Scandinavian Studies 520: Sustainability in Scandinavia
June 13-July 10
Monday-Thursday
9:30-12:30
Instructor: Marcus Cederström (cederstrom@wisc.edu)

Course Description:
From the Viking Age to the postmodern Scandinavian welfare state, sustainability has shaped the Nordic countries. This interdisciplinary environmental humanities course will examine Scandinavian and Nordic communities in relation to the prime elements of ancient cosmology: earth, fire, water, and wind. We will explore cultural, environmental, and economic histories of the Nordic region and its populations, natural as well as human. We'll look at the debates raging in Sámi communities concerning mining the earth, consider the ironies of a Norwegian energy policy that advocates renewable energy while pumping millions of gallons of crude oil from offshore wells, examine Icelandic efforts to harness the power of fire from the 200+ volcanoes that dot its landscape, listen to the ponderings of scientists and policy makers in Finland and Sweden concerning the toxic waters of the Baltic Sea and the acid rain of the northern forests, and ask if Denmark can convince the world to survive on the power of wind alone. We'll examine what sustainability means in a Nordic context: the ways in which the region is positioning itself as a world leader, and what that positioning actually means. We'll look at the good, the bad, and the bleak as we examine Scandinavian architecture, business, design, tradition, and, of course, the environment itself. We will raise lots of questions, few with easy answers, as we work towards a better understanding of sustainability in Scandinavia and in the affluent West more generally.