

## Teaching Statement

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My teaching philosophy has evolved from my work as a scholar of Latin American culture and my personal experience navigating college as a first-generation student. Researching and teaching Latin American languages, literature, and cultures is deeply connected to reflections on colonialism and racism. Highlighting the importance of expanding the field's diversity and equity, my courses privilege historically underrepresented knowledge systems, such as Indigenous and Black epistemologies. This allows my students to pursue enriching comparative readings between these voices and the more canonical texts of the field, focusing on their intersections and points of dissent. In my classes, students are challenged to critique these materials and to perceive their voices as part of developing discourses about the covered topics. Having been a first-generation college student, I understand firsthand the importance of guidance and encouragement for fostering student motivation. I believe that students are more encouraged to fully engage with the class when they know that they are playing an active role in their learning process and that their voices are heard and valued. In my classroom, this translates to an open communication with students regarding their performance and expectations. Their feedback is not only used to assess their progress but also to tailor the course to reflect their interests and backgrounds.

During my doctoral studies at New York University, I have taught a variety of Spanish and Portuguese language and culture classes. In these classes, I work with my students to develop their critical reading skills by asking them to read and compare different sources on the same topic to better evaluate and understand their differing arguments. As an interdisciplinary scholar, I encourage students to engage with materials from various disciplines, schools of thought, and time periods. When working as a teaching assistant for the core course *The Portuguese Sea: Empire, Decolonization and Diaspora*, I organized small-group presentations in which the students were encouraged not only to present about the assigned texts but also to bring in other materials that could contribute to our collective discussion. This led to debates that resonated with students' experiences and backgrounds, such as the meeting focused on Gilberto

Freyre's *The Masters and The Slaves*; that presentation prompted a comparative debate of race and racism in Brazil and the United States in which the students were highly engaged.

I also further this comparative perspective by encouraging students to mobilize their own cultural and academic backgrounds when engaging with the assigned materials. By taking this approach, I hope to inspire students to think critically and explore their own interests concerning the course's topic. For the language courses, I highlight to my students how Indigenous and African languages directly shaped the Portuguese and Spanish spoken in Latin America. Further, I expose the students to these cultures by bringing up supplementary materials such as artworks, poems, and short narrative texts. I use these materials to elaborate activities that require the active participation of students in order to encourage them to become independent users of Spanish and Portuguese. For example, during my class *Portuguese for Spanish Speakers* I screened a film about the Afro-Brazilian religion of *candomblé* and established connections between the movie and the history of slavery and Black resistance in the country. After watching and debating the film in class, I asked the students to write a text about similar customs and traditions in their own cultures. This activity allows them to have a broader knowledge of the language and culture while improving their critical cultural awareness through reflection on their own cultures. The students have received these approaches positively and praised them on course evaluations and personal conversations.

I aim to make learning about Latin American culture and languages an experience that expands students' worldviews and their interest in global issues. In sum, my goal as a teacher is to have an impact on students that extends beyond the classroom by addressing topics that intersect with wider issues such as gender equality, environmentalism, racism, and cultural diversity.