Course Overview: Developed in the 1970s as a form of sustainable farm planning, permaculture (a contraction of "permanent agriculture") has evolved into a full-scale ecological design methodology, used in architecture, urban planning, landscape design, and curriculum development. Building on the foundations in *Perma/Culture: Imagining Alternatives in an Age of Crisis* (Routledge, 2018), this course challenges students to use permaculture to re-think what it means to study literature in a time of severe environmental crisis. How might we use ecological principles to shape how we read and write? How might this kind of critical practice shift the ways in which we teach, communicate and behave in the world? Following our introductory session, students will participate in an intensive two-day workshop on the core principles of permaculture. We will then return to the classroom to discuss, experiment with, and apply what we have learned.

**Required Reading** [Books Available at the University of Toronto Bookstore]
Rebecca Solnit, *The Faraway Nearby* (Viking, 2014)
Adam Dickinson, *Anatomic* (Coach House, 2018)

All articles and chapters from longer books will be available through On-line Course Reserves, accessed via Quercus. Additional materials for case studies will be uploaded to Quercus.

**Course Requirements**

**Class Participation [20%]:** All students will be expected to attend every class having completed the readings. Each student bears an equal responsibility for carrying the discussion. You will be evaluated based on both the quality and quantity of your oral participation. The two four-hour Permaculture Workshop sessions are essential for participation in the class.

**Short Response Papers [20%]:** For the permaculture workshop plus five additional classes (for a total of six), write a short response to a key issue or reading from the class. These responses should be written in the form of a blog post, in accessible prose, 500-750 words in length, accompanied by a title and a relevant lead image. Response papers are meant to communicate your thoughts about our work to a broad general audience. Post responses on the relevant Quercus Discussion Board by the Monday following our Wednesday class (by Tuesday for
responses to the Permaculture Workshop). At the end of term, I will select a few student posts to feature on my Medium blog.

Case Study Presentation and Report [60%]:

1. **Design** a syllabus, a pedagogical tool, a research project, a piece of creative writing, or a literary analysis relevant to your particular field using permaculture design principles.

2. Determine **key readings** for the class and send them (digitally) to Prof. Most two weeks before your presentation date. I will post them on Quercus for the class.

3. **Present** the case study to the class on your selected date. Presentations should last about 45 minutes, and include at least ONE active component as well as significant class discussion/participation. You should have no more than 10 minutes of direct oral presentation! Consider using images, sound or video; group discussions of relevant texts; group participation in a pedagogical exercise; other hands-on or multisensory activities that bring your ideas to life.

4. Drawing upon your initial design, the readings you distributed, your presentation and feedback gleaned from it, and any necessary additional research, create a **Case Study Report**, which can take the form of an essay, a course design, a detailed proposal for a research project, or other formats approved by Prof. Most. This report should include all necessary scholarly apparatus (endnotes, Works Cited, etc.). It is due in the English Department on **Wednesday, Dec. 4**.

COURSE SCHEDULE

**Wednesday, Sept 11: Introduction: Permaculture and its Precursors**

Please read these short essays before our first class meeting (see explanatory notes on Quercus):

- Aldo Leopold, “Thinking Like a Mountain” from *Sand County Almanac*
- Wendell Berry, “Solving for Pattern” from *The Art of the Commonplace*, 267-275
- Robin Wall Kimmerer, “Asters and Goldenrod,” from *Braiding Sweetgrass*, pp. 39-47

Watch: [https://biomimicry.org/what-is-biomimicry/](https://biomimicry.org/what-is-biomimicry/)


**Saturday, Sept 14, 2pm – 6pm AND Sunday Sept 15, 1pm – 5pm: Permaculture workshop**

Workshop will be led by Bonita Ford of LivinghEarth and will be held at Black Creek Community Farm, an 8-acre urban agricultural centre in North York near York University in the heart of the Jane/Finch Neighborhood. The farm is located at 4929 Jane Street, a 15-minute walk (or 4 minute bus ride) from the Pioneer Village TTC Station.
We will start promptly with a welcome and tour with Black Creek staff. Please arrive a few minutes early to get settled, and plan on at least 1 hour travel time from the U of T Campus. Come dressed to be outdoors the entire time. Bring snacks, a water bottle, and a notebook and pens. It is your choice if you want to bring your laptop. Just be advised that we will be spending some time walking around the farm and there will be no place to lock up your bags, so if you bring a laptop, you will have to carry it!

To prepare for the workshop:

EXPLORE: [https://permacultureprinciples.com/](https://permacultureprinciples.com/). An excellent intro to permaculture principles.

**Wednesday, Sept 18: Reading**
Rebecca Solnit, *The Faraway Nearby*

**Wednesday, Sept 25: Writing**
Adam Dickinson, *Anatomic* (Coach House 2018)

CHOOSE AT LEAST 2 OF THESE SECONDARY READINGS:

**Wednesday, Oct 2: Research**
Case Study: *The Persephone Project*
Special Guest: Caroline Holland, Advanced PhD student in the Environmental Humanities and Project Manager of the Persephone Project

READ:
Robin Wall Kimmerer, “Mishkos Kenomagwen: The Teachings of Grass”, from *Braiding Sweetgrass*, pp. 156-66
Persephone Project documents on Quercus

**Wednesday, Oct 16: Pedagogy**
Case Study: “Beyond Books”

READINGS:
Beyond Books Documents [Available on Quercus]
Andrea Most, “Who Do We Think We Are?: The Environmental Imagination and Classroom Practice” [Pre-publication Working Draft, Article forthcoming in a special issue of on pedagogy and decolonization in *The Cambridge Journal of Post-Colonial Literary Inquiry*, on Quercus]

**Wednesday, Oct 23: Student case studies**
Reading TBD

**Wednesday, Oct 30: Student case studies**
Reading TBD

**Wednesday, Nov 13: Student case studies**
Reading TBD