

Matthew K. Ownby

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Department of Geography and Sustainability | University of Tennessee, Knoxville

EDUCATION

- **M.S., Geography & Sustainability**, The University of Tennessee, Knoxville (*Expected 2028*).
 - **B.A., Geography & Sustainability**, The University of Tennessee, Knoxville (*2026*)
 - **A.S.T., Elementary Education K-5**, Roane State Community College (*2023*)
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RESEARCH INTERESTS

- Cultural Geography of Latin America and the Caribbean
 - Marronage and Maroon Communities
 - The Geographies of Resistance
 - Space, Place, and Power
 - Afro-Indigenous Relations
 - Regional Geography
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TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Graduate Teaching Assistant | Department of Geography & Sustainability, University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Fall 2026–Present

- Responsible for course grading and serving as the direct point of contact for undergraduate students in *World Geography* and *Geography of Europe/European War and Society*.

Extended Childcare Program | Woodland Elementary School

July 2021- February 2022

- Led and mentored a class of 28 third and fourth-grade students, supporting academic growth through individualized assignment assistance while fostering an inclusive classroom environment.

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Undergraduate Research Assistant – *Slavery & Abolition in Puerto Rico*, UTK, Spring 2025.
Mentored by Dr. Gaitors, Department of History.

- Analyzed colonial newspapers to reveal how Spanish editors depicted slaves who resisted bondage on the island of Puerto Rico.
- Research identified plantation networks, enslavers, and geographic patterns of bondage and cultivation throughout colonial Puerto Rico.

Presentations

- "The Realities of Bondage: Spanish Media Depictions of the Enslaved in 19th century Puerto Rico." - 29th annual EURēCA Exhibition, 2025.

SELECTED COURSEWORK PROJECTS

Climate Change and Guna Communities in Panama

Research Project/Paper

- Examined the impacts of climate change and sea-level rise on Guna communities across island settlements in the Comarca of Guna Yala.
- Studied patterns of community relocation, tracking resident movement from island settlements to mainland resettlement sites.
- Conducted in-depth ethnographic research on material and non-material culture, analyzing how relocation threatens the preservation of Guna cultural practices and identity.

The Landscapes of Quilombo Resistance

Research Paper

- Examined maroon survival, modes of resistance, and the cultural landscape of quilombo communities.
- Focused on the geography of defense, settlement, mobility, and survival.

- Investigated how physical landscapes and spatial organization contributed to the endurance of maroon communities.

Chained in Darkness: Disease, Punishment, and Survival during the Middle Passage

Research Paper

- Uncovered the harsh living conditions aboard Portuguese slave vessels, including rampant disease, psychological trauma, and severe punishment during the Middle Passage.
- Focused analysis specifically on Portuguese trade routes and vessel conditions, distinguishing them from broader transatlantic patterns.

ACADEMIC HONORS & AWARDS

Normandy Scholars Program, World Languages and Cultures Department, University of Tennessee, (2025)

- Examined collective memory of World War II across Germany, Czechia, and Poland through coursework and fieldwork.

Leroy Graf Early Major Award Nominee (2024)

Department of History, The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

ACADEMIC PRESENTATIONS & PROJECTS

[I will add my SEDAAG/AAG conference presentations and projects]

RELEVANT COURSEWORK

Geography

- GEOG 599: Geographic Thought
- GEOG 442: Urban Spaces and Urban Society
- GEOG 373: Cultural Geography of Latin America and the Caribbean
- GEOG 320: Cultural Geography: Core Concepts
- GEOG 344: Population Geography
- GEOG 415: Quantitative Methods in Geography
- GEOG 311: Geovisualization and Geographic Information Science

- GEOG 363: Southern Spaces and Places
- GEOG 349: Geography of Human Rights: Europe and Asia
- GEOG 451: The Global Economy
- GEOG 499: Practicing Geography and Sustainability

History

- HILA 344: History of Brazil
- HILA 383: Afro-Latin American History
- HIST 299: Thinking Historically – African American Business History

RESEARCH METHODS & SKILLS

- Cultural landscape analysis
- Historical and ethnographic literature review
- Historical archival research/analysis
- Geographic and spatial analysis

LANGUAGES

English — Native/Fluent

French — Elementary comprehension

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

- Member of the United Campus Workers (UCW)

REFERENCES

Dr. Solange Muñoz

Associate Professor

Department of Geography and Sustainability, University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Email: imunoz@utk.edu

Dr. Tracey Norrell

Teaching Full Professor

Department of Geography and Sustainability, University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Email: thayes7@vols.utk.edu

Professor Jacob Watkins

Senior Lecturer

Department of Geography and Sustainability, University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Email: jwatki22@vols.utk.edu

Dr. Beau Gaitors

Assistant Professor

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