# 'Novel *novums*,
# CLAS 1317 – Classical Traditions in Science Fiction
# Dr. Benjamin Stevens

I'm very happy to report that the spring 2017 Mellon course revision grant made a big difference in CLAS 1317 - Classical Traditions in Science Fiction, helping make possible the development and inclusion of a project which I would almost certainly repeat in future iterations of the course. The project was called 'Novel *novums*,' after Darko Suvin's critical concept in science fiction studies--the *'novum*,' identifying a given SF's work single most crucial difference from the world as we know it--and took this form:

**'Novel novums'** Working in small groups you will research, present, and develop a wiki entry for a previously unknown example of CTSF, in three stages: independent research based on the course theoretical frame; public presentation of findings to the class; and construction of the wiki entry. More detailed instructions will be provided closer to the start of the research. Scheduled for just after the midpoint of the semester, this work can lead into the second essay topic or it can be on an entirely separate topic.

As specified here, the students worked in small groups to identify examples of classical traditions in science fiction not listed on the syllabus and, ideally, also not previously known to scholarship. That research led to presentations for the class, allowing the students to develop presentation skills on the basis, in most cases, of original research. It was a pleasure to see the students, most of whom had not considered this topic before, and many of whom were in a literature course for the first time, take pride in their capacity to make substantial contributions to a burgeoning field.

Material from the presentations will be incorporated into the database--begun over the summer by one of the students, Ariana Fletcher-Bai, via another Mellon grant--once that has moved past the compiling and classifying stage and starts including annotations for research entries.