

FROM THE CHAIR'S DESK



The second issue of **Anthroknight News** celebrates recent accomplishments in research, service, and teaching across the department. From faculty achievements to student successes, this issue showcases the vibrant work advancing anthropology's mission to better understand human diversity across time, culture, and place. Alumni, current students, and friends of UCF Anthropology can turn to **Anthroknight News** to stay connected to what's happening in the department.

Go Knights! Charge On!

Dr. Ty Matejowsky

FACULTY PROFILE: DR. MONICA RODRIGUEZ



Dr. Monica E. Rodriguez joined UCF's Department of Anthropology in 2023 as a Lecturer in cultural and applied medical anthropology. Her research focuses on the lived experiences of D/deaf and hard of hearing communities, particularly in Guatemala, with broader interests in disability studies, language ideologies, and Latine communities in the United States and beyond. She earned her Ph.D. in Medical Anthropology from Wayne State University and her M.A. from California State University, Los Angeles. Prior to UCF, she taught at Rollins College and Ferris State University, where she built a strong record of teaching and community engagement.

At UCF, Dr. Rodriguez teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in cultural and medical anthropology and developed Anthropology of Disability, a course that centers diverse experiences and perspectives on disability. She also collaborated with colleagues across campus to help create the interdisciplinary Disability in Culture Certificate, which brings together courses from multiple fields and encourages students to understand disability as a cultural, social, linguistic, and political experience.

This year, the **University of Central Florida's Department of Anthropology** proudly celebrates its **20th anniversary**. Since becoming an independent department in 2006, our faculty, staff, and students have built a vibrant program dedicated to advancing the understanding of human diversity across time, culture, and geography.

As we mark two decades of research, teaching, and fieldwork around the world, this October's milestone celebration will honor our history, spotlight the achievements of our faculty and students, and recognize the lasting impact of anthropology at UCF. Alumni, students, faculty, and friends of the program will come together to celebrate where we've been—and to look ahead to what's next. More details about the anniversary events will be shared soon.



YEARS OF ANTHROPOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA



ACHIEVEMENTS ACROSS THE DEPARTMENT

FACULTY

- **Dr. John Walker's** project, "Linking Amazonian Earthworks and Ecosystems: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Domesticated Landscapes," has been selected for funding through the 2025–2026 College of Sciences Research Seed Funding Program.
- **Dr. Sarah Freidline** contributed to recent publications in *Nature Communications* (2025) and *Nature* (2026), advancing research on human evolution. She was also recognized with both the TIP Award and the OSCAR Award.
- **Dr. Sarah "Stacy" Barber** is a co-author of the article "The Distribution of Power and Inclusiveness Across Deep Time," recently published in *Science Advances*.
- **Dr. Shana Harris** co-authored a recent publication in *Drug and Alcohol Dependence Reports*.

STUDENTS

- **Griffon Binkowski**, M.A. Student, was named a recipient of the Order of Pegasus (Class of 2026).
- **Kenneth Tremblay**, Ph.D. Student, received the National Science Foundation's Biological Anthropology Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Grant. He was also selected as a recipient of the UCF Delores Auzenne Fellowship.
- **Nilver Tovar Ospina**, Ph.D. Student, received the Laura Bassi Scholarship for his book project, *Architectures of Flooding: Unequal Ground in a Drowning County*. He also received the Southern Anthropological Society (SAS) Conference Award, was selected as a fully funded participant in the São Paulo School of Advanced Science (SPSAS), and most recently received a Judges' Choice Award at the Student Scholar Symposium.
- **Tannistha Chakraborty**, Ph.D. Student, co-authored a publication in the *American Journal of Biological Anthropology* (2025).
- **Whitney Margaritis**, Ph.D. Student, serves as the 2026 Student Representative for the National Association for the Practice of Anthropology (NAPA).

GRADUATE STUDENT PROFILE: KELLY MCGEHEE

Doctoral student **Kelly McGehee's** work reflects the depth of training and experience found among UCF Anthropology's graduate students. Specializing in forensic anthropology, Kelly brings extensive hands on experience to her research. She earned her B.A. in Psychology from Stetson University and spent five years as a forensic technician with the Volusia County Medical Examiner's Office, where she assisted with autopsies, specimen collection, and data analysis. Her early research training also included work on human decomposition at the University of South Florida's Facility for Outdoor Research and Training.

Since joining UCF's Department of Anthropology in 2020, Kelly has continued to build a strong academic and professional profile. Now a Ph.D. student under the co advisement of **Dr. John Schultz** and **Dr. Sarah Freidline**, she has interned with the Department of Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, contributing to efforts to recover American service members from past conflicts. Alongside her research, Kelly serves as an Instructor of Record at UCF and as an Adjunct Professor at Stetson University. Her dissertation examines how sharp force trauma from tools such as axes and machetes can be identified and how heat and time since death affect those signatures, with important applications for forensic investigations.



Kelly McGehee's research uses pig limb analogs to investigate how sharp force trauma from chopping tools can be identified and how heat, environment, and postmortem interval influence those signatures.

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: ANTHONY TRICARICO

UCF Anthropology alumnus Anthony Tricarico, Ph.D., RPA, exemplifies the wide range of career pathways open to anthropology graduates. Since completing his M.A. at UCF in 2015, he has built an accomplished career in Cultural Resource Management (CRM).



Anthony Tricarico and his dog at a pumpkin patch—a moment beyond the field.

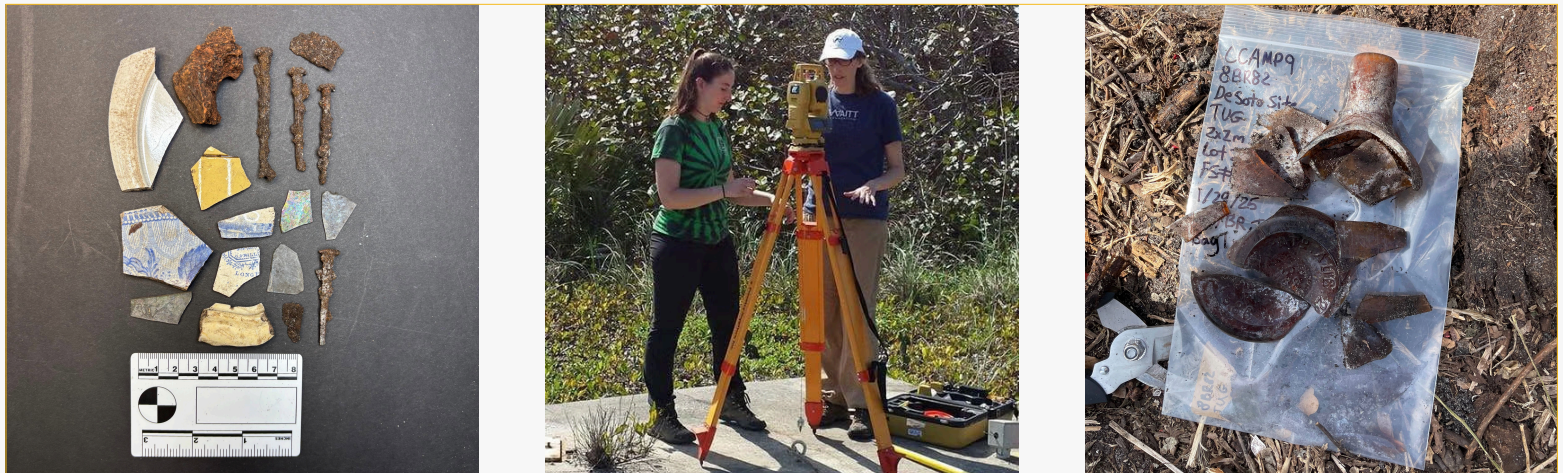
Anthony Tricarico's academic journey began at Rutgers University, where he earned a B.S. in Evolutionary Anthropology. He then pursued graduate studies at UCF and the University of South Florida, culminating in a Ph.D. in Applied Anthropology. His master's thesis, guided by **Dr. Sarah "Stacy" Barber**, reanalyzed Monte Albán's archaeological data, shedding light on landscape use in the Classic Period. His doctoral work explored 2,000 years of land use in Antigua, connecting historical practices to modern environmental challenges. Post-graduation, Anthony excelled in CRM, rising from field archaeologist to Senior Project Manager, leading numerous cultural resource initiatives. Now at Ardurra, Anthony aids operational and business development across the Southeast and beyond, with experiences spanning Europe, the Caribbean, and over twenty U.S. states. Reflecting on his UCF days, he notes, "My time there taught me to apply my archaeological knowledge across regions and eras, guiding my work today." He cherishes his role as a teaching assistant and

encourages students to explore diverse career paths in anthropology and archaeology, inviting alumni and students to connect on LinkedIn for insights into CRM careers.



Snapshots from Anthony Tricarico's past project locations, showcasing the varied landscapes and contexts of his work in Cultural Resource Management.

DIGGING INTO THE PAST: STUDENTS UNEARTH HISTORY AT CAPE CANAVERAL



From left to right: shark remains and other recovered artifacts, students engaged in excavation and mapping at Cape Canaveral, and lab analysis—demonstrating the full research process within CCAMP.

Since 2016, UCF Anthropology has helped shape the university's SpaceU identity through the Cape Canaveral Archaeological Mitigation Project (CCAMP), a long standing partnership between UCF and the U.S. Space Force. Over the past decade, CCAMP has provided immersive field and laboratory experience to nearly 140 undergraduate and graduate students, offering professional level training while working at active sites on Cape Canaveral Space Force Station—where deep human histories intersect with the nation's space future.

Now underway, CCAMP 10 continues this tradition of applied learning under the direction of Professors **Sarah "Stacy" Barber, Neil Duncan, and Emily Zavodny**. Students rotate between archaeological fieldwork on base and collaborative research in UCF's on campus labs, building skills in excavation, artifact analysis, and interdisciplinary teamwork. This season's work is yielding important discoveries related to Indigenous American use of coastal and marine resources in the Indian River Lagoon and the Atlantic Ocean. Among the most notable finds are numerous shark teeth and a rare, complete shark spinal column, providing new insights into past fishing practices and human relationships with coastal ecosystems.

As students excavate less than 5 miles from one of SpaceX's busiest launch pads, CCAMP 10 vividly illustrates what SpaceU looks like in practice—bringing together hands on training, federal partnerships, and cutting edge research in an extraordinary setting. Projects like CCAMP exemplify UCF Anthropology's commitment to preparing students for professional careers while contributing meaningful scholarship at nationally significant space age landscapes.

BIOARCHAEOLOGY IN ACTION: EXCAVATION, RECOVERY, AND GLOBAL IMPACT



Barge-based excavation during a submerged recovery mission.

floating barge, a 21 ton excavator carefully removes sediments and debris while maneuvering the platform across the site. Materials are staged into large containers for processing using a custom built water screening system constructed on site with locally available materials and operated by a team of more than twenty workers.

Dylan played a central role in developing field methodology for the project, coordinating logistics, managing personnel, and overseeing evidence handling within the Italian medicolegal system. As a bioarchaeologist, he conducted field identifications and minimum number of individuals (MNI) determinations for any human remains encountered. To lead local crews and work effectively with regional authorities, Dylan also developed working proficiency in Italian.



Sediment screening during recovery operations.

Earlier in his career, Dylan gained experience excavating Native American burial sites in South Florida in collaboration with tribal representatives and stakeholders. This work required careful attention to commingled remains and included training with zooarchaeologists and comparative faunal collections—skills that continue to shape his work today.

While many details of the DPAA mission remain confidential, the project has been successful and represents excavation methods never before attempted by the organization. Dylan's work highlights how UCF Anthropology prepares graduate students to take on technically demanding, real world projects—at home and abroad.



Water screening of excavated sediments during recovery operations.



Mark your calendars for
Science On Tap!
- May 2, 2026,
- Brewlando Brewing.

**IF YOU'D LIKE TO
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