

**Rita M. Bouwens** (she/her)  
 PhD Student and Graduate Teaching Assistant  
 University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign  
 Department of Anthropology  
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## **Education**

Ph.D. (2027 expected) Anthropology, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign  
 Advisor: Dr. Jane C. Desmond

M.A. (2021) Applied Anthropology, Mississippi State University, Starkville, MS. Thesis title:  
 “A Zoological Spectacular: Conservation in an American Zoo.”  
 Co-advisors: Dr. Kate McClellan and Dr. David M. Hoffman

B.A. (2016) *Summa Cum Laude*, Anthropology, Modern Languages and Literatures (Spanish and French), Beloit College, Beloit WI.

## **Research Interests**

Environmental anthropology, multispecies ethnography, human-animal relationships, political ecology, wildlife conservation, companion animals

## **Grants, Scholarships, and Awards**

### **External Grants, Scholarships, and Awards:**

2019	(Alternate) Fulbright U.S. Student Program, Institute of International Education, Open Study/Research Award, Costa Rica
2014-2016	Wisconsin Foundation for Independent Colleges Rath Scholarship. \$12,000/year
2014-2016	M. Alice Smith Scholarship. \$4,000/year
2015	Ronald E. McNair Scholar Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program award, U.S. Department of Education. \$2,800/summer
2014	Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship, U.S. Department of State. \$4,000

### **Internal Scholarships and Grants:**

2018-2019	Mississippi State University Office of the Graduate School Incoming Student Fellowship. \$2,500
2012-2016	Eaton Merit Scholarship. Beloit College. \$10,000/year
2015	Mouat and Whiteford Endowed Research Fund. Beloit College Department of Anthropology. \$1,600

2013 Lockwood Field School Scholarship. Beloit College Department of Anthropology. \$500

### **Research Experience**

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- Jan 2020-Aug 2021 Master's student, thesis research. Designed, conducted, and analyzed IRB-approved ethnographic research on conservation in an American zoo.
- Aug-Dec 2019 Master's student, graduate ethnographic methods course. Helped design and conduct IRB-approved ethnographic research in Starkville, MS on tailgating, wrote an NSF-style mock proposal about live animal mascots.
- Jan-May 2016 Student, undergraduate ethnographic methods course. Designed and conducted IRB-approved ethnographic research in Beloit, WI on barriers to pet adoption.
- Jan-May 2015 Student, Associated Colleges of the Midwest. San Pedro de Montes de Oca, Costa Rica. Designed and conducted IRB-approved ethnographic research in San Rafael de Heredia, Costa Rica. Studied human-animal relationships, specifically regarding people's perceptions of and interactions with livestock and companion animals and how those categories are defined and constructed.
- Mar-July 2014 Student, Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program. Beloit, WI. Designed and executed IRB-approved exploratory ethnographic research project about food choice and political economy in Beloit, WI. Interviewed and conducted participant observation in Beloit area restaurants.
- June 2013 Ethnographic field school participant, Beloit College Department of Anthropology, directed by Dr. Lisa Anderson-Levy and Dr. Nancy Krusko. Kingston, Jamaica. Researched coming-of-age narratives from Jamaican women in a 3-week-long ethnographic field school. Conducted IRB-approved participant observation and interviews at internship site. Interned for the Jamaica Cultural Development Center.

### **Publications**

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- 2021 "Anthropology from the Bedroom: Navigating Ethnographic Methods in the Time of COVID-19." Consortium of Practicing and Applied Anthropologists.  
<https://www.copaainfo.org/post/anthropology-from-the-bedroom-navigating-ethnographic-methods-in-the-time-of-covid-19>

### **Conference and Symposium Presentations**

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- May 2021 "A Zoological Spectacular: Conservation in an American Zoo." Virtual presentation. Witnessing and Worlding Beyond the Human: An Interdisciplinary and Interspecies Conversation (May 28-29, 2021) by Center for Advanced Study at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

- March 2021 “A Zoological Spectacular: Conservation in an American Zoo.” Virtual poster presentation. Mississippi State University Graduate Student Research Symposium.
- March 2021 “A Zoological Spectacular: Conservation in an American Zoo.” Virtual poster presentation. 81<sup>st</sup> Annual Meeting of the Society for Applied Anthropology (March 23-27, 2021). Remote.
- Nov. 2015 “From Papaya-Eating Dachshunds to Animals that Taste Good: Perceptions of and Interactions with Animals in San Rafael de Heredia, Costa Rica.” 14<sup>th</sup> Annual International Symposium (November 18<sup>th</sup>, 2015). Beloit, WI.
- Aug. 2014 “Who Eats What and Why?: A Political Economy Study of Food Choice in Beloit, WI.” 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual McNair Scholars Symposium. University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, CA.
- Nov. 2013 “Behave Yourself!: An Ethnographic Study of the Self through Coming-of-Age Narratives from Kingston, Jamaica.” 12<sup>th</sup> Annual International Symposium (November 20<sup>th</sup>, 2013). Beloit, WI.

### **Relevant Coursework**

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Introduction to Cultural Anthropology	Social and Cultural Theory
Field School Preparation	Field Research in Cultural Anthropology
McNair Research Preparatory Seminar	Research Design in Anthropology
Anthropology of the Consumer Society	Reflexivity
ACM Costa Rica field research program	Ethnographic Methods (undergrad and grad)
Environment & Society (grad)	Applied Cultural Anthropology (grad seminar)
Adv. Cultural Geography (grad seminar)	Current Cultural Theory (grad seminar)
Environmental Anthropology (grad sem.)	Quantitative Methods in Anthropology (grad seminar)

### **Teaching, Internships, and Work Experience**

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#### **Graduate Teaching Assistant**

- 2021-present University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign  
 ANTH 103: Anthropology in a Changing World  
 ANTH 230: Introduction to Sociocultural Anthropology
- 2020-2021 Mississippi State University  
 CO 2413: Introduction to News Writing and Reporting
- 2018-2020 Mississippi State University  
 AN 1143: Introduction to Cultural Anthropology

#### **Adoptions Staff**

- 2022-present Champaign County Humane Society  
 Urbana, IL

Facilitated the adoption application process for companion animals. Duties include animal care, facility maintenance, application processing and data entry, assisting patrons and the public, patron communications.

### **Seasonal Guest Experience Facilitator and Zoo Guide**

2019-2021            John Ball Zoo  
Grand Rapids, MI  
Facilitated admissions and guest experiences (camel rides, budgerigar aviary, funicular tram), interpreted animal exhibits as an educator in the education dept.

### **Instructor of Record**

2016-2018            Henan University  
Kaifeng, Henan, China  
Undergraduate English Writing and Oral English

### **Museum Attendant**

2015-2016            Logan Museum of Anthropology. Beloit, WI.

### **Tutor**

2013-2016            Beloit Memorial High School Upward Bound. Beloit, WI.

### **Intern**

June-July 2015       Collections, Black Point Estate Museum. Lake Geneva, WI.

### **Undergraduate Teaching Assistant**

Aug-Dec 2014        Beloit College  
FREN 110: Intermediate French  
ANTH 206: Social and Cultural Theory

### **Office Assistant**

2013                    Office assistant for the Beloit College Department of Anthropology.  
Beloit, WI.

### **Languages**

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Spanish (proficient in speaking, reading, and writing)  
French (semi-proficient in speaking, reading, and writing)

### **Technological Skills**

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MAXQDA qualitative data analysis software  
QDA Miner Lite qualitative data analysis software  
Shelterluv

### **Memberships and Affiliations**

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2021                    Society for Applied Anthropology  
2015-present        Mortar Board National College Senior Honor Society

2014-present	Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program
2013-present	Ronald E. McNair Scholar Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program
2013-2014	American Anthropological Association