

****Forthcoming Class Series!****

East Asian Queer Feminist Fantasy and Science Fiction Book Series
Taught by Sabrina M. Weiss



This document lists books that will be in this series and answers some questions about it. There is also a [link to a survey where you can send feedback and preferences about the class design](#) to help me make the class a good fit for you!

Books that will be in this series, with hyperlinks (order and scheduling TBD):

- [Tiger Honor, Yoon Ha Lee](#)
- [Flame in the Mist + Smoke in the Sun, Renée Ahdieh](#)
- [Iron Widow, Xiran Jay Zhao](#)
- [She Who Became the Sun, Shelley Parker-Chan](#)
- [Light From Uncommon Stars, Ryka Aoki](#)

**Sign up to be notified when this class series
will be available through the [survey link](#)!**

Q&A about this series, including what the title means and why this specific focus.

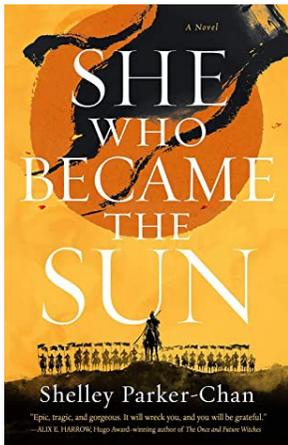
Why is this title so long? Why isn't it something catchy?

I struggled to find a more catchy and easy title, but because of the intersectional topic area, I felt that I needed to be honest and complete about the multiple facets of the subject matter. Each part of this matters and shows respect to the content by being direct and specific and avoiding potentially harmful stereotypes.

What do you mean by “East Asian”?

Each book in this series engages with an East Asian culture (China, Korea, Japan) and is written by an author of East Asian descent. **I specify “East Asian” as a way to show respect to the**

wide diversity of people and cultures on the Asian continent that often is assumed to be monumental or homogeneous, and also has regions commonly referred to as “South Asian”, “Southeast Asian”, “Central Asian” and “West Asian” (sometimes as part of West Asian North African, or WANA cultures). While there can be similarities because of shared historical and philosophical origins, it is more accurate to specify ethnic groups and nations where possible (and as appropriate). The three cultures I am representing are also not an exhaustive list, as Mongolia, North Korea, Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan are also countries in East Asia. However, I have not yet found books written by authors of these countries or in these settings (I am open to finding them!), so I am starting with the ones I have.



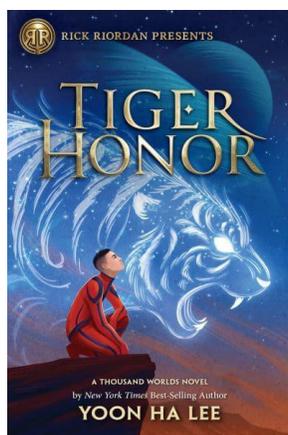
Because of geographical proximity and overlapping histories (often involving conquest), **I am grouping Chinese, Korean, and Japanese stories here as a way to show historically based similarities as well as relevant differences between these cultures.** I myself am of Korean and Japanese descent, and while I am not recently descended from China, there are many historically based commonalities that connect the nations and cultures (the Korean peninsula has been ruled by Japan and China, for example).

While this series presents East Asian stories and authors, I am currently seeking out similar types of books based on other regions' cultures to offer future courses as a way to respectfully celebrate and learn through contemporary books.

More about regions in Asia: <https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/the-four-regions-of-asia.html>

What do you mean by “Queer” and “Feminist”? Why don't you have “LGBTQIAA” in the title?

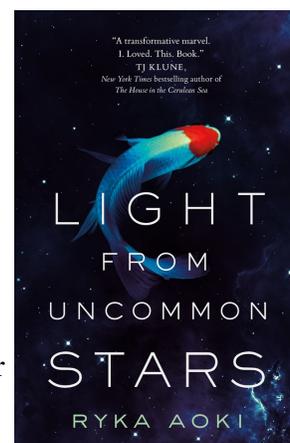
“Feminist” uses the academic definition: **“An approach that critically examines sex and gender norms, especially regarding social and material inequality and oppression.”** While there are well-written girl and woman characters who challenge oppressive social norms and expectations of girls and women in these books, **I also seek out books that present well-written boy/man and queer (nonbinary, nonconforming, agender) characters who also question and challenge norms and expectations of them,** because that is a necessary part of academic feminism. Feminism also often engages with **discussions about social class, socioeconomic status, and disability as part of intersectionality,** and these themes are explored in these books as well.



I use “queer” to refer to challenges to heteronormative and cisnormative assumptions about sex, gender, and relationships, and all of these books challenge these assumptions in multiple ways. However, because East Asian culture constructs sex, gender, and relationships in different ways than do Western societies, it does not necessarily map onto the “LGBTQIAA” framework that is mostly used in white American gender studies. There may be some woman-woman relationships, there may be some transgender representation, however the types and amount of representation vary, and they often are not labeled or described exactly as Americans may talk about LGBTQIAA representations. Additionally, there may be challenges to norms that aren't recognized by that acronym, such as polyamorous relationships. Therefore, I use “queer” as a **more inclusive and less specific term** to let us know that there are challenges to cis-hetero norms of various types.

Why “Fantasy and Science Fiction”?

Fortunately, there are some excellent nonfiction and realistic fiction books about queer East Asian experiences out there – many autobiographies, many stories set in a world similar to ours. **My specialty in the SEA Book Clubs has been focused on books that take place in worlds very different from ours, such as historical fantasy, science fiction, and dystopian or speculative fiction.** Therefore, I'm focusing on this smaller slice of books to help bring visibility to these authors who write at this specific intersection, and to show that genres that have in the past been harder for non-white, non-cis-men to write in are becoming more diverse. Additionally, I want to engage readers who prefer fantasy and science fiction books to help them to share their love of these genres while expanding cultural horizons – a world that has dragons and interstellar travel can and should be at the forefront of imagining people beyond a cisheteronormative white default and celebrating queerness, ethnic and gender diversity, and differences as strength.



What age/maturity level are these books for?

This is a bit difficult to say, since all readers are different and have different topics that are acceptable and that are too uncomfortable to read about. *Tiger Honor* is a middle grade book and should be the most accessible to younger (tween) readers; *She Who Became the Sun* probably is the most mature read (in writing as well as content). It is not required to sign up for all of these books – will offer each book as a separate class so readers can choose the books that fit for them in terms of content and interest. I will include general age range recommendations and content warnings for each book on the course listing.



What are some challenges with teaching this series?

Here is where you can help me to make these classes as interesting, educational, and accessible as possible for you and your learners: [fill out my interest survey for this series to help me design the classes to best fit your needs!](#)

I believe strongly in the value of reading books (including listening to audiobooks) – engaging with texts is a way to ensure lifelong learning, support autodidactic learners, and strengthen foundational critical thinking skills. But I know that everyone needs different types of support to flourish – some need more time, some want constant engagement, some want to read independently and discuss only at the end. There are benefits to a live class (weekly meeting) format as well as a guided class (hybrid self-paced and live interaction) format, and I want to offer these in a format that works for as many people as possible.

Also, most of these books – because they are stories told authentically from experiences of East Asian authors – at times include difficult mature content. There are parts of these books that have sexual assault, body mutilation, emotional and physical abuse and neglect, extremely hurtful parenting, and other hard topics. I believe that all of these difficult topics have a place in the story and speak to important experiences, not just for the authors, but for many readers. While I will do my utmost to give readers space – especially in live sessions – and not discuss these parts of the books graphically, there will be times when we will need to directly reference them for their relevance in the story. I want to support each of my students to help them find an appropriate level of engagement that lets them both feel safe and aids them in connecting with the books positively.

If you could fill out this survey to help me anticipate and plan for support needs, including scheduling, class format, and ways to support students through difficult content, it would help me to customize this series to best fit your needs.

<https://forms.gle/uZt2o3digRJF5XGm7>

Feel free to contact me at smweisssea@gmail.com for more information!