

NEFI REYES

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/nefireyes>

RESEARCH & TEACHING INTERESTS

My research examines how Afro-Caribbean and Afro-descendant authors present their cultural experiences and their history, and how they express their ideas about race, language, and identity in their works. I am interested in how these writers use non-standard language, changes in spelling, and different forms of expression to show the problems that exist inside societies that continue to follow colonial ideas. I examine how the history, memory, and daily life of Afro-descendant communities appear in poetry and narrative, and how these works show the difficulties that come from racial inequality and the idea of mestizaje in Latin America.

EDUCATION

Present	PhD Spanish <i>University of South Carolina</i>
2023	M.A. Iberian & Latin American Studies <i>University of Notre Dame</i>
2021	B.A. Spanish <i>Utah State University</i> Minor: International Studies Honors: Cum Laude Graduate

PUBLICATIONS & CREATIVE WORKS

Peer-Reviewed:

Reyes de la Paz, Nefi. "Discurso decolonial en *No Budu Please* de Wingston González." Unpublished manuscript, in progress, 2025.

Summary: This essay examines *No Budu Please* by Garifuna poet Wingston González and explains how the poem presents the problems that Afro-descendant communities experience in Guatemala. It analyzes how the poem uses broken syntax, changes in language, and different forms of expression to show the violence, exclusion, and racial

inequality that continue because of colonial ideas. It also describes how the poetic voice expresses sadness, distance, and memory, and how these emotions show the division between Garifuna cultural identity and the national ideas of mestizaje. In addition, the essay compares the poet's expression of separation from "Llurumei" with the vision of Yurumei as a spiritual homeland presented by E. Roy Cayetano, showing the tension between cultural continuity and interruption. Overall, the study shows how the poem expresses denunciation, cultural memory, and resistance in a context where Afro-descendant voices have often been placed aside.

Arshavskaya, Ekaterina, and **Reyes de la Paz, Nefi**. "Exploring the Transformative Impact of Language Teachers' Autoethnographies in a Teacher Education Course." *InSight: A Journal of Scholarly Teaching*, vol. 18, July 2023, pp. 26–40.

Summary: This study examines how autoethnographic writing helps language teachers understand their experiences and how these reflections later appear in their teaching practices. It analyzes the essays teachers wrote, the lessons they designed based on their reflections, and the changes that appeared in their classrooms over the semester. It also explains how the course used guided reflection and narrative writing to help teachers examine their identities, question their previous assumptions, and make decisions that were connected to their personal experiences. In addition, the paper shows how teachers described new ideas about their role in the classroom and how these ideas influenced the ways they planned activities and interacted with students. Overall, the study presents autoethnography as a learning tool that helps teachers understand themselves, make more thoughtful instructional choices, and develop stronger teaching identities.

TEACHING APPOINTMENTS

Adjunct Instructor of Spanish

Salt Lake Community College

2024-2026

Responsibilities: In this position, I taught Spanish to adult learners in online and correctional environments, and I prepared activities that helped students understand grammar, vocabulary, and culture in ways that connected to their personal and professional goals. I designed tasks using technology such as Canva and MindTap, and I created assessments that allowed students to demonstrate their progress in reading, writing, speaking, and listening. I also offered individual tutoring sessions where I helped students practice specific skills, clarify doubts, and organize their learning, and in this way, I supported learners who were beginning Spanish for the first time as well as those who had already studied the language. Because the correctional environment presented unique challenges, I also prepared materials that could be

used even when technology access was limited, and I communicated consistently with students to help them stay motivated and feel supported.

Dual Language Immersion Spanish Teacher

Box Elder Middle School

2024-2026

Responsibilities: As an immersion teacher, I taught Beginning Spanish, AP Spanish, and English for native Spanish speakers, and I prepared materials connected to proficiency goals that helped students develop confidence in all language skills. I created lessons that combined grammar practice, reading activities, and cultural topics, and I used technology to support learners who had different levels of experience with the language. I helped heritage speakers strengthen their reading and writing while also helping non-heritage speakers understand the structures of the language. I also taught a class on culture, practices, and perspectives of the Spanish-speaking world, and I created activities that helped students think about the experiences of Spanish speakers in different countries, encouraging empathy, understanding, and curiosity about the lives, histories, and traditions of these communities. I also assisted students with tasks that prepared them for high school Spanish, AP expectations, and real-world language use.

Early College Spanish Teacher

Penn High School

2023-2024

Responsibilities: In this position, I designed and taught Spanish courses for ninth-grade early-college students. I prepared activities that supported students with different learning needs and used technology to help them practice vocabulary, grammar, and conversation skills. I explained grammar in clear ways and showed students how to apply what they learned in reading and writing tasks. I supported students through regular feedback, and I helped them understand how to organize their work and prepare for assessments. Because my classes included students with different levels, I adapted instruction to make sure all students could participate and feel successful. My work in this position resulted in a “Highly Effective Teacher” designation based on student performance and classroom practices.

Instructor of Record

University of Notre Dame

2021-2023

Responsibilities: As Instructor of Record, I taught Spanish 101, 102, and 201 using a Spanish-only and proficiency-based approach. I prepared activities that helped students practice speaking, writing, reading, and listening in ways that connected to real communication. I designed lessons with authentic materials such as music, food, short texts, and media from Latin America, and I helped students understand not only the grammatical structures but also the cultural contexts of the language. I created assessments that measured student progress and explained the results in ways that helped students understand what they needed to continue practicing. I supported learners of different levels by offering extra help sessions and individualized guidance. My students consistently achieved strong results, with average course evaluations of 4.9 out of 5 and a 96% student performance average.

Spanish Teacher Assistant

Utah State University

2018-2020

Responsibilities: In this position, I guided small-group sessions where I helped students practice reading, writing, and speaking. I also offered individual tutoring sessions that allowed students to ask questions, review difficult topics, and practice with confidence. I assisted with assignments and assessments by explaining instructions, clarifying grammar, and helping students understand how to organize their work.

TEACHING ACCOMPLISHMENTS

I was selected as a model educator for a statewide instructional video showing effective teaching practices for new teachers, and through this experience I demonstrated clear instruction, consistent support, and strong classroom management. In all of my teaching positions, I received “Highly Effective Teacher” ratings in formal evaluations based on student results, engagement, and instructional practices. I achieved strong course evaluation averages between 4.5 and 4.9 out of 5, and I consistently maintained student final averages between 93% and 96%, showing that students performed well under my instruction across different age groups and learning environments.

RESEARCH & SCHOLARLY EXPERIENCE

Undergraduate Research Assistant

Utah State University

2019-2019

Responsibilities: As a research assistant, I examined video recordings using the PICCOLO observational framework and prepared notes that helped improve the consistency of parent–child interaction assessments. I participated in weekly research meetings where I discussed methods, observations, and results with the research team. Through these meetings, I learned how to identify small gestures, interpret changes in tone, and connect observations to research goals. These experiences helped me understand how to apply careful and detailed analysis to qualitative work, which later influenced my academic research in literature, culture, and identity.

ACADEMIC SERVICE

Global Engagement Ambassador

Utah State University

2018-2019

Responsibilities: In this role, I supported global engagement initiatives by preparing social media materials, helping with the university’s study abroad fair, and giving presentations in classrooms. I explained international programs to students, shared information about study abroad opportunities, and encouraged participation by answering questions and providing personal insight. Through this work, I helped increase student involvement in international education and supported the university’s efforts to connect students to global experiences.

HONORS & AWARDS

2018	Student of the Year
2018	“A” Pin Award
2018-2019	Dean’s List
2019	Student of the Semester
2020-2021	Faculty-Student Research Mentorship Scholarship

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

2021	Modern Language Association (MLA)
2025	Utah Foreign Language Association (UFLA)

CONFERENCES

“Conquering the World One Book at a Time”

USU Latinx Cultural Center

2019

Description: This presentation explained how reading and literature influenced my life from childhood to the present. I presented my early literacy in the Dominican Republic and explained how books became a path that shaped my curiosity, identity, and values. I shared how literature helped me understand different perspectives and how these experiences influenced my work in teaching and intercultural competence.

“La condesa Pardo Bazán: anhelo de libertad”

USU Student Research Symposium

2019

Description: This presentation examined the work of Emilia Pardo Bazán and explained how her stories show the problems women faced in nineteenth-century Spain. I compared *Las medias rojas* and *El encaje roto*, and I presented themes such as limited autonomy, social hierarchy, and the authority of men. I explained how Pardo Bazán uses narrative structure to show the connection between social class and women’s search for freedom.