

- ⊙ prioritize critical analysis, cultural awareness and engaging in a diverse democracy and an interconnected world
- ⊙ include the contributions, perspectives and histories of individuals and groups previously underrepresented
- ⊙ address new requirements, including civics, ethnic studies, the Holocaust and other genocides

Oregon House Bills 2845, 2023 and 2905 legislate that ethnic studies be integrated into instruction for the state's K–12 public school students.



Oregon's
**Instructional
Frameworks**

**SOCIAL
SCIENCES**

Civilizations, Empires and Colonialism: Grades 6–12

Why is it important to teach about civilizations, empires and colonialism?¹

Understanding the impact of empire building and colonialism fosters global and cultural awareness, empathy and critical analysis of complex historical topics.

Teaching students in grades 6–12 to critically examine historical governance structures, international relationships, cultural exchange and the legacies of civilizations, colonialism and empires provides a more comprehensive understanding of how these forces have shaped the modern world.

Historical inquiry utilizing primary and secondary sources supports the examination of multiple perspectives, conflicting interests and various responses within the context of colonialism and empire.

By constructing and critically evaluating historical narratives using a wide range of sources, students gain a deeper understanding of how different viewpoints and experiences have influenced historical accounts and our understanding of the past.

Studying the histories of civilizations, empires and colonialism provides insights into patterns of territorial expansion, governance structures, societal adaptations, cultural exchanges and transformations.

Understanding how different societies responded to these historical developments prepares students to critically analyze complex international relationships in historical contexts and the contemporary world.

¹ **Civilization:** the organized society, culture and way of life of a particular area. **Empire:** an extensive group of peoples, territories, states or countries, ruled by a single, central person or entity usually through conquest. **Colonialism:** a practice where a powerful country (the colonizer) takes control of another area (the colony) to gain land and expand territory, to access and use the colony's natural resources for the economic benefits of the colonizing country.

What does teaching about civilizations, empires and colonialism look like in practice?

Essential Disciplinary Practice

Cultivate global awareness and cultural understanding to effectively engage with the interconnected world, diverse cultures and perspectives.

Example

Within a lesson on the Mali Empire, the teacher introduces students to the Sundiata epic through a video of Malian musicians, emphasizing oral tradition as a primary source. Students watch the performance, guided by questions that encourage them to analyze the music, lyrics and cultural significance of the narrative. Afterward, students reflect on Sundiata Keita's legacy, the role of oral histories in preserving cultural knowledge and the broader value of non-Western historical narratives. Through discussion and personal connections, students deepen their understanding of global traditions and historical storytelling.

Example Standards: 6/7.G.MM, 6/7.G.HI.5, 6/7.H.CC.5, 6/7.H.CP.15

Collect, interpret, evaluate and apply information from primary and secondary sources to better understand and create historical narratives distinguishing between fact and opinion.

In a lesson on historical narratives, the teacher guides students in analyzing a 1375 CE Catalan Atlas map depicting Mansa Musa and trans-Saharan trade routes. Using primary sources, students examine how Mansa Musa is portrayed and consider how European perspectives may have influenced the depiction. Students then read about the Mali and Mongol Empires, collaborating to compare their political, economic and cultural structures using a graphic organizer. Through discussion and analysis, students critically evaluate historical narratives, exploring how different perspectives shape our understanding of the past.

Example Standards: 6/7.G.GR.2, 6/7.G.HI.4, 6/7.G.HI.5, HS.WR.CC.6

The above examples offer ways that educators might bundle or group multiple standards across the social science domains and concepts within each grade level.

Questions for Consideration and Discussion Starters

How can **educators** locate and identify resources about civilizations and societies?

What strategies can **school leaders** use to coach and support teachers to facilitate discussions about colonialism?

How can **educators** help students make connections between historical and current events?

Civilizations, Empires and Colonialism in Grades 6–12

This module supports educators in teaching about civilizations, empires and colonialism in alignment with the 2024 Oregon Social Science Standards. It provides content knowledge on non-Western civilizations and cultures while equipping teachers with research-based instructional strategies to foster global awareness, cultural understanding and critical analysis in their own contexts. Educators will explore how to use primary and secondary sources to examine the historical consequences and cultural interactions of empires and colonialism. They will also demonstrate their ability to construct and critically evaluate historical narratives by analyzing the role of bias and privilege in historical accounts and investigating Indigenous resistance movements within colonial contexts. Through inquiry-driven and Transformational Social and Emotional Learning approaches, teachers will gain strategies to promote empathy, self-awareness and nuanced discussions of complex historical topics while helping students examine how colonialism has shaped historical and contemporary societies.

Online Module: [Civilizations, Empires and Colonialism 6–12](#)

Learn More [Social Science Standards Resource Website](#)
[2024 Social Science Standards](#)
[Essential Disciplinary Practices](#)