

The R. Frank and D. Schuman Astronomy Lectures

UNLV Physics and Astronomy Department

7:30pm Thursday November 6

Bigelow Physics Building Rm 102 UNLV

Free Admission



Searching for Life: Defending Our World: How Exoplanetary Science is Powering Planetary Defense

Professor Julien de Wit (MIT)

This talk presents breakthroughs in the study of exoplanetary systems and highlights key targets in our search for habitable worlds. I show how the James Webb Space Telescope revealed its capabilities for planetary defense; we plan to use JWST in March 2026 to refine the probability of a 2032 lunar impact for asteroid 2024 YR4—which would disrupt Earth's satellite infrastructure. This work is challenging our views and seemingly shepherding us towards planetary stewardship.

This talk is intended for a general audience including enthusiasts of all backgrounds and ages.