Explores the literature and the cultural debates of “the long 19th century” in Scandinavia. In this class we will read literary and philosophical texts written between the French Revolution and just before World War I. During this period Scandinavians experienced profound political and social changes. They saw the increasing proliferation of secular and scientific explanations of the world, the rise of the Industrial state, and an increasingly assertive call for expanded political rights. The rise of new ideologies such as feminism, socialism, and nationalism colored the environment. The emerging prominence of the natural sciences accompanied by an acute awareness of history also played a strong role in shaping the cultural production of the period. Yet the emergence of “rational” explanations of the world did not preclude the persistence of other ways of understanding. As a result, the 19th century also saw an increasing fascination with folklore and an ever more acute desire to reconstruct tradition. In short, the literature of this period provides us with a portal through which we can observe the collisions between competing ways of explaining the world (notions of the modern and the traditional, rationality and irrationality, religion and secularity and the like), and analyze the implications of these explanations upon events.

The class is conducted in English.