Mississippi State University
Undergraduate Equine Teaching Program

Mississippi State University offers an undergraduate equine teaching program that includes various equine courses from riding classes to horse judging classes along with equine extra-curricular activities such as the equestrian and horse judging teams. Equine students have the opportunity to interact with equine extension and research faculty participating in associated activities. In addition, since the Animal & Dairy Sciences department and the College of Veterinary Medicine share facilities, equine students will frequently interact with the MSU veterinarians through guest lectures and demonstrations in equine courses and club meetings. Potential students are welcome to contact the ADS department (662-325-2802) to receive additional information concerning aspects of the undergraduate equine teaching program.

Equine Courses

Multiple undergraduate equine courses are available both in the fall and spring semesters. While the ADS department offers a bachelors of science degree with a concentration in equine, students of any major can take any equine course. Riding courses offered at MSU include Intro to Horsemanship, Advanced Horsemanship, Advanced Horsemanship II, and Equine Assisted Therapy. Students with more advanced riding experience can also sign up for a directed individual study course after completing one of the above riding courses. Equine courses with hands-on ground handling and management activities include Equine Behavior & Training, Equine Reproduction, and Horse Management. While additional equine courses are available including Equine Conformation & Performance Evaluation, Advanced Equine Evaluation, Equine Exercise Physiology, and Horse Show Marketing & Management, special topic courses besides those courses listed above are available on a regular basis to add to the equine student’s course selection.

Equine Teams

Students can compete both on horseback and off the horse through participation in the equestrian, rodeo, or horse judging teams. The teams are open to any fulltime undergraduate student. Teams are made up of both male and female students and are club activities sponsored by the ADS department.

While horse ownership is important for competing on the rodeo team as team members travel with their horses to competition, horse ownership is not a requirement for the equestrian team. Team members for both teams are welcome to take riding courses offered at the University to develop their riding
skills for competition or can work with outside trainers that have volunteered their time to assist with the teams. Both riding teams compete against other Universities within their region traveling to those Universities hosting collegiate competitions. In addition to traveling to other Universities, Mississippi State University has hosted collegiate rodeo competitions at the Mississippi Horse Park ([http://mshorsepark.com/](http://mshorsepark.com/)) located adjacent to the University. Both riding teams have had a proud history of placing team members and teams in the top ten of their respective regions.

The rodeo team competes in the National Intercollegiate Rodeo Association so students wanting more information concerning NIRA competitions can go to the NIRA website ([www.collegerodeo.com](http://www.collegerodeo.com)). The equestrian team competes in the Intercollegiate Horse Show Association both in english and western competitions at all levels of riding from beginner walk/trot to open so students wanting more information concerning IHSA competitions can go to the IHSA website ([www.ihsainc.com](http://www.ihsainc.com)).

While at this time the equestrian team is not a varsity sport, the team, coached by Dr. Molly Nicodemus, has competed at a varsity invitational and has had team members representing the University at Regionals, Zones, Semi-Finals, and Nationals. As an undergraduate at Missouri State University, Dr. Nicodemus received a scholarship for riding on the IHSA hunt and stock seat teams, and later, coached the Michigan State University IHSA teams before coming to Mississippi State University where she initiated the first IHSA team in Mississippi.

As for those students with a talent for evaluating and selecting horses with superior conformation and performance, the horse judging team is a competitive extra-curricular activity where these students can travel throughout the United States competing at national competitions against other Universities with the potential of winning scholarships and prizes. The Mississippi State University has competed at the following collegiate horse judging competitions: Morgan Grand Nationals, U.S. Arabian Nationals, AQHA Worlds, NRHA Futurity, Appaloosa Nationals, NACTA Spring Contest, and APHA Spring Sweepstakes. The team and team members have brought home multiple championships and reserve championships over the past ten years with students moving on after collegiate competitions to become judging officials for horse shows within and outside of the state of Mississippi.

![Equestrian Team at Huntseat Regionals](image-url)
As both the horse judging team coach and as an equine biomechanist, Dr. Nicodemus incorporates her kinematic research on performance horses to educate her judging team on the objective evaluation limb mechanics. Dr. Nicodemus has spoken internationally on the biomechanics of horses competing in such performance classes as western pleasure, hunter under saddle, country english pleasure, classic pleasure, english pleasure, park saddle, and lite shod and padded gaited pleasure classes.

**Equine Clubs**

Both the Rodeo Club and Horseman’s Association are University clubs focused on equine activities that are open to all students. Both clubs are sponsored by the ADS department. The Rodeo Club is the parent organization for the rodeo team, but students do not have to compete on the team to be members of the club. The Rodeo Club sponsors the annual collegiate rodeo competition along with hosting clinics and other activities associated with the rodeo. Horseman’s Association is the parent organization for the equestrian team, but students do not have to compete on the team to be members of the club.