The Scandinavian countries are often touted as having achieved the greatest gender equality in the world. Political offices are held almost equally by men and women, fathers take paternity leave in unprecedented numbers and more women work outside the home than in other Western countries. Though much of it holds true, it is not a flawless snapshot of this geographic region. Even in this purportedly gender-neutral paradise, gender roles continue to be challenged and the topic incites vigorous debate. Exploring the historical context of this social scenario as well as its contemporary manifestations, SCAN 353 turns a critical eye to a wide range of texts written by Scandinavian women from the mid-nineteenth century until the present. Through the assigned texts we will examine the social construction of gender and the tensions inherent in any attempt to alter accepted/expected societal norms of gendered behavior. We will discuss how women writers contribute to these processes, how they actively partake in the discourses that define what it means to be a woman in Scandinavia at different moments in time. Authors include: Viktória Benedictsson, Cora Sandel, Gerd Brantenberg, Moa Martinsson, Suzanne Brøgger and Sofi Oksanen.

This course is designed to satisfy Arts and Letters group requirement and the Identity, Pluralism and Tolerance multicultural requirement. All readings are in English.