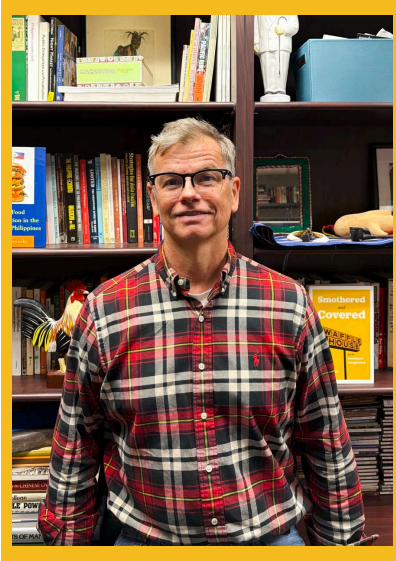


## From the Chair's Desk



Welcome to the inaugural issue of Anthroknights News! We're excited to launch this tri-annual newsletter, which aims to:

- Raise awareness about the UCF Anthropology Department's many exciting contributions to the college, university, and wider community
- Strengthen connections among faculty, staff, student, and alumni engagement
- Celebrate achievements in recent research, scholarly works, and other accomplishments of those affiliated with our unit.

Our dynamic people and interdisciplinary approach will surely make for some compelling reading in the months and years ahead. If you want to find out about cutting-edge developments in archaeology, biological anthropology, and cultural anthropology, then Anthroknights News is your go-to source.

**Go Knights! Charge On!**

**Dr. Ty Matejowsky**

## Faculty Profile: **Dr. Melina Sherman**



The UCF Anthropology department is thrilled to welcome Dr. Melina Sherman as our newest Assistant Professor specializing in medical anthropology. Sherman brings a rich interdisciplinary background, including a B.A. from Northwestern University and both her M.A. and Ph.D. from the University of Southern California's Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism.

Dr. Sherman's research applies a multidisciplinary approach to examine the relationship between contemporary health crises, chronic illness, and social suffering in the United States. Her expertise is demonstrated in her publication record, which includes her book, *How We Hurt: The Politics of Pain in the Opioid Epidemic*, published by Oxford University Press, as well as more than a dozen peer-reviewed articles.

Currently, her research focuses on how individuals with chronic conditions like Long COVID and ME/CFS form advocacy communities, using their lived experiences to create scientific knowledge and fight for visibility and access to care. We are incredibly excited about the valuable contributions she will bring to our department and the broader university community.

## FACULTY ACCOMPLISHMENTS



Professor and Department Chair **Dr. Ty Matejowsky** has published a new book, *Risqué Business: Breastaaurants in American Culture*, with the University of Alabama Press.

**Dr. Donovan Adams** was recently quoted in the Life Sciences article, "How Do Archaeologists Figure Out the Sex of a Skeleton?" by Kristina Killgrove.

## 2025 TONI WINNERS

The Outstanding Names in Instruction:

- Amanda Groff, Senior Lecturer
- Brigitte Kovacevich, Associate Professor
- Michael Callaghan, Associate Professor
- Sarah Freidline, Assistant Professor

## 2025 OSCAR WINNERS

Outstanding Scholarship, Creative Works, and Research

- Amanda Groff, Senior Lecturer
- Emily Zavodny, Assistant Professor
- Neil Duncan, Associate Professor
- Sandra Wheeler, Senior Lecturer
- Sarah Barber, Professor and Associate Chair

## 2025 TIP WINNERS

The UCF In-Unit Teaching Incentive Program rewards teaching productivity and teaching excellence.

- Michael Callaghan, Associate Professor
- John Walker, Professor

## 2025 RIA WINNERS

The UCF In-Unit Research Incentive Award program recognizes outstanding research, scholarly, or creative activity.

- Scott Branting, Associate Professor and Graduate Program Director

## Notes From the Field: Dr. J. Marla Toyne



Students and Dr. Toyne at Kuelap



Students at Tucume



Dr. Toyne & Johan Reinhard

This summer, Dr. J. Marla Toyne led an exciting season of fieldwork in Peru!

Two UCF undergraduate students - Isabelle Fowler and Cassandra Gonzalez - joined her for almost 2 months of hands-on lab activities. Their journey took them to both highland Kuelap and coastal Tucume where new excavations have uncovered numerous fascinating human burials that they helped excavate and analyze.

During her trip, Dr. Toyne also attended the 11th World Congress on Mummy Studies in Cusco. The highlight of the event was meeting the legendary Johan Reinhard, National Geographic Explorer-in-Residence, renowned for discovering the "Ice Maiden" and other high-altitude Inca mummies. Dr. Toyne had the privilege of visiting the archaeological site of Saqsaywaman with him, where they had engaging discussions about the nature of human sacrifice and the challenges of high-elevation archaeology.



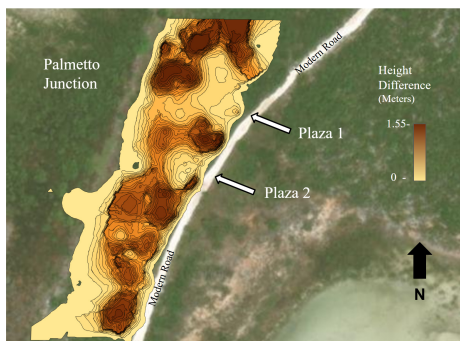
## Undergrad Research: Camden Stryjewski

Camden Stryjewski, a senior Anthropology major at UCF with a focus in archaeology, spent his summer at an archaeological field school in the Turks and Caicos Islands, led by Dr. Peter Sinelli. His work took place at Palmetto Junction, a Lucayan-Taino village dating from around 1300 to 1500 CE. "My primary goal was to learn archaeological techniques while gathering data for my Directed Independent Research" Camden shared.

Camden used cutting-edge technology in the form of a high-precision GNSS receiver to construct a vector contour map of Palmetto Junction. Unlike standard GPS, which is only accurate to about 50 feet, GNSS can pinpoint locations to within a few centimeters. Camden's map of the site is comparable to a topographic map that illustrates subtle elevation changes and creates a remarkably detailed view of the landscape. His efforts may represent the first application of this technology in archaeological research within the Turks and Caicos - and possibly the broader Bahamian archipelago.

The data Camden has gathered alongside fellow student researcher Lucas Cotogno, may soon reveal the true purpose of the North Complex, previously thought to consist of only a single "Plaza," similar to a town square.

The findings suggest that there are actually two plazas within the North Complex, indicating that the site may have accommodated a Cacique, or Lucayan Chief. This discovery is significant, as Lucayan chiefs played a crucial role in resource management and inter-island trade, suggesting that Palmetto Junction held considerable political importance.



(vector contour map of the north complex of Palmetto Junction, work in progress)



(3D model of In-situ pot)

Camden used photostitching to create 3D models of artifacts unearthed during the excavation. This involves taking multiple images of an artifact from different angles and processing them in software like Polycam, which creates a "point cloud" and then a 3D model. This method offers archaeological advantages, such as digitally preserving artifacts and serving as a teaching aid. These models can even be printed for physical interaction.

**Camden plans to present his ongoing research at the Spring 2026 Student Scholar Symposium!**

## TCAEF Spotlight: **Nilver Tovar-Ospina**



Nilver Tovar-Ospina is making history as UCF's first Colombian Ph.D. candidate in Anthropology and the pioneer in his subfield of Environmental Anthropology.

The Trevor Colbourn Anthropology Endowment Fund (TCAEF) was established through the generosity of Robert Schyberg to fund research activities by graduate students in the Department of Anthropology at UCF.

With TCAEF's support, Nilver explored the impacts of flooding and sea-level rise in Miami-Dade County. He is taking a multifaceted approach, including GIS for assessing effects on food-energy-water systems, qualitative approaches for understanding low-income

community experiences, and Participatory GIS (PGIS) to craft risk-perception maps.

Nilver's research extends beyond data and models. He argues that that flooding in Miami-Dade needs to be understood from a human perspective that goes beyond hydrological models. His efforts show how flooding disproportionately impacts overlooked marginalized communities while wealthier areas remain largely unaffected. With a commitment to social impact, Nilver is seeking publication for a book he's authored highlighting these hidden struggles and challenging the notion of neutral adaptation.

*"To study flooding in Miami-Dade is to trace how the environment is transformed, how geography becomes racialized, how adaptation is politicized, and how loss becomes normalized—even invisible—to institutions."*

Nilver emphasizes the need to recognize flooding as an ongoing issue, not a future concern, and



critiques how adaptation narratives often ignore the realities faced by vulnerable communities. His fieldwork also underscores the enduring connection between Indigenous communities and the region's waters.

*"Indigenous communities inhabited this watery landscape, living in relation to its seasonal rhythms and floods. Their knowledge systems treated water not as a threat but as a teacher, a sacred cycle, and a vital source of life. Although Indigenous communities were forcibly removed—along with their ancestral environmental knowledge—the cycle of flooding persisted. What was once lived with was redefined as a problem to be engineered, erased, or monetized."*



Nilver's work challenges dominant climate adaptation narratives and advocates for prioritizing marginalized voices in discussions about environmental risks and solutions.

The Trevor Colbourn Anthropology Endowment Fund supports scholars like him, whose work speaks truth to power and elevates overlooked experiences.

Learn more about Nilver and his research here: <https://sciences.ucf.edu/anthropology/person/nilver-tovar-ospina/>

## STUDENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

**River Coello** – PhD Candidate, Cultural Anthropology  
Recipient of the Summer 2025 Mentoring Fellowship and Trustees Doctoral Fellowship

**Joshua Perez Ramos** – MA Candidate, Cultural Anthropology  
Recipient of the Summer 2025 Mentoring Fellowship

**Konok Chapa Das** – PhD Candidate, Cultural Anthropology  
Awarded the Doctoral Research Support Award (Spring 2025)

**Peter Mercier** – PhD Candidate, Archaeology  
Awarded the Doctoral Research Support Award (Spring 2025)

**Kelly McGehee** – PhD Candidate, Biological Anthropology  
Awarded the Doctoral Research Support Award (Spring 2025)

**Trinity Johnson** – PhD Alumni  
Recipient of the Graduate Dean's Dissertation Completion Fellowship (Spring 2025)

**Katherine Lane** – PhD Alumni  
Recipient of the Graduate Dean's Dissertation Completion Fellowship (Spring 2025)

## WHAT ARE OUR ALUMNI DOING NOW

**Amanda Lima (M.A. '23):**  
Medicolegal Death Investigator, Orange County Government

**Alexander Nalewaik (M.A. '23):**  
State Archaeologist, USDA NRCS Georgia

**Chelsea Rose (M.A. '24):**  
NAGPRA Bioarchaeologist, Sam Noble Oklahoma Museum of Natural History

**Jenn Barritt (M.A. '24):**  
DNA Technician, SNA International

**Alexandria Brock (Ph.D. '23):**  
Visiting Assistant Professor, Oxford College of Emory University

**George Micheletti (Ph.D. '24):**  
Postdoctoral Researcher, UCF

**Morgan Ferrell (Ph.D. '24):**  
Postdoctoral Scholar, University of Kentucky

## DEGREES AWARDED 2024-2025

Level	Total
Bachelor	108
Master's	9
Doctoral	5



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- UCF Department of Anthropology
- UCF Department of Anthropology
- @ucfanthropology

## INTERESTED IN SUPPORTING OUR DEPARTMENT?

<https://foundation.ucf.edu/givetocos?id=9c22f066-0f81-4cfc-a5b2-09d55817c61b>  
<https://sciences.ucf.edu/anthropology/give/>