TEXTS (ordered at the NYU Bookstore)
L. Casson, *Travel in the Ancient World* (Baltimore 1994); *Homer, the Odyssey*. Translation R. Fagles (1996); I put in NYUClasses a copy of F. Redmond, *True History Decrypted*, full text and commentary of Lucian’s True History; Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels*, and several texts and articles.

Academic accommodations are available to any student with a chronic, psychological, visual, mobility, learning disability, or is deaf or hard of hearing. Students should please register with the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 212-998-4980.

COURSE Description

This course will enquire about the conditions for traveling and communicating in ancient times. The ancients embarked on tremendous journeys of mythic and epic significance and did not consider travel for leisure. They journeyed to distant places in precarious condition. In the modern world travels are routine and in most cases happen for personal entertainment or for business. Likewise now we avidly communicate with each other in several ways and at leisure, whereas sending letters and messages in the Greek and Roman worlds was cumbersome and required time. It will be interesting to compare our ways to travel and communicate with the ancient ones. While recognizing the objective difficulties the ancients had to overcome, the students will gradually realize the dangers of a common misconception that can be called ‘the progressive model.’ The lack of appropriate technology, electronic methods, and modern equipment did not prevent people from travelling and getting in touch with each other.

We will read parts of Lionel Casson, *Travel in the Ancient World* and look through depictions of ancient rafts and ships. During the course, students will read a few books
from Homer’s *Odyssey* and from Herodotus’ *Histories*, passages from Plato regarding the travelling of teachers and from Pausanias and his travel through Greece. They will read *A True History* by the second-century writer Lucian, a very amusing fictional travel and some books from Jonathan Swift’s prose satire *Gulliver’s Travels*. They will learn about the traveling of students to various distant schools (equivalent to modern colleges) which appears from ancient letters. Since the instructor is a cultural historian and a papyrologist, students will learn how to handle papyri in translation and cover issues of writing and sending real letters. The papyri from Greek and Roman Egypt contain very interesting letters of students and of women. We will go through a selection of these to understand the difference from fictional writing (of which we will read samples) and everyday correspondence in antiquity.

Attendance is mandatory and more than 3 absences will affect grades. There will be no exams but oral presentations, occasional quizzes on the readings, class discussions, some short written assignments, and a final paper (about 10 pages). The final grade will be broken down as 50% for the writing done; 25% for quizzes and participation; and 25% for oral presentations.

**Class 1**

Preliminary assessment. Characteristics of ancient travel and formulation of the question: was travelling in antiquity severely impaired by the conditions?

Geography of ancient travel: I will introduce the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.

2 Read Chapter 1.1 and 1.2 of Casson *Travel* pp. 15-57. Be ready to discuss. Read Homer *Odyssey* 9 (about 15 pages in various editions). Read pp. 65-98 from the article of N. Austin, “Uncanny Homer” in NYUClasses.

3 Read Homer *Odyssey* 10, 11, and 12 (about 40 pages in various editions). Read the article on Telemachus’ travels (pp. 129-37) and the article on Hybris. Hand in the first written assignment on travel in the *Odyssey*. Read online on Phoenicians’ ancient ships: 

http://www.phoenician.org/ancient_ships.htm
(5 pages) and start looking at Casson’s *Ships and Seamanship* (do 50 pages and 50 more pages for class 4.

4 I will show a video on Underwater Archaeology that will focus on ancient Greek and Roman ships and treasures found there. Travel by land and sea. Herodotus, a writer of travels. Read his accounts of Egypt in NYUClasses: *Histories* 2.35-93 (pp. 1-21).

Also, look through the many images of ancient ships in Casson’s *Ships and Seamanship in the Ancient World* (NYUClasses, 50 more pages) and comment on those you find most inspiring. Read in NYUC the article of J. Redfield “Herodotus the Tourist,” pp. 97-118. [There are in NYUC two articles on the construction of Odysseus’ boat. Two students will present them]

5 Travelling to lecture and teach, mobility of professionals: Read the beginning of Plato’s *Protagoras* in NYUClasses, pp. 1-25. Read the article of S. Montiglio, “Wandering Philosophers in Classical Greece,” pp. 86-105. Read online NYU Hebrary the introduction (pp. 1-9) and chapter “Ships and Sails” pp. 106-25 of the book by James Beresford *The Ancient Sailing Season* (Leiden 2013). Two students will present in class and discuss his argument.


8 Rereading and transforming Homer in the Roman age. Pausanias a geographer and traveller in the Roman empire. Read the two texts on his *Periegesis* in NYUClasses
(in all 35 pp.) and the article of Pretzler “Pausanias at Work,” pp. 199-216. The journey of an Egyptian businessman, Theophanes, from Egypt to Syria. Read the account by John Matthew in NYUC including the letters (in all pp. 25). Oral presentations.

9 Play around with the fabulous Roman Peutinger. There is a copy in NYUC but also look online and bring to class your written observations. Was that a useful map? Read Casson part 2: pp. 149-228.

10 Travel as fiction: Gulliver’s travels, 54 pages. Written assignment: “Gulliver’s travel, Lucian, and Homer: Do they have things in common?” Oral presentations. Introduction in class about letters in antiquity: how were they written and sent. Read in NYUC my piece “Delivery of Letters” (7 pages).

11 Read Casson pp. 229-61. Going to school in the Greek and Roman worlds: the curriculum. Letters regarding students in rhetorical school. Traveling for Study. Read the article of Scott Bradbury in NYUClasses (pp. 72-80). Read (very slowly, they are difficult) in NYUC a selection of fourth century AD letters of the professor of rhetoric Libanius concerning students in rhetorical schools (i.e. modern college, 10 pages). Read also my account of his life (8 pp.) I will give you possible titles for your paper and you should start thinking about it. Oral presentations.

13 Letters of women. Read in NYUC: Women’s letters (pp. 1-20) and Women’s Letters handout (5 pages). Read Aristaenetus Erotic Letters (20 pp.) and compare them with the women’s letters that you just read. Write down a love letter imitating the ancient ones. Read in NYUC some articles about 5 pages each: “the death of letter writing”; “Quit Social Media”; “What is lost as handwriting fades.”

14 Hand in your paper and give a brief presentation of it.