Get to know our new Finnish Language Teaching Assistant Kaija Kauppinen! Kaija is at the UW on a Fulbright scholarship for the 2019-2020 academic year, assisting with our Finnish language courses.

Tell us a little about your background:
Originally, I'm from a small town called Valkeakoski, near Tampere in southern/western Finland. I did my BA in Swedish Language at the University of Eastern Finland in Joensuu. After that, I continued my studies at the University of Turku – I'm an MA student in Finnish Language. I have also Hungarian Language and Culture as my minor.

What will you be working on while you are here?
I am a Fulbright Finnish Language and Culture Teaching Assistant during this academic year.

How does UW compare to your home institution?
At the University of Turku, there are only about 20 000 students, so UW is a bit bigger university. Bureaucratically, UW feels much more complex too. This is also the first university where I've been as a student or an intern, where Finnish Language is in the same department with Scandinavian Languages. I find it amazing.

What do you miss most about home?
First of all, I miss of course my friends and family, but at some point, I'm sure I will also miss snowy and frosty winter. I love it in January or February, when there's a lot of snow, the sun is shining, and it's at least -25 in Celsius.

What is the thing you like the most about Seattle or the US?
Whenever I feel too stressed, or blue because of any reason, there always seems to be an American nearby, who comes up to me and has a very nice conversation with me. It really makes my day. I also love the place I live in, a cute wooden house near Green Lake.
What is the most surprising thing?
How the technology doesn't work like it should when you least expect. It can be surprisingly hard, for example, to transfer a money from one American account to another. It is much easier to do it by writing a check than online. For a Finn, it feels a bit weird.

Have you traveled since you've been here? Where do you want to explore?
I've already visited Portland and Eugene in Oregon and spent a weekend in San Francisco. I also went for a hike at Mount Rainier, and I really liked it a lot. Now before Christmas, I'll travel to Washington D.C. and its surroundings for 1,5 weeks. In spring, I would like to visit Grand Canyon, and I think I'll go to New York right before I'll travel back home next summer.

What's next for you?
When I'll go back to Finland next summer, I'll finish my master's thesis and look for a job as a teacher. It's too early to know yet, where exactly I would like to work next. Based on my education, I have a license to teach on every level of education, and I would like to keep my options open for different possibilities to build my career.