

Spanish Professor Studies the Quechua Way of Life



As an undergrad studying abroad in Ecuador, Alison Krögel, associate professor of Spanish, learned quickly that if she wanted to communicate with Ecuadorians throughout the region, she needed to learn the most commonly spoken indigenous language. Not Spanish, but Quechua, a language spoken by 10-12 million people throughout the Andes of South America.

Krögel began studying Quechua both in graduate school and at the Centro Bartolomé de las Casas in Cusco, Peru. Her interest in the Quechua language and culture has led to a career focus on the Andean region.

“I’ve been a serious student of Quechua culture and language for 14 years,” said Krögel, “and I’m continually surprised and delighted to discover how the beautifully detailed nuances and grammatical flexibility of the language offer a wonderful avenue for understanding Quechua cultural values and preferences.”

Thanks to a Fulbright Fellowship, Krögel will spend the first half of 2014 in Ecuador conducting research for a new book project, *The Letter of the Law (in Translation): Access to Justice for Indigenous Litigants in the Andes since Colonial Times*. She will follow that with archival and fieldwork research in Peru in the summer and will return to teaching at DU in the fall of 2014.

Krögel’s research goal is to understand the ways in which Andean cultures, languages and worldviews interfaced with and responded to the colonial justice system. She will conduct archival research, observe courtroom and other legal proceedings involving Quechua litigants, and interview a wide range of participants in the legal community.

“The overarching goal of this project is to trace the history of indigenous experiences with the law in colonial Spanish America,” said Krögel. “I expect that data gathered from my research will help lawyers, judges, courtroom interpreters, and clerks in both Latin America and the U.S. to more effectively engage with indigenous Andean litigants and to develop strategies for bridging linguistic and cultural divides.”

Krögel has a PhD from the University of Maryland and has taught at DU since 2007. Her research includes studies of the contemporary Quechua oral tradition, artistic representations of resistance by the Quechua people in colonial and contemporary contexts, the roles played by food and cooks in Andean literature and culture, as well as the study of contemporary Quechua poetry. Her first book, *Food, Power, and Resistance in the Andes: Exploring Quechua Verbal and Visual Narratives*, was published in 2011.

“I enjoy introducing students to the wonderful complexities of Andean literature, culture, and history and challenging them to engage with texts, films, and visual art that often draw on Quechua aesthetic sensibilities or may be expressed in a Quechua-inflected dialect of Spanish,” said Krögel.

“Many of my students either grew up in Spanish-speaking households in the U.S. or have experience working with Spanish-speaking communities in Denver, and they continually impress me with their ability to discover interesting and useful parallels between the experiences, challenges, and forms of cultural resistance practiced by Spanish speakers in the U.S. and Quechua speakers in the Andes.”