European “Modernity” has most often been described as an age that ushered in new forms of human relations and the desire to dispense with tradition. Depending on the commentator’s ideological preference, the changes that we identify with the period came either too slowly or occurred too radically. Yet, everyone seems to agree that what we call the “modern” can be characterized by seemingly contrary characteristics. In other words, modernity brings the end of traditional modes of behavior and the invention of the concept of ‘tradition,’” it brings democracy and dictatorship, industrial expansion and urban poverty, utopian hopes and dystopic fears, the rise of the natural sciences and the emergence of religious fundamentalisms, the promise of universal peace and the devastation of two world wars. The modern age also brought in an increased emphasis on historical thinking and with it, a new consciousness of the passing of time. In other words, for all its contradictions, the modern is marked by a critical self-consciousness and an increased awareness of one’s place in developing forms of human interaction. With this in mind, our course examines the cultural changes that occur in Scandinavia from the French Revolution to the beginning of the 21st century and the reactions of Scandinavian artists and intellectuals to these new ways of interaction. In order to come to an understanding of the historical trajectory of “modern” Scandinavia, we will examine a selection of literature and film and address the following topics: secularization, women’s rights, nihilism, the rise of the bureaucratic state, war, class conflict, boredom, and globalization. Readings include works by Søren Kierkegaard, Victoria Benedictsson, Henrik Ibsen, August Strindberg, Knut Hamsun, Hjalmar Soderberg, Karin Boye, and Per Lagerkvist. We will also view film clips from I am Curious Yellow and I am Curious Blue and watch the film Insomnia by Erik Skjoldbærg. All readings are in English, the films are subtitled.