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Media Advisory and Photo Opportunity

Erin Wetherille
Illinois Wesleyan University

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Dec. 3, 2003

Contact: Erin Wetherille 309/556-3181

Media Advisory and Photo Opportunity

- Event:** Illinois Wesleyan University Sociology and Anthropology Department to perform: *Despacho: An Andean ritual for good luck on final exams*
- Date:** Dec. 5 (Friday)
- Time:** 9:00 a.m.
- Location:** Illinois Wesleyan University's Shaw Hall, Room 108
1308 Park St., Bloomington
- Program:** Thirty students, from a broad spectrum of majors and years, in an anthropology class at Illinois Wesleyan University will put one of the rituals they have studied into practice this week. Their hope is to bring good luck and success on upcoming finals, which begin Tuesday, Dec. 9 and last until Friday, Dec. 12.

During the cultural anthropology course this semester, the students read about the ritual conducted by Quechua-speaking Peruvian peasants in "The Hold Life Has: Coca and Cultural Identity in an Andean Community." The peasants speak Spanish and Quechua, live in the Sonqua village, and still follow some ancient traditions in addition to their Roman Catholic religion. During the despacho (which is Spanish for "offering") ceremony, the peasants construct "despachos," or coca-leaf bundles, to ask for good luck blessings.

Substituting spinach leaves for coca leaves, IWU students will roll the leaves with other foods, symbols, and materials into a cloth bundle, and then burn the bundles to dust in the prescribed fashion. Although past classes read about the culture, this is the first year students will actually perform the ritual to further understand the Andean culture.

Associate Professor of Anthropology Charles F. Springwood, a faculty member at IWU since 1996, will lead the Andean ritual on the last day of classes. Springwood decided to conduct this ritual in class to let "the students experience a different way of learning that is hands-on."

Contact: For more information, contact Springwood at cspring@iwu.edu or (309) 556-3180.