

Jules Verne's Scientific Imagination

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4 monthly sessions on Zoom: Mar 17, Apr 14, May 19, Jun 9 | 6:30–8:30 p.m. EST

Jules Verne is, frequently and not incorrectly, cited as one of the fathers of science fiction: throughout the decades of his writing career (1863 – 1905), he penned the fifty-four novels that make up the *Extraordinary Voyages*, and in which he created a new form of storytelling that would go on to be imitated by contemporaries and descendants alike. A lover of literature and of technology, a poet and a scientific popularizer, Verne melded the earlier genres of the extraordinary voyage, travel narrative, and adventure story with unprecedented scientific rigor, creating the scientific romance, or *roman de la science*: lively tales of adventure and exploration that incorporated (and extrapolated from) the most recent, cutting-edge scientific discoveries and technological innovations. This class will explore Verne's unique mix of science and imagination and the role his work played in solidifying the emerging genre of science fiction. In addition to reading three of his most famous novels (*From the Earth to the Moon*, *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Seas*, and *Robur the Conqueror*), we'll also delve into the literary predecessors and genres that shaped him and examine the political, social, and cultural context that made his novel approach to storytelling possible and necessary.

Books (please purchase the editions below, as there is unfortunately a long history of Verne translations that abridge the texts, omit passages, change phrasing, and otherwise alter the original. The below translations are the most accurate).

From the Earth to the Moon, Bantam, trans. Lowell Barr. ISBN 978-0553214208

Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Seas, Penguin, trans. David Coward. ISBN 978-0141394930

Robur the Conqueror, trans. Alex Kirstukas, Wesleyan University Press. ISBN 978-0819577269

March 17

From the Earth to the Moon (1865)

Voltaire, "Micromegas"; Edgar Allan Poe, Moon Hoax

April 14

Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Seas, Volume 1 (1869)

Rosalind Williams, "Inventing the Geographic Romance"

May 9

Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Seas, Volume 2 (1870)

Timothy Unwin, "Jules Verne: Negotiating Change in the Nineteenth Century"

June 9

Robur the Conqueror (1886)