The CWLC Newsletter

Spring 2014 Face-to-Face Bosnian Classes

The Center for World Languages and Cultures will be offering a 10-week course in beginning Bosnian during the Spring 2014 Quarter. The classes will take place in Sturm 201 in the evening during the week (exact times and days to be determined).

Interested students should submit a Student Contract and pay a one-time course fee of $275 by March 14th, 2014. A copy of the contract can be found on our website. You are welcome to contact the CWLC office for more information about this program.

Announcement: Faculty Workshops

The CWLC will be hosting several faculty workshops regarding the use of YouTube, Voicethread, and Flipgrid in the language classroom.

What: YouTube

When: February 18th, 1-2pm
(Study Hall)

Where: Sturm Hall, room 303

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What: Voicethread

When: January 28th, 1-2pm
February 25th, 1-2pm (Study Hall)

Where: Sturm Hall, room 303

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What: Flipgrid

When: February 4th, 1-2pm

Where: Sturm Hall, room 303

More information can be found online on the CWLC website.

Email Adrienne Gonzalez with any questions.

Spring 2014 Directed Independent Language Study (DILS) Courses

The Center for World Languages and Cultures is pleased to announce that we have added Hindi to our DILS course offerings! In addition, during the Spring 2014 Quarter, we will be offering Portuguese, Swahili, and Korean DILS courses.

Early Applications due by: February 21st, 2014

All Applications due by: March 7th, 2014

Contract & Payment due: March 17th, 2014

Self-Study begins: March 24th, 2014

Cost: $350

More information can be found online on the CWLC website.

We look forward to having you join us!
Reflections on a Semester Abroad
in Lima, Peru

By: Bailey Gearhart
CWLC Spanish Tutor and Office Assistant

When I arrived in Lima, Peru in early August of 2013, I had no idea what Peru had in store for me. Lima being the megacity it is—between 9 and 10 million people—I really did not know what to expect; however, it is safe to say that what I experienced during my five months abroad exceeded whatever expectations I could have set.

During my study abroad experience, I studied as a full-time student at the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú and volunteered with a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO), Centro para el Desarrollo con Dignidad (Building Dignity) in the municipality of Villa El Salvador. Volunteering with this NGO was the most eye-opening experience for me while in Peru, and if I am given the opportunity, I would love to go back and see how much they are progressing in the community.

Initially, living in such a large city was extremely intimidating. The sheer amount of traffic alone made me nervous to go out into the city at first. But once I became more accustomed to the city—with the help of the wonderful Peruvian cuisine, which I believe everyone should try once in their lives—I found that Lima was not as intimidating as I had first made it out to be, and that sometimes that never-ending gray sky does indeed turn blue. Including a trip to Machu Picchu, my time in Peru was, in a word, unforgettable, and I hope to one day return.

- Bailey
What Makes a Language Difficult?

By Afton Tyler

Most people think that some languages are more difficult to learn than others. The US Department of State has even classified world languages into three rankings: Category 1 (Spanish, French, and Swedish, among others), Category 2 (Russian, Hebrew, Icelandic, etc.), and Category 3 (Arabic, Japanese, Mandarin, etc.). The higher the category, the more hours of study that are required to master the language. An average of 2,200 hours are required to learn languages in the third category!

Although this and other systems of classifying languages can be useful, they are still hotly debated. Some languages involve difficult inflections, others have complicated and constantly shifting endings on nouns and verbs, and some incorporate rare and difficult sound or letter combinations. With these kinds of diverse linguistic traits, it can be a real challenge to objectively determine what is “easy” and what is “hard”.

A company called Idibon recently took a different approach to language ranking. They have chosen to look at 21 common worldwide linguistic features and have ranked languages according to which ones had the most “unusual” features. Based on their research of 239 languages, Chalcatongo Mixtec, spoken in Mexico, is considered the “weirdest”. Hungarian, Cantonese, and Hindi were considered “normal”, and English weighed in at the 33rd “weirdest”.

Overall, research generally seems to demonstrate that the more rare the language, the more heavily inflected it is, and thus the more difficult to learn. Studies also show that languages which are located on the other side of the linguistic family tree from your native language will be more difficult for you to learn.

For full article:
“The Economist Explains: What makes a language difficult?”
I spent this past fall studying in Paris, France. Although I had been to France twice before, I had never taken classes there and was really excited to live with a host family. I was fortunate to be placed with a single Parisian woman named Louise; there were also two other American girls staying in the same apartment. The apartment was spacious and well-located (two qualities that can be hard to come by in a city like Paris!) in the 15th arrondissement.

It took almost no time for me to fall in love with the city. I had great professors and classmates at the Catholic Institute of Paris; combined with my wonderful living situation, I felt truly blessed and at home. And I would be remiss if I did not mention the foods I tasted. Fresh baguettes, macaroons, chocolates, cheese…it is all incredible in Paris. I was also able to try a few dishes that Americans are not so accustomed to: cow heart, kidney, and escargot, just to name a few!

The beauty of Paris and other European cities never ceases to amaze me. I was able to visit Strasbourg, Amsterdam, Prague, Edinburgh, Venice, and Morocco during my time abroad. I loved every minute of my time there and was very sad when I had to leave. However, I recently applied and was accepted to the University of Edinburgh in Scotland, so it looks like I will be returning to Europe in the fall! I am so thankful to have studied in Paris – not only has my French improved immensely, but I have grown as a person. I am excited to be back at the CWLC and put what I’ve learned to use!

- Melanie
Meet Our Tutors!
A new section profiling DU’s talented language tutors.
In this edition, we meet Kelli Mowrey, one of our Spanish tutors.

¡Hola a todos! My name is Kelli Mowrey. I hale from Englewood, CO, which is just a few minutes southwest of the DU campus. I am currently a second-year graduate student at the Josef Korbel School of International Studies and will graduate this June with a MA in International Development with an Inter-American regional emphasis.

My passion for Spanish and Latin America began when I started studying the language in high school and has only grown over time. I completed my undergraduate degree here at DU, graduating in June 2013 with my BA in Spanish and International Studies. In addition to taking Spanish as a major, I completed the Honors Departmental Distinction in Spanish. Although my academic experiences have enriched and formalized my language skills, I owe a great deal of my ability to speaking Spanish at home with my fiancé, whose family is originally from Honduras, and to spending time abroad.

During my sophomore year of college, I left the country for the first time, traveling to Argentina. Since that trip, I have also spent extended periods of time in Honduras, which holds a special place in my heart for a few reasons: my fiancé’s family lives in a rural town in western Honduras called San Pedro de Copán and, on a trip to Los Cayos Cochinos and Roatán, my fiancé proposed.

I also spent five months living in Mérida, Mexico. As an anthropology minor, I chose to study abroad on the Yucatán Peninsula in order to learn more about the Maya and visit as many archaeological sites as possible. While there, I took physical anthropology and archaeology classes with local students at the Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán. I even had the opportunity to study under one of National Geographic’s Emerging Explorers, Guillermo de Anda, with whom I took a subaquatic archaeology course in which we learned about archaeological deposits in cenotes.

Along the way, I have also become very interested in translation and linguistic pedagogy. In addition to tutoring at the CWLC, I have privately tutored students in Spanish and have also worked as a volunteer ESL tutor for immigrants in the Denver area who are seeking citizenship. While in Mérida, I volunteered as an ESL teacher at a K-12 school, co-creating a curriculum to help the English teachers improve their language and teaching skills. Here in Denver, I have also worked on translation projects including, translating documents for large area events such as Denver’s Project Homeless Connect.

Although I do not yet know what the future holds after graduation, I know that I will continue to use my Spanish in some capacity. I enjoy sharing my passion for both Spanish and Latin America with the tutees at the CWLC!

- Kelli
Happy New Year from the DU Japanese Program!

Students in DU's Japanese program celebrated the start of 2014 by writing 初め (kakizome) - the Japanese custom of practicing calligraphy at the beginning of the New Year. Typically in Japan, one writes a word or phrase wishing for health, happiness, or a similar auspicious hope for the New Year.

DU's entire second-year and third-year Japanese program participated in the kakizome event in class on Jan 8th. After going through the basics of Japanese calligraphy with brush and ink on newspaper, students wrote out their chosen word or phrase for the new year. See all of the photos from the event here.

- Contributed by Orna Shaughnessy

2013 International Hebrew Seminar Review

On Oct 11-13, 2013, DU hosted a successful and enriching International Hebrew Seminar for the second time in three years. The seminar included a diverse group of Hebrew educators from Israel as well as nation-wide, as well as Hebrew teachers from Jewish Day schools and public schools (that offer Hebrew) in Denver, Los Angeles, and Chicago, respectively, all of whom contributed to a dynamic and lively discussion and dialogue.

The topic of the seminar was Culture in the Hebrew classroom and addressed what is now at the forefront of consciousness for many other world languages instructors, namely, how to embed and link cultural proficiency with language acquisition in a contemporary global world.

The educationally-inspiring weekend was made possible with generous contributions from the Office of Teaching and Learning, the Center for Judaic Studies, the department of Languages and Literature, the Office of Internationalization and a Marsico Visiting Scholars’ grant.

Post-seminar evaluations reflected not only eagerness for similar gatherings in the future, but also a deep appreciation for DU’s scholastic commitment and impressive offerings, including the large selection of Israeli films (thanks to several WLA grants) and the use of streamed films (courtesy of CourseMedia).

- Contributed by Sari Havis