

**Carleton University
Fall 2015
Department of English**

**ENGL 4115A: Culture and the Text
A Cultural History of Procrastination: 1800-2015**

Prerequisite(s): fourth-year standing in Honours English.

**Tuesday/ 2:35-5:25pm
Location: Please confirm location on Carleton Central**

**Instructor: Barbara Leckie
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Office: 1917 Dunton Tower
Office Hours: TBA**

“Think of all the years passed by in which you said to yourself “I’ll do it tomorrow,” and how the gods have again and again granted you periods of grace of which you have not availed yourself. It is time to realize that you are a member of the Universe, that you are born of Nature itself, and to know that a limit has been set to your time.”

~Marcus Aurelius

A Cultural History of Procrastination: 1800-2015

B. Leckie

Tuesdays 2:30-5:30

This course will explore the aesthetic, psychological, and political factors that have a bearing on procrastination, in particular, and “unfinishedness,” in general, from 1800 to present. The course will first address works by John Ruskin, Charles Dickens, Karl Marx, Samuel Smiles, George Eliot, George Gissing, and others in the nineteenth century. It will then turn to the self-help industry of the last twenty-five years or so in relation to procrastination. We will consider procrastination and unfinishedness in print and visual culture, interpersonal relationships, and the built environment. This course may be the only course students take in their university careers in which experience with procrastination will be an asset.

READINGS: (Available at Octopus Books, 116 Third Ave, (613) 233-2589 unless otherwise noted)

Samuel Smiles, *Self-Help* (1859)

George Eliot, *Middlemarch* (1872)

Wilkie Collins, *Poor Miss Finch* (1872)

Timothy A Pychyl, *Solving the Procrastination Puzzle* (2010)

Links and/or CuLearn as indicated below

METHODS OF EVALUATION:

1. Two Short Presentations	20% each
2. Essay (2,000 words)	40%
3. Eight one-page reading responses	10%
4. Participation	10%

PLAGIARISM

The University Senate defines plagiarism as “*presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one’s own.*” This can include:

- reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else’s published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one’s own without proper citation or reference to the original source;
- submitting a take-home examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else;
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another’s data or research findings;
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another’s works and/or failing to use quotation marks;
- handing in "substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without prior written permission of the course instructor in which the submission occurs."

Plagiarism is a serious offence that cannot be resolved directly by the course’s instructor. The Associate Dean of the Faculty conducts a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They can include a final grade of "F" for the course. For more information please go to: <http://www2.carleton.ca/studentaffairs/academic-integrity>

Academic Accommodation

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request the processes are as follows:

Pregnancy obligation: write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details see the Student Guide

<http://carleton.ca/equity/accommodation/academic/students/>

Religious obligation: write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details see the Student Guide above.

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: The Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send me your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (if applicable). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with me to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. Please consult the PMC website for the deadline to request accommodations for the formally-scheduled exam (if applicable).

COURSE OUTLINE:

8 Sept: Introduction: Works in Progress

15 Sept: How to Live and How to Die

Kingwell, Mark. "Meaning to Get to It: Procrastination and the Art of Life"

Surowiecki, James. "Later: What Does Procrastination Tell us about Ourselves?"

Bauman, Zygmunt. "Modern Adventures of Procrastination"

Wright, Julia M. "Pathologizing Procrastination: Or, the Romanticization of Work"

22 Sept: Class Cancelled for Yom Kippur

29 Sept: Addiction/Habit

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Kubla Khan" (and "the man from Porlock)

Selection from Thomas De Quincey, *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*

Adam Kirsch, "The Philosopher Stoned: What Drugs Taught Walter Benjamin."

6 Oct: Unfinished Social Projects (1): Marx and Ruskin

Eric Hobsbawm, *How to Change the World* ("The Fortunes of Marx's and Engels' Writing")

Selection from John Ruskin

13 Oct: Biography (1) : New Forms of the Self

selection from John Stuart Mill's *Autobiography*

selection from John Ruskin's *Praeterita* (his autobiography)

20 Oct: Architecture, Visual Art, and the Unfinished

Selection from *Fragments: Architecture and the Unfinished*

Selection from Kite, *Building Ruskin's Italy*

Selection from Richard Sennett's *Flesh and Stone*

"The Fascination of the Unfinished"

<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/10/arts/design/the-fascination-of-the-unfinished.html>

27 October **Reading Break**

3 Nov: Realism

George Eliot, *Adam Bede* (1859) (Chapters 16 & 17)

George Eliot, *Middlemarch* (1872) (Chapters 1-29 & Chapters 43-49)

10 Nov: Self Help (1)

Selections from Samuel Smiles, *Self-Help* (1859)

17 Nov: Sensation

Wilkie Collins, *Poor Miss Finch* (1872)

24 Nov: Biography (2): New Forms of the Self

Selections from the following:

Alain de Botton, *How Proust Can Change Your Life*

Geoff Dyer, *Out of Sheer Rage: In the Shadow of D.H. Lawrence.*

Roland Barthes, *Barthes by Barthes*

27 Nov: Self Help (2):

Timothy A Pychyl, *Solving the Procrastination Puzzle*

Selections from the following:

Joseph R. Ferrari, *Still Procrastinating?*

Neil Fiore, *The Now Habit*

Brian Tracy, *Eat That Frog*

1 Dec: Unfinished Social Projects (2): Climate Change
Readings TBD