The year 1800 found Britain facing unrest at home and major war abroad. The next twenty years saw more of the same, agricultural distress, industrial dislocation, and the ever mounting cost of a seemingly interminable conflict with Napoleonic France. A conservative government responded with patriotic appeals and repression. The national gloom was occasionally lifted by the victories of Nelson or Wellington, as well as news of imperial conquest. Yet even the return of peace in 1815 only inaugurated a more difficult period of economic turmoil, accompanied by the threat of lower class revolt. Never before had the gulf between the rapid transformation of social and cultural life contrasted so sharply with the immobility of the political system. Still, beneath the surface, powerful forces were at work altering the nature of the political debate. The conservatism of Walter Scott and Jane Austen was different in character from the hysterical prose of Edmund Burke. The popularity of the poetry of Lord Byron and the sympathy aroused for the cause of Greek independence suggested that the popular mood had shifted. In particular, the character and composition of Parliament came in for renewed dispute. We will use a variety of texts to examine this fascinating period in more detail. We will begin the course with an important work on population which reflected another face of the social thinking of the period. We will then turn to three works that offer more personal experiences of these years. These works give us an opportunity to measure the extent to which people in early nineteenth-century Britain felt the impact of war or economic change. Along the way we will read two works of fiction that reflect on key developments in British society. Our goal throughout the term is to achieve a better understanding of how Britain navigated through a period of extraordinary stress without seeing the breakdown of its key institutions.

Class meetings will be split between lectures and discussion. This is a class that requires a great deal of reading. Students should recognize this challenge at the outset of the term. You will be expected to have completed reading assignments on time and to come to class prepared to comment on the assigned texts. 10% of the course grade will be based on class participation. The mid-term and paper are each worth 25% of the grade, and the final is worth 40%.

Required Readings:
- Paupers and Pig Killers: The Diary of William Holland, A Somerset Parson (on reserve in library)*
- Jane Austen's Letters, ed. Deirdre Le Faye
- Mary Shelley, Frankenstein
- Samuel Bamford, Passages in the Life of a Radical
- Walter Scott, Ivanhoe

*There are four copies of the Holland diary on reserve. You might try to get a copy through interlibrary loan, and there are used copies on Amazon. Be sure to allow plenty of time to do the reading.

Course Outline: [all readings must be completed by date when they are listed]

Apr. 2 The French Revolution and the war of ideas
April 4  The fortunes of reform  
Burke, Paine, and More handout

April 9  The world in 1800

April 11  Seeing society  
Malthus (entire book)

April 16  Living through a turbulent period  
Paupers and Pig Killers, pp. 15-162

April 18  Preserving the social order  
Paupers and Pig Killers, pp. 163-299

April 23  Letters from Rural England  
Letters of Jane Austen, pp. 1-181

April 25  The world of the family  
Letters of Jane Austen, pp. 182-366

(special viewing of movie, "Sense and Sensibility": time and place to be announced)

April 30  The costs of war  PAPER DUE

May 2  The many faces of the Industrial Revolution

May 7  MIDTERM EXAM

May 9  Peace and the Corn Law of 1815

May 14  The voice of the skilled artisan  
Passages in the Life of a Radical, ch. 1-31

May 16  The goals of radical reform  
Passages in the Life of a Radical, ch. 32-97

May 21  The new imperial vision

May 23  The past and the present  
Ivanhoe (entire novel)

May 28  Memorial Day

May 30  Monsters, the imagination, and the broken home  
Frankenstein (entire novel)

June 4  The strange theater of the Queen Caroline Affair

June 6  The 'passing' of reaction

Final exam -- Thursday, June 14, 3:15