

LIT 4930: Verne, Wells & Co.: European SF of the Late Nineteenth Century

Professor Terry Harpold

Spring 2018, Section 106F

Time: Tu, per. 7 (1:55–2:45 PM) & Th, pers. 7–8 (1:55–3:50 PM)

Location: Turlington Hall (TUR) 2346

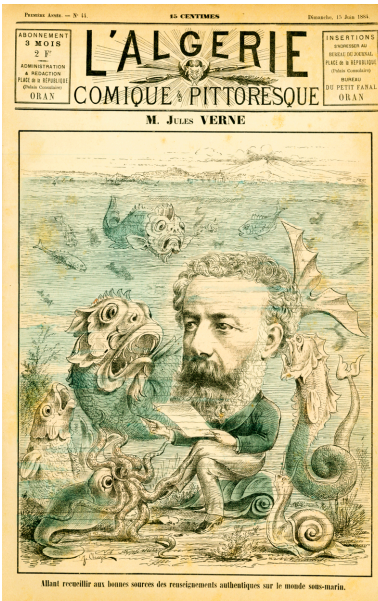
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e-Learning (Canvas) site for LIT 4930 (registered students only): <http://elearning.ufl.edu/>

Course Description



Jules Verne “gathering from the best sources authentic information about the underwater world.” Caricature by J. Chape, *L’Algérie*, June 15, 1884.

Defining the canon of nineteenth-century European science fiction (SF) seems to lead, inevitably, to also embracing doubtful analogies and inventive anachronisms. American editor Hugo Gernsback’s 1926 endorsement of “the Jules Verne, H.G. Wells, and Edgar Allan Poe type of story” as the model for what Gernsback christened “scientifiction” – later “science fiction” – is telling in this regard. Verne, Wells, and Poe *are* among the precursors of modern SF, but in most respects they are dissimilar from each other. Many other, equally dissimilar, figures also contributed to the incunabular period of SF, the complexity of which confounds such comparisons.

Labels such as “proto-SF,” “early SF,” or “Victorian SF” – the last of which is too closely associated with one national tradition to be generally useful – may help to mark the field’s development. But they also beg the question of what SF was, really, during this early phase when it had no widely-accepted name, a concern at least

since Félix Bodin’s description of the problem in *Le Roman de l’avenir* (*The Novel of the Future*, 1834). (Bodin offers the label *roman futuriste* [futurist novel].) The label “scientific romance,” used from mid-century onward for mostly British authors, was rejected by many to whom it was applied, such as Wells, who found “romance” too backward-looking.



"Mr. H.G. Wells Foreseeing Things."
Caricature by Max Berbohm,
London Spectator Supplement,
February 14, 1931.

The French *roman scientifique* ("scientific novel" and "scientific romance") dodges retrospection a little – the etymologies of *roman* and *romance* are tangled – but "scientific" is the problem term here; the label also was applied to naturalist authors such as Émile Zola because their depictions of the influences of heredity and environment were considered *scientifically* accurate. The French *merveilleux scientifique* ("scientific marvel fiction"), associated with authors J.–H. Rosny, *aîné*, and Maurice Renard, is too self-consciously anti-Vernian to be of much use outside of that context. Disagreements about the pertinent traits of the emerging European literature left an opening for twentieth-century Americans like Gernsback and Golden Age editor John W. Campbell to name and circumscribe the field's content and method.

During the late nineteenth century, in short, "SF" is at best a placeholder for a radically diverse, inconsistent field of literary production that emerged, haltingly, out of traditions of utopian fiction, satirical *contes*, and imaginary voyages, and in relation to other literary movements, such as romanticism, realism, naturalism, and early modernism. In this course we will read long and short works of fantastic fiction by European authors of the period whose names are familiar to you (such as Verne and Wells), and some (such as Edward Bulwer-Lytton, George Chesney, Florence Dixie, Enrique Gaspar, Richard Jefferies, Kurd Lasswitz, J.–H. Rosny *aîné*, M.P. Shiel, Émile Souvestre) who are likely unfamiliar. Our aim will be not to solve the taxonomic problems noted above. I'm not sure that we will settle on one definition of "science fiction," so much as we will survey the landscape of an adventurous, nuanced, messy proto-canon that was then – and still is – in search of its meaning and place in the modern literary imagination.

All assigned readings will be in English or English translation. Writing requirements include a take-home midterm and two short critical essays.

Required Texts to Purchase

These texts are available at the UF Bookstore and from online vendors. Used and electronic editions (iBook, Kindle, etc.) are acceptable – indeed they are encouraged¹ – so long as the version of the text you read is *otherwise identical to the editions noted below*.

¹ See my "Policy on environmentally unsustainable activity in the classroom," below.

Note that widely available electronic editions of several of the required texts are based on public domain versions lacking editorial apparatus. *Those editions are unacceptable. Take care when purchasing an electronic edition that it is the specific edition and from the publisher that I have stipulated below.*² Only the translations indicated below are acceptable. Other translations are very likely to be incomplete and of poor quality.

I encourage you whenever possible to buy from independent booksellers. If you choose to buy your texts online, I recommend sources such as Abebooks.com and Alibris.com that serve independent booksellers.

Bulwer-Lytton, Edward. *The Coming Race*. Edited by David Seed, Wesleyan University Press, 2007. ISBN 9780819567352. 280 pp. (print). Orig. pub. 1871. *Available electronic editions are public domain versions and are **not** acceptable.*

Gaspar, Enrique. *The Time Ship: A Chrononautical Journey*. Illustrated by Francesc Soler, edited and translated by Yolanda Molina-Gavilán and Andrea Bell, Wesleyan University Press, 2012. ISBN 9780819572936. 240 pp. (print). Orig. pub. 1887. *Also available in a Kindle edition.*

De Maupassant, Guy. *The Horla*. Translated by Charlotte Mandell, Melville House, 2005. ISBN 9780976140740. 96 pp. (print). Orig. pub. 1887. *Also available in iBook and Kindle editions.*

Shiel, M.P. *The Purple Cloud*. Edited by John Sutherland, Penguin Books, 2012. ISBN 9780141196428. 352 pp. (print). Orig. pub. 1901. *Also available in iBook and Kindle editions.*

Souvestre, Émile. *The World As It Shall Be*. Illustrated by M.M. Berthall, O. Penguilly and St-Germain, edited by I.F. Clarke, translated by Margaret Clarke, Wesleyan University Press, 2004. ISBN 9780819566157. 284 pp. (print). Orig. pub. 1846. *Available only in a hardcover print edition. Available electronic editions are public domain versions and are **not** acceptable.*

Verne, Jules. *Robur the Conqueror*. Edited by Arthur B. Evans, translated by Alex Kirstukas, Wesleyan University Press, 2017. ISBN 9780819577269. 324 pp. (print). Orig. pub. 1886. *Also available in iBook and Kindle editions.*

² Amazon's Kindle WWW site and Apple's iBook "Library" search functions can easily send you astray in this regard. Badly-edited and -translated public domain versions of most of these texts abound. When buying electronic texts for this course be sure to verify that you have purchased the correct edition.

———. *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Seas*. Edited and translated by William Butcher, Oxford University Press, 2009. ISBN 9780199539277. 496 pp. (print). Orig. pub. 1870. *Also available in iBook and Kindle editions.*

Wells, H.G. *The Time Machine*. Edited by Patrick Parrinder, Marina Warner, and Steven McLean, Penguin, 2005. ISBN 9780141439976. 128 pp. (print). Orig. pub. 1895. *Also available in iBook and Kindle editions.*

———. *The War in the Air*. Edited by Patrick Parrinder, Andy Sawyer, and Jay Winter, Penguin, 2005. ISBN 9780141441306. 336 pp. (print). Orig. pub. 1908. *Also available in iBook and Kindle editions.*

———. *The War of the Worlds*. Edited by Patrick Parrinder, Brian Aldiss, and Andy Sawyer, Penguin, 2005. ISBN 9780141441030. 240 pp. (print). Orig. pub. 1897. *Available electronic editions are public domain versions and are **not** acceptable.*

Other required texts

These texts are available in electronic formats via the WWW or will be distributed via Canvas or the course's electronic reserves (Ares, <https://ares.uflib.ufl.edu/>). For Archive.org texts I recommend downloading pdf files that include searchable text.

Chesney, George Tomkyns. *The Battle of Dorking*. Grant Richards, 1871. 95 pp. (print). *Available via Archive.org (<http://archive.org>).*

Dixie, Florence. *Gloriana; or, The Revolution of 1900*. Henry and Co., 1890. 350 pp. (print). *Available via Archive.org (<http://archive.org>).*

Harpold, Terry. "European Science Fiction in the Nineteenth Century." *The Cambridge History of Science Fiction*, edited by Gerry Canavan and Eric Carl Link, Cambridge University Press, 2018. *Draft of a forthcoming article, approx. 7200 words. Available via Canvas.*

Jefferies, Richard. *After London*. Duckworth and Co., 1905. 311 pp. (print). Orig. pub. 1885. *Available via Archive.org (<http://archive.org>).*

Lasswitz, Kurd. "To the Absolute Zero of Existence." *The Black Mirror and Other Stories: An Anthology of Science Fiction from Germany and Austria*, edited by Franz Rottensteiner, translated by Mike Mitchell, Wesleyan University Press, 2008, pp. 3–36, 349. ISBN 978-0819568311. Orig. pub. 1871. *Available via Ares.*

Rosny (aîné), J.–H. "The Xipéhuz." *Three Science Fiction Novellas: From Prehistory to the End of Mankind*, edited and translated by Danièle Chatelain and George E.

Slusser, Wesleyan University Press, 2012, pp. 1–28, 127–34. ISBN 9780819569455. Orig. pub. 1887. *Available via Ares.*

Course Calendar

Science Fiction in the Century

- Tu, Jan 9 *Course introduction*
- Th, Jan 11 *Signature reading assignment description*
Harpold, “European Science Fiction in the Nineteenth Century”

The World as It Shall Be

- Tu, Jan 16 *Signature reading assignment due*
Lasswitz, “To the Absolute Zero of Existence”
- Th, Jan 18 Wells, *The Time Machine*
- Tu, Jan 23 Gaspar, *The Time Ship*
- Th, Jan 25 Gaspar, *The Time Ship*
- Tu, Jan 30 Souvestre, *The World as It Shall Be*
- Th, Feb 1 Souvestre, *The World as It Shall Be*
- Tu, Feb 6 Dixie, *Gloriana*
- Th, Feb 8 Dixie, *Gloriana*
- Tu, Feb 13 Shiel, *The Purple Cloud*
- Th, Feb 15 Shiel, *The Purple Cloud*
- Tu, Feb 20 Jefferies, *After London*

Th, Feb 22 Jefferies, *After London*
Midterm exam prompts posted to Canvas

Fatal Engines

Tu, Feb 27 Verne, *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Seas*

Th, Mar 1 Verne, *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Seas*

Fri, Mar 2 **Completed midterm due by 5 PM**

Tu, Mar 6 No class meeting (UF Spring Break)

Th, Mar 9 No class meeting (UF Spring Break)

Tu, Mar 13 Verne, *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Seas*

Th, Mar 15 No class meeting (TH is out of town)

Tu, Mar 20 Chesny, *The Battle of Dorking*

Th, Mar 22 Verne, *Robur the Conqueror*

Tu, Mar 27 Verne, *Robur the Conqueror*

Th, Mar 29 Wells, *The War in the Air*

Tu, April 3 Wells, *The War in the Air*

W, April 4 **Short critical essay #1 due by 5 PM**

Contact

Th, April 5 Maupassant, "The Horla"
Rosny, *aîné*, "The Xipéhuz"

Tu, April 10 Bulwer-Lytton, *The Coming Race*

Th, April 12 Bulwer-Lytton, *The Coming Race*

Tu, April 17	Wells, <i>The War of the Worlds</i>
Th, April 19	Wells, <i>The War of the Worlds</i> Guest lecture by Madeline Gangnes on the illustrated <i>War of the Worlds</i>
Tu, April 24	Course debriefing (no assigned reading)
Th, April 26	Reading days (no class meeting)
W, May 2	Short critical essay #2 due by 5 PM

Evaluation of Performance, Attendance Requirements & Other Course Policies

Your final grade in this course will be determined by the average of three assignments:

Signature reading exercise: 5% of final grade

Midterm exam: 35% of final grade

Short critical essay #1: 30% of final grade

Short critical essay #2: 30% of final grade

Signature reading exercise. This is a brief writing exercise that will help me and your classmates to understand your reading interests and habits; it's a good way to start off our conversations this semester and to identify shared interests. I will explain the method of the exercise during the second class meeting. The exercise is due by the start of the third class meeting. Students who register for the course nearer to the end of drop/add will be able to make up this assignment during the second week of class. If you complete this exercise and meet its requirements, you will receive a grade of 100 on the assignment. In effect, the assignment is worth 5 free points toward your final grade.

The midterm exam. This is an open-book, take-home exam consisting of short essay responses to detailed prompts concerning the assigned texts we have read to the date the prompts are posted. The exam will consist of three prompts, to which you must reply to two. The exam does not require you to do any research beyond the assigned readings. The completed exam will be between 2400 and 3000 words in length, not including a bibliography.

The short critical essays. In the second half of the semester you will complete two short critical essays on topics of your choosing that focus on passages or images of one or more of the texts we have read since the previous writing assignment. Each completed essay

will be between 1800 and 2000 words in length, not including a bibliography. The bibliography of each essay must include at least three outside scholarly sources (journal articles, books). You are not required to submit a proposal or abstract for each of these essays in advance. However, I recommend that you avail yourself of my office hours to brainstorm on possible essay topics and approaches. I will post technical requirements of the critical essays and recommendations for how best to complete them to the course Canvas site early in the semester.

There are no other graded assignments in this course. There are no extra-credit assignments.

Course reading load. This course includes a substantial reading load but not an onerous one. The pace of our discussions will vary according to the complexity of texts we read and the need to focus on selected portions of the texts. In general, we will spend three class periods on each novel and one or two periods on novellas and short stories. The page counts shown above are fair measures of reading load but they may be deceiving. Some of the texts we will read are illustrated, some – especially the electronic facsimiles of original editions – use larger margins and font sizes than modern editions, some include extensive scholarly apparatus. (Which of course you *should* also read.) You should always aim to have completed your reading of a given text by the last class period in which it is scheduled to be discussed.

Grading scheme and graded assignments. The evaluation method in this course is consistent with UF's policies on grading

(<http://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>).

Grades are calculated on a numeric scale, as below:

A	90–100	A–	87–89		
B+	84–86	B	80–83	B–	77–79
C+	74–76	C	70–73	C–	67–69
D+	64–66	D	60–63	D–	57–59

A grade of 56 or below is a failing grade (E). A minimum final grade of C is required for General Education Credit.

If you do not complete an assignment, you will receive a grade of 0. If you feel that you've been unfairly graded on an assignment, you may make a case in writing for a better grade. I will consider no grade changes without this written rationale.

You may make up a missed exam only if you have a written medical excuse from a doctor, a signed letter from a judge or law enforcement officer (if you are called for jury

duty or to testify in court, for example), or if a death or serious illness or injury occurs in your family. You should contact me as soon as possible when you anticipate a delay in submission of graded work.

Attendance & lateness. The texts and concepts we will review are complex and challenging. You cannot reasonably expect to master them if you do not keep up with required reading assignments and come to class prepared and on time. I do not give reading quizzes and I expect you to adhere to the calendar of assigned readings. Course lectures will often include discussion of materials not among the assigned readings. For these reasons, your presence in class is essential and is required. **I take attendance. After four missed class periods, I reserve the right to lower your final course grade by five points for each additional class period that you miss.** (Note that each of our Thursday classes counts as two class periods.) I treat excused and unexcused absences alike in this regard. It is your responsibility to keep track of your absences and to make sure that you complete all required work. If you must miss class, make sure that you turn in any assignments due for that day, and that you are ready if another assignment is due on the day you return to class. In the event of a prolonged illness or other emergency you should notify me as soon as possible so that we may make provisions to insure that you do not fall behind.

Lateness is disruptive to others in the classroom, and is strongly discouraged. If you are more than 15 minutes late to class, this will be considered an absence.

If you have special classroom access, seating, or other needs because of disability, do not hesitate to bring those to my attention so that I may make appropriate accommodations. Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the UF Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>) by providing appropriate documentation.

If you are unable to attend any part of a class meeting or work on a course assignment because these coincide with the timing of religious observances, you must notify me of this conflict well in advance, so that we may make appropriate adjustments to relevant assignment deadlines.

Use of computers and other electronic devices in class. You may use personal computers and other electronic devices in class for purposes related to class discussion and collaboration. Casual WWW browsing, emailing, chatting, texting, etc., unrelated to classroom activities will not be tolerated. In the event of a violation of this policy, I reserve the right to prohibit your individual use of all electronic devices in class. Apart from those times when I have approved their use in advance, cell phones, pagers, and similar

communication devices may not be used during class meetings, and must be set to silent ring at the start of class.

Course evaluation. Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be notified of specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <http://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/>.

Policy on academic honesty. The University community's policies and methods regarding academic honesty, your obligations to me and mine to you with regard to academic honesty, are clearly spelled out in the UF Student Honor Code, which is available online at <http://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/students/student-conduct-code/>.

Academic dishonesty in any form will not be tolerated in this course. Examples of academic dishonesty include but are not limited to:

- Possessing, using, or exchanging improperly acquired written or oral information in the preparation of graded assignments submitted for this course.
- Substitution of material that is wholly or substantially identical to that created or published by another individual or individuals.
- False claims of performance or work submitted by a student for requirements of this course.

I am obliged to act on any suspected act of academic misconduct. This may include a reduced or failing grade for the course as a whole or other disciplinary proceedings, as per the recommendation of the Dean of Students. If you have any concern that you may not have made appropriate use of the work of others in your research or writing for this course, please confer with me before you submit the assignment. You should retain all graded materials that you receive from me until you receive your final course grade.

Policy on environmentally unsustainable activity in the classroom. I will distribute all administrative materials for this course via paper-sparing digital media. I encourage you to purchase e-book editions of assigned texts when they are available, or used copies of print texts, and to return those to circulation if you choose not to keep them at the end of the course. (Donating your unwanted books to the Alachua County [Friends of the Library](#) annual book sale is a good way to get them into other readers' hands and to help raise a bit of cash for our county's fine public libraries.) If you do elect to keep your books, share them with others after the course is over. And a final appeal to your common sense: bring

food and/or beverages to the classroom only in durable, reusable containers. Please, no food or beverages in single-use containers.