

**WS 215 Reading Women Writers: Women, Race, and Science Fiction**  
**Tues/Thurs 1:30PM-3:18PM      Derby Hall (DB) Rm 024**

Professor Catrióna Rueda Esquibel  
Office hours: Wednesday 12-2  
286H University Hall

WS 215, which fulfills GEC requirements in social diversity, explores the experiences and contributions of diverse groups of women through literature and popular culture. This course foregrounds concepts of gender, race, class, and sexual orientation, and is intended to introduce you to feminist analysis and critical thought as a way of "making knowledge." We will be looking at Science Fiction as a way of looking at Race, Class, and Gender. Students will examine the construction of ethnic and racial identities in visual and narrative culture texts. We will focus on the ways that science fiction constructs "the Other," through race, ethnicity, species, and gender. We will examine parallels between science fiction and history, comparing "first contact" stories and films with Europe's first encounter with the Americas. We will examine the race and gender ideologies emergent in science fiction, including cold war stereotypes, nativism, immigration policies, and reproductive technologies.

Course Objectives:

Upon the successful completion of this course, students will have acquired introductory-level knowledge of

1. Core concepts of women's studies and the humanities
2. Gender and Race as concepts and their histories and meanings
3. Interrelationship between gender, race, class, and sexuality
4. The relationship of race and gender to social structures and opportunities

Key Terms: Utopia, Dystopia, Tropes, Conquest, Colonization, Epic, Myth, Fairy Tale, Santería, Time Travel, Construction of Gender, Construction of Race, Species, Hybridity, Mestizaje, Aliens, Immigration, Space-Time Continuum, Alternate Futures, Patriarchy, Underclass

Class Website: [class.osu.edu](http://class.osu.edu)

This is a WebCT website, you login using your regular OSU username (name.##) and password. Please email the instructor through the class website.

Required Texts

All texts are available at SBX bookstore and are on Closed Reserve at the Main Library

Octavia Butler. *Kindred*. 1979.

Marge Pierce. *Woman on the Edge of Time*. 1976.

Nalo Hopkinson. *Brown Girl in the Ring*. 1999.

Course Reader: (SBX)

James Tiptree, Jr.: “The Women Men Don’t See”  
Octavia E. Butler “The Evening and the Morning and the Night”  
Candas Jane Dorsey, “(Learning About) Machine Sex”  
Sonya Dorman Hess “When I Was Miss Dow”  
Derrick Bell, “The Space Traders”

Films (To be screened in class)

*Alien Resurrection* ([1997] Jean-Pierre Jeunet)  
*Space Traders* ([1994] Trey Ellis, Derrick Bell, Reginald Hudlin)

TV Series Episodes (To be screened in class)

*Dark Angel*  
*Star Trek: Voyager, Episode 14, “Faces”*  
*Star Trek: The Next Generation, Episode 117, “The Outcast”*

Requirements

**Exams:**

Midterm and Final. The exams will be “open note” (*not* “open book”). The exams will cover reading, films, and class discussion. (100 points each)

**Projects:**

Two creative (written and/or artistic) projects to be presented to the class. The class (100 points each). Each project should address issues of race, class, and gender.

Project One: Time Travel/Genealogy/History

Using Octavia Butler’s Kindred as a model, develop an outline for your own time travel story. You should conduct research on your own family’s history and migration, ancestor’s names, dates, locations. Like Dana, you should go back as far as you can. If you don’t have information (i.e. a particular town, a particular year) make an approximation and then back it up with research. This project should be approximately 5 pages long and may include photos, sketches, documentation. Further guidelines will follow. Due Date: **Thursday, October 9.**

Project Two: The Future: Utopia/Dystopia

Using either Nalo Hopkinson’s Brown Girl in the Ring, Marge Piercy’s Woman on the Edge of Time, or Dark Angel as a model, develop an outline for a specific period in the future. Be specific as to how it is related to our current time or history, whether you think it is positive, negative, etc. You will be extrapolating based on our readings, discussions, class lectures, etc. Further guidelines will follow. Due Date: **Tuesday, December 2.**

### 3. Attendance, Participation, Discussion (100 points)

Attendance is mandatory. Five (5) points will be deducted from your overall grade for each absence. I will excuse the first two absences but the third absence will cause a fifteen (15) point deduction from your grade. Arriving late or leaving early will lower your grade. More than five absences will result in a failing grade. Moreover, it is very important that you come to class prepared to discuss the assigned reading. During class, we will have lectures, small group discussion, large group discussion, and informal writing assignments. If students are not prepared for discussion, we will also have quizzes on the reading.

**Total** 500 points..

**Standard Grading Scale:** 94-100%=A, 90-93%=A-, 87-89%=B+, 83-86%=B, 80-82%=B-, 77-79%=C+. 73-76%=C, 70-72%=C-, 67-69%=D+, 63-66%=D, Below 62%=E

### 4. Bonus: Extra Credit (up to 50 points)

Extra-curricular events will allow for extra credit. You may write a short (1-2) reaction paper to a science fiction film, TV-series episode, etc. You must submit the topic to me in advance for approval. Discuss how the text represents Race and Gender, and identify conventions (time travel, first contact, etc.) Up to 10 points for each paper.

### Policies:

Please turn off all **communication devices** during class.

**Accommodation of students with disabilities:** If you need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability, you should contact me to arrange an appointment as soon as possible. At the appointment we can discuss the course format, anticipate your needs and explore potential accommodations. I rely on the Office For Disability Services for assistance in verifying the need for accommodations and developing accommodation strategies. If you have not previously contacted the Office for Disability Services, I encourage you to do so. The Office for Disability Services is located in room 150 Pomerene hall (614-292-3307 ).

**Plagiarism:** As defined by University Rule 3335-31-02, plagiarism is "the representation of another's works or ideas as one's own; it includes the unacknowledged word for word use and/or paraphrasing of another person's work, and/or the inappropriate unacknowledged use of another person's ideas." Plagiarism is one of the most serious offenses that can be committed in an academic community. The Women's Studies department and all of its instructors are required to report **all** cases of suspected plagiarism to the Committee on Academic Misconduct (COAM).

- Always ask questions **before** you turn in an assignment if you are uncertain about what constitutes plagiarism.

To preserve the integrity of OSU as an institution of higher learning, to maintain your own integrity, and to avoid jeopardizing your future, **DO NOT PLAGIARIZE!**

## SCHEDULE

### Week One

**Thursday, September 25:** Course Introduction

(Important: For first creative project—due in week 3—you will need to draw out your family tree, as far back as you can. Start contacting family members and doing historical research if necessary.)

### Week Two

**Tuesday, September 30:**

Lecture: Time Travel, Oedipus, the Question of Origin

Read: *Kindred* 1-51

**Thursday, October 2:** *Kindred* 52-107

Lecture: Race and Racialization, What is Historical Construction?

### Week Three

**Tuesday, October 7:** *Kindred* 108-188

Lecture: How is Race Gendered? Theories of Intersectionality

**Thursday, October 9** *Kindred* 189-264

Lecture: Coming to Terms with the Past

Creative Project #1 **DUE!**

### Week Four

**Tuesday, October 14** *Brown Girl in the Ring* 1-82

Lecture: Culture, Hybridity, Identity

**Thursday, October 16** *Brown Girl in the Ring* 83-166

Lecture: Utopia, Dystopia (I)

### Week Five

**Tuesday, October 21** *Brown Girl in the Ring* 167-end

Lecture: The Other outside, the Other Inside

**Thursday, October 23:** Film: *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, “The Outcast”

Film: *Star Trek Voyager*: “Faces”

### Week Six

**Tuesday, October 28** Octavia Butler “The Evening and the Morning and the Night”

Sonya Dorman Hess “When I Was Miss Dow”

Lecture: What’s Science Got to Do With It?/ Being the Alien

**Thursday, October 30: Midterm Exam**

## Week Seven

### **Tuesday, November 4**

Lecture: How is Female Sexuality imagined/constructed/understood?

Reading: James Tiptree, Jr.: "The Women Men Don't See"

Screening: *Dark Angel* "Meow Meow"

### **Thursday, November 6**

Lecture: Hybridity, Utopia, Dystopia (II)

Candas Jane Dorsey, "(Learning About) Machine Sex)"

Screening: *Dark Angel* Episode "Freak Nation"

## Week Eight

### **Tuesday, November 11: Veteran's Day - No Classes**

*Woman on the Edge of Time* (Read Chapters 1-5)

### **Thursday, November 13**

Lecture: The Present and the Future for Women of Color

*Woman on the Edge of Time* (Read Chapter 6-10)

## Week Nine

**Tuesday, November 18** *Woman on the Edge of Time* (Read Chapter 11-15)

Lecture: Madness and Imagining

**Thursday, November 20** *Woman on the Edge of Time* (Read Chapter 16-20)

Lecture: Alternatives

## Week Ten

**Tuesday, November 25:** Film: *Alien Resurrection*

**Thursday, November 27: Thanksgiving Holiday - No Classes**

## Week Eleven

**Tuesday, December 2**

Creative Project #2 **DUE!**

Presentation of Projects

**Thursday, December 4** - Closing Ceremony, Course Evaluations, Final day to turn in Extra Credit.

**Final Exam: Wednesday, December 10 1:30pm – 3:18pm**