



Dr. Carolina Moctezuma | Modern Language Studies Faculty Highlight

Learning a new language isn't an easy task. But to Dr. Carolina Moctezuma, professor of Spanish at Kutztown University, learning a language is secondary to learning the culture it originates from. "The language is obviously important," she says, "but I think learning to understand other cultures helps us as human beings become more compassionate...everything revolves around culture."

In fact, Dr. Moctezuma thinks it's also important for teachers to strive to understand the various cultures of their students in order to create an accommodating and rich classroom environment. In a way, she learns just as much as her students do when she teaches. "Our students are changing, and you cannot continue to teach the same way you were teaching five years ago. You have to try and find new methods, and that, for me, is a challenge." To her, finding new ways to present course information to the current generation of students will make them understand the information better. She often does this by incorporating pop culture into her lessons. Music, dance, film, and more can offer a deeper understanding of culture at a given point in time. This, she says, helps students just as much as reading classic literature from a culture.

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In addition to utilizing pop culture in her classes, Dr. Moctezuma likes to include food in the discussion of culture. She's currently developing a Food and Culture course to further accommodate her students' interests. "There's so much history behind the food that we eat, so why not

teach and eat at the same time?" She hopes the class will inspire others to learn more about the importance of all aspects of culture.

She had in mind the idea of adapting to student needs when helping to create the Spanish Heritage course offered here at KU. The class is designed to aid

native Spanish speakers who may not have had formal instruction in the language. She says that native Spanish speakers can sometimes forget how to speak certain words or phrases and sometimes become discouraged. The heritage class lets them know that speaking a language is a never-ending learning process, and it provides a safe space for native speakers to openly share their unique experiences with their culture.

By accommodating the needs of native and non-native Spanish speakers alike, Dr. Moctezuma helps all students gain a deeper understanding of the language. In speaking about how students often become hesitant regarding their Spanish speaking ability, she says, "One thing we have to learn is that there is no correct Spanish. There are only dialects of Spanish, so we're all going to have different ways of speaking and expressing ourselves."

Dr. Moctezuma brought her accommodating teaching style to the Allentown School District when she participated in the PA State GEAR-UP grant program in 2019. The program allows high school students in underserved districts to better prepare for college success. Dr. Moctezuma taught her Spanish Heritage course in William Allen High

School and Dieruff High School. "For me," she says, "it was just a really great experience to be able to go and help [these students] and to get them motivated to come to college."

Although the program went virtual due to COVID-19, she was able to see her efforts pay off. "A couple of the students have [come to Kutztown and] minored in Spanish and I do see them in the hallway... It's really nice for them to come by and visit me." By sharing her knowledge and expertise of how to prepare for college with these students, she gave them access to a quality education, something that she believes everyone deserves.

Dr. Moctezuma hopes to aid students even further by applying for the PA ADOPT OER (Open Education Resources) grant. This will allow her to create her own materials tailored toward the diverse Spanish heritage speakers on campus. While she is still in the early stages of the process, she hopes her proposal will be accepted.

There are many reasons some students can't access a quality education, but by focussing on culture in her classes, acknowledging the different dialects of Spanish, and working toward greater accessibility of language education, she successfully shares her passion with students.

Congratulations, December graduates!

You have met a number of challenges to reach this moment, which is why your achievement of making it through successfully is nothing short of monumental. The CLAS Dean's Office would like to acknowledge and celebrate the tremendous work done by the students graduating this semester. You are all a testament to the dedication and hard work that comes with being a KU student. Congratulations! We can't wait to see all the amazing things you accomplish in the years to come.



Sarah Stehlik | Public Relations Student Highlight

Senior public relations major Sarah Stehlik didn't mind the thought of moving from New York all the way to Pennsylvania when she visited Kutztown University for the first time. "I was just blown away by the campus," she says. "I loved the atmosphere. Everyone just seemed so personable and that drew me to Kutztown right away."

It wasn't just the ambience of KU that attracted Sarah, but also the prospect of reaching her potential as a public relations practitioner. Although she began her college career majoring in social media theory and strategy, Sarah felt that the coursework did not exactly match her goals. Her dream is to work in PR, particularly within the fashion or entertainment industry. Switching her major to PR provided her with a broader scope of the profession, allowing her to market herself better for the career she'd like to pursue.

Sarah kept social media theory and strategy as a minor and was able to apply what she learned from that coursework to her internship with Market Muscles, a marketing agency with a fitness-based clientele (gyms, martial arts schools, etc.). The position involves her managing the company's

social media presence, writing emails, and helping with PR campaigns. In managing their social media, Sarah employs a strategy to make sure posts align with one another in color, theme, and quality of content. She says, "They gave me a whole outline of the colors they wanted me to use, and I've [also] based their theme off of their previous posts and their website's look."

Similar to her role at Market Muscles, her position as Marketing Chair for the United Greek Council requires her to manage several social media accounts. However, she is able to take more creative liberties with UGC's accounts. "I kind of created my own [look] that I thought fit UGC," she says, "because I didn't want it geared more towards the frats or more towards the sororities. I wanted it to have a general united kind of feel."

In addition to managing the social media presence of Market Muscles and UGC,

Sarah is also the VP of Programming at her sorority, Delta Zeta, a service organization focused on building awareness and support for the hearing and speech impaired across the world. In her role, she oversees a team that organizes and promotes events on social media.

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Through serving as VP of Programming, Sarah found a new purpose for her public relations and marketing skills in providing service to those in need of support. She feels empowered utilizing her skills as a PR practitioner to help spread awareness of her sorority's cause. Her desire to help others through her work is now what drives all of her social media marketing efforts.

Sarah says being involved with Delta Zeta provided her with lifelong friends and a support system that remains invaluable to

her. She recommends joining a Greek Life organization to anyone looking to be a part of something bigger than themselves. She says that Kutztown offers many different organizations to be a part of, not just Greek Life. She challenges new students to "put yourself out there and meet new people," because the opportunities that arise from that are endless.

Whether she's at her internship, managing the social media accounts of UGC, or planning a new fundraiser for Delta Zeta, Sarah continues to spread her philosophy of making the world a better place. "What that means for me is that, while I know that each individual person can't make that much of an impact just by themselves, I think everyone plays a huge role in being accepting of one another, spreading kindness, and being inclusive to everyone, which can help change the world."

