

## **The status of possible worlds in deriving semantic representations**

course description and preliminary schedule

Viola Schmitt

viola.schmitt@hu-berlin.de

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### **Course description**

This course will focus on the question whether worlds are a ‘type like any other (primitive) type’. More specifically, we will consider \*empirical\* evidence for/against the hypothesis that worlds have the same grammatical status as e.g., individuals or events. We will discuss three issues: Is there evidence for world pronouns (i.e., for syntactic representations of world variables)? Is there evidence for world pluralities? And does world quantification behave analogously to quantification over (other) primitives? (It will become clear that in some of these cases, addressing these question will require us to first work out what our potential evidence would look like.)

This is an advanced semantics course – in order to be able to follow (and participate in) the discussion, you should have completed an intro to semantics (covering, roughly, the content of Heim & Kratzer 1998).

**Note:** I listed some of the literature I will draw on below. This doesn’t mean you have to read all these papers in advance.

### **Rough preliminary schedule**

**Day 1** Are worlds a type like any other?

- what is the empirical question?
- what kinds of evidence are we looking for?

**Some of the literature I will address (non-exhaustive list):** Schlenker 2006

**Day 2** World pronouns?

- transparent /intransparent readings
- the 3rd reading (and restrictions on it) as evidence for world pronouns?
- alternative proposals
- morphological evidence?

**Some of the literature I will address (non-exhaustive list):** Percus 2000, 2020, Schwarz 2012, Keshet 2011, Keshet & Schwarz 2019, Szabó 2010, Benbaji 2021, Blumberg & Lederman 2021

**Day 3** World quantification?

- ‘traditional’ analyses of modals and attitudes
- the morphosyntactic question: morphosyntactic overlap?
- semantic question 1: cross-linguistic gaps?
- semantic question 2: sensitivity to orderings?

**Some of the literature that I will address (non-exhaustive list):** Lewis 1973, Kratzer 1977, 1981, Levinson 2003, Lassiter 2017

#### Day 4 World pluralities?

- Conditionals and neg-raising constructions as candidates for involving world-pluralities
- Symptoms of (cross-categorial) plurality
- Symptoms of plurality in conditionals and neg-raising constructions?

**Some of the literature that I will address (non-exhaustive list):** Schlenker 2004, Gajewski 2005, Križ 2015, 2019

#### Day 5 Tying some of our observations together:

Sensitivity to orderings and the apparent lack of world pluralities

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