



# Lauren Watson

## Spring 2021 Graduation

### Double Major: Italian and Ecology and Biodiversity

I am an Italian-American student who was raised with Italian culture, but never learned the language. I had visited my long lost cousins in Italy in 2017, and despite them not speaking English and me not speaking Italian, we managed a two hour conversation. A few days later, my pass time came up, and from my hotel room in Rome, I added ITA1 to my next quarter's schedule. As both a scientist and an Italophile, I cannot imagine my undergraduate education excluding either of these fields. I knew that I wanted to be a veterinarian, but being constantly deluged with STEM and isolated from my other academic interests led me to explore double-majors. I fell in love with the community, the faculty and fellow students, and the material, and I felt compelled to pursue a second Bachelors degree in Italian. Be unafraid to explore. You can always change your major if you don't like it (and then change it again!) You can pursue another language or skill at any age. You will never regret going abroad, but you will almost definitely regret not going. You don't have to pursue anything just because you've been pursuing it for a long time, nor do you have to want something just because you used to want it. Your family's degree or career of choice does not have to be your degree or career of choice. Find the things that give you inexplicable joy and make them your career, your hobbies, and what you spend your money on. And finally, "having it all figured out" is an illusion. My Italian courses not only helped raise my GPA, but provided me a respite from STEM coursework, which I found to be more challenging and less enjoyable. Pursuing a language has innumerable benefits: communication skills, practical application during travel, connection with family/friends, a sense of culture and community, and, for me, psychological benefits. I enjoyed what I was learning and was impassioned to pursue a graduate degree, which I never thought would happen. Pursuing and Italian degree was truly the greatest decision I've ever made.