



**GENDER, SEXUALITY, AND WOMEN'S
STUDIES
WINTER 2025
GSWS 2203G**

FUTURE SEX

SEX AND SCIENCE FICTION

Course Description

Beginning with cutting edge contemporary practices, from sex reassignment surgery to virtual reality, this course will look at the ways in which we imagine the future of gender and sexuality. The focus will be primarily on science fiction texts that provide interesting alternatives to present-day ideas about sex and sexuality. The course will start by looking at a variety of cutting edge contemporary and near future issues, including genetic engineering (such as the detection of a "gay gene" and the abortion of "gay fetuses" or other controls over human sexuality), the use of biological modification and high-tech prosthetics for sex, reproductive technology, cybertechnologies (especially virtual reality), and the somewhat further future potentials of space

flight, terraforming, human modification for colonization of other planets, etc. It will include numerous important science fiction texts, as well as investigations into societal, social, and personal effects of technology on sexual desire, identity, and embodiment.

Learning Objectives

The course will enable students to:

- understand the inter-relationship between sex, gender, and sexuality by examining both science fictional scenarios and cutting-edge real world practices;

- learn to read science fiction as a field for intense critical and theoretical thinking about practices of gender and sexuality;
- understand the effects and potential consequences of technology for both sexed bodies and sexual practices; understand various types of speculation about the future of reproduction and reproductive technologies;
- interrogate contemporary practices, such as teledildonics and virtual sex;
- reflect on the ways in which science fiction has mirrored real world developments in sexual practices and policies, from debates over the criminalization of prostitution and the proliferation of pornography to issues around the decriminalization of homosexuality, the legalization of same-sex marriage, the medicalization of transsexualism, the battle to end infantile surgery for intersex individuals, the legalization of birth control, battles over women's bodily autonomy and abortion rights, debates over in vitro fertilization and surrogacy, and speculation about cloning.

In addition, the course will assist students in developing aptitude for analytical/critical thinking, written communication skills, and research skills.



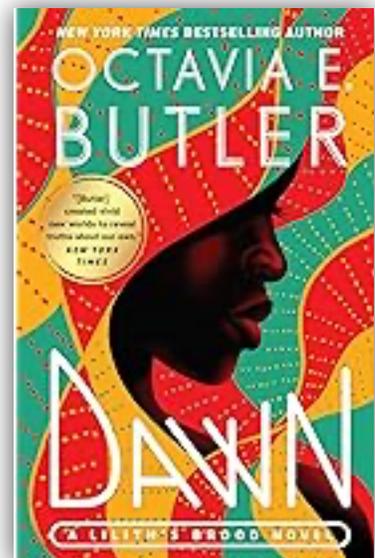
Land Acknowledgement:

Western University is situated on the traditional territories of the Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Lunaapeewak and Attawandaron peoples, who have longstanding relationships to the land and region of southwestern Ontario and the City of London.

TEXTBOOKS

1. Octavia Butler, *Dawn* (ebook: \$15.99)
2. Becky Chambers, *A Closed and Common Orbit* (ebook: \$7.99)
3. Jo Walton, *The Just City* (ebook: \$13.99)
4. Virtual course reader available through Course Readings on Brightspace (free)

Please note that all three books can be borrowed from the library; there are also free or very inexpensive audiobook options





ASSESSMENT

1. Class participation (15%)
2. Online forum discussion posts (10%)
3. Oral presentation (15%)
4. Midterm reflection paper (20%)
5. Final exam (40%)

COURSE INFORMATION

Instructor: Dr. WG Pearson

Office: Lawson Hall 3256

Office hours: Thursdays 1:30-2:30 or by appointment

Format: In person

All materials for this course are available on the Brightspace course site or from the university bookstore

COURSE POLICIES

See all university and course policies on the OWL site.

Use of generative AI (large language learning models, such as ChatGPT) is forbidden in this course. Students suspected of using AI tools may be required to show their notes, rough drafts, and other materials and may also be required to explain their answers orally. Writing clearly is an important skill; using AI to write for you defeats the purpose.