



AMERICAN GENEALOGY: HOME STUDY COURSE

SYLLABUS

NGS AMERICAN GENEALOGY
HOME STUDY COURSE SYLLABUS

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The NGS Home Study Course is available on three CDs that can be purchased individually or as a set. For more information about the course and registration, see <http://ngsgenealogy.org/eduhsc.cfm> or e-mail courses@ngsgenealogy.org.

CD1. Lessons 1-6

Lesson 1. Introduction and Organization

This lesson will begin to answer these questions:

- ❖ What, exactly, is genealogy, and how has the field changed over time?
- ❖ What is the most productive way to research your family?
- ❖ What are the steps to follow in doing research?
- ❖ How should you organize your filing system as you do research and gather evidence?
- ❖ How should you record your research results?
- ❖ How can you communicate your research to others?

To test your knowledge, you will:

1. Create a pedigree chart.
2. Create a family group sheet with citations.

Lesson 2. Family Traditions and Family Records

The first step in the research process is to gather information, and the first place to do this is in your own home. In this lesson, you will gather documents tucked away in boxes and drawers.

You will be able to answer these questions:

- ❖ How do you record and evaluate a family tradition?
- ❖ How can you evaluate the reliability of family Bible records?
- ❖ What kinds of family papers and memorabilia have genealogical information?

To test your knowledge, you will:

1. Take a quick quiz on family Bibles.
2. Record and evaluate a family tradition.
3. Make a list of family sources, identify the original owners, and evaluate the genealogical clues that are found in the source.

Lesson 3. Interviews, Correspondence, and Queries

After you go through your home sources, the next step is to contact family members and relatives who may have helpful information for you. In this lesson, you will learn how to



interview and correspond with relatives and how to locate unknown relatives through genealogical queries in periodicals and on the Internet.

At the end of the lesson, you will be able to answer these questions:

- ❖ What are the correct terms for various family relationships?
- ❖ How do you prepare for and conduct an interview?
- ❖ How do you write a letter to obtain genealogical information?
- ❖ How do you write a genealogical query?

To test your knowledge, you will:

1. Quick Quiz on determining relationships.
2. Quick Quiz on writing a citation for an interview.
3. Plan a genealogical interview.
4. Write a letter.
5. Write a query.

Lesson 4. Library Resources

In this lesson you will look beyond the records and memories housed in your family's collections. You will look at resources found in libraries, manuscript collections, and on the Internet.

The purpose of this lesson is to help you explore several types of library resources. These materials will vary in their accuracy and usefulness. Therefore you will need to analyze and carefully weigh the information they contain.

In this lesson you will explore these questions:

- ❖ How do library resources fit into genealogical research?
- ❖ Where are the major genealogical libraries?
- ❖ How do you search for published genealogical resources in libraries?
- ❖ What types of materials will you find in genealogical collections?
- ❖ What criteria should you use when evaluating published family histories?
- ❖ How do you correctly write end notes, footnotes, and bibliographic entries?

In addition you will:

1. Gain experience writing bibliographic citations for published materials.
2. Survey and then report on the genealogical resources and research facilities of a library.



Lesson 5. Census Records

In this lesson you will learn how to find and use United States census records. From the first population census, taken in 1790, to the most recent one, people have answered questions that aided our government. The answers also aid family historians. We use the information to locate our ancestors in time and place, and to learn about them and their neighbors.

At the end of this lesson you will be able to answer these questions:

- ❖ What genealogical information is found in federal population schedules?
- ❖ Where can you obtain and make copies of federal census schedules?
- ❖ What indexes are available so you can find your people on the federal census schedules?
- ❖ How do you use and evaluate the information found in census records?
- ❖ How do you cite census records?
- ❖ What other federal censuses are available besides population schedules?
- ❖ What state and territorial population censuses are available?

To test your knowledge, you will:

1. Take an exam.
2. Prepare a preliminary checklist of census records available for each person on your pedigree chart.
3. Obtain a copy of a census and extract information from it.
4. Write a source citation for a census record.

Lesson 6. Vital Records

In this lesson you will learn about civil vital records—those records kept by state and local governments. You will learn how to weigh the evidence found in the information contained in those documents.

At the end of this lesson you will be able to answer the following questions:

- ❖ How did vital records develop in the United States?
- ❖ What genealogical information can you find in vital records?
- ❖ How do you evaluate the evidence found in vital records?
- ❖ How do you locate and obtain vital records?

To test your knowledge, you will:

1. Prepare a list of places where civil vital records for your ancestors may be found.
2. Obtain a birth or death record from a vital records office.
3. Write source citations for vital records.



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4. Visit a local courthouse or town hall and write a report on the marriage records found there.
5. Take an examination.



CD2. Lessons 7-11

Lesson 7. Church and Cemetery Records

In this lesson you will learn how to find and use church records, tombstone inscriptions, and records kept by cemeteries and mortuaries.

At the end of this lesson, you will be able to answer these questions:

- ❖ What were the established churches during the colonial period?
- ❖ How did churches change after the Revolution?
- ❖ What are the types of church records?
- ❖ What are the specific types of records that you can find for the major U.S. denominations?
- ❖ How do you evaluate church records?
- ❖ Where do you locate church records?
- ❖ How do you cite church records?
- ❖ What is the value of tombstone inscriptions?
- ❖ How do you locate the cemetery?
- ❖ How do you find published tombstone inscriptions (book, microfilm, internet)?
- ❖ How do you record a cemetery visit?
- ❖ How do you evaluate tombstone inscriptions?
- ❖ What is the value of cemetery and mortuary records?
- ❖ How do you cite cemetery/tombstone records?

To test your knowledge, you will:

1. Report on the records kept by a church in your locality or the locality where your ancestors were living.
2. Visit and evaluate a cemetery in your location or one near where your ancestors lived.

Lesson 8. Probate and Other Court Records

In this lesson you will learn how to find and use probate and other court records.

You will be able to answer these questions:

- ❖ What are the terms used in the probate process?
- ❖ What are the types of probates?
- ❖ What are the documents in a probate file?
- ❖ What special laws regarding inheritance should you know?
- ❖ What is a guardianship?
- ❖ What is the value of your ancestor's siblings' estate papers?



- ❖ Where else are probate matters found?
- ❖ How do you evaluate probate records?
- ❖ How do you cite probate records?
- ❖ How do you locate probate records?
- ❖ How do you abstract probate records?
- ❖ What other records are found in courthouses?

To test your knowledge, you will:

1. Take self-correcting exams.
2. Abstract a will.
3. Identify the genealogically important items in a probate file.
4. Write citations for wills and probate files.

Lesson 9. State and Federal Land Records

Land records can be divided into two groups:

1. Records created when a colony, state, or the federal government granted land to private parties.
2. Records created by the conveyance of land between private parties.

This lesson is about lands in the first category; lands that have been transferred from a colony, state, or the federal government to an individual. In the next lesson, Local Land and Tax Records, you will learn about the conveyance of land between private parties.

At the end of this lesson you will be able to answer these questions:

- ❖ What were Colonial Land Grants?
- ❖ What were State Land Grants?
- ❖ What is the Land Grant Process?
- ❖ What are Metes and Bounds Surveys?
- ❖ How do you Draw a Metes and Bounds Plat?
- ❖ What Records are Available for Colonial and State Land Records?
- ❖ What are Federal Land Records?
- ❖ What is the Rectangular Survey System?
- ❖ How was the Public Domain Land granted?
- ❖ What Information is Found in Federal Land Records?
- ❖ How do you Obtain Federal Land Records?
- ❖ How do you Cite Federal and State Land Records?

To test your knowledge, you will:

1. Take a self-correcting exam.
2. Draw a plat from a metes and bounds description.
3. Report on the land grant records available at a repository in your locality.



Lesson 10, Local Land and Tax Records

In the previous lesson you learned about the genealogical value of records created by the transfer of land from a colony, a state, or the federal government to a private party. The records created by the conveyance of land between private parties are known as local land records.

In this lesson you will learn how to find and use local land records and tax records.

At the end of this lesson you will be able to answer these questions:

- ❖ What are the types of land records?
- ❖ What will you find in deeds?
- ❖ How do you locate local land records?
- ❖ How do you abstract a deed?
- ❖ How do you evaluate land records?
- ❖ How do you cite a deed?
- ❖ What are the types of tax records?
- ❖ How can tax records be used?

To test your knowledge, you will:

1. Search and transcribe information from grantor and grantee indexes.
2. Abstract deeds.

Lesson 11, Migration

As you look at migration patterns and maps in relation to your family research, this lesson will help you answer the following questions:

- ❖ How can I find out where my people lived before they moved, where and how they travelled, where they resettled?
- ❖ What was going on in the origin and destination places that might cause people to migrate?
- ❖ Was each move an individual decision, or part of a larger movement?
- ❖ What were the effects of geography, politics, and economics?
- ❖ Why did some people decide not to move, but to stay in one place for an extended period of time, and how did migration affect them?
- ❖ What was happening in the larger community?

You will complete these tasks:

1. Trace the migration route for one ancestral line through the area of the present-day United States.



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2. Choose two census years, from 1850 to 1930, in which one of your identified families can be found on both censuses, and study the census records for your family and the surrounding families in each year. Your report will be in two parts: a list of significant statistics for each year's group and a narrative analysis of your data.



CD3. Lessons 12-16

Lesson 12, Passenger Lists

The immigration of aliens to the United States has resulted in lists of passengers arriving from foreign ports. The law required some lists. Others were private recordings. The lists were not intended to be genealogical documents, but they are an important source for information about our immigrant ancestors.

At the end of the lesson, you will be able to answer the following questions:

- ❖ Who are the immigrants who appear on passenger lists?
- ❖ What are the types of passenger arrival records, and what information do they contain?
- ❖ How do you find passenger arrival records?
- ❖ What embarkation records are available?
- ❖ How do passports assist in locating passenger arrival records?
- ❖ How do you evaluate passenger arrival records?
- ❖ How do you cite passenger arrival records?
- ❖ What else can you do?

To test your knowledge, you will:

1. Take a self-correcting exam.
2. Practice writing citations for passenger lists.
3. Order a passenger arrival record from the National Archives, write a report on the record received, and write a citation for the record.

Lesson 13, Naturalization Records

Naturalization is the process by which the rights and privileges of citizenship are granted to aliens. Naturalization may naturally or logically follow immigration, but the records were not “created by arrival.” No law required aliens to become U.S. citizens. It was, and is, a voluntary act.

At the end of the lesson, you will be able to answer the following questions:

- ❖ What naturalization policies have been established?
- ❖ What is the naturalization process?
- ❖ What evidence is in naturalization records, and how can it be interpreted?
- ❖ How do you know if your ancestor was naturalized?
- ❖ How do you locate records created before 27 September 1906?
- ❖ How do you locate records created after 26 September 1906?



- ❖ If your ancestor was not naturalized, are there any records?
- ❖ What other records should I know about?

To test your knowledge, you will:

1. Take a self-correcting exam.
2. Prepare a report on the naturalization records found in a repository.

Lesson 14, Military and Veterans Benefit Records

In this lesson you will learn how to find and use military service and veterans benefits records.

At the end of this lesson you will be able to answer the following questions:

- ❖ How do you determine if an ancestor had military service?
- ❖ What are the periods of time for which there are military service records?
- ❖ What are compiled service records?
- ❖ What limits are there to using compiled service records?
- ❖ How do you obtain federal military service records?
- ❖ If there is no compiled service record, what do you do?
- ❖ How do you cite federal military service records?
- ❖ How do you integrate family records and military service records?
- ❖ What records are at the state level?
- ❖ What records are available for twentieth-century military service?
- ❖ What is available for women in the military?
- ❖ What are the types of veterans benefit records and how do you obtain them?
- ❖ How do you cite federal pension application files?

To test your knowledge, you will:

1. Compile a checklist of possible military service by ancestors.
2. Obtain a copy of a military or pension record from the National Archives, write a citation for the record, and write a report on the record received.
Or, as an alternative, obtain copies of the World War I and World War II draft registration cards for an ancestor, write a citation, and write a report comparing the information found on both cards.

Lesson 15, Evidence Analysis and Kinship

In preceding lessons, you learned about records that contain genealogical information. After you locate the records that are relevant to your research problem, you must interpret them and evaluate the evidence they contain. In this lesson you will learn how to evaluate evidence. In



some cases, the evidence will not lead you to a direct answer. When that happens, you may be able to pull together more-complex evidence and build a case to prove relationships.

At the end of this lesson you will be able to answer these questions:

- ❖ What is the Genealogical Proof Standard?
- ❖ What is the nature of "proof"?
- ❖ What are the terms used in evidence analysis?
- ❖ How does understanding the content of documents affect evidence analysis?
- ❖ How do you evaluate evidence?

To test your knowledge, you will:

1. Analyze a source by choosing a marriage or death record from your research files, identifying which information is primary and which secondary, assessing the reliability of the information, determining whether the record itself is original or derivative.
2. Establish the identity of an ancestor by collecting, analyzing, and evaluating the evidence you have for his or her birth, marriage, and death.
3. Prepare a report on the genealogical evidence you have for the six facts (date of birth, place of birth, date of marriage, place of marriage, date of death, and place of death) about your ancestor.

Lesson 16, What Next?

In this lesson you will learn about various avenues open to you as you pursue your genealogical interests. You will also learn more about completing a biographical sketch of an ancestor.

Your task:

1. You are to write a biographical sketch of the ancestor you chose for the assignment in the previous lesson, using the guidelines in Lesson 16.