The reputation of Scandinavian cinema was built on beautiful but bleak art-house films filled with existential anguish and stylistic experimentation. This course reconsiders the raw emotion and humanity of this high art cinema through the lens of film melodrama. Although it might seem the polar opposite of melodrama’s supposed comprehensibility and overflowing expressivity, Scandinavian art-house cinema actually exploits melodrama’s heightened emotional registers, its suffering protagonists, and its pressure on the domestic sphere in interesting ways that challenge and expand what we think of as melodrama. Students will read critical texts in the field of melodrama theory, gaining a solid understanding of the central issues at stake (questions of emotion, gender, form, and social critique) in order to consider the case for Scandinavian art-house melodrama. Although we will touch on the rich and underestimated, domestic traditions of film melodrama in Scandinavia, this course will focus on more recent iterations in work by Carl Th. Dreyer, Ingmar Bergman, Lars von Trier, and Susanne Bier.

This course satisfies IC multicultural and Cinema Studies Core C requirements. Readings & Discussion in English.