

ENGL 4XX: Major Literary Figures Randall Kenan

Student Learning Outcomes

- **Actively read** literature and develop an appreciation of its particular formal, generic, cultural, and historical elements and contexts. (readings, group chat, group notes, journals, annotations)
- **Construct and defend** interpretive arguments about literature through active reading and effective use of textual evidence. (group notes, journals, annotations, final project)
- **Communicate** your thoughts and ideas clearly and effectively to others. (group chat, group notes, journals, final project)
- **Collaborate** with fellow students to explore the concepts and ideas of the fiction you read and the experiences you have while reading it. (group chat, group notes, annotations)
- **Take ownership** of your scholarly interests while simultaneously taking responsibility for all of your scholarly output (all of the above)

Course Keywords

Grief, death, mourning, place, space, the US South, community, knowledge, folklore

| Week | Readings | Assignments |
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| 1 | <p>Read Crank, <i>Understanding Randall Kenan</i></p> <p>Read Rankin, “Front Porch: The Imaginary South”</p> <p>Read “Remembering Randall” Roundtable</p> | <p>Group Chats</p> <p>Group Reading Notes</p> |
| 2 | <p>Read Weekes and Rodriques, “A Close Reading of Randall Kenan, Who Paid Rare Attention to Black Complexity”</p> <p>Read <i>A Visitation of Spirits</i></p> <p>Journal Prompt: Omari Weekes says of Randall Kenan, "his work re-maps the geographies of Southern space in order to better account for how sex, sexuality, and religion deeply intertwine there." In your journal, explore the social and/or physical geography of <i>A Visitation of Spirits</i>. Choose a scene(s) and discuss how Kenan constructs a particular interwoven landscape (physical, emotional, and/or social) in that moment.</p> | <p>Group Chat</p> <p>Group Reading Notes</p> <p>Journal</p> |
| 3 | <p>Read <i>A Visitation of Spirits</i></p> <p>Read and socially annotate:</p> | <p>Group Chats</p> <p>Group Reading Notes</p> <p>Annotations</p> <p>Journal</p> |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Costello, “Randall Kenan Beyond the Final Frontier: Science Fiction, Superheroes, and the South in <i>A Visitation of Spirits</i>” (2010) ○ McRuer, “A Visitation of Difference: Randall Kenan and Black Queer Theory” (1993) <p>Journal Prompt: Choose one of the following words: time, belief, grief, trauma, adulthood, childhood, difference, duality. In your journal, explore this word/idea in the context of the novel and reference concrete evidence from both the text and at least one of the secondary readings.</p> | |
| 4 | <p>Read <i>Let the Dead Bury Their Dead</i>, through “This Far; Or, A Body in Motion.”</p> <p>Listen to <i>Fresh Air</i> interview</p> <p>Journal Prompt: Choose a peer’s comment from the group reading notes that you'd like to think more about. In your journal, continue that conversation. You can offer support, intervention, and/or rebuttal (and you can do more than one thing at a time!). Make sure you reference concrete evidence from the text in your response.</p> | Group Chat Group Reading Notes Journal |
| 5 | <p>Read <i>Let the Dead Bury Their Dead</i></p> <p>Watch Sewanee Lectures and read lyrics,</p> <p>Read and socially annotate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Norman, “Death and Futurity in Randall Kenan's Reinvention of the Passing Narrative” (2012) ○ Cannon, “Disturbing the African American Community: Defamiliarization in Randall Kenan's <i>Let the Dead Bury Their Dead</i>” (2009) <p>Journal Prompt: Continue the thinking you began in the annotations. In your journal, choose at least one of your annotations to expand. As you respond to the essay, make sure to include concrete references to both Kenan’s work and the essay itself.</p> | Group Chats Group Reading Notes Annotations Journal |
| 6 | <p>Read <i>If I Had Two Wings</i>, through "Ezekiel Saw the Wheel"</p> <p>Read Kenan, “Come Out the Wilderness”</p> <p>Watch “Randall Kenan’s History of Crook’s Corner”</p> <p>Journal Prompt: I haven't read this collection yet. Kenan died about a week after I received it in the mail, and I kept saving it for a special occasion. Then I thought it would be interesting to read it for the first time during our class. This means that I will be taking notes and making</p> | Group Chat Group Reading Notes Journal |

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| | chat comments right along with you! So let's practice the basics. In this journal, choose a scene or a sentence(s) to close read. | |
| 7 | <p>Read <i>If I Had Two Wings</i></p> <p>Read McCauley, "Soaring and Singing in <i>If I Had Two Wings</i>"</p> <p>Read and socially annotate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Rowell and Kenan, "An Interview with Randall Kenan" <p>Journal Prompt: Pose a question and offer at least the beginnings of an answer about the last half of the collection. What do you want to think/write/share more about?</p> <p>*In your group chat, discuss synthesis project ideas.</p> | Group Chats Group Reading Notes Annotations Journal |
| 8 | <p>Read Kenan, "Letter from North Carolina: Learning from Ghosts of the Civil War"</p> <p>Read "A Gathering of Friends: Remembering Randall Kenan"</p> | Group Chat Group Reading Notes |
| Final | <p>Synthesis Project due during finals week.</p> <p>Undergraduate students: Because this is a short semester and you have a lot to read, I have decided to focus on informal writing and synthesis this summer. The final project will ask you to synthesize what you have read, heard, and learned this semester into a coherent, cohesive project. What might this look like? It could be a narrated PowerPoint or Google Slide tracing a motif in Kenan's writing, a group podcast discussing Tim's Creek, a personal essay reflecting on the experience of reading Randall Kenan; an annotated map or geographic overview of his fiction, or other pre-approved project. You must put the texts in conversation with each other.</p> <p>Graduate students: Write a conference paper (~8-9 pp) and a 250-word abstract appropriate for submission to the Global Souths conference in the spring.</p> | Synthesis project |