Main emphasis: The course examines some of the major western European dramatists writing between 1850 and 1910, the period marking the shift from Romanticism to Modernism. We will read the significant plays of Ibsen, Chekhov, Strindberg and Shaw in their intellectual and social contexts with special attention to the influence of Nietzsche's *The Genealogy of Morals* and the invective of Max Nordau’s *Degeneration*.

Objectives: The course goal is to allow students to read extensively in the works of the four major "makers" of modern drama with special attention to the scientific, political and philosophical bases of their thought (for instance, Shaw was a Fabian gradualist, Strindberg was influenced by Swedenborg and Occultism, Ibsen was strongly shaped by Nietzsche and Chekhov was a physician). As well, the course explores what "modern" meant at the turn of the century, both as a literary phenomenon and as a cultural force for change.

Honors dimension: Because the course engages with European history, philosophy, science, and culture, it allows students of a high caliber from across the disciplines to engage in depth with accessible, familiar, but challenging plays.

Format: Largely discussion with some lecture. Students will be expected to participate in every class, either with a brief oral presentation or a paper. Film screenings and local theatre productions as availability and interest dictate.