

Fall 2025 AML 4311 Octavia Butler

Professor Dr. Tace Hedrick

Class Hours: Wednesdays 7:20-10:10 pm

Room: MAT 113

Office Hours: M 12:15-1:15, W 2:00-3:00

Office: TUR 4326

Email: Please email me through Canvas

“There seem to be solid biological reasons why we are the way we are. If there weren’t, the cycles wouldn’t keep replaying. The human species is a kind of animal, of course. But we can do something no other animal species has ever had the option to do. **We can choose:** We can go on building and destroying until we either destroy ourselves or destroy the ability of our world to sustain us. **Or we can make.**”

Octavia E. Butler

“The completely self-contained ‘individual’ is a myth that needs to be replaced with a more flexible description.”

Lynn Margulis and Dorion Sagan

Course Description:

In this class, we are reading the work of Octavia Butler (1947-2006), black feminist speculative fiction writer. Although few readers were aware of her until well into the 1990s, her work has garnered more and more attention for its examination of connections between "alien" otherness, theories of genetic interdependence, and race and sexuality. We will be reading her major works, including her best-known *Xenogenesis* trilogy. We will be looking at some of her varied influences—sociobiology and evolutionary biology, even the possibility of telepathy and mind control, as well as what she had to say in interviews about race, gender, and politics in her writing and interviews. **Course Requirements:** Three in-class essay exams (75% of final grade) and reading quizzes (25% of final grade).

In-Class Essay Exams:

These are open book, open notes. I will provide the exam prompts the day before the exam. I advise you to use the time to make notes from the readings so that you can insert them into your essay. Make sure you have a clear thesis sentence that you can back up with examples, and follow this, making sure you use quotes to illuminate your argument, and making a clear conclusion. Here are the main points for writing the essay.

- For this 3-hour exam, I will provide a number of prompts. You should choose **just one**. The essay exam should be at least three to four full pages (**not** two and a half or three and a half) and consist of at least (more if you want) seven to eight good, solid paragraphs, of at least three-five sentences each.
- **Quotes** are extra important in order to illuminate your argument but keep them short and to the point—I don’t want to see an exam filled in with really long quotes.

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- The exam, which will be available on Canvas Assignments, should be uploaded to Canvas once you're done. It should be written in 12 pt. Times Roman font, double space, **no** twice-double spaces (that is, quadruple spaces) between paragraphs. MLA style should be followed throughout.

Attention! Important Note:

- I often notify the class about a change in the syllabus or an assignment through **Canvas Announcements**. For you as students to get notifications right away from Canvas, go to Canvas-Account-Notifications-Announcements and set it to "Notify Immediately."

Required Texts:

Octavia Butler

Kindred (1979)

Seed to Harvest, including:

Patternmaster (1976)

Mind of My Mind (1977)

Wild Seed (1980)

Clay's Ark (1984)

Lilith's Brood (Xenogenesis), including:

Dawn (1987)

Adulthood Rites (1988)

Imago (1989)

Kaitlyn McNamee, *MLA Guidelines 9th Edition QuickStudy Laminated Style Reference Guide*

August

Week 1

W 27 Course Goals and Housekeeping
Course Reserves (CR): "Bloodchild" and "Amnesty"

September

Week 2

W 3 **Reading Quiz #1 *Kindred***
Kindred
CR Butler Interview, "We Keep Playing the Same Record"
CR Yaszek, "A Grim Fantasy": Remaking American History in Octavia Butler's *Kindred*

Week 3

W 10 **In-Class Exam #1**

Week 4

W 17 **Reading Quiz #2 *Wild Seed***
Wild Seed (in *Seed to Harvest*)
Ibrahim, H., "Caliban, His Woman, and the Gendered (In)humanism of *Wild Seed*"

Week 5

W 24

Reading Quiz #3 *Clay's Ark*

Clay's Ark (in *Seed to Harvest*)

CR Magnone, "Microbial Zoopoetics in Octavia Butler's *Clay's Ark*."

October

Week 6

W 1

Reading Quiz #4 *Patternmaster*

Patternmaster (in *Seed to Harvest*)

CR Hampton, "*Patternmaster*: Hierarchies of Identity" (**online book, Chapter Three**)

October

Week 7

W 8

Reading Quiz #5 *Mind of My Mind*

Mind of My Mind

Donner, "Networked Consciousness and Ethical Subjectivity in Octavia E. Butler's *Mind of My Mind*"

Week 8

W 15

In-Class Exam #2

Week 9

W 22

Reading Quiz #5 *Symbiotic Planet*

Margulis *Symbiotic Planet* Prologue, Chapter One, and Chapter Three

CR Ferreira, "Symbiotic Bodies"

Week 10

W 29

Reading Quiz #6 *Dawn*

Dawn (in *Lilith's Brood*)

CR Luckhurst, "'Horror and Beauty in Rare Combination': The Miscegenate Fictions of Octavia Butler"

CR Mann, "Pessimistic futurism: Survival and Reproduction in Octavia Butler's *Dawn*"

November

Week 11

W 5

Reading Quiz #7 *Adulthood Rites*

Adulthood Rites (in *Lilith's Brood*)

CR Vado, "But All We Really Know That We Have Is the Flesh": Body-Knowledge, Mulatto Genomics, and Reproductive Futurities in Octavia Butler's *Xenogenesis*

Week 12

W 12

Reading Quiz #8 *Imago*

Imago (in *Lilith's Brood*)

CR Van Engen, "Metamorphosis, Transition, and Insect Biology in the Octavia E. Butler Archive"

Week 13

W 19 **In-Class Exam #3**

Week 14 **Thanksgiving Holiday**

December

Week 15

W 3 **Last Day of Class**

GRADING:

Grading is done on a point scale. Always make sure that you check the grading scale below; a 7 or 8, for example, does NOT mean a failing grade.

A	10	12
A-	9	11
B+	8	10
B	7	9
B-	6	8
C+	5	7
C	4	6
C-	3	5
D	2	4
E	1	3

A= excellent; unusually outstanding; good writing (**one or less writing errors per page**) and original thinking; that is, thinking critically beyond what you have read and discussed in class. You use reading and class discussion, as well as other sources if needed, to back up your ideas so that you are not just giving an opinion but an informed argument. You think of yourself as a writer interested in her ideas and interested in sharing them.

B= above average; only a few (**on average, two or so per page**) writing errors, a standard (not original) argument for the subject, though you should work harder on contributing your own ideas about the subject.

C= average based on general class performance; several writing errors (**on average, 3-4 per page**); you understand the subject, but you tend to repeat and/or merely summarize what has already been said in the readings or in class discussion.

D= below average; you have not paid attention to the subject and/or you have enough writing errors that your argument cannot be followed.

E= failing to meet the requirements of the assignment

CLASS POLICIES

Students with disabilities: Please consult with me as soon as possible so that I can make appropriate accommodations for you.

Electronics in the Classroom: As a courtesy to me and others, you will use your computer or iPad (or other reading device, such as Kindle) **only** for the purposes of the class. If you are looking at Facebook, texting, etc. I will ask you to leave the classroom.

Class Deportment: You are adults and must be expected to behave as such. If you are more than 15 minutes late, do not come to class. In addition, if you are too tired to pay attention in class, or too sick, please do not come to class. Do not read other material in class and come prepared for class discussion.

Late Policy: For every 3 times that you are late 10 minutes or more to class, I will **deduct two points** from your total score at the end of the semester.

Absences: I allow one unexcused absence. **Each unexcused absence** after the first will result in the **loss of two points** from your total end-of-semester score.

Late Papers: Late papers will not be accepted unless you have a legitimate (for example, doctor's) excuse.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism means using someone else's work as your own and not acknowledging that it is your own; it's a form of stealing. This means that when writing a paper, **your quotes and paraphrases from other sources which are not your own must be referenced**, that is, you must say what your source is and tell the reader how to find it; if not, you have plagiarized. A plagiarized paper will get an automatic failing grade.

Grading for Content, Development, and Grammar

Excellent (A) Good (B) Adequate (C) Poor (D) Failing (E). Each assignment marked DUE will receive a numeral equivalent to a grade. These numbers will be calculated on Canvas at the end of the semester for your final grade.

Content:

A: Significant controlling idea or assertion supported with concrete, substantial, and relevant evidence.

B: Controlling idea or assertion supported with concrete and relevant evidence.

C: Controlling idea or assertion general, limited, or obvious; some supporting evidence is repetitious, irrelevant, or sketchy.

D: Controlling idea or assertion too general, superficial, or vague; evidence insufficient because obvious, aimless, or contradictory.

E: No discernible idea or assertion controls the random or unexplained details that make up the body of the essay.

Development

A: Order reveals a sense of necessity, symmetry, and emphasis; paragraphs focused and coherent; logical transitions reinforce the progress of the analysis or argument.

B: Introduction engages initial interest; conclusion supports without repeating. Order reveals a sense of necessity and emphasis; paragraphs focused and coherent; logical transitions signal

changes in direction.

C: Introduction engages initial interest; conclusion supports without merely repeating. Order apparent but not consistently maintained; paragraphs focused and for the most part coherent; transitions functional but often obvious or monotonous.

D: Introduction or conclusions may be mechanical rather than purposeful or insightful. Order unclear or inappropriate, failing to emphasize central idea; paragraphs jumbled or underdeveloped; transitions unclear, inaccurate, or missing.

F: Introduction merely describes what is to follow; conclusion merely repeats what has been said. Order and emphasis indiscernible; paragraphs typographical rather than structural; transitions unclear, inaccurate, or missing. Neither the introduction nor the conclusion satisfies any clear rhetorical purpose.

Grammar

A: Grammar, syntax, punctuation, and spelling adhere to the conventions of “edited American English.”

B: Grammar, punctuation, syntax, and spelling contain no serious deviations from the conventions of “edited American English.”

C: Content undercut by some deviations from the conventions of “edited American English.”

D: Frequent mistakes in grammar, syntax, punctuation, and spelling obscure content.

F: Frequent and serious mistakes in grammar, syntax, punctuation, and spelling make the content unintelligible.

Special Needs Accommodations: If you need academic accommodations for special needs, you must first contact the Disability Resource Center at 392-8565 (accessuf@dso.ufl.edu; 0001 Building 0020 [Reid Hall]) to verify the disability and to establish eligibility for accommodations. You should schedule an appointment with me within the first two weeks of the semester to make appropriate arrangements.

Course Evaluations: Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluer.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

In-Class Recordings:

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited.

Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor. A “class lecture” is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving

solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third-party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040.

CAMPUS RESOURCES:

Health and Wellness

U Matter, We Care:

If you or a friend is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu or 352 392-1575 so that a team member can reach out to the student.

Counseling and Wellness Center: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>, 392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS)

Student Health Care Center, 392-1161.

University Police Department, 392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies). <http://www.police.ufl.edu/>

Academic Resources

E-learning technical support, 352-392-4357 (select option 2) or e-mail to Learning-support@ufl.edu. <https://lss.at.ufl.edu/help.shtml>.

Career Resource Center, Reitz Union, 392-1601. Career assistance and counseling. <http://www.crc.ufl.edu/>

Library Support, <http://cms.uflib.ufl.edu/ask>. Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.

Teaching Center, Broward Hall, 392-2010 or 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring. <http://teachingcenter.ufl.edu/>

Writing Studio, 302 Tigert Hall, 846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers. <http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/>

Student Complaints Campus: https://www.dso.ufl.edu/documents/UF_Complaints_policy.pdf
On-Line Students' Complaints: <http://www.distance.ufl.edu/student-complaint-process>