

## **Dr. Melissa Stewart, WKU Professor of Spanish and Spanish Program Director**

*By Bethany Waddey*

*Written Spring 2022*

*"I hope my students can see my enthusiasm for the content."*



Dr. Melissa Stewart has traveled, studied, and taught around the world. Now, she shares her passion and her extensive knowledge with her Spanish students at Western Kentucky University.

Growing up, Dr. Stewart always knew she wanted to be a teacher. In high school, she identified Spanish as one of her strengths, and she had an incredible Spanish teacher that inspired her to continue learning the language. She pursued this passion at the college level, and she spent her junior year studying abroad in Spain. After graduating with her undergraduate degree, Dr. Stewart went on to get her Master's degree, teach English in Spain for a few years, and then get her doctorate degree. After completing her doctoral program, Dr. Stewart found her place at WKU, and she has been here ever since. Throughout her time at WKU, Dr. Stewart has been involved with the [Kentucky Institute for International Studies \(KIIS\)](#), and she is now the director of one of the KIIS programs in Spain.

At WKU, Dr. Stewart teaches numerous upper-level Spanish courses. Currently, she is teaching a translation and interpretation course. This course is unlike all other Spanish courses. Translating English to Spanish or Spanish to English can be meticulous, and it requires a high level of skill. This course also has a community service element. Each semester, Dr. Stewart finds opportunities for her students to use their new-found translation and interpretation skills to benefit the community. In the past, students have made informative brochures and pamphlets for a number of community organizations, including LifeSkills, Lost River Cave, and the Kentucky Museum. They are currently working on materials for the Barren River Health Department that discuss various health conditions, the dangers of vaping, and other important topics. One semester,

students created an informative resource discussing Multiple Sclerosis, and it was later published by the Multiple Sclerosis Society. This class is a unique experience for students, and it has a wide-reaching impact on the community.

Through her teaching, Dr. Stewart hopes that her students can see her enthusiasm and passion for the content. She tries to make learning fun and hopes that her students enjoy her classes and gain valuable knowledge. She wants her students to evaluate their own way of language learning and find what processes are most effective for them as individuals. In her classes, she also wants her students to gain larger skills that will stay with them outside of the classroom and beyond college. She hopes her students learn critical thinking skills and how to thoroughly evaluate content and situations. She also promotes an attitude of life-long learning, and she hopes that her students gain this passion as well.

Outside of teaching, Dr. Stewart has many other hobbies, interests, and passions. She loves to travel. Similarly, she enjoys experiencing new cultures and trying new foods. She also loves seeing art exhibits and films, especially while traveling. One of her other interests is attending conferences and having the opportunity to share recent projects, hear other people's perspectives, and participate in panel discussions.

Dr. Stewart is excited about all that is currently happening in the Department of Modern Languages. She describes it as a "new chapter." She is excited about Dr. Alex Poole's recent appointment as department head. She feels that he has valuable knowledge and skills that he can share with faculty and students, and she also believes he will bring great leadership. She also sees new and exciting growth in the Spanish Club. There have been numerous fun events, and attendance has been high. Additionally, she is hopeful to be able to take students on a study abroad trip to Spain this summer. Due to COVID, the trip has been cancelled for the past two years, and she hopes that this year COVID will be less of a factor and students will be able to experience this life-changing opportunity. Overall, she is excited about the future of the department.

