

Fall 2022

ENG 4936 SEC 9014 Octavia Butler Honors Seminar: Race and Gender in Octavia Butler's Speculative Fiction

Professor Tace Hedrick, Ph.D.

Class Hours: W 4:05-7:05 pm

Room: TUR 2349

Office Hours: W 2:00- 3:00 and by appointment

Office: TUR 4326

Email: Please email me through Canvas

Because this is a small honors course, it will be run as an undergraduate seminar. This means it will be intensive, research-oriented, and will require you to participate more extensively both in class and out. Each student will give one short presentation (8-10 minutes) to the class on the reading for the week they choose, and hand in a 1–3-page prospectus for their final paper, an annotated bibliography for that paper, (10 works), and a 10–12-page final paper.

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 in the United States.

Attention! Important Notes:

- I will be holding class face-to-face. As with classes before Covid, if you are sick or have another valid excuse, stay home and notify me; please don't ask to be online.
- As well, 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."

Another Important Note: In response to COVID-19, the following practices are in place to maintain your learning environment and to enhance the safety of our in-classroom interactions.

- If you are not vaccinated, get vaccinated. Vaccines are readily available at no cost and have been demonstrated to be safe and effective against the COVID-19 virus. Visit this link for details on where to get your shot, including options that do not require an appointment: <https://coronavirus.uflhealth.org/vaccinations/vaccine-availability/>. Students who receive the first dose of the vaccine somewhere off-campus and/or outside of Gainesville can still receive their second dose on campus.

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- You are **expected** to wear approved face coverings at all times during class and within buildings even if you are vaccinated. Please continue to follow healthy habits, including best practices like frequent hand washing. Sanitizing supplies are available in the classroom if you wish to wipe down your desks prior to sitting down and at the end of the class.
- Hand sanitizing stations will be located in every classroom.
- If you're sick, stay home and self-quarantine. Please visit the UF Health Screen, Test & Protect website about next steps, retake the questionnaire and schedule your test for no sooner than 24 hours after your symptoms began. Please call your primary care provider if you are ill and need immediate care or the UF Student Health Care Center at 352-392-1161 (or email covid@shcc.ufl.edu) to be evaluated for testing and to receive further instructions about returning to campus. UF Health Screen, Test & Protect offers guidance when you are sick, have been exposed to someone who has tested positive or have tested positive yourself. Visit the [UF Health Screen, Test & Protect website](#) for more information.
 - Course materials will be provided to you with an excused absence, and you will be given a reasonable amount of time to make up work.
 - If you are withheld from campus by the Department of Health through Screen, Test & Protect you are not permitted to use any on campus facilities. Students attempting to attend campus activities when withheld from campus will be referred to the Dean of Students Office.

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)

Lynne Margulis:

Symbiotic Planet: A New Look at Evolution Revised Edition 1999

E.O. Wilson:

Biophilia (1984)

Suggested:

Hacker and Sommers, eds. *A Pocket Style Manual*, Ninth Edition (this can be rented or bought from Amazon)

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August 2022

Week 1

W 24 Course Goals and Housekeeping
Course Reserves: “Bloodchild”

Week 2

W 31 **CR** “Amnesty”

September 2022

Week 3

W 7 *Kindred*
CR Butler Interview, “We Keep Playing the Same Record”

Week 4

W 14 E.O. Wilson, *Biophilia*

Week 5

W 21 *Patternmaster* (in *Seed to Harvest*)
CR Hampton “*Patternmaster*: Hierarchies of Identity” (**online book, Chapter Three**)

Week 6

W 28 *Mind of my Mind* (in *Seed to Harvest*)

October 2022

Week 7

W 5 *Wild Seed* (in *Seed to Harvest*)
DUE: Paper Proposals

Week 8

W 12 *Clay’s Ark* (in *Seed to Harvest*)
CR Ferreira “Symbiotic Bodies”

Week 9

W 19 Margulis *Symbiotic Planet* Prologue, Chapter One, and Chapter Three
CR Bollinger, “Symbiogenesis, Selfhood and Science Fiction”

Week 10

W 26 *Dawn* (in *Lilith’s Brood*)
CR: Johns “Becoming Medusa: Octavia Butler’s *Lilith’s Brood* and Sociobiology”

November 2022

Week 11

W 2 **DUE: Annotated Bibliography**

Week 12

W 9 *Adulthood Rites* (in *Lilith's Brood*)

Week 13

W 16 *Imago* (in *Lilith's Brood*)

Week 14

W 23 **Thanksgiving Holiday**

Week 15

W 30 **TBA**

December 2022

W 7 **DUE: Final Paper**

Class Presentation:

This class aims to examine in detail some of Butler's central concerns in her writing. The presentations should be structured around this goal, but "concerns" can be widely interpreted: for example, ideas about mixed race, evolutionary biology, questions of power and control, or extra-sensory perception could be cited as concerns of hers. To this end,

1) Make an 8-to-10 -minute presentation (3-5 pages) that is briefly informative about the text and about the related readings for your week; and discuss a theme, major idea or concern you find significant or interesting in the reading. At the end, pose your readers 3 or 4 questions or comments that will help illuminate the text. That is, **each presentation should invite questions and/or comments from the class.**

As soon as we know which student is taking which text, I will make a space on Canvas for each student to upload the following for the class to follow along with on the day of the presentation:

1) A double-spaced copy (about 3-5 pages) of the presentation.

Final Paper Proposal: This will be a 1–3-page document. It will lay out your argument, how you plan to support your argument in the body of your paper, and your conclusion. See "Posing a Research Question," and "Finding Appropriate Sources," in *A Pocket Style Manual*, or check online at "Conducting Research" and "Using Research" at https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/mla_style/mla_formatting_and_style_guide/mla_formatting_and_style_guide.html.

Annotated Bibliography: This will be a bibliography of 10 sources you have found to be helpful in your paper. For each source, you will write a brief but **complete** paragraph encompassing the main ideas of the source **and why it will be useful to your writing**. It will, again, follow MLA style guidelines. See "Annotated Bibliographies" at:

https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/common_writing_assignments/annotated_bibliographies/annotated_bibliography_example.html

Final Paper: This will be a 10–12-page paper, **not including** the bibliography. In this paper, you will conduct your own research on a topic of your choosing (I will also provide some topics you might be interested in), following MLA style guidelines. We will be discussing this paper throughout the semester.

Presentation:	10 points	20%
Final Paper Proposal:	10 points	20%
Annotated Bibliography:	10 points	20%
Final Paper:	<u>12 points</u>	<u>40%</u>
	42 points	100%

GRADING:

Grading is done on a point scale. Each assignment, save for your final paper, will be worth a possible 10 points (an A). Always make sure that you check the grading scale below; a 7 or 8, for example, does NOT mean a failing grade.

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 Rubric

Excellent (A) Good (B) Adequate (C) Poor (D) Failing (E). Each assignment marked DUE will receive a numeral equivalent to a grade. (Your final paper will be worth 12 points). 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.

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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.

Style

A: Sentences varied, emphatic, and purposeful; diction fresh, precise, economical, and idiomatic; tone complements the subject, conveys the authorial persona, and suits the audience.

B: Sentences varied, purposeful, and emphatic; diction precise and idiomatic; tone fits the subject, persona, and audience.

C: Sentences competent but lacking emphasis and variety; diction generally correct and idiomatic; tone acceptable for the subject.

D: Sentences lack necessary emphasis and purpose; diction vague; tone inconsistent with or inappropriate to the subject.

F: Incoherent, rudimentary, or redundant sentences thwart the meaning of the essay; diction nonstandard; tone indiscernible or inappropriate to the subject.

Usage

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.bluera.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>