




---

## UFC application

---

**From** Joelle Renstrom [REDACTED]  
**Date** Wed 10/9/2024 8:52 AM  
**To** Vanessa Boukili <vboukili@somervillema.gov>

 1 attachment (36 KB)  
Joelle Renstrom CV Oct 2024.docx;

**This email is from an external source. Use caution responding to it, opening attachments or clicking links.**

---

Hi Vanessa and the rest of the UFC.

I'd love to be a member of Somerville's UFC. I became interested in urban forestry about five years ago, when a colleague and I proposed and then created a class at Boston University called "Environmental Equality and Urban Tree Canopies." We're currently teaching the course for the fourth year, and we have learned so much and made so many amazing connections throughout the greater Boston community. This class, in which students form teams and complete a project under the guidance of a community partner, has resulted in collaborations with: Bio4Climate, Tree Eastie, Mass Audubon, City of Boston Urban Forestry, Speak for the Trees, Green Cambridge, Boston Nature Center, and City of Boston Urban Wilds. These collaborations and projects have given us and the students a hands-on education regarding urban forest plans, tree canopy discrepancies and approaches to mitigate them, redlining and greenlining, community outreach, bureaucracy, and so much more. This semester, we're planting 75 trees with Tree Eastie (including related training), assessing the health of trees planted in the fall (including related training), developing an outreach and awareness campaign for vulnerable residents in East Boston, and we're designing and promoting the planting of a Miyawaki forest on BU's campus in April. I'm a steward of Somerville's Miyawaki forest and have participated in the planting of that one and the two in Cambridge, and a few of us have been working on this campus forest for years now. Seeing the effects our work has on the community and on students has been beyond inspiring--so much so that I plan on getting a graduate certification at BU in Applied Sustainability so I can do more of this work.

Just last week I completed all of the volunteer hours required to obtain my certification as a master urban gardener. I completed all of the coursework last spring through the Trustees of the Reservations. Taking this class has been the highlight of my year. Not only was it delightful to be a student instead of a teacher, but I learned so much through the class and through the other people taking it, almost all of whom work for environmental/sustainability organizations. Among other things, I became familiar with Boston's Community Gardens, which I'd seen many times without understanding their history. While not a forest, the concept of communal gardening, especially in areas where food agency is crucial, does connect to urban forest in terms of understanding and valuing green spaces and access to them.

I am passionate about trees and green spaces, and as a resident of Somerville--and someone whose home flooded a couple years ago in part because of the excess of pavement in the area--I understand

how important it is to make these spaces available to everyone, particularly those in less green areas. I would love to do more to promote environmental justice and community, and this seems like a perfect way to do that.

My CV is attached. Please don't hesitate to get in touch if you have any questions.

All the best,

Joelle

Vita  
**JOELLE RENSTROM**

Somerville MA 02145

## EDUCATION

- Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing      University of British Columbia, Vancouver BC      (2004—2006)
- Bachelor of Arts      University of Michigan, Ann Arbor MI      (1996—2000)

## TEACHING

- Senior Lecturer of Rhetoric      Boston University, College of General Studies      (2013—present)
- Teaches rhetoric, research, and expository, exploratory, and analytical writing
  - Teaches experiential, interdisciplinary courses based in Boston and London, UK
- Process of Discovery: "Quantum Science Fiction" Boston University, Kilichand Honors College      (2024)
- Co-created and co-teaches a junior seminar about Quantum Science Fiction
- "Environmental Equality and Urban Tree Canopies" Boston University      (2021—present)
- Co-created and co-teaches an interdisciplinary class for juniors and seniors
  - Collaborates with community organizations to design and deliver course projects
  - Designing and planning the installation of a Miyawaki forest (microforest) on campus
- Menino Scholarship Orientation Instructor      Boston University      (2017, 2018)
- Writing Instructor      Boston University, CAS Writing Program      (2008—2017)
- Taught expository, analytical, and research writing focused on sci-fi, robots, and AI

## WRITING & EDITING

- Guest Editor      "American Science Fiction" (special issue of *Literature*)      (2022—present)
- Wrote and advertised RPFs and identified and contacted potential authors
  - Assessing manuscripts and reviewers' comments, making inclusion decisions, and editing
- Contributing nonfiction editor      *Panorama* travel journal      (2019—present)
- Reviews and edits essays for publication
- Contributing Editor      *How Democracy Survives*      (2021—2022)
- Edited chapters for a textbook from Routledge
- Contributing Writer      *Astrobiology*      (2017—2021)
- Wrote articles about scientific studies with implications for extraterrestrial life
- Robot Columnist      *Daily Beast*      (2016—2020)
- Wrote about robots and artificial intelligence

## URBAN FORESTRY, GARDENING, & PLANTS

- Master Urban Gardening certification      Trustees of the Reservations, MA      (2024)
- Completed coursework and volunteer hours
- Steward of Somerville Miyawaki Forest      Somerville, MA      (2023—present)

- Performs biweekly maintenance

Somerville Public Library West Branch Plant Coordinator (2024—present)

- Performs maintenance on plants
- Manages volunteer maintenance schedule
- Coordinates with library staff for programming and workshops

Maison Green plant installation and maintenance (2022—present)

- Installs plants in homes, schools, and businesses and performs plant maintenance and consultations
- Writes the weekly “Orchid Corner” blog and the monthly newsletter
- Attends markets and events

Plant consultation clinic (sponsored by the Somerville Arts Council) (Dec 2021)

- Hosted a four-hour online clinic on Zoom where people could ask questions about plants

## PUBLICATIONS

- “AI Teaching Assistants Are No Match for Human Beings” *Cognoscenti* (Aug 2024)
- “Cemetery Conversations With My Dead Dad” *Panorama* (Aug 2024)
- “Why a Private Mission to the Moon Could Still Be a Win for America” *Cognoscenti* (Feb 2024)
- “You Think AI Could Write ‘Shake It Off’? As If.” *Cognoscenti* (Jan 2024)
- “College Students Don’t Need a Concierge” *CNN* (Oct 2023)
- “Racing Toward the Dark Side of the Moon” *Slate* (Aug 2023)
- “What Jupiter’s Icy Moons Might Teach Us About Our Universe” *Cognoscenti* (April 2023)
- “How the U.S. Government Made Pilots Too Embarrassed to Admit to Having Seen UFOs” *Slate* (Feb 2023)
- “Tiny Urban Woodlands, Big Biodiversity” *Boston Globe* (Dec 2022)
- “Artemis Finally Launched. But We’ll Need Humility to Return to the Moon.” *Cognoscenti* / WBUR (Nov 2022)
- “All of This Has Happened Before, and All of This Will Happen Again: Doomsday Book and Recurring Pandemics,” Chapter one of *Connie Willis’ Science Fiction: Doomsday Every Day*, Routledge (Oct 2022)
- “Why Sending a Native American into Space is a Big Deal” *Cognoscenti* / WBUR (Oct 2022)
- “What the James Webb Space Telescope Might Tell Us About Ourselves” *Cognoscenti* / WBUR (July 2022)
- Interviews with three scientists about quantum computing, security, and climate change *Popular Science* (2022)
- “The Future of AI Is Up to Humans” *Popular Science* (Summer 2022)
- “How the scientific enterprise fuels a culture of misinformation” *Open Mind* (June 2022)
- “As a Teacher, Where Does Work End and I Begin?” *Catapult* (May 2022)
- “Farewell My Blackberry. I’ll Miss You” *Boston Globe* (May 2022)
- “Looking for Alien Life? Seek Out Alien Tech” *Wired* (Nov 2021)
- “What Would It Mean to Live in the Clouds?” *Catapult* (Oct 2021)
- “What Orchids Taught Me—On Their Own Time” *Boston Globe* (Oct 2021)
- “Our Need for True Connection is Giving Rise to Phone-Free Spaces” *Aeon* (July 2021)
- “The Troubling Rhetoric of Space Exploration” *Undark* (March 2021)
- “The Perseverance Mission Isn’t Just About Science—It’s About Ethics” *Boston Globe* (Feb 2021)
- “How Does Anyone Stay Healthy in a World Full of Germs?” *Nautilus* (Dec 2020)
- “Why Older Adults Really Eschew Technology” *Slate* (July 2020)
- “Working from Home is a Lifesaver—and a Big Danger” *CNN* (March 2020)
- “Is Aging a Disease?” *Slate* (March 2020)
- “When Will Sexbots Reflect More than Stereotypical Male Fantasies?” *Lady Science* (Feb 2020)
- *Closing the Book: Travels in Life, Loss, and Literature* (essay collection), Pelekinesis Press (Aug 2015)

## Public Events & Media Features / Interviews

- NPR’s *On Point* “A Year of Discovery from the James Webb Space Telescope” (7/19/23)
- Interviewed astronaut Jeanette Epps for Boston’s Boskone Science and Sci-Fi conference (2/11/23)
- XCC Course on Urban Tree Canopies featured in *BU Today* (“A Tree Grows in Boston”) (12/15/22)
- Food for Free Volunteer Spotlight (1/25/22)
- *BU Today*’s “Office Artifacts” segment (10/20/21)
- *NECN* segment “Questions about the Government’s Handling of UFO Reports, Explained” (5/8/21)
- Interviewed in *BU Today* article “Manned Missions. Conquering Space. The Problem with Space Lingo” (4/26/21)
- Featured in for “Ciencia ficción con poco de ficción,” *La Razón* (3/10/19)

- Featured in the *MultiTalented Writer's Blog* (1/16/19)
- Featured in "What Science Fiction Teaches Us About the Real World" Boston University *Collegian* (12/18)
- Featured in "A Look at Undergraduate Research: The Robot Revolution" Boston University CGS (12/4/18)
- WGBH BostonTalks Smarter Happy Hour speaker: "Robots" (11/15/18)
- CBC's "The Current" to talk about the Mars Opportunity Rover (9/21/18)
- *NPR* All Things Considered "A School's Way to Fight Phones in Class: Lock 'Em Up" (1/11/18)
- WGBH Great American Reads event panelist: "The Popularity of Dystopian Fiction" (8/30/18)
- WGBH Great American Reads event panelist: "Portrayals of Scientists in Fiction" (8/1/18)

## Conference Presentations

- Clash of Realities Conference presentation: "How sci-fi prepares us for encounters with aliens, robots, and AI—and what those encounters can teach us" (Cologne Game Lab, Germany) (9/30/22)
- Global Community Bio Summit panel presentation: "Communicating Science" (MIT, Boston) (10/12/19)
- Paper presentation: "What Science Fiction Teaches Us About Slavery and Dehumanization and How We Might Eliminate Prisons," International Association for the Fantastic in the Arts (IAFA) conference (3/14/19)
- Chaired panel on Ursula K. LeGuin at the 2019 IAFA conference (3/16/19)
- Presenter at the Hospitality Innovation Planet Expo Madrid: "Robots and AI in Hospitality" (2/20/19)
- Paper presentation: "The Influence of Early Science Fiction on Cultural Views and Portrayals of Robots" International Association for the Fantastic in the Arts conference (3/17/18)

## Guest Lectures and Presentations

- Conducted 75-minute interview of scholar Michael Bess about AI and democracy for *Politica* (2/8/22)
- Organized and moderated a panel on Planetary Protection & Ethics (Kilachand Honors College) (11/4/21)
- Guest Lecture, Boston University, CGS: "Immortality, Virtual Reality, and the Evolution of Humankind" (8/4/21)
- Guest Lecture, Boston University, CGS: "Robotic Companions: Humanity's Relationships to Interactive Tech" (8/3/21)
- Guest lecture, MassART Design Symposium: "Transhumanism & Virtual Worlds" (5/3/21)
- Participated in a *Politica* roundtable discussion about tech, fake news, and elections (3/24/21)
- Guest lecture, Boston University, CAS ENG130: "Science Fiction & the Evolution of Humankind" (9/28/20)
- Guest lecture, Boston University, CGS: "Transhumanism, Virtual Reality, and the Evolution of Humankind" (8/4/20)
- Guest lecture Boston University, CAS WR699: "Teaching Digital Multimedia Expression" (12/4/19)
- Guest lecture, Northeastern University: "Transhumanism, Technology, and Ethics" (11/22/18)

## University Service

- Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program (UROP) assessment committee (2023—present)
  - Reads and evaluates research proposals for funding
- Pitch Clinic (conception, organization, and execution, as well as individual coaching) (2021—present)
- Council of Coordinators, College of General Studies, Boston University (2022—2023)
- Served on CGS Lecturer Promotion Committee (LPC) (2021, 2023)
- Directed Study focused on sci-fi and novel-writing (one student, weekly meetings) (Spring 2022)
- Undergraduate Research Mentor, Boston University CITL (2018—2022)
  - Research assistant received Provost Scholar "stretch" award (2019)
- Served on Rhetoric Division Performance Advisory Committee (PAC) (2021, 2017)
- Committee for Technology and Learning (College of General Studies) (2018—present)
  - Committee Chairperson, 2019—2021
  - Created a CGS website for Digital Multimedia Expression assignments and resources
- Committee member and reader for *IMPACT*, the Center for Interdisciplinary Learning journal (2013—present)
- Adobe Catalyst Mentee (participating in Adobe Catalyst training sessions) (2019)
- Boston University Faculty Innovation Network CGS representative (2018—present)
- Served on General Education Committee HUB Rhetoric Subcommittee (2017)
- Boston University College of General Studies Writing Center volunteer (2013—present)

## Professional Service

- Guest editor of special issue of *Literature* (“American Sci-Fi”) (2022—present)
  - Wrote and advertised RPFs and identified and contacted potential authors
  - Assessing manuscripts and reviewers’ comments, making inclusion decisions, and editing
- Consulting nonfiction editor of *Panorama* travel magazine (2019—present)
- Nonfiction reader for *Carve Magazine* (2018—present)
- National High School Mock Trial Championship 2022 case writer and consultant (2020—2022)

## Honors, Grants, and Fellowships

- Somerville Arts Council Artist Fellowship (2021)
- Gerontological Society of America Journalist Fellowship (2019)
- Best Short-form Science Writing, *Medium* (April—June 2019)
- Somerville Arts Council Artist Fellowship (2018)
- Solas Award for Best Travel Writing (2018)

## Community Service

- Somerville-Cambridge Elder Services food delivery (2020—present)
- Food for Free food delivery (2020—present)
- On the Rise shelter meal-prep volunteer (2017—2019, 2022—present)
- Kitty Connection cat shelter volunteer (2022—2023)
- Friendship Works social volunteer (2020)

## Memberships

- National Association of Science Writers (NASW) (2018—present)
- New England Science Writers (NESW) (2016—present)
- International Association for the Fantastic of the Arts (IAFA) (2018—2020)

## Other

- Familiar with Zoom, WebEx, Teams, Blackboard, WebCT, Gradequick, Microsoft Word, Excel, Access, PowerPoint, Digication, InDesign, Front Page, Photoshop, Adobe Audition, Adobe Creative Cloud programs, Lexis-Nexis, HTML, Word Press, scanners, digital cameras, mini-disc recorders, LCD projectors, and more.
- Traveled to Austria, Bahamas, Belgium, Belize, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Canada, Colombia, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Dominican Republic, England, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Guatemala, Holland, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Mexico, Morocco, Norway, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Puerto Rico, Romania, Scotland, Serbia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, and Turkey.