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I. Introduction. (10 min) Charles Beichman (JPL)
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This talk will provide a brief introduction to the questions that motivate the modern search for habitable planets, and life, beyond the solar system. While we have learned that about 7% of nearby stars are orbited by giant planets like Jupiter, we have not yet found analogs to our own solar system. Are there systems with gas giant planets orbiting outside the water-ice condensation line with rocky planets nestled close enough to the star to be warmed to allow liquid water to exist on the surface? What are the planetary conditions necessary to support the origin and evolution of primitive life? What are the signposts of life that might be detected from many light years away? What series of observatories might be feasible within the next 20 years to resolve these questions?

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