

- **ENGL 4813/5003 Literature and Science**

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Scheduled: M/W/F – 1035 – 1125

In the early nineteenth century, the word “science” came to refer to the study of the natural world, and the word “scientist” was used to describe a new generation of scientific specialists, who were beginning to play an increasingly important role in society. Prominent scientists often gave public lectures and organized exhibitions, which became an important means of educating the public. The expansion of printing and literacy also led to the rise of popular science books and magazines, and by the end of the century it was possible for people of all classes to learn about science through lectures, exhibitions, or the popular press.

As the public became increasingly interested in science, writers also began to incorporate scientific ideas into their work. Some writers sought to educate readers about the latest scientific developments or to further scientific knowledge through imaginative speculation and extrapolation, while others sought to question the ethics of scientific practices or to criticize the potential impact of technological innovations with a particular emphasis on the risks they posed to the individual, the society, and the environment. Literature was thus seen as playing several different roles with regard to science, as it could be used to translate scientific knowledge into everyday language, to intervene in scientific debates, or to question and potentially even challenge the scientific establishment.

This **combined fourth-year & graduate seminar** will examine the complex relationship between literature and science by exploring how literary texts have historically addressed the implications and applications of new scientific theories, concepts, and practices from such fields as biology, geology, psychology, and medicine. By comparing these literary texts to scientific texts from the same period, students will develop a better understanding of the ways in which knowledge has been transferred between literature and science, and they will be able to evaluate the benefits and limitations of this interdisciplinary exchange of ideas.