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Championing the Value of the Humanities Actor and Author Jenny Slate Visits UW-Madison

MADISON, Wis. (September 12, 2023)—The UW-Madison Center for the Humanities is thrilled to host award-winning actor, author, and comedian Jenny Slate on October 12, 2023, for a dynamic and wide-ranging [Humanities Without Boundaries](#) conversation on culture, craft, and comedy—and the value of the humanities in our scholarship and community.

“As a cross-disciplinary unit on campus, our small and mighty staff supports humanities education with publicly engaged programming, encouraging students and society at large to think creatively and critically, to reason and ask questions, and to investigate differences among cultures and communities,” said Cindy I-Fen Cheng, Robinson Edwards Professor of American History and Asian American Studies at UW-Madison and Interim Director of the Center for the Humanities.

“We are so thrilled to host Jenny Slate and her visit to Madison. Her work represents the best of a humanities education, helping us understand and interpret human experiences in a witty and insightful manner,” Cheng said.

This event is part of the Center for the Humanities’ flagship *Humanities Without Boundaries* public lecture series, which draws large and diverse crowds for talks throughout the year by artists, authors, poets, filmmakers, philosophers, theorists, and historians, whose work crosses boundaries, elevates discourse, stirs curiosity, and invites audiences to inquire, critique, imagine, and engage together. Previous speakers in this series include Tommy Orange, Sianne Ngai, Margaret Atwood, Ruth Wilson Gilmore, and Ato Quayson. *Humanities Without Boundaries* is made possible by the Brittingham Wisconsin Trust and the Anonymous Fund of the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Like all lectures and public conversations hosted by the Center for the Humanities, “A Conversation with Jenny Slate” is free and open to all. The conversation will be moderated by Ramzi Fawaz, Professor of English at UW-Madison. On October 30, 2023 Fawaz will also deliver the *Focus on the Humanities* lecture for the Center for the Humanities on “[Webbed Attachments: Psychedelic Lessons from the Multiverse](#)”. By promoting the university’s own distinguished humanities faculty, the *Focus on the Humanities* series demonstrates the humanities as essential contributions to teaching, learning, and research.

Fawaz is author of *The New Mutants: Superheroes and the Radical Imagination of American Comics* (2016) and *Queer Forms* (2022). A scholar of American popular culture and social movements, Fawaz is a fitting academic to pair with Slate, whose writing and stand-up engage in

personal and political reflection, and whose acting credits include roles in fantastical and imaginative settings, such as *Venom* (2018) and *Everything Everywhere All at Once* (2022).

“In order to foster deeper understanding of ourselves and the world, the humanities look at human cultures and social phenomena from a critical perspective. What better example of this, as well as the will to share our insights with others, than comedy?” said Megan Massino, Associate Director at the Center for the Humanities. “Whether as a major in college or a life-long intellectual pursuit, the humanities invite us to engage with the complexity of human existence and expression, particularly the weird and the wonderful. And Jenny Slate’s work is both.”

[Register for a free ticket](#), [learn more about the Jenny Slate event](#), and [download a poster](#).

On Tuesday, Oct. 10 at 7:00 PM (Marquee Cinema at Union South) the Center for the Humanities will screen the 2021 film *Marcel the Shell with Shoes On*, an award-winning, independent, animated mockumentary about Marcel, a one-inch-tall shell who lives with his grandmother Connie. The film is directed by Dean Fleischer Camp and stars Jenny Slate, Isabella Rossellini, Rosa Salazar, Thomas Mann, and Lesley Stahl. It is distributed by A24. More information on the screening [is available here](#).

About Jenny Slate: Jenny Slate is an actor, author, and comedian who co-wrote, produced, and voiced the short film *Marcel the Shell With Shoes On* with Dean Fleisher Camp. After several years of viral success, this feature-length version premiered at Telluride Film Festival and was acquired by A24. Slate’s breakout role came by way of her leading performance in *Obvious Child*, for which she won the Critics’ Choice Award for Best Actress in a Comedy. She also stars opposite Charlie Day in Amazon’s *I Want You Back*, written and produced by Isaac Aptaker and Elizabeth Berger. She is also seen in Dan Kwan’s *Everything Everywhere All at Once* for A24, opposite Michelle Yeoh. Her additional feature credits include Sofia Coppola’s *On the Rocks*, Ruben Fleischer’s *Venom*, Marc Webb’s *Gifted*, and Drew Pearce’s *Hotel Artemis*. Slate’s comedy special *Stage Fright* was released on Netflix to rave reviews and exemplified her ability to reframe comedy’s relationship to mental health. This feature uses humor to hold space for depression, anxiety, and fear. She has had several notable television performances in such series as *Parks and Recreation*, *House of Lies*, *Bored to Death*, and *Girls*. Additionally, Slate wrote the national bestselling novel *Little Weirds*.

About the UW-Madison Center for the Humanities: Founded in 1999, the [Center for the Humanities](#) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison advances the humanities on campus and beyond, by drawing faculty, staff, students, and the public into informed, thoughtful, and civil discourse on the political, literary, ethical, and aesthetic questions of the day. Our unwavering support of public scholarly engagement has helped graduate students and faculty create mutually rewarding partnerships with public schools, prisons, senior centers, hospitals, community gardens, and more. Championing the public humanities, the Center is guided and inspired by the Wisconsin Idea, the principle that the university’s impact on people’s lives should reach beyond the classroom.