.S. foreign policy at the Council on Foreign Relations and a distinguished author. His book *Special Providence: American Foreign Policy and How It Changed the World*, won the Lionel Gelber Award for best book in 2002 on international relations.

Assisting Mead were his research associates at the Council on Foreign Relations, Charles Edel, Scott Erwin, and Bryan Gunderson. In addition, Betty Bao Lord, a celebrated novelist and chairman emeritus of Freedom House;

Lucien Ellington, editor of *Education About Asia* and professor of history at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga; and Gregory Rodriguez, Sunday op-ed columnist for the *Los Angeles Times*, contributed critical feedback at key moments in this project.

Like the U.S. history standards review that preceded it, this project would not have been possible without the generous support of the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation; we thank them sincerely.

Their support enabled us to continue our ongoing series of state standard reviews, first launched in 1997. Fordham is not only the one organization that engages in standards review in a serious manner; it is also, so far as we know, the first and only group to undertake a review of world history standards.

## Grading the States

Mead’s first challenge was to develop criteria to gauge standards in this field. He organized these in two categories: 1) the quality of the standards’ content, and 2) their instructional focus. Then he gave extra credit to states whose standards are lively and engaging, thus apt to spark a life-long interest in this limitless and ever-changing field.

Standards were first appraised in eleven core content areas that Mead believes are central to the study of world history (see p. 19). But he is not dogmatic. Mead believes that students should be thoroughly exposed to at least one non-Western culture, for example. He suggests China as the best choice. But should one choose, say, India or Japan instead, and cover it thoroughly, that state would meet his requirement.

Turning to the standards’ instructional focus, Mead examined three areas (see page 25). If faithfully followed, would the standards lead to students gaining a good base in world history? Will teachers find the documents a help or hindrance? Again, Mead has clear preferences—e.g., world history should be taught chronologically. But states that intelligently employ a thematic approach can also score well (Alabama, for example).

Despite such flexibility, few states got high marks. Just twelve deserved honors grades (As or Bs), while thirty-three received Ds or Fs. There are several reasons for this

poor showing, of which the most obvious is that few jurisdictions have stand-alone world history standards. Most wrap this subject into their state's social studies or general history standards. Those could be good, but seldom are, at least not if one is serious about history. We knew this from historian Sheldon Stern's 2003 review of state standards for U.S. history, in which just eleven states earned honors, while thirty-one received Ds or Fs. One would not expect many states to do right by world history if it's immersed in the same thin gruel as American history.

Regardless of where they're found, however, the greatest single explanation for states' poor showing in world history is the lack of solid historical content in their standards. At times, this is due to states' obeisance to a social studies mindset that eschews knowledge (often dismissed as "rote learning" or "mere facts"). Alaska, for example, produced standards that are essentially devoid of content. They're little more than lists of categories and vague concepts. For instance, the Last Frontier State asks its students to understand "the forces of change and continuity that shape human history." And how are they to do this? By examining the "major developments in societies, as well as changing patterns related to class, ethnicity, race, and gender." One doesn't know whether to laugh or cry.

Other states' standards are so nebulous that little real guidance can be found for teachers, students, textbook writers, test makers, etc. Michigan, for example, asks its students to "identify major decisions in the history of Africa, Asia, Canada, Europe and Latin America, analyze contemporary factors contributing to the decisions and consider alternate courses of action." What decisions? How do you analyze them? What's expected? Teachers looking to such cosmic standards for clear advice about what to put in their lesson plans would come away in despair.

Sometimes, an avalanche of information is the problem. Some states' standards, such as North Dakota's, read like laundry lists of material to be learned. The Roughrider State asks its students to know about the "earliest humans, early communities, agricultural societies, emergence of civilizations, emergence of major religions, great empires (e.g., Roman and British), colonialism, imperialism, assimilation, acculturation, migra-

tion, revolutions (e.g., French), Reformation, technology, global conflict, human rights, hemispheric interactions, peace-keeping efforts." Ambitious, yes, and all of it worthy, but sans detail such a catalog is also useless to teachers. Which early communities and agricultural societies? What aspects of acculturation? How many hemispheric interactions? Whose migrations?

Even good standards amount to little if schools aren't obligated to teach what's in them and students aren't required to learn the material. At the high school level, few states mandate the study of world history. It's an

*Even good standards amount to little if schools aren't obligated to teach what's in them and students aren't required to learn them.*

elective, albeit an increasingly popular one. Of those states that do require it during high school, a single year is the norm. That's only enough time to cover a few topics and/or civilizations in depth. Ideally, schools would require at least two years of the subject. Mead would prefer three.

Despite the many low marks, this study did not yield only gloom. Models of excellence are also to be found. Consider Virginia, which requires two years of world history and whose standards are chronologically arranged and rich in detail. Eight states get the package close to perfect. California, Georgia, Indiana, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New York, South Carolina and Virginia have done a terrific job with their standards, and states seeking ways to improve their own would do well to follow these models.

Some good news can also be found in states' treatment of geography, an essential part of world history. Most do this adequately, perhaps because they have drawn upon the very good standards developed by the National Geographic Society.

Yet a cloud hovers over even the best states. There's no guarantee that those with good standards are teaching the material—not even those that require students to

take courses labeled world history. That's because, while it's difficult to quantify precisely how many states require students to pass a world history test to advance to the next grade, most require no test at all. And what gets tested, so the adage goes, gets taught.

If most states don't even bother to require students to pass a test in this subject, do their standards have any traction? Maybe a little. Perhaps they exercise some influence—for good or ill—on textbook writers, curriculum developers, and class-room teachers.

A more powerful driver in world history today is the handful of national tests. As noted earlier, the number of student test-takers is rising, but not enough to signify a popular upwelling of interest. Consequently, those students not driven to attend selective colleges almost surely aren't getting the important information they need to function as global citizens.

## Grading the Exams

Because these national tests matter, at least to a select group of students, we asked Mead to review the AP and SAT II exams in world history. He graded them using a modified version of the criteria he used to grade state standards. We also asked him to review the New York Regents Exam in world history, a very popular state world history test.

All three earned high marks, but the AP Exam looks to be best of show. In addition to a multiple choice test that covers essential topics and areas of world history, students must be able to demonstrate subject mastery by answering essay questions that require them to pull from the variety of material learned in the course of their study.

For present purposes, what sets the Advanced Placement program apart is the course description that accompanies the exam. Treated as a syllabus, it spells out clearly what students should, and shouldn't know. For example, students are asked to know the Jacobins, but not Robespierre, not because Robespierre is unimportant, but because with the limited time available, the AP creators felt it more important to know the Jacobins' role in revolutionary movements in general. Such attention to detail keeps students and their teachers focused on the arc of world history.

The New York State Regents Exam is impressive, too, and well matched to the Empire State's excellent standards. And the test is a model for assessment. Most notable are its document comparison questions, which require students to examine how two documents address one of the grand themes of world history. Mead says it well. "The use of document based questions, particularly asking students to synthesize documents, encourages students to do what nearly all the state standards fail to do themselves, namely, ask students to see the continuity and change in history." (NB: We could not evaluate how rigorously this exam is scored. Given the contretemps in New York over easy passing levels and low "cut points" on Regents Exams in various subjects, we note that the best of tests doesn't amount to much if correctly answering just a few questions equals passing—or if answers are over-generously judged to deserve credit.)

The SAT II world history test is pretty good, too, though not the equal of the first two exams. It uses only multiple-choice questions. But it uses them well and still expects students to tease out many key points and subtleties of world history.

## Fixing the problem

How to ratchet up the quality of world history being taught and learned in U.S. schools? *First, it's important that states get their standards right.* Many could make valuable improvements by revising their current documents, using higher-scoring standards from other states to help guide their work.

Those states whose standards are too weak to salvage can choose two courses of action. They could adopt the standards of a state that's gotten world history right. Or they could model their standards on the New York Regents Exam, the SAT II test or, best of all, the Advanced Placement Exam.

For evidence that states can turn things around, look to Minnesota. When Stern reviewed that state's U.S. history standards in 2003, the state received an F. But that same year, Cheri Yecke, now Chancellor of K-12 Education in Florida but then Minnesota Education Commissioner, undertook a thorough overhaul of the state's social studies standards (including U.S. and world history). Though social studies advocates and

establishment educators fought mightily, Yecke's revisions won out. And the result is the very good A-rated standards that Minnesota enjoys in this report.

*Second, states should ensure that this subject is taught by competent teachers.* That means expecting those who teach world history to have studied this subject in depth.

*Third, states need to incorporate world history in their assessment and accountability measures.* At the very least, they should ask students to pass a suitably demanding test in this subject in order to earn a diploma. Again, there are good models to follow (Virginia and New York, the Regents Exam and the AP World History Exam, to name a few).

Standards, however, are the starting place. If these aren't right, the rest is a house of cards, destined to fall. And there's too much at stake for our nation to base its future on so wobbly a structure.

Many people at Fordham contributed to this report. Justin Torres and Kathleen Porter-Magee were there at the start and helped shape the project. Vice President for National Programs and Policy Michael J. Petrilli kept the project moving upon his arrival in 2005, while

Associate Writer and Editor Liam Julian and Staff Assistant Sarah Kim poured over numerous drafts checking and re-checking data, grammar, and facts. This report owes much to all their efforts.

The Thomas B. Fordham Institute is a nonprofit organization that conducts research, issues publications, and directs action projects in elementary/secondary education reform at the national level and in Ohio, with special emphasis on our hometown of Dayton. It is affiliated with the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation. Further information can be found at [www.edexcellence.net/institute](http://www.edexcellence.net/institute) or by writing to the Institute at 1701 K Street, NW, Suite 1000, Washington, D.C., 20006. This report is available in full on the Institute's web site; additional copies can be ordered at [www.edexcellence.net/institute/publication/order.cfm](http://www.edexcellence.net/institute/publication/order.cfm) or by calling 410-634-2400. The Institute is neither connected with nor sponsored by Fordham University.

*Chester E. Finn, Jr.*  
*President, Thomas B. Fordham Institute*

*Martin A. Davis, Jr.*  
*Senior Writer and Editor, Thomas B. Fordham Institute*  
*May 2006*

To review the world-history standards of the states is a sobering experience. One is at once aghast at how poorly written and organized most of them are, and in awe of the few shining lights of excellence. What is also clear, however, is the states' palpable discomfort with this material. These are problems that we must overcome, because a working knowledge of world history is socially, politically, economically, and culturally indispensable for young Americans.

**Socially.** As citizens of a democratic state whose population is growing ever more diverse and whose values are shaped by a variety of cultures and historical experiences, young Americans must understand the historic roots both of majority and of minority cultures in this country. The growing importance of Latino immigrants, for example, renders it necessary that students understand the historic relationships between Anglo and Latin cultures in the Western hemisphere.

**Politically.** In order to act responsibly as adults in shaping U.S. foreign and domestic policies and electing those who lead the country, today's students must learn something of the history of republican institutions and democratic ideals. They must also be able to appreciate and emulate those virtues that make democratic institutions prosper and survive. Moreover, because this country is so deeply involved in international affairs, students should have a working understanding of the histories and cultures of nations that American foreign policy is closely engaged with, or likely to be engaged with, in the near future.

**Economically.** Our students are participants in a global economy. It is vital, therefore, that they understand the origins and nature of the global economic system, the ideas and values that make that system work, the scientific and technological achievements that make a global economy possible, and the relationship this system has to the two nations that have led in building it—Britain and the United States.

**Culturally.** Our students inherit the great cultural and religious traditions that flourish in America, and their lives are shaped in no small part by the interplay of these

forces. It is primarily through religion, culture, philosophy, and the arts that human beings have come to achieve their fullest understanding of themselves. Students have a right to the knowledge necessary to participate in these human endeavors; educators have a duty to provide that knowledge so today's youth will be prepared to participate in and further these traditions.

The importance of world history is obvious, as elite private schools have known for some time. Public schools pay lip service to world history's value, but few have

*Public schools' failure to provide superior instruction in world history is a serious shortcoming.*

done an acceptable job of defining what *should* be taught. Given that one's ability to understand the global economy is among the most important factors affecting one's future earning power, our public schools' failure to provide superior instruction in world history is a serious shortcoming.

This failure most seriously affects children from low-income families, because they depend most heavily on public schools to educate their children. The failure to teach world history, therefore, amounts to denying equal opportunity to our most vulnerable population. In short, millions of low-income and minority students are being denied basic cultural and economic rights. This is a form of institutionalized racial and class discrimination, and ending it is not simply a matter of educational reform or intellectual housekeeping—it is a matter of social justice.

## How to Teach World History

The teachers, scholars, curriculum developers and others responsible for shaping world history courses have two basic tasks. The first and more important is to instill in students a lifelong interest in this subject. Young people should leave school eager and able to study more

world history—whether formally through post-secondary and/or adult education, or informally through reading and/or travel, even watching television.

Second, world history course designers must select their targets. It's not possible to teach everything. They have an obligation to explain why they chose the topics they did.

How educators elect to engage students in world history directly affects how this material is chosen and presented. Gripping narratives, striking incidents, and strong characters are very much a part of the historical record. History class should be a place where students learn the drama and passion that is the human story.

Taught poorly, world history appears to students as a confusing wasteland of disconnected concepts, names, and ideas that are frustrating to study and impossible to master.

*To be both interesting and memorable, world history instruction should move from abstract analysis to gripping story.*

Taught carefully, despite the inherent bulk and complexity of world history, students can learn many of the key topics and eras they need to know, while using this basic information to open their eyes to useful and interesting insights.

To be both interesting and memorable, the presentation of world history should move from abstract analysis (“Conflicts between nomadic tribes and settled farmers and city dwellers were an important feature of life in the ancient Middle East.”) to gripping story (“When the nomads sacked the city, they built a pyramid sixty feet high with the skulls of their victims.”). There are a number of useful tools and methods for accomplishing this curricular and pedagogical transformation. I note four of these.

**Biography.** This well-respected type of writing is an important part of history education. Exposing students to the mysteries, wonders, crimes, and follies of human character, as only biography can, taps into their innate curiosity about the lives of other people and the worlds they inhabited. Biography is an excellent introduction to the complexities and nuances of a given historical period.

Many more adults read lives of the founding fathers, say, than read histories of the Revolutionary War or legal analyses of the Constitution. Students should know, for example, about Cleopatra, King David, Alexander the Great, the Buddha, and Winston Churchill. In so doing, they'll learn more about ancient Egypt and Israel, post-classical Greece, ancient China, and modern England than had they read bland textbook accounts of these periods.

**Legends.** History teachers should not be overly scrupulous about excluding interesting, if questionable, legends from the classroom. To be sure, students should not be lied to. They should not be taught that Parson Weems's legend of George Washington and the cherry tree is historical fact. But they should know the story, and they should know how that story has affected others' understanding of our first president.

In the same way, students shouldn't be led to believe that the story of Horatio on the bridge is historical fact. But any study of early Roman history that excludes this myth, or the tale of Romulus and Remus, is incomplete.

These stories and others are a vital part of history, and they have shaped consciousnesses and fired imaginations for generations.

Ideally, state standards and curricula for world history would be coordinated with standards and curricula in literature and other subjects. Students could read Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra* in literature class, for example, while studying the fall of the Roman Republic in history. Such coordination isn't easy, but principals, teachers, curriculum supervisors, and state education departments ought to make every effort to provide this kind of rich, integrated educational experience.

**Chronological coherence.** For making history comprehensible and engaging to students, it's difficult to underscore the importance of telling it chronologically. But too few states teach world history this way. With thousands of years of recorded history and more than a score (by Arnold Toynbee's count) of major civilizations, world history presented non-chronologically is bewildering and incomprehensible to primary and secondary students. The human mind is more comfortable with narrative than with large sets of unorganized data points; students will learn more history and remember

it better if there is a strong narrative structure to the history. Disraeli once remarked that his wife could never remember who came first, the Greeks or the Romans; American students won't have this problem if their teachers get the chronology straight.

**Geography.** E.C. Bentley quipped that geography is about maps while biography is about chaps. The two subjects are hardly disconnected, however. Without a solid foundation in geography, students can't appreciate the "chaps." One easily comprehends why Islam didn't spread to Europe in the ninth and tenth centuries when he or she understands the geography of the Mediterranean world. The great sea, and not Charles Martel, was the hammer that beat back the Muslim advance.

## What Should Be Taught

To teach is to choose, and in no subject are there more curricular choices than in world history. But choose we must, for students cannot possibly learn everything they might benefit from knowing about this subject in the few years that schools dedicate to its study. Most states offer just one year of world history at the secondary level. But even those that require two years cannot begin to provide a full course of study. Three years of instruction in grades seven to twelve would allow for a fuller presentation, but even this ampler structure would not eliminate the need to make choices.

So which material should be required? The model I propose focuses primarily on regional and temporal dimensions, with the vital additions of science/technology and religion.

### Europe or Multiculturalism?

American educators—including elite independent-school educators—used to focus on European history and culture because those were the dominant forces in both world and U.S. history. Many of today's educators question this approach for two reasons. First, they contend, European history and culture are less relevant for Americans in the twenty-first century; second, they see great value in advancing a "multicultural" perspective that treats the world's peoples and cultures more equally.

I find myself drawn to a third approach; one that neither reasserts the traditional Eurocentric history cur-

riculum of the last generation, nor embraces the treat-all-cultures-and-stories-as-equals approach that is more common today. While it's surely true that Eurocentric history no longer meets the needs of American students in the twenty-first century, I find that, in practice, the multicultural approach too often leads to unfocused attempts to cover everything and pass judgments on nothing.

The traditional curriculum is composed of several distinct elements: the ancient Mediterranean, the European Middle Ages, the Renaissance and Reformation, British history, and the history of the modern European state system from the seventeenth

*To teach is to choose,  
and in no subject are  
there more curricular choices  
than in world history.*

through the twentieth centuries. Some of these remain keenly relevant today. The ancient Mediterranean world, for example, is the seedbed of three great world religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—that continue to play a vital role in international politics.

A working knowledge of Greece and Rome is important not only for understanding the pillars of Anglo-American culture, but for Latin-American culture as well, which was not as important to the grandparents and parents of today's youth. Today, however, Latin-Americans are significantly shaping the land in which young Americans live. Students should get a thorough, chronologically based understanding of these seedbed cultures, especially for the crucial period beginning with the rise of Greek civilization and ending with the development of the classical Islamic empires.

The rise of Great Britain is another element of the traditional curriculum that warrants continued emphasis. In part because Britain was important in the rise of liberal politics and civil society, which are so vital to the American story; in part because the deep cultural connections between Britain and the United States remain powerful in American life. More important, however,



the British were the primary force in developing the global economic and political system, which plays a leading role in American lives and U.S. foreign policy today. Paying more attention, not less, to this story helps students ground their knowledge of American history in the wider context of world history. It also provides a framework through which the history of key societies such as

*States should mandate  
that students learn in-depth  
one major non-Western culture.  
I recommend China.*

India can be taught, and in which topics such as the trans-Atlantic slave trade can be clearly presented. “Globalization” is a process that shapes American and world politics and economics more than ever; the history of the British system and British Empire is the best possible introduction to this vital topic in all its complexity.

On the other hand, the history of the European Middle Ages and the modern European state system are two elements of the traditional curriculum that I would de-emphasize. Beyond providing students a basic chronological outline, European history should only be discussed in order to assist students in their understanding of key current events that involve Europe. The traditional emphasis on modern European history in U.S. schools reflects circumstances that no longer apply. For much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Europe was the central theater of world politics for Americans. Our most powerful potential allies and opponents were European states. Until the Second World War, much of the Third World was ruled from European imperial capitals. Europe was the source of the overwhelming majority of American immigrants; European economies were the most important outlets for our products, and European companies were the most important rivals of American firms. American intellectuals, artists, and universities looked to European models. During the Cold War, the United States was engaged in a titanic struggle with an ideology—communism—that developed in the cockpit of European politics in the nineteenth century. And the Cold War was, in large part, a contest to determine the future of the European continent.

Historical literacy in the age of the Cold War demanded a basic knowledge of nineteenth-century European politics, culture, and thought. This knowledge remains desirable and important today, but difficult choices need to be made. The rise of Asia, the deep American involvement in the Middle East, the decreased chance that European conflicts will lead to global wars, and the disappearance of communism as a major ideological and political danger to the United States, all counsel a shift in American world history curricula away from modern European history.

### **China and Latin America**

De-emphasizing medieval and modern European history creates more space in the curriculum for the study of non-European elements of world history. Educators should resist the temptation to divide their time equally among many different cultures and civilizations, however. State standards should mandate that students make an in-depth, comprehensive, and systematic study of one major non-western culture. China, as the home of one of the world’s greatest and most influential civilizations, and as a nation that is already showing itself a major player in world politics for the near future, deserves special and sustained attention.

Ideally, the study of China would begin in students’ primary years and continue through secondary school. Moreover, Chinese literature, history, and art would be integrated into other subjects.

Greater attention also should be paid to Latin America, especially Mexico. Today’s students will be critical players in working out the terms of accommodation and assimilation between Latin-American culture and Anglo-American culture.

Sub-Saharan Africa, the Caribbean, and India are three major regions that I suggest need not necessarily be addressed systematically. In the early grades, students should learn enough about these civilizations and the contributions of their people to respect their accomplishments; in the later grades, the stories of these regions can be introduced in the context of the study of the emerging global economic and political system. India’s struggle for independence, for example, is key to understanding twentieth century de-colonization. And the importance of Gandhi’s movement for the U.S. civil rights struggle is something that every American stu-



dent should appreciate. The Atlantic slave trade, its context, its scale, and its consequences for the western hemisphere and world history should be a significant element in every state's curriculum.

### **Science and technology**

One constant in world history is the presence of scientific inquiry and technological change. The oldest archaeological remains of human settlements show that our remote ancestors were eager to develop new tools. It is also true that developments in technology went hand-in-hand with changes in human society and politics. The development of farming contributed to the rise of cities. Developments in shipbuilding and navigation created new possibilities for trade and for contact between different cultures and civilizations. The industrial revolution launched the West to the front of world affairs in the nineteenth century, while the information revolution is the major force shaping the lives of students now in our schools.

In more recent times, the acceleration of technological progress has given societies new kinds of challenges and opportunities. Change is much more rapid now than in the past, and all signs point to continuing acceleration in the rate of technological and scientific progress and social change. A significant aspect of education is preparing students for this kind of world.

While world history cannot be a history of science and technology, it should aid students' appreciation of how technology shapes civilization. They should also learn that technological change is not *sui generis* to the modern era and the West; it has driven change around the globe since the dawn of history.

### **Religion**

Given the increasing salience of religion in world politics, I would significantly upgrade its study in world history. In particular, we should pay attention to the rise of Judaism (because of its historic role as the first Abrahamic religion) and to the two other faiths "of the book"—Christianity and Islam.

This does not mean ignoring non-Abrahamic religions, such as those that have played a major role in Chinese history. But the overwhelming majority of American students confront one or more of several religious dichotomies in

the course of their daily lives: Protestant and Catholic, evangelical and non-evangelical, Muslim and Christian.

A pluralistic country such as ours should not, and cannot, in its public schools enjoin a single religious truth or history on its students. Young people need and deserve to know more about how these religious traditions appeared and grew if they are to understand the turmoil and opportunities ahead.

### **Criteria**

I've grouped my review criteria under two separate headings: content and instructional focus. Under content, I evaluate the standards' success in selecting and setting forth the most important material necessary to equip students with a basic knowledge and understanding of world history, in addition to how well they provide students a foundation. Content includes the study of geography, important civilizations, modern history as it relates to the United States, and the treatment of socially important ideas such as the values of tolerance and liberty.

Under instructional focus, I evaluate the success of each state in developing, via its standards, a pedagogically sound approach to the material. In particular, I examined whether state standards encourage (or mandate) instructional approaches to history that are likely to appeal to students' interests, give them a good chance to master material, and inculcate in them an interest in world history that will stay with them after leaving secondary school. I stress these criteria because of my conviction, discussed earlier, that it is unrealistic to expect students to achieve during their K-12 schooling the kind of mastery of world history that they will need to participate fully in the political and cultural life of their times. Hence, educators and standards-makers must concern themselves with fostering a life-long interest in the subject.

I had originally planned also to credit states that incorporated sound accountability mechanisms into their standards, mindful of the truism that what gets tested is often what gets taught and learned. Unfortunately, most states do not require testing to gauge their students' knowledge of world history. For this reason, I regretfully decided to omit state accountability as a criterion. Important as it is, its inclusion here would have functioned mainly to lower the grades of nearly every state—and most were plenty low already.

But another method of accountability exists and is operational in U.S. high schools today. Two national exams (Advanced Placement [AP] and SAT II) and one state exam (New York Regents Exam) attract more test-takers each year. Because so many take these exams—which have real-world consequences, such as high school diplomas and college admission—states with poor world history standards will feel increased pressure from students, parents, and teachers to improve their standards so their students are more competitive on these tests.

For this reason, I reviewed these three exams, grading them on a modified version of the system used to grade the state standards. All three tests score well, and their reviews can be found beginning on page 31.

The grading scale for the state standards is fairly straightforward. States could receive up to 110 possible points for content, a maximum of 10 points for each of 11 content areas. I also awarded up to 60 points for instructional focus, though the scoring was weighted. I identified three areas to grade, awarding up to 30 points for standards' selectivity and coherence, 20 points for their teachability, and 10 points for sequencing.

The highest possible score was 170 points. Grades were then assigned based upon a 25-point scale:

146-170.....	A
121-145.....	B
96-120.....	C
70-95.....	D
69 and Below .....	F

I have been as objective as possible, scoring and re-scoring, and examining how states compare with one another. I have done my best to give a fair and even-handed evaluation. States with approaches that differ from those I propose, but which have wrestled with the problems of teaching world history in their own way and developed curriculum standards that are thoughtful and comprehensive, receive positive evaluations and, where appropriate, high scores. The only states that perform poorly or fail by these criteria are those whose standards are inadequate by any reasonable measure. When possible, I have given states the benefit of the doubt. For example, I chose to review

Kentucky's draft standards—to be implemented without any significant changes at the beginning of the 2006-7 school year—rather than its current, outdated curricular framework. The other states were reviewed on the official standards adopted prior to the 2005-2006 school year.

## I. Content—(110 points)

Rationale: Evaluating the K-12 content requirements of state standards in world history demands selectivity. World history treats many different subjects, and does so at many grade levels. There are serious disagreements among educators and historians about the priorities for world history instruction.

In choosing the specific content criteria for this process, I focused on eleven subject areas: geography; ancient Mediterranean; the non-Western world; Mexico and the Western hemisphere; the Anglo-American context; modern contexts; history of religion; science and technology; culture, arts, and philosophy; democratic values; and balance. These, in my judgment, are the elements of world history best suited to equip young Americans to live in the twenty-first century, and they are most likely to provide them with the kind of learning experience that will encourage them to become lifelong students of world history. At the same time, these criteria demand a rigor and focus in standards that are too often missing from non-traditional approaches to world history teaching. I have tried to identify those subjects in world history that have the most relevance for the lives of young Americans, and I have evaluated state standards based on the degree to which they impose a similar structure and ordering on the subject.

Of the eleven, “balance” requires a brief comment. It has been included because experience shows me that history curricula have a tendency to fall into one of two traps. Traditional curricula tend to idealize the Western past, to ignore the accomplishments of non-Western civilizations, and to overlook the ethical questions posed by the existence of such practices as slavery and gender discrimination in societies such as ancient Athens and Rome. Non-traditional curricula, on the other hand, have been known to overcompensate for these faults and to fall into other equally serious errors.

## State Scores and Grades for World History Standards

STATE	TOTAL POINTS SCORES EARNED FOR CURRICULM	TOTAL POINTS SCORES EARNED FOR INSTRUCTION	TOTAL	FINAL GRADE
Alabama	68	38	106	C
Alaska	12	0	12	F
Arizona	83	49	132	B
Arkansas	25	13	38	F
California	110	57	167	A
Colorado	53	28	81	D
Connecticut	60	18	78	D
Delaware	44	35	79	D
District of Columbia	44	30	74	D
Florida	18	13	31	F
Georgia	100	56	156	A
Hawaii	23	15	38	F
Idaho	11	3	14	F
Illinois	48	26	74	D
Indiana	103	58	161	A
Iowa				
Kansas	81	50	131	B
Kentucky	12	5	17	F
Louisiana	31	7	38	F
Maine	25	8	33	F
Maryland	52	21	73	D
Massachusetts	106	58	164	A
Michigan	22	0	22	F
Minnesota	96	56	152	A
Mississippi	61	38	99	C
Missouri	8	0	8	F
Montana	14	0	14	F
Nebraska	58	36	94	D
Nevada	60	34	94	D
New Hampshire	46	29	75	D
New Jersey	78	47	125	B
New Mexico	60	34	94	D
New York	96	59	155	A
North Carolina	44	20	64	F
North Dakota	46	23	69	F
Ohio	39	28	67	F
Oklahoma	83	46	129	B
Oregon	39	26	65	F
Pennsylvania	31	13	44	F
Rhode Island				
South Carolina	94	56	150	A
South Dakota	56	34	90	D
Tennessee	55	28	83	D
Texas	66	31	97	C
Utah	42	19	61	F
Vermont	19	7	26	F
Virginia	104	60	164	A
Washington	62	31	93	D
West Virginia	60	36	96	C
Wisconsin	26	10	36	F
Wyoming	20	12	32	F

Too often they emerge as checklists of significant cultures, events, and people with no story or unifying theme. Consequently, students and teachers are left to drift in material that neither informs nor inspires. I look to see if state standards help teachers, parents, curriculum developers, test-writers, and students find a healthy middle course.

## *Greater attention must be paid to Latin America and Mexico.*

**A. Geography:** Understanding geography is integral to the study of history. Students should be able to read, work with, and create maps, as well as have a basic understanding of political and natural geography. Do the standards clearly mandate instruction in basic geography? Do standards require basic map literacy? And do the standards seek to link history and geography?

- 0 points: The standards pay superficial or cursory attention to geography and its role in world history.
- 1-5 points: The standards pay attention to world geography, but there are significant gaps or shortcomings in their approach.
- 6-10 points: The standards propose a coherent and thorough approach to world geography.

**B. Ancient Mediterranean:** Do the standards clearly set forth a coherent approach to the great ancient civilizations and cultures that dominated the Mediterranean basin in the years (approximately 500 B.C.E. to 1,000 C.E.) when the foundations of the modern Western and Islamic worlds were established? Do the standards include the rise and accomplishments of ancient Judea, Greece, Rome, and the early Islamic world? Do the standards expect schools to teach the ideas, legends, values, and cultures of these seedbed societies as well as their politics and wars? Are students encouraged to learn both about similarities between these cultures and contemporary American life as well as their differences?

- 0 points: The standards pay superficial or cursory attention to the ancient Mediterranean and its role in world history.
- 1-5 points: The standards address the ancient Mediterranean, but there are significant gaps or shortcomings in their approach.

- 6-10 points: The standards propose a coherent and thorough approach to teaching the history of the ancient Mediterranean, addressing the rise of civilizations, major accomplishments, and connections between then and now.

**C. The Non-Western World:** Do the standards require students to engage seriously and deeply with the history of at least one non-Western culture? A curriculum that dips and dabs briefly into many non-Western cultures but never treats any of them with serious intellectual and cultural intent does not succeed in teaching students much of anything. With the best of intentions, educators who follow this approach may reinforce student prejudices that the Western experience is the only “worthwhile” historical narrative. Twenty-first century students need a deep and serious engagement with the non-Western world; I recommend that China is the culture best suited for this study, but states that effectively engage with any other major culture will meet this test. At the same time, without engaging in depth with every great civilization, students should be taught that each continent has played a major role in the story of civilization and that important civilizations have flourished throughout the world.

- 0 points: Standards pay superficial or cursory attention to the non-Western world or do so in a diffuse and confusing manner.
- 1-5 points: The standards address the non-Western world, but there are significant gaps or shortcomings in their approach.
- 6-10 points: The standards propose a coherent and thorough approach to teaching the history of the non-Western world, including substantial engagement with at least one specific culture (e.g., China).

**D. Mexico and the Western Hemisphere:** A generation ago, many U.S. educators believed that hemispheric history could be largely ignored. That is clearly no longer the case. World history curricula must now prepare American students to understand the roles of Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as the Anglo elements, in shaping the present and future of U.S. society. States need to provide clear mandates and guidance to ensure that Mexican and Caribbean history receive an appropriately thorough treatment. The African and Native American components of hemispheric history should be integrated into the standards.

- 0 points: Standards pay superficial or cursory attention to Mexico and the Western Hemisphere.
- 1-5 points: The standards address Mexico and the Western Hemisphere, but there are significant gaps or shortcomings in their approach.
- 6-10 points: The standards propose a coherent and thorough approach to teaching the history of Mexico and the Western Hemisphere.

**E. The Anglo-American Context:** U.S. public schools are educating young Americans; thus world-history education in the early grades needs to give purposeful attention to the elements of world history that most directly shape American life. In particular, America's cultural, social, economic, and political histories are closely and intimately connected to that of the British Isles. Whether one looks at American political institutions, political culture, foreign policy, world role, or economic development and thought, one understands them better by mastering the British context in which they were shaped. In the context of British history, key themes—the rise of liberty and democracy, capitalism, and the business economy, and the rise of a global political and economic order—can all be presented in a comprehensive and orderly way. British history can also integrate other major themes of modern world history—the slave trade, the rise of the global humanitarian movement, the rise and fall of colonialism—in a form that allows students to grasp at least the outlines of the making of the contemporary world. The study of colonialism and the rise and fall of the British Empire can help introduce students to contemporary Africa, India, and the modern Middle East.

- 0 points: The standards pay superficial or cursory attention to the Anglo-American elements of world history with particular relevance to the United States.
- 1-5 points: The standards address the Anglo-American context, but there are significant gaps or shortcomings in their approach.
- 6-10 points: The standards propose a coherent and thorough approach for teaching these elements, leading to a comprehensive but focused approach to global history.

**F. Modern Contexts:** The purpose of teaching world history is to help students better understand current events within a larger context, and state standards

should reflect this. Students should understand the history and significance of the two world wars and the Cold War, and they should have some perspective on the modern ideological crisis we are facing with radical Islam. Students should be aware of the world in which they live and have a firm understanding of current events. World history should prepare students to follow the news with a keen and informed eye.

- 0 points: The standards pay superficial or cursory attention to modern and contemporary world history.
- 1-5 points: The standards address modern world history, but there are significant gaps or shortcomings in their approach.
- 6-10 points: The standards provide a coherent and thorough approach to teaching modern history.

**G. History of Religion:** Religion plays a growing role in both international politics and American life. Students need to understand the origin and history of the belief systems that shape our world. Religion is an explosive subject, but that is no excuse for not treating it. State standards should provide for an adequate introduction to the history and beliefs of major religions, and the role of religion in global political history should be presented in a thoughtful and integrated way. It is not enough to consider religions as abstract belief systems; the role of religion in shaping social interaction and, sometimes, conflict within or between societies also needs to be taught. In particular, state standards should ensure that students receive a solid grounding in the origins, history, cultural effects, and chief doctrines of the three Abrahamic faiths and their leading varieties (for example, Shi'a and Sunni Islam; Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant Christianity; and Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform Judaism). Each religious tradition should be presented in a neutral and balanced way that neither glosses over their differences nor attempts to propagandize students to favor or oppose any of them.

- 0 points: The standards pay superficial or cursory attention to the importance of religion and its role in world history.
- 1-5 points: The standards address the importance of major world religions, but there are significant gaps or shortcomings in their approach.
- 6-10 points: The standards propose a coherent and thorough approach to teaching about religion.

**H. Science and Technology:** Given the role that scientific discovery and technological change can be expected to play in the twenty-first century, students need a reasonable grounding in this material. A world history curricu-

*Our nation cannot enjoin  
a single religious truth or history  
on public school students.*

lum cannot be expected to teach basic scientific principles, but it should enable students to appreciate the ways in which scientific and technological progress have shaped the human story. The story of science should be integrated into history more generally—so that, for example, students understand the way that advances in navigation made possible the expansion of global contact and trade starting in the sixteenth century. Standards should also highlight the ways cultures thrive by accepting and adapting to scientific knowledge and technological change—and how they suffer when they do not. Finally, standards should ensure that students understand how the pace of scientific and technological change has accelerated through history and how this continuing acceleration poses new and complex challenges for tomorrow.

- 0 points: The standards pay superficial or cursory attention to science and technology as it relates to world history.
- 1-5 points: The standards address the importance of science and technology, but there are significant gaps or shortcomings in their approach.
- 6-10 points: The standards provide a coherent and thorough approach to teaching about science and technology.

**I. Culture, Arts, and Philosophy:** Culture, art and philosophy are critical dimensions of world history. The philosophical thought systems of the ancient Mediterranean world in particular played a major role in the development of Anglo-American, Latin American, and Islamic society. Students should know that our philosophical ideas about government, morality, virtue, justice, etc. did not come out of the blue, and that other cultures have formed their own ideas on these subjects. The cultural and artistic activities

of present and past civilizations are as much a part of their history as their military exploits and scientific discoveries. World history cannot take on the burden of the arts instruction that is properly housed elsewhere in the K-12 curriculum, but it can and should introduce students to some of the cultural riches that are part of their heritage.

- 0 points: The standards pay superficial or cursory attention to culture, arts, and philosophy as these relate to world history.
- 1-5 points: The standards address culture, arts, and philosophy, but there are significant gaps or shortcomings in their approach.
- 6-10 points: The standards provide a coherent and thorough approach to teaching about culture, arts, and philosophy.

**J. Democratic Values:** Education is more than the communication of factual knowledge to a new generation. It inevitably involves the transmission of moral, cultural, and spiritual values. This is particularly true of history, which touches on many diverse subjects. The rise and triumph of democratic values in America and across the world is one of the major narratives in political history. A democratic society has the right and the duty to educate young people in the values and virtues that sustain democracy. In American society especially, values such as the ability to work with people from different backgrounds, to appreciate and learn from cultures and traditions unlike one's own, and the ability to disagree peacefully are necessary to our society's working. Students should understand the basic principles of democracy along with other values and virtues historically associated with republican ideals. Patriotism, honesty, self-restraint, and courage can and should be encouraged in our schools. In evaluating state standards, I look to see whether they provide for teaching core democratic values.

- 0 points: The standards pay superficial or cursory attention to teaching democratic values.
- 1-5 points: The standards address the importance of teaching democratic values, but there are significant gaps or shortcomings in their approach.
- 6-10 points: The standards provide a coherent and thorough approach to teaching democratic values, including interesting ways of integrating republican, moral, cultural, and religious values into the teaching of world history.

## State Scores and National Averages for Content Areas

STATE	Geography IA	Ancient Mediterranean IB	Non-Western World IC	Mexico and Western Hem. ID	Anglo-American Context IE	Modern Contexts IF	History of Religion IG	Science and Technology IH	Culture, Arts, & Philosophy II	Democratic Values IJ	Balance IK	TOTAL
Alabama	8	6	6	7	7	5	5	4	5	7	8	68
Alaska	5	0	0	0	2	0	0	2	1	2	0	12
Arizona	10	7	7	6	7	8	7	8	8	7	8	83
Arkansas	3	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	3	2	2	25
California	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	110
Colorado	9	3	3	4	3	4	7	6	6	4	4	53
Connecticut	8	4	4	4	7	7	3	7	6	5	5	60
Delaware	7	0	3	3	6	7	2	3	3	5	5	44
District of Columbia	5	2	5	3	5	4	5	4	3	4	4	44
Florida	2	3	2	1	2	2	1	1	2	0	2	18
Georgia	9	9	9	9	9	10	10	8	8	9	10	100
Hawaii	5	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	1	2	23
Idaho	3	2	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	2	1	11
Illinois	4	4	4	4	5	5	4	4	4	4	6	48
Indiana	10	10	10	10	8	10	10	8	8	9	10	103
Iowa	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kansas	10	8	7	6	7	8	7	7	7	7	7	81
Kentucky	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	12
Louisiana	4	3	3	3	3	2	2	3	2	3	3	31
Maine	4	2	2	2	2	3	1	2	2	2	3	25
Maryland	6	3	5	5	6	5	4	4	4	5	5	52
Massachusetts	10	10	10	8	10	10	10	9	9	10	10	106
Michigan	3	0	2	1	3	2	1	2	2	3	3	22
Minnesota	9	9	8	8	9	10	8	8	9	9	9	96
Mississippi	7	4	6	6	5	6	5	5	5	6	6	61
Missouri	2	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	8
Montana	6	0	0	0	1	1	0	2	2	2	0	14
Nebraska	6	5	3	4	6	5	6	4	7	7	5	58
Nevada	10	5	3	2	5	4	8	6	6	6	5	60
New Hampshire	4	4	6	4	5	3	4	3	4	4	5	46
New Jersey	7	6	7	7	7	7	7	8	7	8	7	78
New Mexico	6	5	6	8	4	5	5	4	5	7	5	60
New York	8	9	7	7	9	9	8	10	9	10	10	96
North Carolina	6	4	4	3	4	3	5	4	3	5	3	44
North Dakota	7	4	3	3	4	4	5	4	4	3	5	46
Ohio	4	2	4	3	4	6	2	4	4	3	3	39
Oklahoma	7	9	7	7	8	5	7	7	8	10	8	83
Oregon	4	5	6	4	3	1	5	2	3	2	4	39
Pennsylvania	4	2	2	3	2	3	2	4	3	4	2	31
Rhode Island												
South Carolina	8	8	9	8	9	8	8	8	8	10	10	94
South Dakota	7	5	5	4	5	7	5	4	5	5	4	56
Tennessee	5	6	4	4	6	6	6	5	4	5	4	55
Texas	7	6	8	5	5	6	6	5	5	9	4	66
Utah	6	3	5	3	2	5	3	3	4	4	4	42
Vermont	2	1	2	2	1	2	2	1	2	2	2	19
Virginia	9	10	10	6	10	10	10	10	10	9	10	104
Washington	6	6	7	5	4	6	8	5	5	6	4	62
West Virginia	8	5	3	4	6	8	7	4	4	6	5	60
Wisconsin	2	3	2	2	3	2	3	3	2	3	1	26
Wyoming	3	1	2	1	3	1	2	2	1	2	2	20
Average	6.2	4.5	4.7	4.2	5.0	5.0	4.8	4.6	4.7	5.2	4.9	

**K. Balance:** As noted earlier, standards should strike a balance between the traditional approach to world history and the multicultural approach. Beyond this, an appropriate balance should also be struck between “presentism” (rigidly judging past events and people by the standards of twenty-first century America) and a paralyzing failure to make any ethical judgment about the

*Content alone is not enough.  
The manner by which world history  
is presented is also important.*

past. Comparisons, explicit or implicit, between Western and non-Western traditions and societies should similarly avoid either replicating Western supremacist ideas of the past or romanticizing the non-Western world. It is important to treat major controversies in a historically accurate and non-ideological way. The standards should also provide enough treatment of non-Western cultures and accomplishments, especially in the early grades, that students are not at risk of concluding that only some peoples and some regions have had important histories or made significant contributions to overall human progress.

- 0 points: The standards are not balanced in their presentation.
- 1-5 points: The standards are somewhat balanced, but there are significant gaps or shortcomings in their approach.
- 6-10 points: The standards, properly taught, will present history to students in a well-balanced way.

## **II. Instructional Focus— (60 points)**

While quality of content is certainly a benchmark of effective state standards, content alone is not enough; the manner by which world history material is presented is also important. There is no shortage of material to be taught. Therefore, what gets selected for coverage, and how coherently that information is put together, takes on a great deal of importance. Entire semesters could be spent on any number of seminal events or time periods from world history, however, standards-makers

must sift through the various epochs to create an orderly and logical narrative arc that does not lose itself in minutia or overlook essentials. Additionally, the standards must be written so that they’re accessible both to education specialists and to laypeople alike. If parents and students are unable to easily understand and follow a state’s framework, arguably the most critical constituencies have been underserved.

**A. Selectivity & Coherence:** Has the content been well-selected, or have the standards become a kind of historical laundry list with many subjects presented, but few opportunities for students to develop real knowledge? Is it apparent from the standards that the writers have successfully compiled a coherent body of the most essential content out of the vastness of world history and presented it to teachers and test-makers in a clear, logical, and manageable way? Has the state, in effect, made some hard decisions about what’s most important to teach and learn, as opposed to including everything and leaving it to teachers to select from that endless buffet?

- 0 points: The standards are overly broad or unrealistically inclusive and fail to select the most important aspects and contours of world history.
- 1-15 points: The standards are moderately focused and frame world history in a reasonably comprehensible way.
- 16-30 points: The standards are sharply focused and coherent, and successfully frame subject matter that will help awaken students’ interest in world history.

**B. Teachability:** Are the standards easy to read and follow for educators? Are they presented in a sufficiently concrete and transparent way so that a textbook author, a teacher, a test-maker, a curriculum director, or a parent can actually find useful guidance from them? Has the state made a sincere effort to present world history as a subject that a teacher can reasonably address? Are the standards reasonably suited to the intellectual development of students in pertinent grade levels: e.g. when portions of world history are presented in standards for seventh grade, are they grade-appropriate for both teachers and students? Are they organized sufficiently so that students are able to develop a broad grasp of the great narrative arc of world history? Are they concrete enough so that a teacher can build a curriculum on them and develop lesson plans, as opposed to being vaguely conceptual and nebulous?



## State Scores and National Averages for Instructional Areas

STATE	IIA Selectivity & Coherence	IIB Teachability	IIC Sequencing	TOTAL POINTS
Alabama	20	13	5	38
Alaska	0	0	0	0
Arizona	26	17	6	49
Arkansas	5	5	3	13
California	30	17	10	57
Colorado	15	8	5	28
Connecticut	10	4	4	18
Delaware	17	13	5	35
District of Columbia	15	12	3	30
Florida	6	3	4	13
Georgia	28	18	10	56
Hawaii	7	5	3	15
Idaho	2	1	0	3
Illinois	14	8	4	26
Indiana	30	18	10	58
Iowa	0	0	0	0
Kansas	24	18	8	50
Kentucky	3	2	0	5
Louisiana	3	2	2	7
Maine	5	2	1	8
Maryland	12	7	2	21
Massachusetts	30	18	10	58
Michigan	0	0	0	0
Minnesota	28	18	10	56
Mississippi	20	12	6	38
Missouri	0	0	0	0
Montana	0	0	0	0
Nebraska	18	12	6	36
Nevada	15	12	7	34
New Hampshire	14	10	5	29
New Jersey	23	16	8	47
New Mexico	18	10	6	34
New York	30	19	10	59
North Carolina	10	8	2	20
North Dakota	7	10	6	23
Ohio	14	8	6	28
Oklahoma	22	16	8	46
Oregon	12	9	5	26
Pennsylvania	5	5	3	13
Rhode Island				
South Carolina	28	18	10	56
South Dakota	16	11	7	34
Tennessee	15	10	3	28
Texas	16	12	3	31
Utah	5	8	6	19
Vermont	2	3	2	7
Virginia	30	20	10	60
Washington	17	9	5	31
West Virginia	19	12	5	36
Wisconsin	3	4	3	10
Wyoming	4	5	3	12
<b>Average</b>	<b>14.2</b>	<b>9.6</b>	<b>4.9</b>	

- 0 points: The standards are not readable, coherent and grade-appropriate.
- 1-10 points: The standards are moderately coherent and could serve as a functional guide for teachers, parents, and students.
- 11-20 points: The state supplies excellent standards that are readable, coherent, easy to follow, grade-appropriate and useful to principals, teachers, parents and others in developing an integrated, focused, comprehensive, and comprehensible approach to world history.

*State world history standards are beset by a legion of problems, not the least being the lack of a clean, clear storyline.*

**C. Sequencing:** Are the standards cumulative and sequential such so that each grade builds in a rational, coherent way on what was done in previous (and will be done in subsequent) grades? Additionally, does the state expect middle schools to teach world history in a fashion that lays a suitable foundation for high school course(s)? Extra points may be awarded for states that sequence their world history courses in thoughtful, useful, and practical ways.

- 0 points: The standards do not present a sequenced, cumulative approach to world history.
- 1-5 points: The standards present a moderately well-sequenced, cumulative approach to world history, but significant gaps or shortcomings are evident.
- 6-10 points: The standards present a well sequenced and cumulative approach to world history.

## What We Found

State world-history standards are beset by a legion of problems. One is first struck by how poorly written and organized many of them are. Worse, many states employ awkward code systems and useless charts, ostensibly to simplify what should be taught and when. For the most part, these devices make the standards even more difficult to read and render them less helpful to educators and others invested in the topic.

One also quickly senses the discomfort that educators have with this subject matter. Much of world history, for example, revolves around questions of religion. Many Christians, Muslims, and Jews believe that their sacred books contain valuable historical information—but the degree to which biblical and Quranic narratives accurately describe political and cultural conditions is hotly disputed by many scholars. Interpretations of monumental events in world history—the Crusades, the fall of Constantinople, the Reformation, the French Revolution, the trend toward secularization among Europeans and American elites in the twentieth century—depend to some degree upon one’s religious values and views.

Another problem is the lack of a clean, clear, storyline. Standards writers are confronted by every ethnic group, every religious and ideological lobby, every group in civil society interested in promoting a cause, and each demands “adequate” treatment for particular incidents and themes. Faced with these challenges, the political process either legislates intellectual pork (i.e., give something to everybody) or it abandons content scruples altogether. The latter approach is somewhat more common. If we cannot agree on how much emphasis to give sub-Saharan Africa relative to India or the Reformation, for example, one can imagine bureaucrats and committees saying, “Let us say nothing about these difficult subjects.” Instead, they opine, in the words of the fatuous Alaska state standard, that “A student should understand that history is a record of human experiences that link the past to the present and the future.” The worst state standards are those that follow Alaska’s example and shun any serious discussion of content for the sake of airy skills and themes—and perhaps, the avoidance of conflict.

### Content

Most state standards suffer problems related to content. These take a variety of forms. The most obvious, and most disturbing, are those lacking actual world history content. In short, these states don’t take standards seriously, and their documents are nearly impossible to critique. The most obvious example of this is found with Alaska’s, which unfortunately, is not the only state that so suffers.

Some states have the opposite problem. In an effort to appease every group that wants its history included in the standards, states succumb by producing laundry

lists of names, events, cultures, and events. Such lists provide no story line, no coherent chronology that enables students to see the flow of human events.

In an effort to counteract the laundry-list approach to history, some choose to over-emphasize European history, and pay little attention to non-Western cultures and traditions. This is evident beginning in the earliest stages of teaching world history; many states focus solely on the development of the Greek and Roman civilizations and give short shrift to advancements in Africa and Asia.

With these general problems in mind, I now turn to brief overviews of how the states fair in general around each of the eleven content areas I judged the state standards by.

**Geography:** States are generally strong in geography because they have adopted the standards put together by the National Geographic Society. In fact, the average score for all states was 6.2 out of a possible 10 points. This is a full point better than the next best scoring section, Democratic Values (average score of 5.2). Thirty-eight states require students to take a separate world geography class during the middle or high school years. Though it would be ideal for teachers to integrate geography and history into a single, comprehensive discussion, it is important that students are receiving a solid overview in both field.

**Ancient Mediterranean:** For those states with relevant content standards, adequate detail is paid to the Roman and Greek civilizations and the river civilizations that preceded them. Even if a standard misses the mark elsewhere, this is a place where most address the basics, and the good ones really deliver.

**The Non-Western World:** States generally fail to address the non-Western world in sufficient detail. While over forty states at least make reference to China in their standards, they only touch upon its ancient civilizations. California and Oklahoma excel not only in covering the non-Western world but in doing so with appropriate discrimination.

**Mexico and the Western Hemisphere:** Latin American is largely overlooked by most states; a number of them fail to mention any aspect of Mexican history. Just nine states mention the seminal figure Simon Bolivar, and the nine that do are among the fifteen states with the best

coverage of Latin American history. (See map on page 30.) This explains why, in part, that the average state score is a low 4.3 out of a possible 10, the worst of all the content sections. It is particularly disconcerting that states with large Mexican-American populations such as Texas and New Mexico don't adequately address the history of their neighbor to the south. It is possible that this area is covered partially in U.S. history; regardless, more attention is needed.

### *Lack of content is a serious problem in world history standards.*

**Anglo-American Context:** On the subject of Anglo-American traditions, states generally cover free market capitalism and the foundations of liberal democratic theory in England. Over half require students to study the influences of Smith and Locke. However, no state makes sufficiently explicit the deep connections between America and England, and their influence on the development of the current global order.

**Modern Context:** States run the gamut on this one. All states cover World War II and pay at least cursory attention to the Cold War. The half that drafted or revised their standards after the terrorist attacks of September 11th pay more attention to the history of Islam and the rise of Islamic extremism. Massachusetts and Indiana illustrate this trend. Standards drafted before 9/11 often assume that there is no history to speak of after the fall of Rome and before the Middle Ages. This kind of historical gap is unacceptable and does a real disservice to students across the country.

**History of Religion:** While over forty states directly reference religion in their standards, the vast majority pay only cursory attention to this topic. States such as South Carolina, New York and Virginia are effective at interweaving discussions of religion throughout social, political and economic narratives.

**Science and Technology:** Science and technology are rarely addressed in specifics, though most states make mention of major inventions and the ramifications of the Industrial Revolution and the computer age.

However, states are rarely effective in weaving scientific discoveries and their influence into the greater historical narrative.

**Culture, Arts, and Philosophy:** Culture is usually addressed with broad strokes. The arts and philosophy are presented as so many interesting asides in a laundry-list format. At times, mention is made that a particular philosopher or artist had a role in a political transformation. But there's rarely more said than this.

**Democratic Values:** The quarter of the states with actual content in their standards are fairly effective in their coverage of democratic principles. Two states that played a critical role to our nation's founding, such as Massachusetts and New York, are exemplars in this field. Sadly, Pennsylvania's standards seem to overlook the values that emerged from Independence Hall.

**Balance:** As mentioned above, the majority of states fail to pay close enough attention to non-Western cultures and civilizations. Those that do are awarded the top grades and should be commended. For example, students from high-scoring states Oklahoma and South Carolina benefit greatly from insights into the cultural development of such contemporary powerhouses as China, India, and Japan. This is one area in which underperforming states can and should make up significant ground.

## Instructional Focus

The problems with content are compounded by the often times confusing way in which material is presented in the standards. If states are to improve their standards, they must begin by crafting documents that can be easily understood and used.

**Selectivity and Coherence:** Many of the content flaws discussed above have their origin in standards-writers' inability to be selective in the material that is to be covered. Too many states, in place of a logical chronology, present history in thematic strands, e.g., "time, continuity and change" or "effective citizenship." These open-ended and vague topics simply add florid rhetoric to vapid standards. Wyoming and Colorado exemplify this.

Still another problem associated with organization is states that package material by subjects (civics, economics, and geography). History is too often tacked on at the end. This approach creates overlap (students receive a piecemeal education in historical periods such as the Enlightenment where economic, social and political trends are taught separately from one another).

**Teachability:** Too many states are bogged down with awkward code systems and useless charts, which make documents tough to read and less than helpful to those who'll use them. Even the best standards fall victim to the use of confusing or opaque language, repetition, and laundry lists. Moreover, about half of the states' standards lack grade specificity. That is to say, while states may supply standards, they do not give a good idea of when students should learn what. Connecticut and Michigan are good examples of this error.

**Sequencing:** Twenty-five states teach the first half of world history in middle school and then wait until high school to teach the second half of the subject. This non-contiguous approach obscures the larger narrative arc of history and does a real disservice to students. Were this the only example, it would be a minor concern. Unfortunately, this problem occurs all too often.

## Recommendations

Legion though the problems are, they are not insurmountable. The standards themselves are easily corrected. States with useable, though not stellar, standards can look to the models offered by higher-rated states and borrow from them. States whose standards are especially bad can likewise borrow (or adopt) the standards of better-performing states. California, Georgia, Indiana, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New York, South Carolina, and Virginia offer exceptional models. Beyond these options, states can look to the College Board and use its syllabus put together for students planning to take the AP World History exam. (See below for more on the AP Exam.) Whatever the decision, the states must first make sure the standards are right.

Regardless of the model adopted or adapted, states must realize that even the best standards compressed into too small a span of instructional span will fail. Therefore, students should

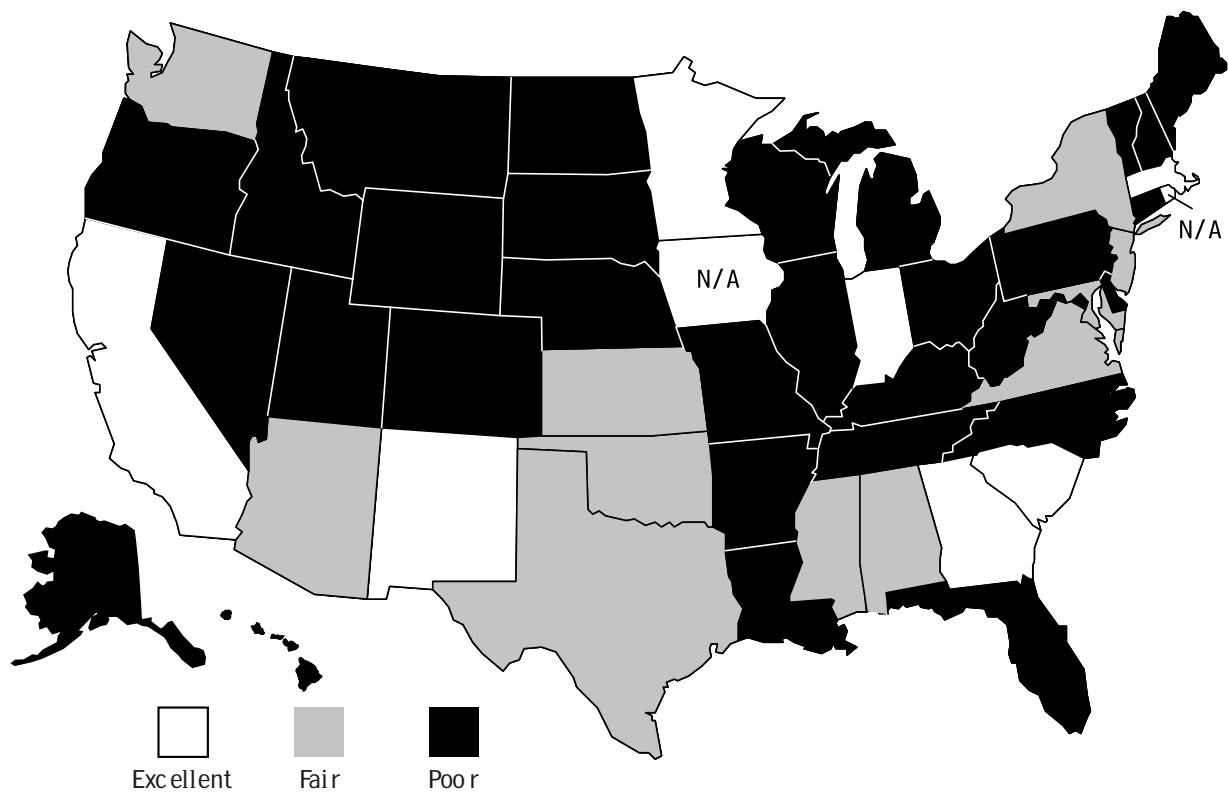
be required to take at least two, preferably three, years of integrated study at the middle and high school levels. The amount of material that must be covered, even when the standards writers are highly selective, requires it. To think it's possible to teach the material in less than two years is untenable.

Finally, states must test in world history—and require that students pass that test in order to advance to the next grade or to graduate. Until this happens, states fac-

ing pressure to raise performance in other areas, specifically math and reading, will have little motivation to improve student performance in world history.

Not one state in the union does all of these things. Many do not do any of them. Fixing what is wrong with most state world history programs is not primarily about spending money. It is about the wise use of instructional time and a coherent approach to curriculum issues.

### State Standards' Coverage of Latin America



As noted above, national exams in world history do create some pressure on states to produce world history standards that are sound. The number of students taking these exams is soaring, and students motivated to take these texts want to be sure they have a fair chance of doing well.

For this reason, I decided to review the AP World History exam, the New York Regents exam, and the SAT II exam in world history. In conducting my review, I amended the criteria I used in reviewing the state standards to better fit the format of the exams. This entailed removing the instructional focus section from the criteria and grading solely on content. Just as with the states, exams could receive up to 110 possible points for content, a maximum of 10 points for each of 11 content areas. However, the difference in this case is that the highest possible score was 110 points. Grades were then assigned based upon a 12-point scale:

99-110.....	A
87-98.....	B
75-86.....	C
63-74.....	D
62 and Below .....	F

### AP World History *(Exam & Course Description)*

**Website:** [http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/ap/sub\\_worldhist.html?worldhist](http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/ap/sub_worldhist.html?worldhist)

**Total Score:** 110

**Grade:** A

The AP world history exam and the course description put together by the College Board to prepare students to succeed on the test are gold standards. Because the curriculum corresponds directly to the test in terms of weighting, content coverage, themes, and skills expectations, we jointly reviewed the exam and the course description.

The latter opens with an easy-to-follow outline of the five historical periods which students are expected to cover (8000 B.C.E. to 600 C.E., 600 to 1450, 1450 to 1750, 1750 to 1914, and 1914 to present). This periodization, according to the College Board, “forms an organizing principle for dealing with change and continuity throughout the course.”

AP teachers are asked to devote seven or eight weeks to each period. Moreover, the course description spells out precisely

## Exam Grades for the AP World History, SAT II World History, and New York Regents World History Exams, by Year

	Geography IA	Ancient Mediterranean IB	Non-Western World IC	Mexico and Western Hem. ID	Anglo-American Context IE	Modern Contexts IF	History of Religion IG	Science and Technology IH	Culture, Arts, & Philosophy II	Democratic Values IJ	Balance IK	Point Total	Final Grade
AP World History	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	110	A
SAT II World History	9	10	9	9	9	10	10	9	9	8	8	100	A
New York Regents in World History	9	10	10	10	9	10	10	9	10	9	9	105	A

what students should know—quite simply, what should be taught when. For the period 600 to 1450, for example, students are expected to learn about the new empires that emerged, the rise of the Islamic world, China’s expansion, the development of Europe, social and political traditions of the American Indian, and the major historical interpretations of the period. In addition, they are asked to compare a series of institutions, including major religions, types of feudalism, and the functions of cities. Each requirement is fleshed out fully in the course description, with detailed information that gives students what they need without overwhelming them.

Even more impressive, the course description spells out what students do and do not need to know. For example, students are expected to know the “Jacobins, but not Robespierre” on the grounds that “students don’t need to know Robespierre in any great detail, but they do need to understand the importance of the Jacobins in relation to revolutionary movements and new political ideas.” This is an extraordinary feature, and it demonstrates AP’s dedication to focusing on the arc of history without losing its most important details.

The exam measures student learning via multiple choice questions, document-based questions, and essays. Students are questioned on each chronological period, and all material covered in the course description is considered fair game. A review of past tests indicates that AP is not shy about testing students on some of the overlooked or more difficult periods of history. For example, sample questions asked include: What are the similarities between West Africa and South America before 1000? Which country led world cotton production in 1700? The essay questions require students to pull together the variety of strands learned to explain a larger problem in world history. This is exactly what a good test should look like.

Advanced placement courses are designed to teach students the equivalent of a college level course. Often, schools interpret this to mean that only “advanced” students should enjoy the benefits that these courses, taught well, offer. But world history deserves to be taught like this, no matter how advanced the student. As Robert Maynard Hutchins famously said, “The best education for the best is the best education for all.

## The New York Regents Exam

**Website:** <http://www.regents.nysed.gov/>

**Total Score:** 105

**Grade:** A

The exam is divided into three parts. Part I is a series of 50 multiple choice questions that cover a broad span of world history. Part II is a thematic essay on a broad topic that students can answer drawing upon examples from different time periods. Part III is made up of two sections, both of which are based on interpreting a series of documents (eg: graphs, charts, paintings, poems, sections of philosophical texts or portions of seminal documents). The first section asks students to answer questions about each document, while the second asks students to write an essay that synthesizes the two documents. Overall, the Regents is demanding and requires that students be nimble with a wide range of material and that they use a spectrum of academic skills.

The exam covers the critical periods in European history, major events of the twentieth century, and the spectrum of intellectual and political revolutions over the past five centuries or so. But considerable attention is also paid to world religions, political philosophies, and areas of world history ignored by most state standards. For example, the Regents isn’t shy about asking students about the rise of Islam, the tenants of Shintoism, and Machiavelli’s philosophy. A recent test included questions about the geography of Machu Pichu, the thought of Theodore Herzl, and the similarity between the Taliban and Ayatollah Khomeini. Even more surprising is the inclusion of difficult questions, such as asking students to compare the leadership styles of Jomo Kenyatta, Jose de San Martin, and Sun Yixian.

The breadth of the exam is made clear on the first page of the multiple choice questions that appeared on a recent exam: students are expected to know why some Italian city states developed into major commercial and cultural centers in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the reasons behind the wealth and power of African empires in Ghana and Mali, and the cultural influences of early Japan, among other things.

In looking over the broad range of content the Regents covers, the real question is does it accurately test what stu-



dents are supposed to be accountable for in the standards? Based upon a review of the broad trends evident in past exams, it is clear that New York has made every effort to match the test to the standards. No period is conspicuously overlooked. No topic is haphazardly forgotten. The Regents for all intents and purposes is matched up with New York's excellent world history standards.

The test design deserves special mention. The use of document-based questions, particularly asking students to synthesize documents, encourages students to do what nearly all the state standards fail to do themselves, namely, ask to see the continuity and change in history. For example, a recent exam featured documents ranging from a description of the crusades to a selection from *Mein Kampf* and statement of objectives in the Persian Gulf War. From these diverse points of view students were asked to develop a coherent essay on the history of warfare and its causes. This is the kind of skill that will be useful to students in college and their professional lives, and New York should be applauded for testing it.

More states should look to New York and to the Regents for guidance as to what a reasonable world history exam for students exiting high school might look like.

## SAT II Subject Test

**Website:** [http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/sat/lc\\_two/histworld/histworld.html?histworld](http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/sat/lc_two/histworld/histworld.html?histworld)

**Total Score: 100**

**Grade: A**

The SAT II in world history is a one-hour test consisting of 95 multiple-choice questions that attempts to assess students' understanding of key developments in global history, in addition to their ability to "use basic historical techniques including application and weighing of evidence and the ability to interpret and generalize."

According to the College Board, the material covered on the test can be categorized both chronologically and geographically and it provides prospective students the information.

Students are expected to have taken a one-year comprehensive course in world history at the college-preparatory level, as well as to have engaged in "independent reading of materials on historical topics." A wide range of skills are tested, including but not limited to, knowledge of historical events and major narratives; the ability to interpret maps, graphs, and other artistic materials; and knowledge of historical terminology.

The SAT II should be commended for testing whether students have engaged seriously the history of non-western cultures. With over half the questions (according to the breakdown given by the College Board) focused solely on regions outside of Europe—and 30 percent of the questions dedicated to Asia alone—the SAT II test should serve as a guide to standards-makers throughout the country.

Students must have a working knowledge of major world religions and an appreciation for the role faith has played in historical development in order to perform well on the test. For example, they are expected to know general concepts such as the chronological order of the origins of various religions, as well as more specific details such as "Which two religions in India contributed to violent conflicts during and after the struggle for independence?"

The SAT II test appears to be effective in forcing students to draw comparisons between civilizations and societies, assuming the exam has questions such as the sample question provided by the College Board. This question asked students to identify the European practice that most closely resembles the "economienda system in the Spanish Empire in the Americas."

The tests often ask students to attribute quotations to particular individuals. The best questions, however, are those that require students to display an understanding of influential individuals in their historical context. For example, one sample question asks test-takers to identify what "advocates of Social Darwinism such as Herbert Spencer argued."

Despite all these good points, there are inherent difficulties in attempting to measure comprehension with multiple-choice questions alone. To its credit, the



College Board makes an effort to incorporate pictures of art and artifacts into tests; however, a student's ability to understand the cultural and artistic activities of present and past civilizations is better analyzed by essay questions. The same can be said for testing one's awareness of the philosophical ideas about government, morality, virtue, and justice that have served as the foundation of different global civilizations. Questions that merely require students to understand

basic definitions of key philosophical and economic concepts ring hollow.

The College Board makes the most of the multiple-choice format. The exam is balanced in the areas and cultures it covers, and in so far as is possible, it asks students to draw comparisons between cultures. Though the less desirable of the three, the test is still a good judge of how well students have learned world history.

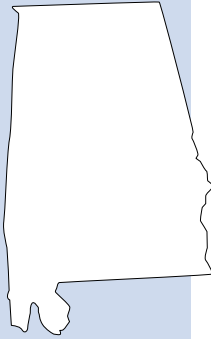
**ALABAMA**

**STANDARDS WEBSITE:**  
[http://www.alsde.edu/text/sections/doc\\_download.asp?section=54&id=2068](http://www.alsde.edu/text/sections/doc_download.asp?section=54&id=2068)

**YEAR STANDARDS APPROVED:**  
 2004

**SCORING BREAKDOWN**  
 Curriculum: ..... 68  
 Instructional: ..... 38  
 Total: ..... 106

**GRADE: ..... C**



American history across four years (in the fifth and sixth grades, and then again in tenth and eleventh grades, broken up on either side of 1877). Alabama would be better served if it spread its world history curriculum over three years.

Were students to leave high school with all of the information mentioned in the framework, they would be intellectually well-off. Unfortunately, the framework may be too broad for even the best students to learn in two years. In the first year, laudably, it addresses some issues other states often overlook, such as early China, African civilization, and pre-Columbian culture. But students are also required in that first year to cover Greek civilization, the rise and fall of Rome, the rise and fall of Islam, the transition from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, as well as a handful of other narratives. Similarly, the second-year curriculum makes specific mention of philosophers Hobbes and Locke, and does a good job with the commercial revolution in Europe, and the tensions between religious and secular authorities during the Reformation. The French Revolution is addressed with fair detail as are Latin American revolutions. Modern history is covered with a choice group of historically significant people and events.

Overall, Alabama’s curriculum framework is chronologically sound and includes much important content. Although it’s no model curriculum, it does supply an adequate body of information that is easy to follow and should serve students and teachers well.

Alabama’s world history curriculum is wrapped into its social studies standards, which are organized around four strands: economics, geography, history, and political science. The standards’ goals are to develop “literate and analytical students who have the ability to ... read, write, interpret, and apply information related” to the four strands. Moreover, they continue in typical social studies argot, students should “be able to make logical decisions that empower them to be responsible citizens who are active and valuable participants in the community.”

These are worthy enough goals, and Alabama lays out a course of study that is fairly successful in accomplishing them.

Each strand is explained in terms of its practical relevance. These explanations range from somewhat specific (“[students should] understand the free enterprise system and the American economy, including the role of entrepreneurs and the government”) to cosmically vague (“[students should] comprehend the relationship of the United States to the rest of the world”).

World history is supposed to be taught in the eighth and ninth grades, with material prior to 1500 taught in eighth grade—material after 1500 taught the next year. Why the state compresses so much material into so little time is perplexing, given that it spreads out its requirements for

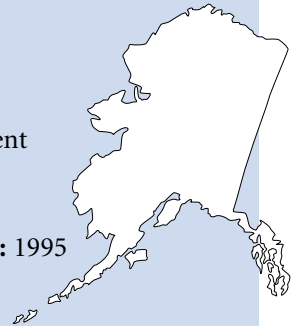
**ALASKA**

**STANDARDS WEBSITE:**  
<http://www.educ.state.ak.us/ContentStandards/History.html>

**YEAR STANDARDS APPROVED:** 1995

**SCORING BREAKDOWN**  
 Curriculum: ..... 12  
 Instructional: ..... 0  
 Total: ..... 12

**GRADE: ..... F**



The Alaska standards for world history are an utter failure. There is no specific section or document that addresses what parts of world history should be taught, let alone any mention of how it should be taught or when. The information available supplies no useful guidance to teachers, parents, or students, and it does not ensure, or even go so far as to encourage, students to learn about historical events and why they are important. The standards ask that students:

1. Understand that history is a record of human experience that links the past to the present and the future;
2. Understand historical themes through factual knowledge of time, places, ideas, institutions, cultures, people and events;
3. Develop the skills and processes of historical inquiry;
4. Be able to integrate historical knowledge with historical skill to participate effectively as a citizen and as a lifelong learner.

This loose language could be tolerated were it substantiated with historical detail and specific content, but it isn't. Indeed, the title "content standard" is a glaring misnomer, as the document provides neither content nor standards.

The second category would be the right place to include world history content. Rather than offering a chronological outline of facts, cultures, and events, however, Alaska has only an 18-line list of concepts that students should somehow absorb. For example, they are asked to "comprehend the forces of change and continuity that shape human history." But rather than providing teachers with details or facts to work with, the state provides these meaningless examples: "[Students should understand] the consequences of peace and violent conflict to societies and their cultures" and "major developments in societies as well as changing patterns related to class, ethnicity, race, and gender."

Alaska states that students should "understand that history is a fundamental connection that unifies all fields of human understanding and endeavor," and should "recognize the importance of time, ideas, institutions, people, places, cultures, and events in understanding large historical patterns." It even goes on to say that students should "understand that the student is important in history," without mentioning that, say, Napoleon is important in history.

There are a few redeeming qualities in the Alaska standards. For example, the state addresses geography more thoroughly than it does history. Not well, but within the vague information provided there is room for a successful treatment of the subject by a knowledgeable teacher. The approach to "Government & Citizenship," though nebulous, does mention that students should understand U.S. economics and America's role in the world.

Looking at the standards alone, however, there is no reason to believe that an Alaskan student leaving high school will know the difference between the Franco-Prussian War and Afghan-Soviet War, or will know who came first, De Gaulle or Talleyrand. In the Last Frontier State, a coherent state standard is still far off in the uncharted wilderness.

## ARIZONA

### STANDARDS WEBSITE:

<http://www.ade.state.az.us/standards/sstudies/standard1.asp>

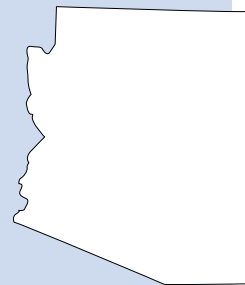
### YEAR STANDARDS APPROVED:

2005

### SCORING BREAKDOWN

Curriculum: .....	83
Instructional: .....	49
Total: .....	132

**GRADE: ..... B**



In its introduction, Arizona's social studies standards correctly, and unabashedly, say that because "most United States institutions and ideals trace their origins through Europe, the study of Western Civilizations is a central feature of the standards." The document then goes on to say that students should analyze "patterns and relationships within and among world cultures such as economic competition and interdependence, age-old ethnic enmities, and political and military alliances." The standards follow through and incorporate world history into the curriculum as few states do. They well deserve a top mark.

The standards are divided into five categories—readiness, foundations, essentials, focus, and proficiency—and are easy to follow. In the early grades, students learn basic history skills and how to use them to examine history. Later, students are asked to apply these skills in a more sophisticated manner (e.g., “Apply chronological and spatial thinking to understand the meaning, implications, and import of historical and current events.”).

World history content is addressed directly and chronologically. Key information is clearly laid out; geographic, economic, political, and social dimensions are addressed; and the standards maintain their clarity and comprehensiveness throughout. World history begins in sixth grade with a look at ancient civilizations. Greece and Rome are treated with sufficient rigor, and Socrates, Alexander the Great, Cleopatra, Julius Caesar, and Augustus are mentioned specifically. A welcome addition is ancient China.

Students are encouraged to understand multiple dimensions of each culture, from government to technology to agriculture. A good example is the attention paid to world religions. Students are asked to learn in-depth about Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and their impact on their respective cultures.

The Reformation and Renaissance are treated thoroughly, with enough detail to be rich, but carefully selected so as not to be cumbersome. Post-Renaissance history is addressed in high school. Again, the standards are coherent and thorough. Revolutions of the eighteenth century are addressed and include a mention of Simon Bolivar. The industrial revolution is covered broadly, with attention paid to “the impact of the growth of population, rural-to-urban migrations, growth of industrial cities, and emigration out of Europe.” Modern world history is also addressed smartly, with good approaches to both World Wars. Rather than simply providing a chronology of the wars, Arizona includes topics like “the human costs of the mechanization of war such as the machine gun, airplane, gasoline, submarine, trench warfare, and tanks.” These points are helpful in capturing some of the meat of history, not just its skeleton.

Beyond this basic outline of history, a hallmark of Arizona’s standards is their deft weaving together of complementary materials throughout the curriculum.

For example, while all states address geography, they frequently devote only one semester to the subject. Arizona integrates geography throughout its history standards. It does the same with science, art, architecture, and philosophy.

But the standards are not without flaws. It is somewhat of a mystery why Arizona’s otherwise first-rate standards would gloss over the period between the fall of the Roman Empire and the rise of Medieval Europe. This 500-year span was once called the “Dark Ages,” but no more. Unfortunately, Grand Canyon State students are kept in the dark about this. Moreover, little attention is paid to the rise of Islam in the seventh century. There is only one mention of the French Revolution: students should understand “challenges to absolute monarchy, including the French Revolution.” It is not as if students should be required to read Carlyle, but a period as important to modern democracy as the French Revolution deserves slightly more color.

Despite these minor flaws, Arizona’s standards are top-notch. The state claims that its “very first priority is to prepare [its] young people for the office of citizen.” Its attentive approach to world history standards suggests it’s doing that.

## ARKANSAS

### STANDARDS WEBSITE:

<http://arkedu.state.ar.us/curriculum/benchmarks.html#Social>

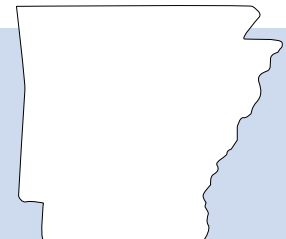
### YEAR STANDARDS APPROVED:

2000

### SCORING BREAKDOWN

Curriculum: .....	25
Instructional: .....	13
Total: .....	38

**GRADE: ..... F**



Arkansas’s social studies standards claim to “provide a broad conceptual framework which teachers can use to

organize integrated social studies units for the lower grades or discipline-based curriculum in the higher grades.” Toward that end, the standards employ five strands—time, continuity and change; people, places and environments; power, authority and governance; production distribution and consumption; and social sciences processes and skills—to give students a broad overview of what they should know. Many states use a similar breakdown and some states do it well. Regrettably, Arkansas is not one of them.

It is never made clear just what students are expected to know upon graduating high school. This problem could be fixed if the standards provided suitable references to actual historical events and people—both of which are 100 percent absent.

Rather than asking students to look at the birth of Christ or the fall of the Soviet Union, for example, students are encouraged to “evaluate major turning points in history.” Rather than discussing the Black Plague, the Trojan Horse, or the change in energy markets during the industrial age, students are asked to “analyze and evaluate the history, causes, consequences and possible solutions to persisting issues such as health, security, resource allocation, economic development, and environmental quality.” Rather than mentioning the struggle for a balance of power in the wake of the Napoleonic wars, students are encouraged to “probe the interdependencies of nations.” This approach does nothing to ensure that students learn world history.

What few details are mentioned in Arkansas’s standards appear in a supplemental section called “Scenarios for the Classroom.” Here, we find specific references to a few actual historical details. Operation Desert Storm is mentioned, as are Hobbes and Locke, and free market economic systems. While these add some depth to the standards portion of the document, they provide very limited guidance for teachers, students, textbook publishers, test-makers, etc.

Given these problems, it’s only natural that students in the Natural State will probably leave high school with a complete lack of factual understanding of world history.

## CALIFORNIA

**STANDARDS WEBSITE:** <http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/hstmain.asp>

**YEAR STANDARDS APPROVED:** 2005

### SCORING BREAKDOWN

Curriculum: .....	110
Instructional: .....	57
Total: .....	167

**GRADE: ..... A**



California’s premise is that “history is a story well told.” It is puzzling that more states do not figure this out.

The state’s social studies standards, which include its world history requirements, run some 200 pages long. They’re largely in narrative format and full of pictures, but virtually free of bullet points, charts, grids, and rubrics. They emphasize that history should be taught chronologically, that its story should be told well, and that major events should be covered in-depth rather than by skimming enormous amounts of material. All of these things raise the reader’s expectations. The standards themselves meet, and often exceed, these expectations.

World history instruction begins in sixth grade by examining events from the ancient world to 500 C.E. In seventh grade, students continue their study with the medieval period and early modern times. They return to world history in tenth grade and study the modern world from 1789 to the present. This three-year program meshes with the state’s American history curriculum to give students both a global context and an idea of how America fits within the broader narrative of world history.

The actual content sections are superb. World religions are addressed in an easy to follow and useful way. Rather than just saying that students should understand Islam, for example, California asks that its ninth graders recognize “Islam’s continuity with Judaism and Christianity in its proclamation of belief in one God; its belief that God’s will has been given final expression in the Koran in words revealed to the last and the greatest prophet,

Mohammad; and its observance of the ‘Five Pillars of Islam.’” This treatment is consistent throughout the standards. Coverage of imperialism takes the form of a case study of India. Matters of great importance to the modern world, such as the rise of industrialism and the role of tyranny and totalitarianism in the twentieth century, the World Wars, and the role of democracy, are treated fairly and thoroughly.

The only downside to California’s approach is that its standards are so long that some parents and teachers may not read them. That said, standards should not foster lethargy. The length of California’s standards never seems to obscure their clarity or intent.

Standards writers in states looking for good world history models may well turn to California’s and shout, “Eureka!”

## COLORADO

### STANDARDS WEBSITE:

[http://www.cde.state.co.us/index\\_stnd.htm](http://www.cde.state.co.us/index_stnd.htm)

**YEAR STANDARDS APPROVED:** 1995

### SCORING BREAKDOWN

Curriculum: ..... 53  
 Instructional: ..... 28  
 Total: ..... 81

**GRADE:** ..... **D**

Colorado’s standards describe the lessons of studying history by saying: “[History] helps students develop a sense of ‘shared humanity’; . . . to discern the difference between fact and conjecture; to grasp the complexity of historical cause . . . and to be prepared for the irrational, the accidental, in human affairs, and to grasp the power of ideas and character in history.”

The state tries to impart these valuable lessons to students by blending process-related and content-related criteria, which

the state combines to create a six-point standard for history. The process-based criteria, while vague, are largely unobjectionable. Colorado students are expected to “reconstruct the time structure and identify connections found in historical narratives.” They are also expected to “evaluate data within the social, political, and economic context in which it was created, testing its credibility, and evaluating its biases.” These are useful skills that students should possess upon graduating. But in order to teach them properly, these conceptual skills must be presented in tandem with a comprehensive content package. This is where Colorado’s standards disappoint.

The state’s simplistic and superficial approach to content is most evident in its treatment of some of the twentieth century’s signal events. Consider this bullet point from the standards: Students should be able to “analyze the causes and events of major wars of the contemporary era and the resulting changes in the distribution of power (for example, World War I, World War II, Vietnam War, the Russian invasion of Afghanistan).” Mentioning the Afghan-Soviet war is a rare treat in world history standards, but otherwise, this treatment of these four conflicts is utterly insufficient. Each one of the four could be addressed in more detail to increase the likelihood that teachers would treat them thoroughly.

Structurally, Colorado’s standards are often tough to follow. The state integrates both U.S. and world history into the same document, but coherence and clarity suffer. Teachers will struggle to figure out what they should teach in which class. That said, the history standards should receive some praise for breadth. Many scientific, economic, cultural, artistic, and philosophical issues are at least mentioned. And though the standards are vague about content, they do manage a better discussion of religion than most states. The Centennial State dedicates three pages of text and an entire standard to religion and philosophy. Major religions are discussed from a number of different angles, including their cultural aspects and theological components. This is a welcome level of seriousness. Why the state doesn’t handle other world history topics as well is puzzling.

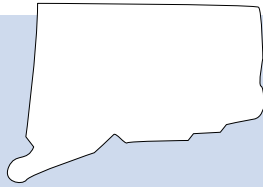
The Colorado standards were approved in 1995 and could use a little freshening up.



## CONNECTICUT

### STANDARDS WEBSITE:

[www.state.ct.us/sde/dtl/curriculum/currkey3.htm](http://www.state.ct.us/sde/dtl/curriculum/currkey3.htm)



**YEAR STANDARDS APPROVED:** 1998

### SCORING BREAKDOWN

Curriculum: .....	60
Instructional: .....	18
Total: .....	78

**GRADE:** ..... D

The Connecticut Social Studies Curriculum Framework opens with a general claim: the purpose of social studies is to create responsible citizens. The broad program goals it lays out to accomplish this include such points as, “analyze the historical roots and the current complexity of relations among nations in an increasingly interdependent world,” and “apply concepts from the study of history, culture, economics and government to the understanding of the relationships among science, technology and society.” The goals are worthy enough, and students graduating high school should be able to reach them, but these standards give one little confidence they will.

These standards are so frustrating because their conceptual framework is fairly complete, but they lack detail. They cover the beginnings of human society, early civilizations and the pastoral people, classical traditions, world empires and major religions, and what the state calls “expanding zones of exchange [300-1000], intensified zones of interactions [1000-1500]” and “emergence of the first global age [1450-1770].” From there, eighteenth century European history is the focus, as are the major events of the twentieth century. It’s not a bad chronological road map, but it lacks any real group of facts or body of information that students should know within these periods. For example, students of world history are asked to “use

historical thinking skills to develop an understanding of major historical periods.” But this point is never substantiated. Similarly, students are expected to “describe, explain and analyze political, economic and social consequences that came about as the resolution of a conflict.” But the standards do not mention any actual conflict. The document builds a chronological skeleton, but never puts flesh on it. Such content deficiencies in world history standards are common, but they are particularly pronounced in Connecticut.

Also frustrating is that the standards lack any grade-specific instructions and lump the world history curriculum into the morass of other social studies curricula. All that the standards reader takes from the document are the broad concepts that students should assimilate at some point in grades K-4, 5-8, and 9-12. Consequently, parents and teachers will have trouble deciphering what Connecticut expects its students to know, and when it expects them to know it.

The failure to treat historical facts does not entirely doom the standards, however. The approach to geography is sound, and they place a welcome emphasis on the meaning of demography and how different cultures and regions interact. They also ask that students be able to “use maps, globes, charts and databases to analyze and suggest solutions to real world problems,” and to “locate at least 50 major countries and physical features on a map or globe.” These are skills that other states do not address as specifically.

Connecticut’s section on international relations, though vague, is better than most. While no mention is made of specific historical content, the standards outline America’s role in international affairs. They also ask students to “identify and analyze the various domestic, political, economic and social interests which play roles in the development of foreign policy,” and to “develop proposals regarding solutions to significant international, political, economic, demographic or environmental issues.” The framework could serve students well, were the state to add some historical meat.

## DELAWARE

### STANDARDS WEBSITE:

[www.doe.state.de.us/Standards/Social\\_studies/standard.htm#HISTORY](http://www.doe.state.de.us/Standards/Social_studies/standard.htm#HISTORY)

**YEAR STANDARDS APPROVED: 2000**

### SCORING BREAKDOWN

Curriculum: ..... 44  
Instructional: ..... 35  
Total: ..... 79

**GRADE: ..... D**



Delaware's social studies standards are built around "end of cluster expectations [sic]," which are designed around a few key goals. At the end of each expectation, the standards state, the material will "serve as the basis for Social Studies assessment items in the Delaware Student Testing Program." The combination of these expectations and the state's evident commitment to accomplishing them should make for an intriguing package, but The First State does not follow through.

For history, Delaware lays out four expectations. The first three emphasize skills and are set forth in relatively straightforward fashion. They give teachers and parents a good idea of what students should be able to do. The fourth expectation focuses on historical content. "Students will develop historical knowledge of major events and phenomena in world history," and by the end of eleventh grade, they're asked to "develop an understanding of recent and modern world history and its connections to United States history."

The content is organized and, for the most part, smartly selected. At times the descriptions could use more detail, however, especially if students will be tested on the information. For example, World War II receives only three lines: students are asked to describe its global consequences, but the standards state only that teachers should teach the "multiple causes of World War II" and "the global scope and human cost" of the conflict. Knowledgeable teachers could do this, but this vague outline does nothing to ensure that students under less capable instructors will learn much of anything.

But the most glaring problem is that in high school, world history is limited to the period after 1500 C.E.

Though the ancient world is taught in the early years, it's unreasonable to think that high school students launching into the Reformation and Renaissance will remember much of what was taught to them as youngsters.

If the state were to correct the lack of ancient history at the high school level, it would have some of the better standards in the union. Delaware seems committed, it just needs to add the dots (historical content) to its standards and connect them.

## DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

### STANDARDS WEBSITE:

<http://www.k12.dc.us/dcps/curriculum/content/scnd-stl.htm>

**YEAR STANDARDS APPROVED:**

### SCORING BREAKDOWN

Curriculum: ..... 44  
Instructional: ..... 30  
Total: ..... 74

**GRADE:..... D**

The District of Columbia Public Schools Social Studies curriculum was designed to "empower students to develop their own perspectives regarding people, issues, eras, events and places," as well as "prepare well-informed and analytical readers who are intelligent judges of ideas, events and institutions past and present." Unfortunately, even though the District of Columbia depends upon the national content standards developed by organizations such as the National Education and Improvement Council, its world history standards are largely devoid of substance and specificity.

The standards claim to emphasize "the Eastern Hemisphere (Africa, Asia, Europe) from human origins through early and classical ancient civilizations" in the sixth grade. But they don't mention Egypt, Mesopotamia, the Indus Valley, or Shang China. These omissions are inexcusable.

The high school standards are better, but still lack the necessary details that can help teachers build classroom curricula. For example, students are asked to "interpret the impact of



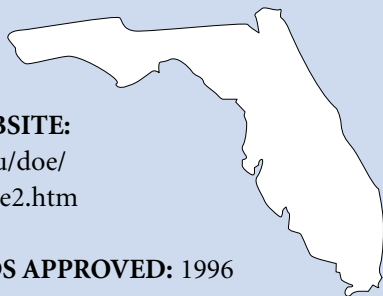
major events and turning points on the growth and development of the contemporary world,” and identify “key dates, events, places and people during historical periods.” A tall order made nearly impossible because there are no details.

Cursory attention is paid to important historical periods such as the Renaissance, Enlightenment, and Industrial Revolution. Ideologies such as liberalism, conservatism, egalitarianism, democracy, and socialism are listed like so many grocery items.

There are some bright spots. The District of Columbia is unique in its focus on the effects of maritime power and international trade on world history. These critical historical narratives are ignored by all other states. Also, the standards excel in their treatment of Africa. Students are expected to “describe the three major periods of African history; the Golden Age of Empire, the Age of European Colonization, and the Modern Age of Independence,” in addition to developing an understanding of North African history and culture for a comparison to the Middle East. Whereas only a few states mention Africa to their students in the middle school years, the District of Columbia requires a fairly comprehensive study.

Overall, the District of Columbia needs to revisit a large portion of its standards before it can provide its students the tools to “develop a comprehensive understanding of the world, its many cultures, and ways of life.”

## FLORIDA



**STANDARDS WEBSITE:**  
<http://www.firn.edu/doe/curric/prek12/frame2.htm>

**YEAR STANDARDS APPROVED:** 1996

### SCORING BREAKDOWN

Curriculum: .....	18
Instructional: .....	13
Total: .....	31

**GRADE: ..... F**

The Sunshine State standards claim to “identify what students should know and be able to do [sic] for the 21st

century.” That vague goal, unfortunately, is largely unrealized when it comes to world history.

The state addresses the entirety of world history in 21 bullet points on a single page. It should come as no surprise that it is impossible to cover world history from the “beginning of time” to “Western and Eastern civilizations since the Renaissance” in that brief write-up.

The list includes a number of important cultures, events, and themes, but nothing is addressed with any depth or sincerity. Atop this fundamental failure, there is no attempt to supply any grade specificity in the high school years. Florida’s approach is so superficial that it is, for all intents and purposes, worthless.

There’s nothing glowing in the Sunshine State’s standards, and little worth redeeming. At the very least, the state should supply some actual content to the standards themselves and specify at the high school level what material should be learned in which grades. But the best course of action would most likely be to dispense with what the state has and adopt another state’s standards—Floridians could hardly do worse.

Thankfully, Florida is scheduled to review and revise their social studies and history standards in 2007.

## GEORGIA



**STANDARDS WEBSITE:**  
<http://www.georgiastandards.org/socialstudies.aspx>

**YEAR STANDARDS APPROVED:**  
 2005

### SCORING BREAKDOWN

Curriculum: .....	100
Instructional: .....	56
Total: .....	156

**GRADE: ..... A**

Like other states, Georgia’s standards spell out lofty goals; unlike other states, Georgia attains them.

The standards are web-driven, giving teachers easy access to online standards, lesson plans, and web resources, among other things. This gives the state's standards a degree of flexibility because items can be quickly added to keep up with changing expectations or events. Moreover, lesson plans and related materials vary in complexity, allowing teachers to select the ones that best fit the classes they're teaching. But with this flexibility comes a measure of confusion. It's unclear at times if a link leads to material that the state asks students to know, or merely recommends they know. On balance, however, this approach is better than worse.

As for content, Georgia's Performance Standards for World History are superb at the high school level. The standards say that the "high school world history course provides students with a comprehensive, intensive study of major events and themes." This simple promise is substantiated with a series of well thought-out standards and expectations. Content is clearly presented with comprehensible headlines and relevant bullet points. Students begin with ancient history and are expected to understand "the origins, structures and interactions of complex societies in the ancient Eastern Mediterranean from 3500 BCE to 500 BCE." This provides a good base for understanding the Mediterranean basin as the root of early civilizations. The study of classical history is thorough with ample use of proper names. Key narratives such as the expansion of the Islamic World between 600 and 1300 are not overlooked. And religion's role in shaping world cultures and events is handled well throughout.

Modern history is treated with an eye toward democratic values and events important to American history. When looking at the age of revolutions, for example, students are expected to examine Asia's interactions with the West. Events and people to study include the Opium War, the Taiping Rebellion, and Commodore Perry. This is the type of content specificity that other states should emulate.

The Russian Revolution is not given short shrift, mentioning even Stalin's first Five-Year Plan. In the section on World War II, major battles are mentioned, ideologies addressed, and technological and economic issues covered. The level of seriousness with which Georgia treats the subtleties of history is encouraging indeed.

The Peach State's standards are ripe in detail, and Georgia's students will be well-prepared to take their place in the world community if teachers and scholars use the standards properly.

## HAWAII

### STANDARDS WEBSITE:

<http://standardstoolkit.k12.hi.us/index.html>

**YEAR STANDARDS APPROVED:** 2005

### SCORING BREAKDOWN

Curriculum: .....	23
Instructional: .....	15
Total: .....	38

**GRADE: ..... F**

The Hawaii Social Studies Content Standards are truly weak. They begin with a foreword from the state's superintendent: "Research on effective schools tells us that one of the most important elements in improving the results of education is being clear about standards, what it is the students are expected to learn." Unfortunately, Hawaii fails to accomplish that goal.

The standards approach world history by listing a half page of things that students should know. This short list is grossly inadequate. Mention is made of the early river civilizations, and passing attention is paid to China. Greece and Rome win a few bullet points and Plato, Socrates, and Aristotle are noted. But these modest successes are not the norm.

More typical of Hawaii's expectations are statements such as this: students should understand the "Mongol empire and its impact on Eurasia." A mention of Genghis Khan would make sense, or better yet, a brief discussion of his impact on history. But the reader will search in vain for such specificity. The outlines of Europe's development are loosely sketched. Mention is made of the age of exploration, the age of reason, and the revolutions in England and France. But there is no thorough discussion. Apparently, we are to assume that all teachers and parents know their way around the major contours of these three ages. India's experience with colonialism is touched upon and the World Wars get a line or two.

While this list succeeds in naming some of the major events in world history, it does not engender any confidence that Hawaii's students will know anything specific about them upon graduating high school.

Yet that is not the most troubling aspect of these standards. What bothers the careful reader is not how the list is presented, nor what it does or does not include, nor the lack of grade specificity and detail. Rather, it's this statement: "This framework is not a checklist of subjects that must be taught. Instead it provides possible topics for implementing the history standards." Why not have the lists serve as checklists, even as mandates? Students should be expected to know certain things leaving high school. Giving an incomplete list of suggestions as opposed to concrete requirements is counterproductive.

The way the standards are presented now, it is not clear that Hawaii's students will learn anything about world history. The current standard may as well open with a sentence telling teachers to teach whatever they please. That's one teachers could surely check off.

## IDAHO

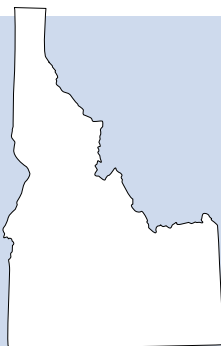
**STANDARDS WEBSITE:**  
<http://boardofed.idaho.gov/saa/standards.asp>

**YEAR STANDARDS APPROVED:**  
 2006

### SCORING BREAKDOWN

Curriculum: .....	11
Instructional: .....	3
Total: .....	14

**GRADE: ..... F**



Buried in a wide-ranging standards document of some 300 pages, Idaho slips in a revealing line about how it expects world history to be taught. "Current world affairs and geography will be integrated into all social studies instruction. Courses such as geography, sociology, world affairs, and world history may be offered as

electives, not to be counted as a social studies requirement." In short, world history needn't be taught. Individual districts can choose to teach it, or other subjects. Though some undoubtedly will teach world history, it's reasonable to assume that many students will not receive any instruction in this field before graduating high school.

That said, the standards do provide some guidance for students lucky enough to study world history. In sixth grade, they begin to examine the history of human civilization and to learn "how human communities populated the major regions of the world and adapted to a variety of environments," and how "empire building and trade contributed to increasingly complex relations among people." Within each of these expectations is a group of more specific subpoints, none of which includes any reference to actual historical events or names of key figures and relevant civilizations.

The standards move swiftly from their brief treatment of the ancient world to geography. Geography is, in fact, treated with relative care, compared to the treatment of world history. Some mention is made of migratory trends and how geography changes the way cultures relate to one another. However, there are no details, nor any mention of teaching students how to read and use maps. At this point, the standards switch gears to American history and leave world history by the wayside.

Some issues that would normally be addressed in courses on world history appear within sections about U.S. history. For example, the broader Western roots of democracy are cursorily addressed. Better than nothing at all, but not much.

Idaho's standards are easy to read, but their occasional satisfactory performance does not excuse the fact that the state does not address world history with any specificity. A vague bundle of optional themes for children in sixth through eighth grades that lacks historical detail does not constitute a reasonable approach, even by the most lenient critics.

## ILLINOIS

### STANDARDS WEBSITE:

[http://www.isbe.net/ils/social\\_science/standards.htm](http://www.isbe.net/ils/social_science/standards.htm)

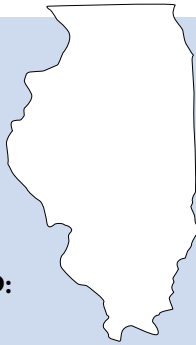
### YEAR STANDARDS APPROVED:

2004

### SCORING BREAKDOWN

Curriculum: ..... 48  
Instructional: ..... 26  
Total: ..... 74

**GRADE: ..... D**



Illinois says that the importance of social studies is to “help people develop the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world.” The study of history, the document goes on to say, should enable students to “understand events, trends, individuals and movements shaping the history of Illinois, the United States and other nations,” stressing that “students who can examine and analyze the events of the past have a powerful tool for understanding the events of today and the future . . . [and] can better define their own roles as participating citizens.” These statements point teachers and students in the right direction. Unfortunately, the standards won’t get them there.

World history is divided into eleven sections: Prehistory to 2000 B.C.E., early civilizations, nonwestern empires and tropical civilizations, the rise of pastoral peoples, classical civilizations, fragmentation and interaction of civilizations, centralization of power in different regions, the early modern world, global unrest, change and revolution, and global encounters and imperialism and their effects on the twentieth century. It’s a good categorization, but the categories must be backed up with historical detail. They are not.

Students begin world history in junior high school when they study classical civilization. Greece and Rome share the curriculum, surprisingly and encouragingly, with the Han dynasty and the Gupta empire. Students are asked to “describe the origins of Western political

ideas and institutions” (e.g., Greek democracy, Roman republic, Magna Carta and common law, the Enlightenment). But the good start isn’t followed up. The standards cover the entire political history of the world in half a page, much of it vague and unhelpful (e.g., “Analyze world wide consequences of isolated political events, including the events triggering the Napoleonic Wars and World Wars I and II.”) Worse, much of the actual political content of history is overlooked or treated superficially.

To its credit, Illinois emphasizes issues that are not discussed in other standards. For example, the Land of Lincoln is eager to impart the economic dimension of world history. Students are asked to “describe major economic trends from 1000 to 1500 C.E. including long distance trade, banking, specialization of labor, commercialization, urbanization and technological and scientific progress.” This focus is all too uncommon in most states’ world history standards. But this doesn’t make up for the significant historical details omitted from the standards.

These standards are by no means the worst of the worst, and in places they’re good. But unless they’re updated with significant amounts of historical detail, the standards will keep Illinois students in the dark about the broader world around them.

## INDIANA

### STANDARDS WEBSITE:

[http://doe.state.in.us/standards/standards2000\\_sstudies.html](http://doe.state.in.us/standards/standards2000_sstudies.html)

### YEAR STANDARDS APPROVED:

2000

### SCORING BREAKDOWN

Curriculum: ..... 103  
Instructional: ..... 58  
Total: ..... 161

**GRADE: ..... A**



Indiana’s fine World History and Civilization standards begin with open letters to students and parents. The state

urges students to refer to the state standards as a guide for what they should know at the end of each year and asks that they “review this guide with your teachers and share it with your parents and family.” The letter to the parents continues: “Nothing will have a bigger impact on your student’s success than your involvement in his or her education.” It then suggests twelve things that parents can do to help their students succeed. While these documents are aspirational, this collaborative approach is indicative of Indiana’s genuine dedication to helping its students learn world history well. From the first page, Indiana’s standards do very little to disappoint.

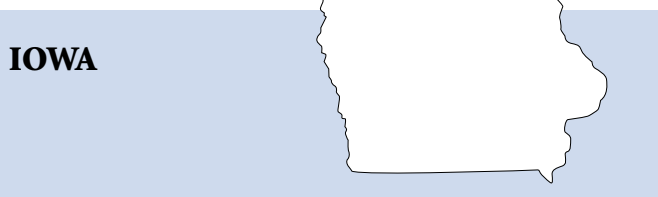
The treatment of world history is coherent, thoughtful, easy to follow, and generally comprehensive. The standards are organized chronologically into eleven parts that are described in detail. This approach provides a simple guide for what teachers should teach, what students should learn, and what parents should expect.

Without being exhaustive, all major contours of world history are addressed in detail and with balance. Indiana stresses what is truly important without losing sight of topics of lesser significance. In the section detailing major civilizations from 1000 B.C.E. to 1500 C.E., for example, the standards focus on Asia, but they do not neglect Sub-Saharan Africa or Pre-Columbian America.

The standards are particularly good at incorporating religion into the fabric of history. For example, one requirement asks students to “Differentiate hierarchies in the social structures of early civilized peoples and explain the influence of religious belief systems upon ancient governmental systems, including analysis of the importance of Judaism.”

The standards conclude with a particularly helpful “Scope and Sequence” section, laying out when students should know what material, and how each subject should fit within the broader educational experience.

Such attention to detail sets Hoosier State standards apart.

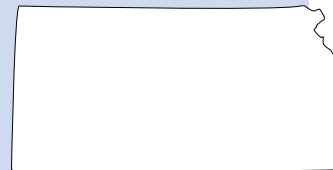


Iowa does not offer any history or social studies standards.

## KANSAS

### STANDARDS WEBSITE:

<http://www.ksde.org/outcomes/socialstudies.html>



**YEAR STANDARDS APPROVED:** 2005

### SCORING BREAKDOWN

Curriculum: .....	81
Instructional: .....	50
Total: .....	131

**GRADE: ..... B**

Kansas has recently approved a revised edition of its history standards, and the state appears to have taken the project seriously. Unlike most standards, which begin with florid rhetoric, Kansas maps out how readers, such as teachers, administrators, or college faculty members, might be able to use the new document. This basic recognition of the relevant audiences and stakeholders in Kansas education is welcome.

The overarching goal for studying history, the state says, is to teach students to use “a working knowledge and understanding of significant individuals, groups, ideas, events, eras and developments in the history of . . . the world, utilizing essential analytical and research skills.” While most states opt to stress skills and thematic understanding, Kansas stresses content. The standards are full of useful historical detail and not shy about naming names.

By the end of high school, students are expected to know how to compare the rise of constitutionalism in Britain with political structures in France. They are asked to understand the English Civil War and Glorious Revolution, and encouraged to understand selections from the English Bill of Rights. This level of historical specificity and detail is something that only the best standards display, and Kansas deserves praise for it.

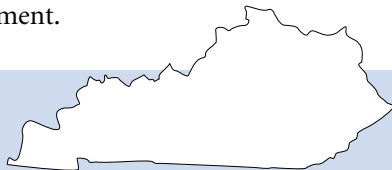
The problem with the Kansas standards is that they’re overly Eurocentric. While there is mention of the spread of Shi’ism in Persia, the establishment of Islamic rule in India, restriction of human rights in King Leopold’s

Congo, and the creation of Pakistan, most of the standards focus on the European narrative. The result is a document strong in stressing the rise of enlightened free-market democratic capitalism, but weaker in teaching how that rise fits in to the rest of the world's story.

The standards also have structural flaws. Like many states, Kansas splits world history instruction into two courses: one in sixth grade, which covers the periods from ancient history through medieval times; and one in high school, which covers the Renaissance to the modern era. The problem with this approach is that some of the most important historical narratives are taught at a very early age. By the time students return to world history in high school, they've lost the basic chronological flow. Moreover, the standards seek to integrate subjects by employing a code system that tries to point out links and bridges. Even after familiarizing oneself with the format and learning the code system, readers will find the method needlessly complicated.

Kansas's standards are better than most. Their recent revisions are serious, and students, teachers, and parents will benefit. Were they to treat history before 1500 in later grades, and ease the dimensions of the standards that are unfriendly to readers, the state would have an even stronger document.

## KENTUCKY



### STANDARDS WEBSITE:

<http://www.education.ky.gov/KDE/Instructional+Resources/Curriculum+Documents+and+Resources/Core+Content+for+Assessment/Core+Content+for+Assessment+ver+4.0+for+Contractors.htm>

**YEAR STANDARDS APPROVED:** Adoption pending

### SCORING BREAKDOWN

Curriculum: .....	12
Instructional: .....	5
Total: .....	17

**GRADE: .....** F

Kentucky's Core Content for Social Studies Assessment is still in draft form, but because it is slated for adoption in fall 2006 with no significant changes, I have opted to review this over the 1999 version. Though standards rarely change dramatically from near-complete drafts to the final product, the state should consider it in this case. The present draft is sorely deficient. It claims to represent the content "that is fair game for inclusion on the state assessment," and that "it captures the 'big ideas' of social studies." But this is hardly the case.

The standards are organized by grade levels around so-called assertions. There are two for history which are supposed to reflect the "Big Ideas" of social studies.

\*History is an account of human activities that is interpretive in nature.

\*The history of the United States is a chronicle of a diverse people and the nation they formed. The history of the world is a chronicle of human activities and human societies.

These "big ideas" are so vague as to be meaningless. The specific content standards are no better. The history of the world from 1500 to the present is covered in six bullet points in just over half a page of text.

Major historical narratives are entirely absent. For example, students are asked to know how "the Age of Revolution brought about changes in science, thought, government, and industry." No specific revolutions to be studied are named, however. What is the purpose of content standards if no real content is offered? Take, for example, the expectation that students should be able to "analyze how history is a series of connected events shaped by multiple cause and effect relationships, tying past to present." Why not have a clear outline of the basic chronology of world history so that students know what events and what causes shaped the past and present? Another example of this laissez-faire attitude towards detail is the standards' asking students to "analyze how nationalism, militarism, and imperialism led to world conflicts and the rise of totalitarian governments (e.g., European imperialism in Africa, World War I, the Bolshevik Revolution, Nazism)." While it mentions specific events, it does not provide enough detail. Mentioning the fact that World



War I happened and that it was loosely tied to ideas such as nationalism and militarism does not replace explaining why that is so and how it happened. Who was there? Why did it start? Who won? Why was it important? These are the types of questions that Kentucky needs to answer.

At their core, the standards are confusing. The Kentucky Board of Education website lists a number of auxiliary documents that support and add to the standards, such as suggested course plans, sample curricula from schools around the state, and sets of topics to be addressed. This material would be considerably more helpful were it incorporated into a single document.

The standards include a cumbersome numbering and code system, as well as an odd way of distinguishing between what’s required and what’s suggested. Approved content statements are in bold type, while supporting content statements are italicized. The document complicates this system by noting that “. . . if the list is not preceded by an e.g., the list is to be considered exhaustive and those items are the only items that are ‘fair game’ for assessment.” Why complicate the standards, when all that’s needed is a clear document outlining what information should be included in world history, how it should be addressed, and in what grades? Bluegrass State students deserve better.

## LOUISIANA

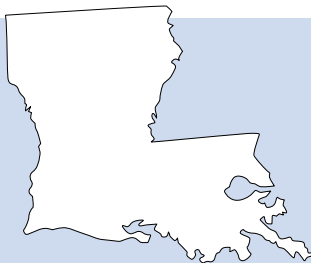
**STANDARDS WEBSITE:**  
<http://www.doe.state.la.us/1de/curriculum/home.html>

**YEAR STANDARDS APPROVED:** 1997

### SCORING BREAKDOWN

Curriculum: . . . . .	31
Instructional: . . . . .	7
Total: . . . . .	38

**GRADE:** . . . . . **F**



Louisiana’s Social Studies Content Standards claim to create a “rigorous framework [that] promotes local flexibility in curricular designs, course sequence, assess-

ment methods, and instructional strategies.” They go on to stress that “A reasonable balance between breadth of content and depth of inquiry must be achieved.” Like many states, Louisiana has chosen a combination of foundation skills and content-based instruction. This is the right recipe for an adequate standard, but the Bayou State stumbles in its execution.

History instruction is organized into three grade clusters: K-4, 5-8, and 9-12. While world history is touched upon in each of these, it never gets proper attention or sufficient rigor. The content standards are vague and often far off the mark. For example, the state’s K-4 world history standards absurdly ask 5 to 10 year olds to describe “the social and economic impact of major scientific and technological advancements.” This is reasonable for high school students, but it is unlikely that even the brightest fourth-grader could parse the ramifications of the invention of gunpowder.

Outlandish expectations are counter-balanced with obtuse statements about what students should be learning. For example, rather than providing details about the classical period, the state offers silly one-line expectations such as, students will spend their time “discussing and giving examples of technological and cultural innovation and change,” and “analyzing the origins, central idea and worldwide impact of major religious and philosophical traditions.”

While some states choose to teach the same material twice—once in middle school and again in high school—Louisiana has decided to “allow for mastery of needed content without detailed repetition and major omission.” This approach can yield serious gaps in historical understanding. Students study classical history in fifth grade and then are expected to meld that with modern history which is taught in eleventh grade.

The standards say that “the study of the great sweep of history explains the past so that citizens can understand the present and look toward the future.” But, based on these standards, Louisiana students will be no better prepared to understand the political storms around the world than New Orleans’ dykes were prepared for the perfect storms that ravaged the state in 2005.

## MAINE

### STANDARDS WEBSITE:

<http://www.state.me.us/education/lres/ss.htm>

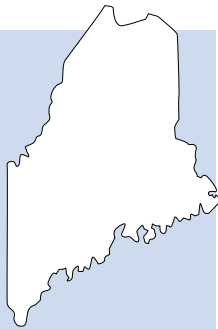
### YEAR STANDARDS APPROVED:

1997

### SCORING BREAKDOWN

Curriculum: .....	25
Instructional: .....	8
Total: .....	33

**GRADE: ..... F**



This is the only specific guidance on world history that teachers, parents, and students receive.

The standards stress that students should be able to “evaluate,” “analyze,” and “explain” history as much as to “identify,” “recognize,” or “describe” particular aspects of it using the contents supplied by the state. These skills are no doubt keystones of any education, but if Maine’s students are expected to learn them by using the content supplied, they will likely go underdeveloped.

In short, Maine’s standards are good at saying what skills students should have but fall short when establishing what they actually “should know.” With what the state now has, it is likely that Maine’s students will have difficulty understanding any kind of history, much less world history.

Maine’s Learning Results “express what students should know and be able to do at various checkpoints during their education,” pointing out that the standards “serve to focus discussion and to develop consensus on common goals for Maine education.” Maine is far more successful at defining the checkpoint goals, however, than at explaining what students should know. Its approach is heavy on rhetoric and light on actual historical content. The Pine Tree State justifies its thin content by placing that burden on individual schools, and that is why these standards fail.

The standards divide history into three sections: chronology; historical knowledge; and historical inquiry, analysis, and interpretation. Each section is further divided into grade clusters. Not until the secondary grades does world history receive concrete treatment, and even then what is offered is weak. Students are asked to “Identify and analyze major events and people that characterize each of the significant eras in the United States and world history,” focusing on:

- Emergence of Civilization to 1,000 BC
- The Classical Civilizations of the Mediterranean Basin, India, and China, 1,000 BCE-600 CE
- The Expansion and Interaction of Civilizations, 600-1450
- The Early Modern World, 1450-1800
- The World in the Nineteenth Century
- The World in the Contemporary Era

## MARYLAND

### STANDARDS WEBSITE:

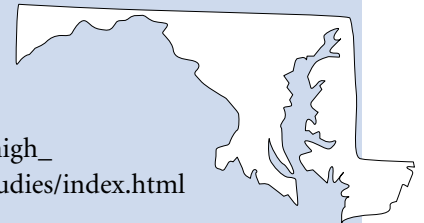
[http://mdk12.org/mspp/high\\_school/what\\_will/socialstudies/index.html](http://mdk12.org/mspp/high_school/what_will/socialstudies/index.html)

### YEAR STANDARDS APPROVED: 2000

### SCORING BREAKDOWN

Curriculum: .....	52
Instructional: .....	21
Total: .....	73

**GRADE: ..... D**



The intent of Maryland’s core learning curriculum is to stress the “importance of civic education which is necessary to be an informed, involved citizen who understands and supports democratic principles, institutions, and processes.” For world history, students are asked to understand political systems, peoples of the nation and world, geography, and economics.

Unfortunately, the state provides no chronological framework for learning these four areas. For example, students are asked to “evaluate the degree to which political institutions promote continuity and stability in a society” by looking at the development of kingdoms in West Africa, nation-states in Europe, constitutional



development in seventeenth century England, dynasties in China, and totalitarianism in the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany. Were each of these topics addressed as a chronological event in history, discreet but related, they would make more sense as a package. As presented, however, the relationship between these disparate events is obfuscated.

Maryland’s standards also lack grade specificity. The state’s rationale is that the standards “are not specific to a particular social studies course or grade-level social studies curriculum. Each social studies course presents a part of the whole goal statement appropriate to its objectives[sic].” The problem with this approach is that, for all its good intentions, Maryland’s teachers still lack a blueprint for teaching world history. After reading the standards, one has a vague idea of what basic areas and themes students should understand, but no idea about how that conceptual framework should turn into an instructional edifice.

On the whole, Maryland would benefit from more specificity in its world history standards. Were they to add more historical detail, teachers would have a better sense of how to teach world history, parents would understand what it is their kids should know, and students might even end up learning.

tion was “to enable man to judge for himself what will secure or endanger his freedom.” Massachusetts says it is the duty of schools to “impart to their students the learning necessary for an informed, reasoned, allegiance to the ideals of a free society.” This belief, the state says, rests on three principles:

1. Democracy is the worthiest form of human government ever conceived.
2. We cannot take democracy’s survival or its spread or its perfection in practice for granted.
3. We are convinced that democracy’s survival depends upon our transmitting to each new generation the political vision of liberty and equality that unites us as Americans.

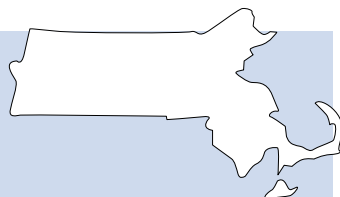
It’s a great start, and the Massachusetts standards do little to disappoint: They are grade specific, focused, balanced, rich in content, and could well serve as a model for other states and for the nation.

World history is addressed beginning in fourth grade, but focused treatment begins in high school. The standards are readable, easy to follow, and good about emphasizing events of significant importance without drowning students in detail. Throughout, emphasis is placed on democratic values as well as the evolution of personal freedom, individual liberty, and free market ideals.

The sections on Greece and Rome are particularly solid. While many states acknowledge that these ages were important, Massachusetts makes clear they are the bedrock of Western civilization. Students are expected to “explain why the government of ancient Athens is considered the beginning of democracy and explain the democratic political concepts developed in ancient Greece,” paying special attention to “the polis or city-state, civic participation and voting rights, legislative bodies, constitution writing and the rule of law.”

While many states stumble on world religions, and most skip over the period between the fall of Rome and the birth of the Middle Ages, Massachusetts addresses both with relevant detail and careful attention. The emergence and expansion of Islam is covered in depth, as is the Christian world’s interaction with the Muslim world. There are terrific sections on the history of India, China, Japan, and Korea until 1800 that are rich in names, dates,

## MASSACHUSETTS



**STANDARDS WEBSITE:**  
<http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/current.html>

**YEAR STANDARDS APPROVED:** 2003

### SCORING BREAKDOWN

Curriculum: ..... 106  
 Instructional: ..... 58  
 Total: ..... 164

**GRADE:** ..... A

The Bay State’s standards begin with a passionate, and welcome, argument for democratic values that remind the reader of Jefferson, whose vision for general educa-

and narratives without being overly dense or obscure. Cultural and physical geography are woven into the text in a reasonable and helpful way. The fall of the Ottoman Empire and the two World Wars are addressed in full, and include such tidbits as the Balfour Declaration and Italy’s invasion of Ethiopia in 1935.

In addition to the state’s success in presenting content, it has an interesting approach to teaching world history. Like many states, Massachusetts has separated the subject into two year-long courses in the upper grades. But rather than mandating that the first course be taught in eighth grade and the other in the tenth grade, Massachusetts lays out five different ‘pathways’ for grades 8-12. These pathways organize alternative sequences for schools to teach social studies: some place world history at the beginning, some towards the end, while some spread it across the high school years. This curricular flexibility adds to an already first-rate standard.

In the introduction, the state asks, “How can we avoid making all of this unto nothing more than just another, and perhaps longer, parade of facts, that smother the desire to learn?” Its answer is equally colorful: “Focus upon the fateful drama of the historical struggle for democracy.” This is a good approach, something that the Massachusetts standards accomplish well and something that more states should emulate.



**MICHIGAN**

**STANDARDS WEBSITE:**

<http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,1607,7-140-28753---,00.html>

**YEAR STANDARDS APPROVED: 1995**

**SCORING BREAKDOWN**

Curriculum: .....	22
Instructional: .....	0
Total: .....	22

**GRADE: ..... F**

The Michigan standards are designed as a resource to help schools “design, implement, and assess their core content curricula.” The Great Lake State’s broad vision is “to prepare young people to become responsible citizens . . . who display social understanding and civic efficacy.” Social studies, it continues, helps to create such citizens by building four capacities: “disciplinary knowledge, thinking skills, commitment to democratic values, and citizen participation.” Further, “social studies education for responsible citizenship is a compelling priority if we expect to sustain our constitutional democracy.” Unfortunately, these lofty goals are largely lost within the state’s unwieldy and confusing approach to teaching world history.

The standards are far more complicated than need be. They are poorly organized, difficult to follow, and confusing. They begin with extensive material that is largely outside the scope of the standards themselves, such as discussions of their origins. Though not necessarily a problem, there is a little too much back-patting up front. The framework even has a section on using the framework. While not a bad idea, it highlights the fact that Michigan’s standards are complicated enough to require an owner’s manual.

Like too many other states, Michigan folds world history standards into social studies, with disastrous results. For example, Content Standard 2 says that “All students will understand narratives about major eras of American and world history by identifying the people involved, describing the setting and sequencing the events.” Then, in half a page, Michigan tries to paint broad brush strokes of how that might happen with no specific mention of what should be learned. While the interconnection among these disciplines is real, combining all of them into a single document obfuscates how each should be taught.

The specific mention of world history is included in a strand called ‘historical perspective’ under the subheading “comprehending the past.” While U.S. history is addressed chronologically, world history receives no such treatment. Students are expected to “identify and explain how individuals in history demonstrated good character and personal virtue,” and are asked to “select events and individuals from the past that have had global

impact on the modern world and describe their impact.” Instead of solid historical treatment and basic historical detail, the standards are full of such vague and meaningless expectations.

Even worse, perhaps, are instances when middle-schoolers are asked to “identify major decisions in the history of Africa, Asia, Canada, Europe and Latin America, analyze contemporary factors contributing to the decisions and consider alternate courses of action.” Taken seriously, such an analysis is far beyond the capacity of middle-schoolers.

There is no substitute for a simple grade-specific content standard that lays out what it is students are supposed to know and when they’re supposed to learn it. Michigan fails to do this and consequently has done a disservice to its parents, teachers, and students.

## MINNESOTA

### STANDARDS WEBSITE:

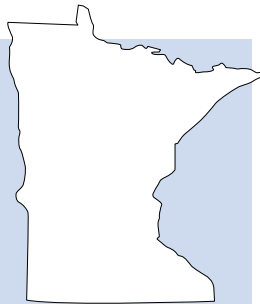
[http://education.state.mn.us/mde/Academic\\_Excellence/Academic\\_Standards\\_Curriculum\\_Instruction/Social\\_Studies/index.html](http://education.state.mn.us/mde/Academic_Excellence/Academic_Standards_Curriculum_Instruction/Social_Studies/index.html)

**YEAR STANDARDS APPROVED:** 2004

### SCORING BREAKDOWN

Curriculum: .....	96
Instructional: .....	56
Total: .....	152

**GRADE:** ..... **A**



The recently approved and substantially improved Minnesota state standards begin by saying, “Public education in Minnesota must help students gain the knowledge and skills that are necessary to protect and maintain freedom.” They aspire to specify “the particular knowledge and skills that Minnesota students will be required to learn.” They suggest that the purpose of world history is to help students “recognize the com-

mon problems of all humankind, and the increasing interactions among nations and civilizations that have shaped much of human life.” In that vein, they point out how the “increasing connections” make world history of critical importance “in fostering the respect and understanding required in a connected and interdependent world.” The revised standards deliver on much of this ambitious promise and will serve the current generation of Minnesota students well.

The content standards are divided among grade clusters K-3, 4-8, and 9-12. While they lack year-by-year grade specificity, they have mapped out a coherent set of expectations for each cluster and left it to the districts to decide when to teach what. In the earlier years, students focus on interesting people and places, laying the groundwork for more thorough treatments later. In middle school, students survey the entire scope of world history from ancient times to the present. In high school, they survey world history again, but this time with an eye toward more complex topics and a deeper understanding of the subject matter.

The state avoids redundancy by isolating major narratives and time periods for each grade cluster, providing clear expectations for students at each level, clearly identifying benchmarks, and providing specific examples. For example, in high school under the heading World Civilizations and Religions, 1000 B.C.E. — 500 C.E., the standards require students to “demonstrate knowledge of ancient Greek civilization and its influence throughout Eurasia, Africa and the Mediterranean.” They then describe what steps should be followed to accomplish this benchmark: Students will “analyze the influence of Greek civilization beyond the Aegean including the conflicts with the Persian empire, contacts with Egypt and South Asia, and the spread of Hellenistic culture throughout the Mediterranean” by looking at specific places and events such as Marathon, Salamis, the Persian and Peloponnesian Wars, and Alexander the Great. This same level of detail and selection is employed throughout the document.

Like many states, Minnesota uses both a set of standards and a curriculum framework to guide teachers. And like

many states, the relationship between these two documents is murky. The standards for world history are largely complete on their own, so the framework adds little clarity or structure. Minnesota, like many states, would be better off were it to condense the good work that it has done into one complete package. That said, the North Star State standards are a major improvement over its last version, and a welcome challenge for parents, students, and teachers alike.

## MISSISSIPPI

### STANDARDS WEBSITE:

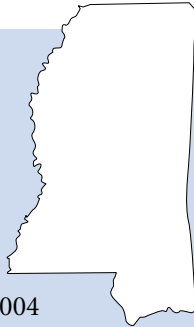
<http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/public.htm>

**YEAR STANDARDS APPROVED: 2004**

### SCORING BREAKDOWN

Curriculum: .....	61
Instructional: .....	38
Total: .....	99

**GRADE: ..... C**



Mississippi’s Social Studies Framework and Guide’s goal is “citizenship education in order to foster the development of life-long, responsible, accountable, global citizens in a democratic society.” To advance these ends, Mississippi identifies four strands: geography, civics, economics, and history. These are further subdivided into broadly defined ‘competencies’ that give considerable latitude to school districts and teachers. One of the Magnolia State’s strengths is clear expectations: “The competencies are required to be taught.” How they’re taught, however, is up to the districts, which may do so thematically, chronologically, geographically, or in some other format. There is value in allowing districts flexibility in teaching world history, but states must be serious about what it is that students should know upon graduation. Mississippi, has failed to do this

In the sixth grade, Mississippi students begin by focusing on “historical developments in the Western Hemisphere with emphasis on the neighbors of the United States.” Understanding our neighbors is too often overlooked in other standards. But while Mississippi earns credit for including this topic early on, it does not deserve accolades

for its treatment. The actual content standards and required information are patchy and nebulous. They ask students to “investigate the history and cultures of the regions of the Western Hemisphere (e.g., Canada, North America, Middle America, South America, and Antarctica),” but they offer only vague notions about the method for that investigation. For example, students are expected to “Assess the interactions of nations over time in the Western Hemisphere (e.g., political conflicts, commerce, transportation, immigration, etc.)” and “Trace the evolution of political organizations in the Western Hemisphere.”

In seventh grade, students are expected to study the Eastern Hemisphere through 1750. While Mississippi is successful in pointing out the breadth of cultures that should be addressed here, its standards lack the content necessary to offer a proper approach. For example, students are to “Analyze various Eastern cultures: Asia, Africa, Europe, Australia, and the Islands of the Pacific (e.g., religion, language, customs, contributions, etc.)” The standards attempt to suggest how students might go about learning this broad sweep, but their suggestions offer little guidance. They include such things as “assess[ing] the interactions of nations over time in the Eastern Hemisphere (e.g., political conflicts, commerce, transportation, immigration, etc.)” and “describ[ing] the essential characteristics of capitalism in the Eastern Hemisphere.” These are good starts, but they are bones in desperate need of flesh.

In high school, the relationship between competencies and content is again disappointing. While most of narratives in world history from 1750 to the present are mentioned, that’s about it. For example, the rise of industrialism is not discussed in a historically detailed manner. Instead, teachers are encouraged to take their students on tour of a factory to help them understand what the period might have been like. A factory tour can make for a nice field trip, but it does not replace understanding what happened in the age of industrialism. If states must choose between recommending what should be taught and how it should be taught, they should select the former. There is a certain body of knowledge that students must know upon leaving high school, and states should be upfront about what that is. How teachers go about imparting that knowledge should be up to them.

Mississippi has a particularly good approach to incorporating outside reading and literature into world history. A supplement to the standards includes a 50 page list of grade- and subject-specific books that would be helpful to teachers. While the world history list is a little confusing, terrific suggestions are made for sixth and seventh grades.

The Magnolia State is a perfect example of not following through on good intentions. It states its goals clearly, but fails to anchor them in a coherent curricular package supported by specific detail.

## MISSOURI

### STANDARDS WEBSITE:

<http://dese.mo.gov/divimprove/assess/ss.html>

**YEAR STANDARDS APPROVED:** 1996

### SCORING BREAKDOWN

Curriculum: .....	8
Instructional: .....	0
Total: .....	8

**GRADE:** ..... F



The Show Me State standards begin with the usual rhetoric that promises readers the “graduates of Missouri’s public schools have the knowledge, skills, and competencies essential to leading productive, fulfilling and successful lives as they continue their education, enter the workforce and assume their civic responsibilities.” They go on to say, “These standards for students are not a curriculum. Rather, the standards serve as a blueprint from which local school districts may write challenging curriculum to help all students achieve their maximum potential.” Ensuring that local school districts have flexibility to tailor specific curricula may be valuable, but only to a point. Missouri’s blueprint is as helpful to the state’s educa-

tors as a picture of a building that doesn’t include doors, windows, and elevators is to a builder.

Missouri has no section in its social studies standards with specific world history content standards. World history benchmarks are given for eighth grade and eleventh grade. These are meant to cover the entirety of world history, but the set of expectations for the two grades takes up just a single column of text on one page. There is simply not enough information here for parents or teachers to get a good idea of what students should learn.

The eighth-grade benchmarks, for example, suggest that students should know about Africa. The first bullet point says “empires,” and the second is “agriculture, arts, gold production, and the trans-Saharan caravan trade spread of Islam into Africa.” These two points alone are supposed to give teachers an outline of what it is that their students should know about Africa.

Missouri approaches Greek civilization and the Roman empire with the same lackluster model. The standards stress three nearly useless points: 1) “origins of democracy,” 2) “rule of law,” and 3) “government structures.” Districts will have to do a lot of tailoring to fill in the gaps.

The eleventh grade expectations are no better. These cover the world after 1450. Most of the major historical events are mentioned, but not one thing is covered with sufficient detail. For example, the first expectation is that students identify “dominant characteristics, contributions of interactions among major civilizations of Asia, Europe, Africa, the Americas and the Middle East in ancient and medieval times.” It’s ridiculous to think this offers any real guidance to anyone. The predictable vagaries such as “the first global age” are included, and major events are mentioned in passing without any real explanation.

Instead of doing its job, Missouri places the burden on districts to “show” students the details of world history. But by passing the buck, the state’s ensured only that most students will leave Missouri public schools with little understanding of world history.

## MONTANA

### STANDARDS WEBSITE:

<http://www.opi.state.mt.us/pdf/standards/ContStds-SocSt.pdf>

**YEAR STANDARDS APPROVED: 2000**

### SCORING BREAKDOWN

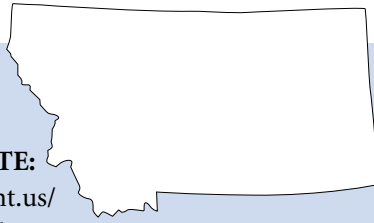
Curriculum: ..... 14  
Instructional ..... 0  
Total: ..... 14

**GRADE: ..... F**

The Montana standards assert that “social studies is an integrated study of the social sciences and humanities designed to foster citizenship in an interdependent world.” Further, they declare that social studies “addresses political, economic, geographic, and social processes that allow students to make informed decisions for personal and public good.” As Montana claims, social studies is capable of providing students “the knowledge, skills, and processes necessary to understand historical and present day connections among diverse groups and individuals. Yet, the state’s “content standards” fail to provide even a basic historical chronology of world affairs and are more likely to confuse than clarify commonalities.

The Treasure State’s nebulous curricular framework focuses on process and methodology. It has little to do with content, much less world history. For example, students are asked to “access, synthesize, and evaluate information to communicate and apply social studies knowledge to real world situations.” This standard is terminally vague and devoid of practical application. Students are also asked to “analyze how people create and change structures of power, authority, and governance to understand the operation of government and to demonstrate civic responsibility.” This is slightly more effective than the previous example because it’s supported by tangible benchmarks. But that’s the best we can say.

Upon graduation, students are expected to compare various world political systems (e.g., ideologies, structure, institutions) with that of the United States. But the



standards seem to presuppose that students will have acquired the basic foundation in world history and culture needed to carry out this task. Where they get it is anyone’s guess, as there’s no mention of simple historical narrative in the standards.

The state deserves some praise for asking students to “analyze both the historical impact of technology (e.g., industrialization, communication, medicine) on human values and behaviors and how technology shapes problem solving now and in the future.” Concrete examples such as the invention of penicillin and the development of nuclear weapons would strengthen this section. Montana’s insistence that “students apply geographic knowledge and skills (e.g. location, place, human/environment interactions, movement, and regions)” should be commended as well. Students are asked to examine human settlement patterns, global distribution of resources, and demographic trends, in addition to the physical characteristics of the globe.

Sadly, the majority of Montana’s standards are completely irrelevant and the supporting benchmarks are useless. While graduating students are expected to “interpret how selected cultures, historical events, periods and patterns of change influence each other,” there is no substantive mention of a single culture, historical event, period, or pattern in the entire curriculum. Montana’s standard-makers would do well to jettison this document.

## NEBRASKA

### STANDARDS WEBSITE:

[http://www.nde.state.ne.us/SS/pdf/SS\\_Framework.pdf](http://www.nde.state.ne.us/SS/pdf/SS_Framework.pdf);

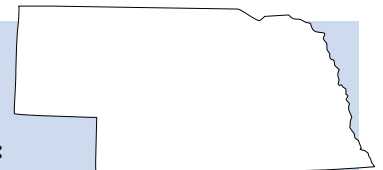
[http://www.nde.state.ne.us/ndestandards/documents/SocialStudiesHistoryStandards\\_001.pdf](http://www.nde.state.ne.us/ndestandards/documents/SocialStudiesHistoryStandards_001.pdf)

**YEAR STANDARDS APPROVED: 1995**

### SCORING BREAKDOWN

Curriculum: ..... 58  
Instructional: ..... 36  
Total: ..... 94

**GRADE: ..... D**





The foreword to Nebraska’s K-12 Social Studies Framework declares that “The mission of social studies is to develop capable citizens who are empowered with knowledge, skills, and attitudes enabling them to make informed decisions in a culturally diverse world.” The framework is built on the ten themes articulated by the National Council for the Social Studies with “modifications to meet the contextual demands of social studies educators and programs of Nebraska.” Fine, but the document itself is devoid of content. A second document, the Social Studies Standards that the state board adopted in 2003, does provide content. But it isn’t clear if this second document supplements the frameworks, or replaces them. Regardless, the documents, whether taken individually or collectively, are an inconsistent guide for the state’s teachers and students.

World history does not appear until middle school, and Nebraska youth are supposed to leave eighth grade with a firm grasp of global events from the earliest civilizations to 1000 C.E. Students are asked to “compare selected ancient river civilizations, such as Egypt, Mesopotamia, the Indus Valley, and Shang China, and other ancient civilizations such as the Hebrew and Phoenician kingdoms and the Persian Empire.” Instead of listing specific characteristics of each culture, however, Nebraska asks students to look at the civilization’s “location in time and place” and to consider their important cultural dimensions, such as religion and writing.

The treatment of Roman and Greek civilizations is better. It exposes students “the social structure, significance of citizenship, and the development of democracy in the city-state of Athens” and “the roles of Julius and Augustus Caesar and the impact of military conquests on the army, economy, and social structure of Rome,” among others. Non-Western civilizations don’t receive this level of treatment. Contemporary powers such as India, Japan, and China are not discussed to any serious degree, and Africa is largely ignored.

World history after 1,000 C.E. is studied in high school. Latin America, Africa, and Asia are mostly addressed in the context of European expansion, but the topics are limited to such generic subjects as “the introduction of Christianity,” “the introduction of new diseases,” and “the roles of explorers/conquistadors.”

There are a number of factual inaccuracies in the framework. For instance, students are asked to “describe 12th

century political developments in Europe” such as the Congress of Vienna, the unification of Germany, and the role of Bismarck, despite the fact that all three have their homes in the eighteenth century.

The Cornhusker State does a commendable job with philosophy and the arts. Students are introduced to the works of Voltaire, Diderot, Delacroix, Bach, and Mozart. The coverage of major twentieth-century historical events is also good. For example, students are expected to learn “how African and Asian countries achieved independence from European colonial rule, such as India under Gandhi and Kenya under Kenyatta, and how they have fared under self rule.” It is unfortunate that these good sections are the exception.

The standards have a long way to go before they can, as claimed, “identify what students should know to be able live and work in the 21st Century.”

## NEVADA

### STANDARDS WEBSITE:

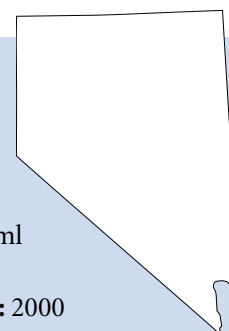
<http://www.doe.nv.gov/standards/socialstudies/history-standards.html>

**YEAR STANDARDS APPROVED: 2000**

### SCORING BREAKDOWN

Curriculum: .....	60
Instructional: .....	34
Total: .....	94

**GRADE: ..... D**



“Historical knowledge and historical inquiry,” the Nevada History Standards state, “contribute the skills necessary to be informed citizens, who can function effectively in the democratic process of a diverse society.” Therefore, “It is imperative in today’s global economy” that students understand world history and “develop an appreciation of the contributions made by all nations.”

Judging by this document, however, which encompasses history skills and content, world affairs is an afterthought, particularly in the primary-school years. Fifth-graders discuss world history tangentially, i.e., the relation

between the national anthem and the War of 1812, or the U.S. involvement in World War II. Moreover, students are not required to address, much less engage, non-Western countries. On a positive note, Nevada does offer, as it claims, “what constitutes a world class education in geography,” beginning in kindergarten. The state asks students to learn both political and natural geography.

Eighth grade is the first time that Nevada addresses world history with any seriousness. The standards ask students to analyze the “achievements made by ancient and classical civilizations, including, the Americas, China, Egypt, Greece, India, Mesopotamia, and Rome.” The document wisely places great importance on the study of the origins, traditions, customs, and spread of the major Western and Eastern world religions. Less clear is how this religious study is integrated with international political issues and historical analysis.

Though students receive an adequate introduction to the role of science and technology in shaping world affairs, the examination, unfortunately, begins with the Industrial Revolution and ignores all prior advances.

Twelfth-grade world history standards are far more detailed, but still lack the continuity and sophistication necessary to develop Nevada students into informed global citizens. In addition to significant gaps in historical narrative—no specific mention of the French Revolution, for example—the standards fail to foster an understanding of the rise of liberty and democracy, capitalism and the business economy, or the global political and economic order.

Somehow, Nevada achieves a surprising degree of comprehensiveness, sequential development, and balance in addressing twentieth-century world history. Few states do this well. From the causes and effects of the Cold War to the regional and global effects of modern international and political alliances, Nevada’s standards are nuanced and detail-rich. They include topics such as the military offensives of the Korean and Vietnam wars, and an examination of the “geopolitical changes in the world due to the disintegration of the USSR.”

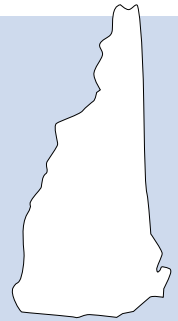
In sum, the Nevada curriculum offers a marginal overview of world history in the middle- and high-school years, but fails to build any foundation in international affairs during the primary years. Silver State standard-makers should

focus on the steps necessary to create a comprehensive and well-balanced history program in which world history is a priority rather than an afterthought.

## NEW HAMPSHIRE

### STANDARDS WEBSITE:

<http://www.ed.state.nh.us/education/doe/organization/curriculum/SocialStudies/SocialStudies.htm>



### YEAR STANDARDS APPROVED:

### SCORING BREAKDOWN

Curriculum: .....	46
Instructional: .....	29
Total: .....	75

**GRADE: ..... D**

The New Hampshire Social Studies Curriculum Framework claims to “define what New Hampshire students should know and be able to do in the social studies.” It aspires to guide students through the “the powerful ideas and experiences found in history of the world” and enable them “to make informed and reasoned decisions both as individuals and as citizens of the community, state, nation, and the world.”

The framework is divided into four organizing strands—civics and government, economics, geography, and history—and includes learning assessments in grades six and ten, but specific world history requirements are slighted. The entire subject is relegated to one standard that reads, “Students will demonstrate a knowledge of the chronology and significant developments of world history to include the study of ancient, medieval, and modern Europe (Western civilization) with particular emphasis on those developments that have shaped the experience of the entire globe over the last 500 years and those ideas, institutions, and cultural legacies that have directly influenced American thought, culture, and politics.”

By the end of sixth grade, students are expected to understand the “distinctive characteristics of major ancient, classical, and agrarian civilizations,” yet the particular



characteristics are not detailed. The situation improves in tenth grade, when the focus turns to world religions. Students are required to “compare the origins, central ideas, institutions, and worldwide influence of major religions and philosophical traditions including Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism.” Again, no specifics provided, but the inclusion of this critical topic deserves notice. Overall, the tenth-grade learning assessment is overly Eurocentric and fails to take into account the historical development of those Asian and Middle Eastern countries (with the exception of their religions) so critical to world affairs today. At a minimum, students would benefit from substantial engagement with at least one non-Western culture.

New Hampshire’s discussion of nineteenth and twentieth century European ideologies is a haphazard catalog of “-isms”: Conservatism, Liberalism, republicanism, Marxism, Communism, Fascism, Nazism, and nationalism. Standard-makers would do better to flesh out two or three ideologies and their pertinent theorists, rather than provide a shopping list.

The state also expects students graduating high school to have “[A] thorough knowledge of the history of their community, New Hampshire, the United States, Western Civilization, and the world, including the contributions of famous men and women, ordinary citizens, and groups of people.” Biography is certainly an effective tool for teaching world affairs and famous leaders, so it’s puzzling that no specific names are included.

But there’s hope yet for the Granite State. A proposed draft of the revised frameworks is online, and unlike the current standards, it is rich in historical detail and covers a broad range of topics from economic development to social movements. A number of prescient themes are discussed, such as “the relationship between weapons development and political and economic power” and “the basis for ranking social groups within a given culture.” These are supported with concrete examples from history. New Hampshire’s discussion of world religion and ideologies is even stronger in the draft document. Students are expected to “analyze how philosophic systems and social theories are powerful forces throughout history such as, but not limited to, Stoicism, neo-Confucianism, or liberation theology.” New Hampshire would make significant strides in the quality of its world history curriculum by implementing this draft immediately.

## NEW JERSEY

### STANDARDS WEBSITE:

[http://www.state.nj.us/njded/cccs/s6\\_ss.htm](http://www.state.nj.us/njded/cccs/s6_ss.htm)

**YEAR STANDARDS APPROVED: 1999**

### SCORING BREAKDOWN

Curriculum: .....	78
Instructional: .....	47
Total: .....	125

**GRADE: ..... B**



At almost 600 pages, one expects the New Jersey Social Studies Curriculum Framework to be comprehensive. Alas, it contains little in the way of coherent standards. Instead, the bulk of its pages focus on learning activities built around historical events. This isn’t all bad—encouraging students to read primary documents related to Hernando Cortez’s conquest of the Aztecs is a productive exercise. But clear and concise benchmarks that specifically outline the material teachers are to cover would be more helpful.

The state is certainly capable of accomplishing this—its Core Curriculum Content Standards (a separate document) paints a clear picture of what students are expected to learn of world history, and it’s not one-tenth as long as the framework. This recent addition is far more effective in delineating important global events, leaders, and trends.

New Jersey’s standards do not outline specific world history content and skill requirements for students before the eighth grade, in which year students are expected to develop a relatively comprehensive understanding of global affairs up to the fifteenth century. The major ancient civilizations and world religions are covered in adequate detail. New Jersey should be commended for including “the influence of Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism on the formation of the Chinese civilization” and “Hinduism, the Aryan migrations and the Caste system in India.”

The standards are particularly effective in their coverage of the Mayan civilization, including such details as the “loca-

tions of Mayan city-states, road systems, and sea routes, the role and status of elite men and women in Mayan society and their portrayal in Mayan architecture, the role of religion and ceremonial games in Mayan culture, and the structure and purpose of the Mayan pyramids.” This is just one of many topics that the Garden State covers well. The standards touch upon a number of important subjects relating to Islam, such as “the origin and development of Islamic law” and “the split [of Islam] into Sunni Shiite factions.” Additionally, New Jersey’s approach to African and Asian history is far more comprehensive than most states. For example, students are introduced to the development of the West African empires of Ghana, Mali, and Songhay. Additionally, the Ming and Qing Dynasties in China as well as Japan during the Tokugawa period are included within the framework.

In high school, students study world history from 1400 to the present. Sensitive issues such as slavery are addressed in these years; students are asked to “analyze and compare the ways that slavery and other forms of coerced labor or social bondage were practiced in East Africa, West Africa, Southwest Asia, Europe, and the Americas.” The standards also mention frequently overlooked events, such as the Haitian revolution and leaders such as Toussaint L’Ouverture, Simon Bolivar in Venezuela, and Jose Marti in Cuba. New Jersey skims though the “Era of the Great Wars” with undue haste, however, and the framework suffers accordingly.

In several places, vagueness creeps in. For instance, the standards list “nationalism and propaganda” as two causes of World War I. Fleshing out these subjects with discussions of the nationalistic movements in France and Austria-Hungary would greatly enhance the standards. Overall, New Jersey has improved its history standards dramatically with the most recent revision of its content standards. The devil, after all, is in the details.

## NEW MEXICO

### STANDARDS WEBSITE:

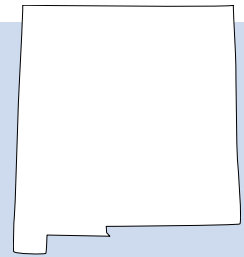
<http://www.nmlites.org/standards/socialstudies/index.html>

**YEAR STANDARDS APPROVED:** 1999

### SCORING BREAKDOWN

Curriculum: .....	60
Instructional: .....	34
Total: .....	94

**GRADE:** ..... **D**



New Mexico’s Social Studies Content Standards, Benchmarks, and Performance Standards start with guiding principles that “emphasize the importance of both content and skills as essential elements of a social studies program.” One such principal asserts that “social studies (history, geography, economics, and government/civics) should provide learning opportunities that build upon significant concepts and skills over time.” Another discusses the importance of providing “a setting and frame of reference from which current events and public policy issues directly impact student interest and commitment to the study of social studies content.” Although New Mexico is correct that “learning social studies is a lifetime endeavor,” its actual standards do not lead one to think students will be so motivated.

New Mexico introduces world history in fifth grade with the “characteristics of early societies, including the development of tools and adaptation to environments.” Students are asked to “identify, describe, and explain the political, religious, economic, and social conditions in Europe that led to the Era of Colonization.” Both standards are vague and lack any semblance of continuity.

Sixth grade features a well-crafted discussion of world history that begins with ancient civilizations and extends into Medieval Europe. In addition to Egypt and Mesopotamia, students are invited to “analyze the geographic, political, economic, religious, and social structures of the early civilizations in China.” What makes

this standard effective is the supporting detail. Specific references to the “location and description of the origins of Chinese civilization in the Huang-He Valley, Shang dynasty” and “rule by dynasties (e.g., Shang, Qin, Han, Tang and Ming)” is critical to a solid framework. Regrettably, this is one of the few standards supported in such a manner. The majority of the curriculum is overly vague, relying on benchmarks such as “reasons for the fall of the Roman Empire” and “new forms of government, feudalism, and the beginning of limited government with the Magna Carta.”

The discussion of major world religions “include[s] Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam (e.g., founding leaders, traditions, customs, beliefs).” Providing specific principles of each religion would be helpful to teachers and students alike. The curricular balance throughout the middle-school years is cause for concern. World history is studied almost exclusively in the sixth grade. The only international topic that students address in the remainder of middle school is “the influence of Spain on the Western Hemisphere from colonization to the present.”

High school students fair no better. Twelve performance standards cover world events from the Renaissance to modernity. These contain varying degrees of supporting detail, and, not surprisingly, those with the greatest detail are the most effective. For example, students are asked (without mention of actual examples) to “analyze and evaluate the actions of competing European nations for colonies around the world and the impact on indigenous populations.” On the other hand, the frameworks call students to analyze “the causes, events, and impacts of World War II from various perspectives,” including “political, diplomatic, and military leadership (e.g., Winston Churchill, Joseph Stalin, Franklin Roosevelt, Emperor Hirohito, Adolf Hitler, and Benito Mussolini).” Moreover, students must learn the “principle theatres of battle, major turning points, and geographic factors in military decision outcomes (e.g., Pearl Harbor, ‘island hopping,’ D-Day invasion, Stalingrad, atomic bombs dropped on Japan).” This level of detail about World War II is a good model for the rest of the framework.

The Land of Enchantment’s standards show promise, but are still a long way from nirvana.

## NEW YORK

### STANDARDS WEBSITE:

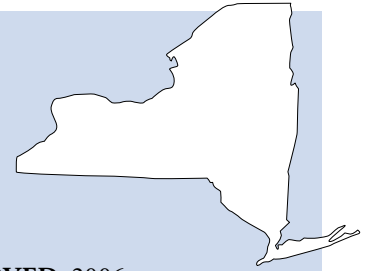
<http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/ciai/socst/ssrg.html>

**YEAR STANDARDS APPROVED:** 2006

### SCORING BREAKDOWN

Curriculum: .....	96
Instructional: .....	59
Total: .....	155

**GRADE: ..... A**



The introduction to the New York Social Studies Resource Guide asserts that “social studies classes help students understand their roots, see their connections to the past, comprehend their context, recognize the commonality of people across time, appreciate the delicate balance of rights and responsibilities in an open society, and develop the habits of thoughtful analysis and reflective thinking.” If New York’s curricular framework accurately foreshadows the social studies education offered in Empire State schools, young people should graduate from high school with all the aforementioned skills.

Students are introduced to global affairs in third grade via a comprehensive, balanced look at how leaders around the world are selected, and how human migration has affected various geographic regions. New York’s sixth-grade social studies curriculum draws on the Eastern hemisphere for many lessons and activities. Students are introduced to the Chinese and Indian civilizations, and they explore these cultures through “arts and sciences, key documents, and other important artifacts.”

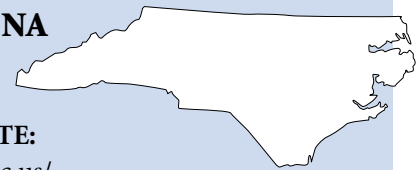
For middle- and high-school students, the state provides an advanced global history core curriculum. Students are given the standard introduction to early river civilizations, for example, but are then asked to study the “demographic patterns of early civilizations and movements” of the Bantu people in Africa. This multi-lens focus is not lost in later years when the rise and fall of African civilizations such as the Ghana, Mali, Axum, and Songhai empires are covered as well.

Great emphasis is placed on Eastern cultures and civilizations throughout the curriculum. The attention paid to maritime and overland trade routes linking China, Korea, and Japan, and the “role of migrating nomadic groups from Central Asia,” is an example. The development of major religions is handled with significant detail. Students are asked, “How did the expansion of Islam, Confucianism, Christianity, and Buddhism encourage the encounter and exchanges of peoples, goods, and ideas?” They are then told to study such documents as the “Old Testament, Torah, the Lawbook of Manu, the Caste System, and the Bhagavad-Gita, Life of Buddha, the Analects, and the Koran.” Often-overlooked empires such as the Gupta in India are covered, in addition to more familiar ones such as the Tang and Song Dynasties in China. At times the New York standards do resemble a laundry list more than a detailed framework. Even still, the standards are so far superior relative to the majority of other states, it is difficult to fault them for this flaw.

Like most successful standards, New York’s core curriculum harnesses the power of personal narrative to augment its coverage of historical periods. Individuals such as Dante, Cervantes, Shakespeare, Joan of Arc, Luther, and Calvin are discussed in the unit Global Interactions (1200 – 1650). Additionally, New York suggests that students complete case studies of “Akbar the Great, Suleiman the Magnificent, Phillip II, Louis XIV, Ivan the Terrible, and Peter the Great” when studying political ideologies of global absolutism during The First Global Age (1450-1770).

New York excels in its discussion of Latin America, particularly during the Age of Revolution (1750-1914) unit. The comprehensive framework discusses the cause and effect of the Mexican Revolution and the roles played by Porfirio Diaz, Francisco “Pancho” Villa, and Emiliano Zapata. Modern affairs are discussed as well; the changing role of the “Roman Catholic Church in Latin America, Nicaragua and the Sandinistas, and Fidel Castro’s Cuban Revolution are given significant coverage. In sum, New York is at the forefront of social studies education and should be commended for a job well done.

## NORTH CAROLINA



### STANDARDS WEBSITE:

<http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/curriculum/socialstudies/>

**YEAR STANDARDS APPROVED: 2003**

### SCORING BREAKDOWN

Curriculum: .....	44
Instructional: .....	20
Total: .....	64

**GRADE: .....F**

The North Carolina Standard Course of Study and Grade Level Competencies begins by noting that “The youth of North Carolina will spend their adult lives in the twenty-first century; therefore, the need for a social studies education that develops their knowledge, skills, and attitudes requisite to live effectively in this century is more critical than before.” History, it is said, can “teach both the burdens the past has placed upon us, and the opportunities knowledge of the past can provide.”

At first blush, the Tar Heel State takes a multifaceted approach to teaching history that varies according to grade level. Elementary students are introduced to history “through the autobiographies and biographies of historical personalities” in order to lay a solid foundation for future education. Middle schoolers are taught to appreciate “differences in historical perspectives, recognizing that individual experiences, societal values, and technology bring changes that astonish and even challenge beliefs and values.” Finally, high school students “draw on their knowledge of history in order to make informed choices and decisions in the present” and “integrate individual stories about people, events and situations to form broader concepts in which continuity and change are linked in time and across cultures.”

It sounds good, but in practice the approach doesn’t work so well. North Carolina, unlike other states, sequences its world history curriculum by region rather than time in the middle school years. So students are introduced to Canada,

Mexico, and Central America in fifth grade; South America and Europe in sixth grade; and Africa, Asia and Australia in eighth grade. This approach is supposed to prevent teaching overlapping material, but in fact it breeds repetition and discontinuity. For instance, students would need to study the ramifications of the Cold War each year in order to gain an understanding of this or any other transformational historical event of global importance.

North Carolina’s high school standards are equally deficient. Devoid of suitable specificity in most cases, they focus instead on general cultural currents such as “the conditions, racial composition, and status of social classes, castes, and slaves in world societies and analyz[ing] changes in those elements.” There are a few bright spots, however. North Carolina is one of the few states that requires its students to “describe the rise and achievements of African civilizations, including but not limited to the Axum, Ghana, Kush, Mali, Nubia, and Songhai.”

A fundamental problem with the standards are their lack of chronological sequence. Major narratives such as the women’s suffrage movements and race conflicts are mentioned without reference to specific dates or events. Instead, students are required to “analyze causes and results of ideas regarding superiority and inferiority in society and how those ideas have changed over time.” Without concrete examples, events, and people, this objective—like most others in the framework—has little meaning and is more likely to confuse students than improve their understanding of history. The state needs to dig its heels in and supply actual content if it hopes to deliver on its promise to prepare its students for life in the twenty-first century.

The North Dakota Social Studies Standards were developed with the following goals:

1. Provide students with a better understanding of the contributions of various cultures and decrease stereotypes.
2. Overcome “presentism” and give students a sense of their place in time and enable them to adapt to societal changes that will occur in their lifetime.
3. Enhance students’ understanding of the world, whether the world is defined as “self” or local, state, tribal, regional, national or international community.

The document is structured around nine content standards and has established benchmarks for each at the fourth, eighth, and twelfth grades. Each standard is subdivided into subcategories that contain “examples of specific knowledge” that “describe the specific information or skills that students should acquire to meet a standard” at each grade level.

Despite its organized approach, however, the document’s content leaves much to be desired. Specific examples are few—and some of these are plain silly—while a sequenced, cumulative approach to world history is nowhere to be found.

The most outlandish ideas are found in the state’s primary school standards. North Dakota introduces its students to the world in primary school by encouraging them to “trace their bare feet and use the shape to create a map of a fictitious continent” (e.g. Bunion Bay, Hangnail Lake, Big Toe Peninsula).

Beyond the ridiculous, mentions of world history are rare, and when the curriculum does address international affairs it does so in vague language. Eighth graders, for example, must understand how “key events, people, and ideas contributed to world history.” Specific examples that would aid students in accomplishing this include: “Ancient and classical civilizations, mound builders, feudalism, Crusades, exploration, Renaissance, Reformation, Enlightenment, nationalism, world conflicts (e.g., World War I and World War II), globalism, interdependence.” This random and incoherent assortment of historical periods and vague words does little to provide teachers and parents with a usable framework.

## NORTH DAKOTA

### STANDARDS WEBSITE:

<http://www.dpi.state.nd.us/standard/content/SStudies.pdf>

**YEAR STANDARDS APPROVED:** 2000

### SCORING BREAKDOWN

Curriculum: .....	46
Instructional: .....	23
Total: .....	69

**GRADE:** ..... F





The high school world history standards are equally futile and without any discernable sequence. Specific knowledge that students are asked to master includes: “[E]arliest humans, early communities, agricultural societies, emergence of civilizations, emergence of major religions, great empires (e.g., Roman and British), colonialism, imperialism, assimilation, acculturation, migration, revolutions (e.g., French), Reformation, technology, global conflict, human rights, hemispheric interactions, peace-keeping efforts.” A few examples are included in this chaotic historical laundry list, but nowhere near enough. Instead, high school students are encouraged to “participate in a simulation to demonstrate understanding of cause and effect relationships.”

The authors of the Roughrider State’s standards claim to have worked three years, culling a wide variety of educational texts—including other states’ standards—to write this document. The final product is not a reflection of such dedication and hard work. Sound structure and visual appeal mean little when the text is devoid of adequate content.

## OHIO

### STANDARDS WEBSITE:

[http://www.ode.state.oh.us/academic\\_content\\_standards/SSContentStd/PDF/SOCIAL\\_STUDIES.pdf](http://www.ode.state.oh.us/academic_content_standards/SSContentStd/PDF/SOCIAL_STUDIES.pdf)



**YEAR STANDARDS APPROVED: 2002**

### SCORING BREAKDOWN

Curriculum: .....	39
Instructional: .....	28
Total: .....	67

**GRADE: ..... F**

In developing Ohio’s Academic Content Standards in Social Studies, the state advisory committee says it reviewed exemplary standards from the U.S. and other countries, including documents produced by such organizations as the National Center for History in the Schools, National Standards for Civics and Government, and the National Geographic Society. The content standards were also “subjected to a

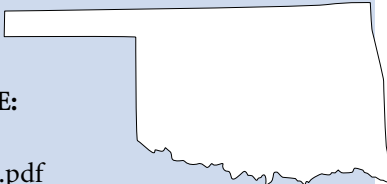
period of extensive public engagement and rigorous review” in the form of focus-group meetings and electronic feedback. As a result, the framework is well organized by grade level and content standards, which revolve around six fundamental social studies themes: history, people in society, geography, economics, government, and citizens’ rights and responsibilities. Unfortunately, this thoroughness does not translate into an effective world history curriculum. Ohio’s educational leaders acknowledge that their content standards “do not specify content to be taught.”

Students are first exposed to world history in sixth grade with an introduction to Regions and People of the World, which is followed in seventh grade by World Studies from 1000 B.C.E. to 1750: Ancient Civilizations Through the First Global Age. By the end of middle school, students are expected to describe the development of the earliest civilizations in Mesopotamia and the Indus Valley, in addition to understanding the “enduring impact of early civilizations in China, Egypt, Greece and Rome after 1000 BC.” Supporting detail is in short supply, however, and what exists remains vague. Specific references to aspects of Athenian democracy and the Roman republic, as well as the influence both cultures had on late forms of representative government, would be more useful. The standards do a good job discussing the role of West African empires such as Ghana, Mali and Songhay in spreading Islam and the Arabic language. However, seminal events such as the Crusades, Renaissance, and Reformation are mentioned in passing. It’s unlikely that students will develop any real understanding of them.

In high school, world history is relegated to the ninth grade, where students study events from 1750 to the present. Ohio should be commended for its discussion of the causes and effects of the Industrial Revolution. Students are expected to learn the “impact of the growth of population, rural-to-urban migration, growth of industrial cities, and emigration out of Europe,” as well as “the changing role of labor and the rise of the union movement.” But other topics don’t fair as well. The discussion of World War I is supported by unhelpful generic subtopics such as “Militarism, imperialism, nationalism, and alliances.”

The Buckeye State’s standards sprawl over 300 pages, but size matters little when pages are more attuned to methodologies and instructional commentary that content. They should focus on benchmarks. Only then will the state’s students begin learning the skills necessary to be active members of the global community.

## OKLAHOMA



### STANDARDS WEBSITE:

[http://sde.state.ok.us/  
acrob/pass/socialstudies.pdf](http://sde.state.ok.us/acrob/pass/socialstudies.pdf)

**YEAR STANDARDS APPROVED: 2003**

### SCORING BREAKDOWN

Curriculum: .....	83
Instructional: .....	46
Total: .....	129

**GRADE: ..... B**

Overall, Oklahoma’s world history standards are balanced, comprehensive, and easy to follow. Teachers are given a solid foundation on which to construct lesson plans. Similarly, parents have ample information to gauge their children’s achievement relative to established benchmarks.

A dearth of world history education in the primary years is the only glaring weakness in these standards. World studies is not addressed seriously until the sixth grade. Here, students are briefly introduced to other countries in the context of their impact on global “migration and settlement patterns.”

Oklahoma’s high school world history standards are challenging, asking students to draw comparisons between various countries, civilizations, and cultures, in addition to examining them individually and in detail. For example, students are asked to “compare ancient river civilizations (e.g., Egypt, Mesopotamia, the Indus Valley, and Shang China), and other ancient civilizations (e.g., the Hebrew and Phoenician kingdoms, and the Persian Empire).” The standards are certainly not Eurocentric, as students should gain insights into the cultures of such contemporary powerhouses as China, India, and Japan. More impressive is the inclusion of such nuanced topics as the influence of Chinese culture on Japan’s development.

Ancient Greece and Rome are examined in detail, and the discussion of Rome includes the origins of Judaism and early Christianity. Also present is an in-depth analysis of the “interactions and relationships between the Muslim world

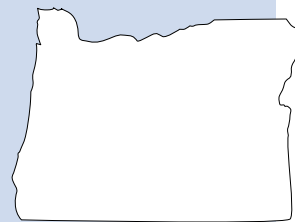
and Christendom” which includes a discussion of the roots of Islam. Students are exposed to other world religions such as Hinduism, Confucianism, and Buddhism and the roles they have played in the histories of their respective cultures.

The standards provide a thorough and coherent approach to democratic values, including discussion of the “development of democracy in ancient Greece and Rome, the United Kingdom, and the American colonies.” Additionally, students are introduced to such seminal theorists as Locke, Hobbes, Rousseau, and Blackstone, and are asked to interpret their contributions to “contemporary political theory and governmental structure.” The standards are thorough in their discussion of the Renaissance, Reformation, and Industrial Revolution, and they wisely highlight the literary, artistic, scientific, and theological advancements made during these periods. Events up through World War II are covered with similar proficiency.

The Sooner State’s discussion of post-World War II and contemporary events could be improved, as little information is included about the world following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Moreover, although written in 2002, the standards do not reference the attacks of September 11 or the rise of Islamic extremism. This omission is particularly glaring in light of the thoroughness with which Oklahoma has addressed other world events.

Overall, however, this Mid-American state has succeeded in creating a world history framework that will prepare its students to be active citizens in the global community.

## OREGON



### STANDARDS WEBSITE:

[http://www.ode.state.or.us/  
/teachlearn/real/documents/  
05-06socialsciences.pdf](http://www.ode.state.or.us/teachlearn/real/documents/05-06socialsciences.pdf)

**YEAR STANDARDS APPROVED: 2001**

### SCORING BREAKDOWN

Curriculum: .....	39
Instructional: .....	26
Total: .....	65

**GRADE: ..... F**

The introduction to Oregon’s Social Studies Content Standards says, “The study of the social sciences (civics, economics, geography, and history) prepares students for responsible citizenship.” The document goes on to communicate the importance of social studies for equipping students to “evaluate historical and contemporary issues, understand global relationships, and make connections between the past, present, and future.”

Unfortunately, the standards fall short of these lofty goals. Moreover, Oregon’s claim to “[r]elate significant events and eras in the United States and world history to past and present issues and development” is not done well. Early civilizations through the Renaissance are studied only in eighth grade, and the Industrial Revolution through the Cold War is studied only in tenth grade. Students have no opportunity to revisit material after having presumably reached a higher level of understanding. Moreover, they’re expected to retain the knowledge acquired in the eighth grade until the tenth, and then be able to discern the continuities in the historical narrative.

Eighth grade world history begins with an attempt to understand the “political, economic, and cultural impact, and lasting influence of the early civilizations on world development”; yet few specifics are provided. Strangely, Oregon encourages in-depth study of the “characteristics of the Roman Republic and Empire and how they are reflected in the law, government, economy and society of the United States,” but gives little attention to Greek civilization and the rise of the demos. On a positive note, the standards highlight the rise of Islam and its interaction with Europe, but there is no mention of early Christianity, its proliferation throughout the world, or critical events such as the Crusades or the Spanish Inquisition.

Tenth-grade world history is a haphazard compilation of events. The Enlightenment is passed over without mention, and transformational developments such as the formation of modern Europe are hurdled without notice. The revolutions in China, Russia, and Mexico are included in the curriculum, yet discussion of the French Revolution is noticeably absent. Oregon’s standards are at their strongest when discussing the events surrounding World War II. From comprehending “the terms of the Versailles Treaty” to the “division of Europe after World War II leading to the Cold War,” students may

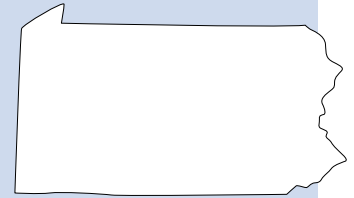
gain a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. Sadly, this success is short-lived as discussion of the Cold War is vaguely centered on “understanding [its] impact on individuals groups and nations.” One may hope that high school educators teach such events as the Bay of Pigs and the fall of the Berlin Wall. It is a disservice to them that no specific framework is provided.

Inexplicably, the Oregon curriculum concludes with the Korean and Vietnam Wars, thus giving students the impression that the Soviet bloc is firmly intact today. This inexcusable oversight is compounded by the absence of any discussion of September 11 and the current War on Terror. If Oregon were dedicated to relating past events in world history to current issues, it would complement its examination of the rise of Islam in eighth grade with an analysis of the rise of Islamic extremism in the late twentieth century. Overall, the Beaver State needs to make major changes to its world history standards in order to prepare its students to be contributing citizens in contemporary American society.

## PENNSYLVANIA

### STANDARDS WEBSITE:

<http://www.pde.state.pa.us/k12/lib/k12/histwhole.pdf>



**YEAR STANDARDS APPROVED: 2001**

### SCORING BREAKDOWN

Curriculum: .....	31
Instructional: .....	13
Total: .....	44

**GRADE: ..... F**

Pennsylvania presents world history in four stages: beginnings to present (grades 1-3); beginnings to present (grades 4-6); beginnings to 1500 (grades 7-9); and 1450 to present (grades 10-12).

Unfortunately, the Keystone State’s world history standards are devoid of content and lack any true sequencing and coherency. If they are meant to function as “a starting point for the study of history,” as the framework



claims, then the state's youth are severely handicapped. The framework consists of nebulous statements such as "Identify and explain how individual groups made significant political and cultural contributions to world history," followed by an arbitrary, almost random, listing of international figures from different epochs such as "Nelson Mandela, Pope Leo X, Commodore Perry, and Montezuma." These groupings of random individuals serve little purpose and provide students with a fragmented picture of world leaders and events. If Pennsylvania truly does believe in the importance of historical context, its standards do not reflect it.

With only three pages dedicated to world history, it is curious that Pennsylvania uses a quarter of that space to identify and explain "important documents, material artifacts and historic sites in world history." It would seem that a student's ability to identify a "samurai sword" as indigenous to Asia is secondary to receiving an introduction to Japanese history. Apparently, Pennsylvania's standard-makers think otherwise.

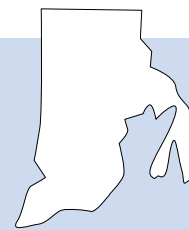
The standards grandly ask all grade levels to "[a]nalyze how conflict and cooperation among social groups and organizations affected world history." It would seem that both third graders and twelfth graders are expected to develop similar understandings of such topics as "domestic instability, labor relations, racial and ethnic relations, immigrant migration and military conflicts." This failure to tailor age-appropriate standards is detrimental to all age groups.

Teachers and students searching for the promised "narrative" approach to history will not find it in the standards framework; nor in the accompanying curricular document, *Academic Standards for Civics and Government*. Consider the section "How International Relationships Function." It's difficult to gain a better understanding of the interactions between foreign entities when the U.S. is the only country named.

This state's failure to provide educators a more adequate framework upon which to construct their respective curricula is offensive. Pennsylvanian Benjamin Franklin, a man well versed in world affairs, would be aghast at these rock-bottom benchmarks.

## RHODE ISLAND

No Grade

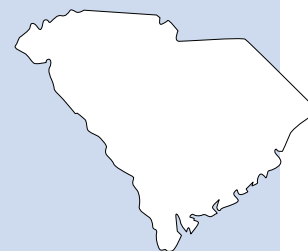


Rhode Island's Department of Education decided not to develop statewide frameworks in social studies. Instead, the state published a lengthy Standards-Based Guide for Social Studies in Rhode Island, which is a compilation of a "range of social studies standards," such as "the national social studies content standards," and a variety of other national documents. This haphazard compilation of documents is of no help to those interested in assuring the educational development of Rhode Island's youth.

## SOUTH CAROLINA

### STANDARDS WEBSITE:

[http://www.myschools.com/offices/cso/social\\_studies/documents/9INEZSocialStudiesStandards.pdf](http://www.myschools.com/offices/cso/social_studies/documents/9INEZSocialStudiesStandards.pdf)



**YEAR STANDARDS APPROVED:** 2005

### SCORING BREAKDOWN

Curriculum: .....	94
Instructional: .....	56
Total: .....	150

**GRADE: ..... A**

South Carolina's Social Studies Academic Standards begin with an all-too-common assertion among state standards: "A working knowledge of government, geography, economics and history is essential for effective citizenship in a democracy." Unlike many states, however, South Carolina's standards are a model of excellence. They are specific, with clear indicators established for each standard, and they are organized not by themes, but chronologically. This approach gives South Carolina a place of distinction in K-12 social studies education and reflects an earnest commitment to teaching real history.

Standards are provided for nine grades (K-8) and four high school core areas: Global studies, U.S. history and the constitution, economics, and United States government. World history is addressed in detail during sixth grade (ancient cultures to 1600), seventh grade (contemporary cultures: 1600 to the present), and high school (global studies). Remarkably, South Carolina's sixth grade and seventh grade standards are more comprehensive than most states' complete K-12 standards.

Children in the Palmetto State are exposed to a variety of cultures in sixth grade and are asked to “summarize the significant features of the classical Indian civilization, including the caste system” and its contributions to the modern world in literature, the arts, and mathematics. Likewise, they are introduced to classical Chinese civilization. These standards are effective because, unlike most states, South Carolina values specific historical examples. For their study of Africa, students are asked to “compare the features and major contributions of the African civilizations of Ghana, Mali, and Songhai, including the...impact of Islam and Christianity on their cultures.” The framework excels in its discussion of religion, particularly during the Middle Ages. Included is a discussion of “the influence of the Roman Church in Europe, including its role in spreading Christianity and the fact that monasteries affected education and the arts by founding universities and preserving ancient language and learning.”

The seventh grade framework addresses colonial expansion in significant detail and provides students with an appreciation for “how technological and scientific advances, including navigational advances and the use of gunpowder, affected various parts of the world...and contributed to the power of European nations.” South Carolina's coverage of European history is particularly strong and shows an appreciation for the relevance of British history to understanding past and contemporary America. Students are asked to “summarize the essential characteristics of the Glorious Revolution,” in addition to discussing the works of political theorists such as Locke, Rousseau, and Montesquieu. Nineteenth and twentieth century world history is covered in a similarly comprehensive manner, leaving one to wonder if it is possible to teach such a significant amount of material to young students over the course of one year.

The high school framework shows a similar commitment to coverage. But there is room for improvement in the state's treatment of modern world events. While important topics

such as the “course of independence and democratic movements in Africa, Asia, and Latin America” are treated well, the standards fall down in their handling of post-Cold War history. A thorough discussion of topics such as the proliferation of Islamic extremism throughout the world and the expansion of the European Union would nicely complement what are otherwise superb benchmarks. Overall, teachers, parents and students should commend the South Carolina Department of Education on a job well done.

## SOUTH DAKOTA

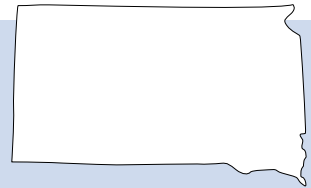
**STANDARDS WEBSITE:**  
<http://doe.sd.gov/contentsstandards/social/index.asp>

**YEAR STANDARDS APPROVED:** 1999

### SCORING BREAKDOWN

Curriculum: .....	56
Instructional: .....	34
Total: .....	90

**GRADE: .....** D



The South Dakota Social Studies Standards are designed to “develop the knowledge and skills of history, geography, civics, and economics that enable students to place the people, ideas, and events that have shaped South Dakota and our nation in perspective.” The standards divide into four main areas—history, geography, economics, and civics—and revolve around four goals of varying specificity: 1) understanding the emergence and development of civilization over time and place; 2) understanding the interrelationships of people, places, and the environment; 3) understanding the historical development and contemporary role of government power and authority; and 4) understanding the impact of economics on the development of societies and on current and emerging national and international situations.

The standards are organized effectively by grade levels, thus allowing parents and teachers to understand what is expected of students each year. But while world history gets good attention at the primary and middle school levels, it is slighted in high school. There, history is discussed only in the context of geography or U.S. foreign policy.

South Dakota should be commended for its attention to world history in elementary and middle schools. Its second-grade standards “include an introduction to the heritage and contributions of historic groups of people throughout the world” and encourage a serious study of the ancient Egyptian and Chinese civilizations. The sixth-grade standards includes an evocative analysis of India’s culture and history, while also providing an introduction into the beliefs and practices of major world religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism. Also included is the traditional examination of Greek and Roman civilizations along with the origins and spread of Christianity.

The absence of world history in South Dakota’s high school standards is dismaying. Following sixth grade, it is not clear that students are expected to study the history of any other country in comprehensive manner. Perhaps individual high schools and educators do supply this to their students, but the standards provide those brave souls little guidance.

While the high school frameworks include a peripheral analysis of the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the emergence of new Middle Eastern following World War I, it’s inexcusable that major narratives such as the Renaissance and Enlightenment are ignored.

While the Mount Rushmore State claims to “prepare students for informed and responsible citizenship” and “provide students with a framework for continuing education in social studies,” its world history standards beyond the sixth grade reflect no such commitment.

The Tennessee Social Studies Curriculum Standards claim to “integrate many philosophical and instructional approaches in order to enable students to achieve a true understanding of the world” and to encourage “a dialogue among students, teachers, and parents through the students’ entire social studies coursework.” At first blush, Tennessee would appear to be successful, thanks to a comprehensive high school curriculum which addresses world history outside the standard context of a social studies framework. In fact, the state has produced detailed standards for a variety of courses—ancient history, contemporary issues, modern history, world history, and world geography—that together provide an excellent introduction to global affairs. If these courses are taught and taken, that is. In reality, students are required to take either world geography or world history in order to graduate. In other words, while impressive in length and scope, Tennessee’s curriculum standards do not necessarily translate into an effective world history education for its youth.

Like many states, Tennessee deploys overarching content strands—culture; economics; geography; governance and civics; history; and individuals, groups, and interactions—throughout the social studies curriculum. The Volunteer State may be commended for exposing students to different cultures at a young age, yet some of its standards during the primary years are unrealistic. For instance, third graders are expected to “identify major events, people, and patterns...in world history” without the requisite instruction. In sixth grade, world history is broken into five eras commencing with the “Beginnings of Human Society” and concluding with “The Emergence of Europe (1200-1500 AD).” Students are expected to identify such sweeping narratives as “the role of major religions” and “the influence of science and technology on the developments of culture throughout time.” Yet, these essential subjects are addressed with a disheartening lack of specificity. Rather than naming particular religious figures or important inventions, for instance, Tennessee settles for such nebulous benchmarks as, “Understand the place of historical events in the context of the past, present, and future.”

World history is again addressed in high school where the emphasis is on events from the Renaissance to the present. The state’s standards brush the surface of a number of important historical themes, but fail to delve into any

## TENNESSEE



### STANDARDS WEBSITE:

<http://www.state.tn.us/education/ci/cistandards2001/ss/cisocialstudies.htm>

**YEAR STANDARDS APPROVED:** 2002

### SCORING BREAKDOWN

Curriculum: .....	.55
Instructional: .....	.28
Total: .....	.83

**GRADE: .....D**

with adequate detail. It seems impossible, for example, to “understand the chronological flow of historical eras and events in World history” without identifying such critical events as the Peloponnesian War or the Russian Revolution. Tennessee is right to bring the “cost and benefits of global war, ethnic conflicts, genocide, and diplomatic exchanges” to the attention of its students; yet such topics ring hollow without substantive discussion of Nazi Germany, Rwanda, and the War on Terror.

The state has constructed its most comprehensive frameworks for elective high school classes, such as ancient history and modern history (neither of which is required for graduation). In the former, students are asked to grasp such complex notions as “how cultural life in the Hellenistic era was a diffusion of Greek, Egyptian, Persian, and Indian art and architecture because of assimilation, conquest, trade, and migration.” In modern history, they are expected to know “the major terrorist organizations and actions since the 1970’s” and to engage in serious debate about “the change in civil liberties in countries throughout the world since September 11, 2001.” This is the right level of detail and relevance that is missing from the rest of the Volunteer State’s social studies framework, but it is inexcusable that students can opt out of World History at the high school level and graduate with no real exposure to global events of the past 500 years. Surely this isn’t the “understanding of the world” that Tennessee claims to foster in its students.

**TEXAS**

**STANDARDS WEBSITE:**  
<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/rules/tac/ch113.html#s1131>

**YEAR STANDARDS APPROVED: 1998**

**SCORING BREAKDOWN**

Curriculum: ..... 66  
 Instructional: ..... 31  
 Total: ..... 97

**GRADE: ..... C**



Texas’s Essential Knowledge and Skills for Social Studies asserts that the study of social studies “enables students to understand the importance of patriotism, function in

a free enterprise society, and appreciate the basic democratic values of our state and nation.” That’s fine, but these standards don’t do as much as they could to help students accomplish these goals.

During the primary grades, Texas’s standards address world history in the context of the exploration of the United States. Starting in sixth grade, students are asked to “describe the influence of individuals and groups on historical and contemporary events” in regions throughout the world. Unfortunately, the framework is severely lacking in specific individuals and events. Rather than encouraging substantive analysis of foreign cultures, the standards are vague and unhelpful. For example, students are supposed to “compare how governments function in selected world societies such as China, Germany, India and Russia.” Yet no mention is made of the time periods in the histories of these dynamic countries to be used for comparison. Examining the Weimar Republic and Bolshevik Russia is quite different from discussing Bismarck’s Germany and Imperial Russia. This is indicative of a serious flaw throughout the framework: Texas’s discussion of world history lacks any chronology.

The Lone Star State’s high school standards take a far more serious approach to world history. Specificity is still a problem, but some important historical events and actors are mentioned. Students receive an introduction to “the ideas from the English, American, French and Russian revolutions concerning separation of powers, liberty, equality, democracy, popular sovereignty, human rights, constitutionalism, and nationalism.” While these fundamental political issues are presented more as a laundry list than as topics for serious examination, it is nevertheless important that they are raised in the context of historical events. In fact, the one area in which the framework shines is its discussion of political theory. Texas asks that students read historical documents ranging from John Locke’s *Two Treatises on Government* to Justinian’s *Code of Laws*.

These standards do an adequate job of exposing students to non-Western cultures during high school. The “fundamental ideas and institutions of Eastern civilizations that originated in China and India” are discussed in some detail. Additionally, the framework makes good use of biography; students are supposed to “identify the contributions of significant scientists and inventors such as Robert Boyle,

Marie Curie, Thomas Edison, Albert Einstein, Robert Fulton, Sir Isaac Newton, Louis Pasteur, and James Watt.”

But while the state’s standards make good use of historical context, they fail to present events sequentially, which is a disservice to educators, parents, and students. Until this significant shortcoming is addressed, any attempts to improve content will be as fruitless.

**UTAH**

**STANDARDS WEBSITE:**

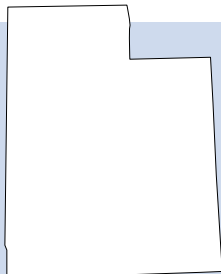
<http://www.uen.org/core/socialstudies/index.shtml>

**YEAR STANDARDS APPROVED:** 2002

**SCORING BREAKDOWN**

Curriculum: ..... 42  
 Instructional: ..... 19  
 Total: ..... 61

**GRADE:** ..... F



Utah has no overarching curricular framework for social studies. Instead, it provides core standards for each grade. For world history, the state asks that students study the “increasing interrelationships over time of the world’s peoples.” Not surprisingly, the details for accomplishing this are no better. In short, these nebulous goals ensure that teachers and students who depend upon them will garner no solid understanding of the world’s history or people.

Utah first exposes its school kids to world history in the third grade, where they are asked to “investigate how environments and communities change over time through the influence of people.” Specific attention is paid to the “indigenous (native) people of the United States” and comparisons are drawn between them and the Inca of South America. While promising in theory, this exercise proves useless as the state fails to provide enough details to stimulate comparison. Rather than giving characteristics of each culture, for instance, the standards ask for “comparisons of the local community with the community of the Inca.” Utah makes no effort to identify the indigenous group to which it refers.

In similarly bizarre fashion, Utah asks fourth grade students to compare the governments and economies of Utah and Japan. The problem lies in the difficulties inherent in comparing a state with a nation. Done well, this type of comparison could have some benefit. But statements such as “identify and compare major industries of Utah and Japan” leave one convinced of this exercise’s uselessness. Rather than introducing students to non-Western cultures with these types of comparisons, students would be better served with basic information about Japan and China.

The thrust of Utah’s world history curriculum is contained within a required high school course on World Civilizations. Sadly, those standards lack any semblance of sequence or coherence. Major narratives are covered peripherally and inadequate attention is paid to non-Western cultures. Vastly ambitious projects such as “Appraise the major characteristics of interregional contact that linked the people of Africa, Asia, and Europe” are put forth with little supporting detail. Major stories such as the Crusades, the Mongol invasion of Europe and Asia, and the influence of Chinese culture on Southeast Asia, Korea, and Japan are given short shrift. This problem occurs throughout the curriculum; Utah touches upon lots of important historical trends and events but fails to develop them adequately. Providing a laundry list of the major world religions, for instance, helps no one if that list is not supported with basic characteristics of each religion. Beehive State parents and students should buzz their state’s standards-makers for a better document.

**VERMONT**

**STANDARDS WEBSITE:**

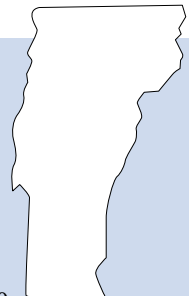
<http://www.state.vt.us/educ/new/pdfdoc/pubs/framework.pdf>

**YEAR STANDARDS APPROVED:** 2000

**SCORING BREAKDOWN**

Curriculum: ..... 19  
 Instructional: ..... 7  
 Total: ..... 26

**GRADE:** ..... F





Vermont’s standards employ a complex and confusing system to support its social sciences framework. The Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities is made up of Grade Expectations (GEs) which outline what teachers and their students should know at each stage. These GEs are “supported” by Grade Cluster Expectations, which detail the content and skills students are supposed to master. Fair enough, except that this system is so difficult to decipher that the state included a table to teach first-time users “how to read the GEs.” The purpose of standards is to simplify the lives and shape the work of educators, parents, and students alike, not make them more difficult to read.

The Green Mountain State’s standards are vague and completely devoid of historical fact. For instance, students are asked to explain the differences between historical and present day objects in the United States and/or the world, evaluating how the use of the object and the object itself changed over time (e.g., comparing modes of transportation used in past and present exploration in order to evaluate the impact of those changes). Teachers and their students gain little from standards such as these; listing specific modes of transportation and their inventors throughout history would be far more useful. Yet, instead of helping its youth learn historical events, Vermont is more concerned that “students connect the past with the present” and “show understanding of how humans interpret history.”

The state should be commended for addressing the role of religion in the public sphere, but its methodology could be improved. Asking students to identify and describe “examples of tensions between belief systems and government policies and laws, and identifying ways these tensions can be reduced” is a useful exercise. However, providing illogical and unrelated examples such as “gambling on reservations; neutrality of Switzerland; humanitarian aid” merely complicates an already challenging subject.

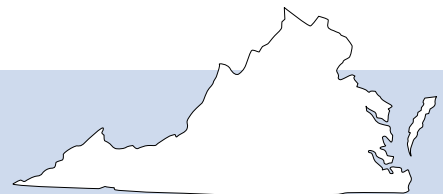
Another overarching problem evident throughout Vermont’s standards is a chronological vacuum. With no mention of specific dates or eras, Vermont is more likely to confuse students by asking them to “identify the beginning, middle and end of an historical narrative or story” and “construct time lines of significant historical development in the nation and world.” Nor is there any systematic

approach for when students are to study world history. One may suppose that focus is given to international affairs during at least one middle school grade and another in high school. But that’s a guess. At the very least, this information should be made clear in a world history framework.

Vermont challenges its elementary school students to “examine how different societies address issues of human interdependence by identifying different types of conflict among individuals and groups (e.g., girls and boys).” This standard is worthless. In a slight improvement, Vermont asks high school students to “identify why certain events are considered pivotal...e.g. Muhammad’s call to prophecy, the collapse of the Soviet Union.” However, this is the extent to which specific events are conveyed to students throughout the curriculum, in a superficial and incoherent manner.

The state’s standard-makers claim that they “teachers, content experts, curriculum coordinators, and administrators” when they created the document. Yet, the framework is completely devoid of teachable material, content, a readable curriculum, and administrative oversight. There is no way around it; these standards are terrible.

## VIRGINIA



### STANDARDS WEBSITE:

[http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Instruction/History/hist\\_ss\\_framework.html](http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Instruction/History/hist_ss_framework.html)

**YEAR STANDARDS APPROVED: 2001**

### SCORING BREAKDOWN

Curriculum: .....	104
Instructional: .....	60
Total: .....	164

**GRADE: ..... A**

The primary function of Virginia’s Social Sciences Standards of Learning Curricular Framework is to assist “teachers as they plan their lessons by framing essential questions, identifying essential understandings, defining

essential content knowledge, and describing the intellectual skills students need to use.” Virginia’s framework distinguishes itself by delineating “in greater specificity the minimum content that all teachers should teach and all students should learn,” and including “names of individuals whose study further enriches the standards and clarifies the concepts under investigation.”

Students are first exposed to world history in third grade when they explore the ancient Greek and Roman civilizations. They are expected to understand the forms of government specific to each and the influence of these two cultures on the United States and its democracy. Students are also asked to understand the early West African empire of Mali and are asked to describe “its oral tradition, government and economic development.” Virginia’s efforts to expose its students to non-Western cultures in the primary years should be commended. Additionally, the detail with which Malian culture is described is a portent of good things to come. The framework discusses the country’s prime location “across the trade routes between the sources of salt in the Sahara Desert and the gold region/mines of West Africa,” in addition to elaborating on the importance of salt as a natural resource and gold as a precious metal.

Students are introduced to world history and geography up to 1500 during the middle grades; this framework is longer and more elaborate than most states’ entire social studies curricula. The standards initially focus on “the ancient river valley civilizations, including Egypt, Mesopotamia, the Indus River Valley, and China, and the civilizations of the Hebrews, Phoenicians, and Kush.” Students are asked to locate these civilizations in time and place and then to describe their religious traditions and the “development of social, political and economic patterns, including slavery.”

The state’s coverage of Chinese civilization is the most effective in the country. Such subjects as the construction of the Great Wall and the origins of Confucianism and Taoism are covered in fine detail. Students must also demonstrate knowledge of the Persian and Indian civilizations. The framework is especially effective in

detailing the Indo-Aryan invasion and subsequent creation of the “rigidly structured society (caste system) blended with native beliefs.”

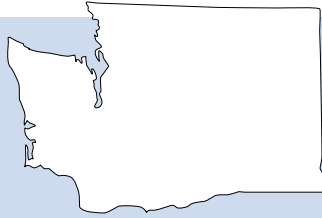
The framework is also more comprehensive than other states in its discussion of ancient Greece and Rome. Virginia’s framework even takes a serious approach to the oft-ignored Medieval period. For instance, students are to demonstrate knowledge of the Byzantine Empire and Islamic civilizations, respectively, by “explaining disputes that led to the Roman Catholic Church and the Greek Orthodox Church” splitting, and discussing the “achievements in science and arts that transformed the Islamic world.”

In high school, students move on to world history and geography since 1500; this curricular framework is equally comprehensive. The Renaissance, Enlightenment, and Age of Exploration are covered with the requisite seriousness. What makes Virginia’s coverage of these crucial periods particularly strong is its focus on individuals—Bach, Kepler, Delacroix, Voltaire, Bolivar, and Cromwell are mentioned, just to name a few. The framework also excels in its coverage of “the impact of European economic and military power on Asia and Africa, with an emphasis on the competition for resources and the responses of colonized peoples.” Students learn that “European economic, military, and political power forced colonized countries to trade on European terms” and develop an appreciation for the ways “colonized peoples resisted European domination and responded in diverse ways to Western influences.” Virginia covers the two major wars of the twentieth century in thorough fashion, but the state really shines by including discussion of the independence movements and development efforts in Africa—including Kenyatta’s leadership of Kenya—and the “regional settings for the Indian independence movement.”

The one area in which Virginia is deficient is its coverage of Latin America. Little mention is made of Central American countries, and events such as Mexico’s liberation from Spanish rule are omitted. This oversight aside, Virginia’s standards are a model of clarity and its state officials should be commended for a job well done.



## WASHINGTON



### STANDARDS WEBSITE:

<http://www.k12.wa.us/curriculumInstruct/SocStudies/default.aspx>

**YEAR STANDARDS APPROVED: 2003**

### SCORING BREAKDOWN

Curriculum: .....	62
Instructional: .....	31
Total: .....	93

**GRADE: ..... D**

Washington's Essential Academic Learning Requirements murkily assert that "receiving a well-grounded foundation and understanding of social studies concepts provides students with unique and diverse viewpoints to examine their role in the community, state, nation, and the world in order to actively participate in our democracy." Revised in 2003, the framework relies on four themes: civic responsibility, historical understanding, geographic understanding, and economic understanding. The Evergreen State is correct to acknowledge that "[i]t would be nearly impossible to teach students about every important topic in social studies in a way that promotes in-depth understanding." Still, that does not excuse the state's largely superficial approach to social studies and world history, at least during the high school years.

The K-8 grades receive respectable instruction in world history. For example, while most states limit their material in ancient civilizations to Greece and Rome, Washington includes ancient China. The coverage is solid. Students are asked to "explain the economic and cultural effects of the Silk Road trade" and to describe "how Chinese philosophy (Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism) was reflected in its culture."

This laudable trend continues in the seventh grade with a thorough treatment of Islamic civilization. Students are asked to "trace the origins of Islam and the life and teaching of Mohammed, including Islamic teachings on the connection with Judaism and Christianity." The framework also addresses "the significance of the Qur'an and the

Sunnah as the primary sources of Islamic beliefs, practice, and law, and their influence in Muslims' daily lives." The authors have provided young Washingtonians with a first-rate introduction, assuming that it's taught and learned.

The state understands the importance of incorporating biography into the narrative of history as well. Students greatly benefit from an introduction to "the impact of advances made in the arts, science, mathematics, cartography, engineering, and the understanding of human anatomy and astronomy" by such individuals as Dante Alighieri, Leonardo da Vinci, Johan Gutenberg, and William Shakespeare.

Washington's high school standards are far less detailed, however, and in many respects less demanding than the middle school framework. For example, rather than studying the fundamental tenets of Islam, high school students are vaguely asked "to understand the interrelationship between religion and governments." Important periods such as the Renaissance and Enlightenment go unmentioned. Instead of referencing tangible events and real individuals from history, Washington's high school standards are vague and unspecific.

Washingtonians should feel cheated. The middle school standards are thoughtfully written and provide a solid framework around which teachers can develop lesson plans. This strong foundation goes to waste in high school, however, as the curriculum lacks specificity and coherence. The Evergreen State has proven it can take world history education seriously; now it needs to do so consistently throughout the K-12 years.

## WEST VIRGINIA

### STANDARDS WEBSITE:

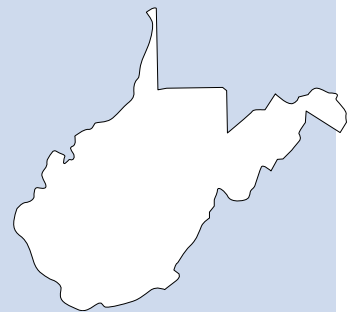
<http://wvde.state.wv.us/igos/psock-12.html>

**YEAR STANDARDS APPROVED: 2003**

### SCORING BREAKDOWN

Curriculum: .....	60
Instructional: .....	36
Total: .....	96

**GRADE: ..... C**



West Virginia’s Content Standards and Objectives for Social Studies define the discipline as an examination of how people “live in an increasingly culturally diverse, interconnected world.” The document is divided into five disciplines—citizenship, civics/government, economics, geography, and history—and contains specific standards, objectives, and performance descriptors following each grade. The importance of sequencing in the study of historical affairs appears not to be lost on West Virginia standard-makers. One of five overarching history standards expects students to “examine, analyze, and explain historical relationships using chronology to sequence and organize events and people in history.” Unfortunately, the actual content does not reflect such attention to the progression of world events; no continuous historical narrative can be discerned.

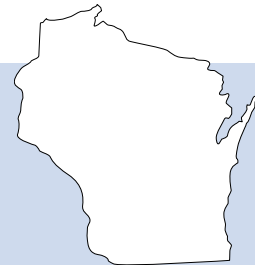
West Virginia’s performance descriptors are overly vague and age-inappropriate, particularly in the primary years. For example, a kindergarten student is deemed distinguished if he or she “demonstrates exceptional knowledge and exemplary performance with distinctive and sophisticated application of knowledge and skills that exceed the standard in history.” It is difficult to picture any kindergartener capable of such sophistication, particularly when being asked to “explore the past through stories of people, heroes, pictures, songs, holidays, customs, traditions and legends.” World history is not a focus in the elementary years, with the exception of a study of European explorers of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Sixth grade “provides an interdisciplinary examination of selected world regions, North America, South America, Western Europe and the Middle East.” There is no explanation or excuse for the omission of Asia and Africa. The majority of the standards are far too general, e.g., “identify and evaluate contributions of past civilizations and cite reasons for their rise and fall.”

The thrust of West Virginia’s world history education is contained within tenth grade. There the standards ambitiously claim to cover “cultural regions of the world from the dawn of civilization to 1900.” One would expect such an assertion to be supported by detailed and well-crafted objectives; instead, the document contains such general criteria as “identify and assess foreign colonization” and “analyze and assess the concept of nation building.” The framework is devoid of coherence and any narrative

arc. Asking students to “compare and contrast the acceptance of diversity in hierarchical societies” means little if such societies are not first identified and discussed in chronological order. Discussing such topics as minority and women’s rights in India’s caste system would greatly improve West Virginia’s framework.

Eleventh grade focuses on the “increasing interdependency of the United States and the world” in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Here, the state at least mentions contemporary events such as Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan and the rise of Islamic extremism and terrorism. Too few states do. But these subjects, like the rest of the content standards, are addressed superficially and without appropriate context. West Virginia’s 2003 overhaul of its standards have improved the world history framework, but the state still has significant room for improvement.



## WISCONSIN

### STANDARDS WEBSITE:

<http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/standards/ssintro.html>

**YEAR STANDARDS APPROVED:** 1999

### SCORING BREAKDOWN

Curriculum: . . . . .	26
Instructional: . . . . .	10
Total: . . . . .	36

**GRADE:** . . . . . F

According to Wisconsin’s Model Academic Standards for Social Studies, “In order to ensure our survival as a free nation, students at all grade levels in Wisconsin are required to learn about the principles and ideals upon which the United States is founded and understand the world in which they live.” The framework is organized into five strands: geography, history, political science and citizenship, economics, and behavioral sciences.

Students begin studying world history in fifth grade and are expected over the course of their middle and secondary grades to comprehend a hodgepodge of

chronologies and anxieties. The methodology behind this framework is unclear, and the overly vague language is unhelpful to interested parties. For instance, why should the study of religions and civilizations stop at the year 1100 C.E.? (One can speculate that this seemingly arbitrary date is related to the conclusion of the First Crusade.) Plenty of noteworthy events related to religion have occurred since the beginning of the twelfth century. Additionally, how much more difficult would it be to build upon a heading such as “global unrest, change and revolution, 1750-1850” and reference specific events and participants from the French, American, Spanish, or Venezuelan wars?

To augment its one content standard and supporting historical themes, Wisconsin has developed performance standards for the eighth and twelfth grades. Yet these, too, are ambiguous and unhelpful. For example, asserting that eighth grade students will be able to “describe the relationships between and among significant events, such as the causes and consequences of wars in United States and world history” seems unreasonable if significant events go unmentioned throughout the entire curriculum. Nor is there any discernable historical sequence to the standards. One can only hope that students will study the ancient Greek and Roman civilizations before covering the Renaissance.

By the end of twelfth grade, students are expected to “select instances of scientific, intellectual, and religious change in various regions of the world at different times in history and discuss the impact those changes had on beliefs and values.” Besides making no sense, this assertion is untethered to the limited content included within the framework. Before discussing the impact of changes throughout the world, for example, it is necessary to say what those changes, in fact, are.

While it is likely that most educators do not limit their teaching to this paltry framework, Wisconsin does them no service by providing so weak and patchy a foundation.

## WYOMING

### STANDARDS WEBSITE:

<http://www.k12.wy.us/SA/standards/socstud.pdf>

**YEAR STANDARDS APPROVED:** 2003

### SCORING BREAKDOWN

Curriculum: .....	20
Instructional: .....	12
Total: .....	32

**GRADE:** ..... F

The Wyoming Social Studies Content and Performance Standards asserts that the mission of social studies “is to help young people develop the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world...Effective self-government requires informed people and civic participation.” Modeled loosely upon the National Council for Social Studies standards, Wyoming’s are organized into five strands: citizenship, government and democracy; culture and cultural diversity; production, distribution, and consumption; time, continuity, and change; people, places, and environments. These formulaic social studies categories do not clearly define where the study of world history may be found. So it’s no surprise that comprehensive and sequenced standards relating to its examination are glaringly absent.

In developing benchmarks for fourth, eighth, and eleventh grades, Wyoming has constructed “performance standards level descriptors” divided into the following categories: Advanced, Proficient, Basic, and Below Basic. For example, “advanced” students in the eleventh grade are expected to “demonstrate a sophisticated analysis of how diversity, cultural influences, and geography have influenced peoples and world events.” This is particularly challenging because Wyoming’s standards make no specific mention of non-American cultures, countries, events, or people prior to eleventh grade.

Rather than providing such nebulous criteria (e.g., students in the eighth grade are asked to “identify people, events, problems, conflicts, and ideas and explain their historical significance”), Wyoming should focus on detailing specific historical events and periods that students ought to master. Performance descriptors such as Wyoming’s are meaningless unless accompanied by well-developed standards by which students can be truly judged. Asking students in eleventh grade to “communicate how shared cultural experiences influence people’s perceptions of prominent historical figures, groups, institutions, and world events” is pointless if basic historical narratives such as the rise of Christianity or capitalism go unmentioned, along with historical figures themselves.

Just as troubling is Wyoming’s failure to provide teachers with a sequential historical framework upon which

to erect their curricular activities. One must assume that educators in Cheyenne understand that the Franco-Prussian War followed the rise and fall of Napoleonic France; yet, this information—even a discussion of ancient Rome and Greece—is not readily available from the state.

Wyoming should rethink its reliance on NCSS for guidance in crafting its content and performance standards, and should instead begin with developing a clear chronology for teachers to follow. It is unfair to young Wyoming students that their state standards do not actually “specify the essential learning that students must master,” or “assist school districts, schools, and communities in developing and strengthening curriculum.” Rather, they obfuscate even the most elementary aspects of world history.



1701 K Street, NW  
Suite 1000  
Washington, D.C., 20006  
202-223-5452  
202-223-9226 Fax  
[www.edexcellence.net](http://www.edexcellence.net)

Copies of this report are available electronically at our website, [www.edexcellence.net](http://www.edexcellence.net).

Additional copies can be ordered at [www.edexcellence.net/publication/order.cfm](http://www.edexcellence.net/publication/order.cfm) or by calling 410-634-2400.