**Family History Narrative Assignment**

Step 1: Choose a format

Option 1:

**Memoir -** Memoirs usually focus on a specific episode or time period in the life of a single ancestor.

Option 2:

**Narrative:** A narrative generally encompasses a group of ancestors.

Step 2: Choose a focus

Do you intend to write mostly about **just one particular relative**, or **everyone on your pedigree**?

Step 3: Choose Plot and Themes

Thinking of your ancestors as characters in your family history story, what problems and obstacles did your ancestors face? A plot gives your family history interest and focus. Popular family history plots and themes include:

* Immigration/Migration
* Rags to Riches
* Pioneer or Farm Life
* Rising Out of Slavery
* War Survival

Step 4: Do your Background Research

If you want your family history to read more like a suspense novel than a dull, dry textbook, then it is important to make the reader feel like an eyewitness to your family's life. Even when your ancestor didn't leave an account of his or her daily life, social histories can help you learn about the experiences of people in a given time and place. Read about town and city histories to learn what life was like during your time period of interest. Research timelines of wars, natural disasters and epidemics to see if any might have influenced your ancestor. Investigate your ancestor's occupation to gain greater understanding into his daily activities. Read up on the fashions, art, transportation and common foods of the time period and location. If you have spoken to family members, attempt to use their stories (according to them) to add a personal touch.

Step 5: Brainstorm

Use the graphic organizer found on my website to help you brainstorm ideas and organize thoughts.

Step 6: Choose a Starting Point

What is the most interesting part of your family's story? Did your ancestors escape a life of poverty and persecution for a better one in a new country? Was there an interesting invention or occupation? A wartime hero? Pick out an interesting fact, record or story about your ancestors and open your narrative with it. Just like the fiction books you read for pleasure, a family history book doesn't need to begin at the beginning. An interesting story will grab the reader's attention, with the hope of drawing them in past the first page. You can later use flashback to fill in the reader on the events that lead up to your opening story.

Step 7: Make it Personal

Anyone who reads your family history will likely be interested in the facts, but what they'll most enjoy and remember are the everyday details - favorite stories and anecdotes, embarrassing moments and family traditions. Sometimes it can be interesting to include varying accounts of the same event. Personal stories offer a great way to introduce new characters and chapters, and keep your reader interested. If your ancestors left no personal accounts, you can still tell their story as if they had, using what you've learned about them from your research.

Step 8: Review Rubric

Rubric listing the criteria that will be used to grade your narrative can be found on my website.

Step 9: Meet Length Requirement

Period Two: 2 to 3 pages (double-spaced)

Period Three: 3 to 4 pages (double-spaced)

Grading:

* Cornell Notes on Creating Pedigrees: 12 participation pts.
* Completed Pedigree: 20 homework pts.
* Narrative Brainstorming (Graphic Organizer): 10 participation pts.
* Narrative: 25 assessment pts.

**Total Assignment: 67 points**