

Bold Ideas Colloquium Speaker Series

Friday, November 6 2026, NOON to 1PM

via Zoom at:

Zoom Link:

<https://ca01web.zoom.us/j/67421204519?pwd=LkXT1ZFzAKTOisuT3ZlaLa9z50FJhB.1>



Octavia E. Butler and Other Speculative Feminist Science Fiction as a Case Study for Teaching Health Studies

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Abstract: *What happens when care arrives without consent?* Octavia E. Butler's novel *Dawn* (1987) poses that question with unsettling force: aliens save the last humans, but on terms the survivors never chose. Drawing on Dr Mehta's 2025 presentation to the American Literature Association as a guest of the *Octavia E. Butler Society* and drawing on her over twenty years of research and teaching in Community and Global Health; this research study argues that speculative feminist science fiction offers health education as a rigorous way to interrogate the histories and assumptions that shape health knowledge. Through a qualitative case study grounded in feminist pedagogy and critical feminist bioethics, it develops the *fiction–health–future framework*. The framework centers a question urgent for the next generation of health studies students: *when does expertise become authority, and when does care become control?* The study positions speculative fiction not as a supplement to evidence, but as a critical method for cultivating the ethical imagination that health futures demand.

Talk Learning Objectives: By the end of the session, participants will be able to:

- 1: Understand what happens when care arrives without consent via speculative feminist science fiction.
- 2: Illustrate this dynamic through a qualitative study.
- 2: By Applying this framework to demonstrate the value of cultivating an ethical imagination.

Speaker Biography: Punam Mehta, PhD (she/her), is an Instructor II in the College of Community and Global Health at the Max Rady College of Medicine, University of Manitoba, and a Senior Fellow of St John's College. A feminist scholar and educator, she brings authenticity, compassion, and lived experience to her work. She is committed to mentoring the next generation of health professionals in Manitoba and to fostering classrooms grounded in joy, creativity, and critical thinking.