

# SCIENCE: FICTION, FACT and FANTASY

Professor Barri J. Gold \* ENGL 1595/ENVS 1410 \* Tuesday/Thursday 12:00-1:29

Literature and science both tell stories about how the world works. Both develop in conversation



with a host of con-texts, driven by larger cultural forces. Both use metaphor as a tool for thinking—albeit in different ways. In this course, we will explore how English literature, from the early 19th century to today, grapples with the rapidly changing relationship between humans and the natural world. We will explore how literature reflects on, converses

with, and even helps shape the sciences of energy and evolution. We begin in the 19th century because this period witnessed not only the industrial revolution and the emergence of the ecological sciences, but also a nascent environmental consciousness. Its literature helped set us on—and struggled against—the ecology-breaking worldviews that have brought us to where we are today. As we hope to develop a more ethical relationship to our world, literature enables us to understand how we got here and perhaps even to discover paths not taken that may guide us in our own efforts to live better in our world. *No prerequisites. All years, all majors welcome.*

*Themes: Reading Nature, Nature and Gender, Anthropocentrism, Evolution and Ethics, Sex and Taxonomy, Energy, Entropy, Ecopoetics, Observer Dependence, Chaos*

## Short stories:

E. M. Forster, “The Machine Stops”

Thomas Pynchon, “Entropy”

Octavia Butler, “Bloodchild”

## Plays:

Tom Stoppard, *Arcadia*

Michael Frayn, *Copenhagen*

## Novellas:

H.G. Wells, *The Island of Dr. Moreau* and *The War of the Worlds*

R.L. Stevenson, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde*

## Movies

*Bee Movie*

*Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*

Select poems by Dorothy & William Wordsworth, Erasmus Darwin, Charlotte Smith, John Keats, Alfred Tennyson, Adrienne Rich, Stephanie Strickland, Alice Fulton

Prose selections by Malthus, Darwin, Joule, Mill, Huxley and others

## Expectations

Weekly reading averages 2-4 hours

1 in-class essay (around week 4)

1 in-class short essay exam (around week 13)  
1 final paper (7-8 pages) or project  
Weekly or bi-weekly online discussion posts (limit 250 words)  
Conspicuous and consistent in-class engagement

### **Essential Course Policies**

Attendance at twice weekly seminar-style discussions  
Canvas and email participation.

Attributes: ENGL 19th Century Literature (AE19) \* ENGL 20th 21st Century Literature (AE21) \* ENGL 20th Century Literature (AE20)\* ENGL Literary Theory and Cultural Studies (AETC) \* ENGL Theory and Poetics (AETP) \* ENVS Environmental Humanities (AESH) \* SEAS Humanities (EUHS) \* STSC Energy and Environment Elective (ASTE) \*STSC Science, Nature and Culture Concentration (ASTS)