This is our foundational course, which defines the scope of what Scandinavian Studies is at the UO. It serves as an introduction to critical thinking as well. The course is designed to prompt an interrogation of mere appearances. This questioning of the superficial will be enacted through the close reading of a series of texts and films that highlight the difficulty of interpretation. The goal is to develop the critical thinking skills that enable students to read more accurately their experiences and environments. With this goal in mind, the course will introduce students to a number of works that use masks and tell tales of ecstatic experiences. The masks can be as simple as a pseudonym or as subtle as formal aesthetic choices. The initial premise is that masks are used to depict ecstatic experience (traumatic events, religious passion, sexual desire, and the like) because these experiences are transformative, and that the face of transformation, the appearance of becoming, needs the mask in order to be legible. While this course is an introduction to a way of thinking critically about cultural production, it also serves as an introductory survey to the art, literature and film of Scandinavia. In it we will learn to read, analyze, and write about short stories, plays, novels, and philosophy. We will also view several films. In this way, the student will experience a representative sample of Scandinavian cultural production after 1800 and learn about the context in which these cultural artifacts were produced.

The class is conducted in English.

This course satisfies both the Arts and Letters group and the International Cultures requirements.