

Math 6610: Analysis of Numerical Methods, I

Eigenvalues and eigenvectors

Department of Mathematics, University of Utah

Fall 2026

Resources: Trefethen and Bau [1997](#), Lecture 24
Süli and Mayers [2003](#), Section 5.1
Salgado and Wise [2022](#), Sections 1.3, 8.3

Eigenvalues and eigenvectors

Given $\mathbf{A} \in \mathbb{C}^{n \times n}$, $(\lambda, \mathbf{v}) \in \mathbb{C} \times (\mathbb{C}^n \setminus \{0\})$ is an eigenvalue-eigenvector pair if

$$\mathbf{A}\mathbf{v} = \lambda\mathbf{v}.$$

Recall: it doesn't matter what value(s) λ takes on, but $\mathbf{v}$ *cannot* be $\mathbf{0}$.

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Some additional terminology/properties:

- The collection of all eigenvalues of $\mathbf{A}$ is $\lambda(\mathbf{A}) \subset \mathbb{C}$, its *spectrum*.
- Even if $\mathbf{A} \in \mathbb{R}^{n \times n}$, $\lambda(\mathbf{A})$ can contain complex values, and eigenvectors can be complex-valued.
- On paper, we typically identify the spectrum by computing roots of the *characteristic polynomial*, $p_{\mathbf{A}}(\lambda) = \det(\lambda\mathbf{I} - \mathbf{A})$. (This turns out to be a *terrible* algorithmic strategy.)

Eigenpair properties

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- All square matrices have at least 1 eigenvector.

$$A = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix} \rightarrow \lambda = 1, \text{ multiplicity } 2 \text{ alg}$$

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- Eigenvectors from *distinct* eigenvalues are linearly independent.
- Every *distinct* eigenvalue has at least 1 eigenvector.

$\rightarrow$ if $\{\lambda_j\}_{j=1}^k$ are
distinct, with eigenvectors
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- Every *distinct* eigenvalue has at least 1 eigenvector.
- The *eigenspace* associated with λ is the subspace $E_\lambda := \ker(\mathbf{A} - \lambda\mathbf{I})$.
- Eigenspaces are invariant subspaces of $\mathbf{A}$, i.e., $\mathbf{A}E_\lambda \subseteq E_\lambda$.

$$\rightarrow \dim E_\lambda \geq 1$$
$$\dim E_\lambda \leq n$$

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- The number of times an eigenvalue is repeated a_λ is its *algebraic multiplicity*.
- The *geometric multiplicity* g_λ of an eigenvalue λ is $\dim E_\lambda$.
- *Simple* eigenvalues λ have $g_\lambda = a_\lambda = 1$.

$$A = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 1 \\ 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}, \quad \lambda = 1, 1 \quad a_1 = 2$$
$$E_1 = \text{span} \left\{ \begin{pmatrix} 1 \\ 0 \end{pmatrix} \right\} \rightarrow g_1 = 1$$

$$\left. \begin{array}{l} A = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix} \\ \lambda = 1, 1 \quad a_1 = 2 \\ E_1 = \mathbb{C}^2, \quad g_1 = 2 \end{array} \right\}$$

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- Eigenvalues λ with $g_\lambda < a_\lambda$ are *defective*.
- Any $\mathbf{A}$ with a defective eigenvalue is *defective*.

A digression: similarity transforms

Two square matrices $\mathbf{A}$ and $\mathbf{B}$ are *similar* if $\exists$ an invertible $\mathbf{S}$ such that

$$\mathbf{B} = \mathbf{S}^{-1}\mathbf{A}\mathbf{S}.$$

(The map $\mathbf{A} \mapsto \mathbf{S}^{-1}\mathbf{A}\mathbf{S}$ is a similarity transform.)

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Suppose $\mathbf{A}$ is not defective: then with linearly independent $\mathbf{v}_i$, $i \in [n]$ we have the relations,

$$\mathbf{A}\mathbf{v}_i = \lambda_i\mathbf{v}_i.$$

This is equivalent to,

$$\mathbf{A}\mathbf{V} = \mathbf{V}\mathbf{\Lambda}, \quad \mathbf{V} = \left(\begin{array}{c|ccc|c} & & & & \\ \mathbf{v}_1 & & \cdots & & \mathbf{v}_n \\ & & & & \end{array} \right), \quad \mathbf{\Lambda} = \text{diag}(\lambda_1, \dots, \lambda_n).$$

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And since $\mathbf{V}$ is full-rank, then

$$\mathbf{A} = \mathbf{V}\mathbf{\Lambda}\mathbf{V}^{-1},$$

i.e., $\mathbf{A}$ is similar to a diagonal matrix containing its spectrum.

Matrix diagonalizability

This motivates a key definition and consequence.

Definition

A square matrix $\mathbf{A} \in \mathbb{C}^{n \times n}$ is diagonalizable if it is similar to a diagonal matrix.

Theorem

A square matrix $\mathbf{A}$ is diagonalizable iff it is *not* defective.

When $\mathbf{A}$ is not defective, it is diagonalizable via a matrix whose columns are comprised of its linearly independent eigenvectors.

Similarity invariances

One simple observation is that the set of eigenvalues is invariant under any similarity transform. If $\mathbf{A} = \mathbf{V}\mathbf{\Lambda}\mathbf{V}^{-1}$ is diagonalizable, then

$$\mathbf{S}^{-1}\mathbf{A}\mathbf{S} = (\mathbf{S}^{-1}\mathbf{V})\mathbf{\Lambda}(\mathbf{S}^{-1}\mathbf{V})^{-1}.$$

For any square matrix, defective or not, the same conclusion follows from $\det(\lambda\mathbf{I} - \mathbf{S}^{-1}\mathbf{A}\mathbf{S}) = \det(\lambda\mathbf{I} - \mathbf{A})$.

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More consequences follow, e.g., some familiar determinant and trace properties,

$$\det \mathbf{A} = \prod_{j=1}^n \lambda_j, \quad \operatorname{tr} \mathbf{A} = \sum_{j=1}^n \lambda_j.$$

The above is actually true for any square matrix $\mathbf{A}$, defective or not.

A diagonalizable: $A = V \Lambda V^{-1}$

$$\begin{aligned} \det A &= (\det V)(\det \Lambda)(\det V^{-1}) \\ &= \det \Lambda = \prod_{j=1}^n \lambda_j \end{aligned}$$

Jordan normal form

Defective matrices certainly exist. The most common example is,

$$\begin{pmatrix} 1 & 1 \\ 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}.$$

A rather nice fact is that the above example is “spiritually” the prototypical and essentially only type of defective matrix.



A handwritten blue matrix in Jordan normal form, consisting of three diagonal blocks. The first block is a 2x2 Jordan block with 1s on the diagonal and a 1 in the upper-right position. The second block is a 1x1 block with a 1 on the diagonal. The third block is a 1x1 block with a 0 on the diagonal. The matrix is enclosed in large blue parentheses.

$$\begin{pmatrix} 1 & 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}$$

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Theorem (Jordan normal form)

Every square matrix $\mathbf{A} \in \mathbb{C}^{n \times n}$ is bidiagonalizable, i.e., is similar to a bidiagonal matrix.

More specifically, let $\lambda_1, \dots, \lambda_U$ be the unique eigenvalues of $\mathbf{A}$, and suppose they have algebraic and geometric multiplicities a_j and g_j , $j \in [U]$, respectively. Then:

$$\mathbf{A} = \mathbf{V} \mathbf{J} \mathbf{V}^{-1}, \quad \mathbf{V} \in \mathbb{C}^{n \times n},$$

where $\mathbf{V}$ is invertible and $\mathbf{J}$ is bidiagonal with $\lambda(\mathbf{A})$ on the diagonal. If $a_j = s_{j,1} + \dots + s_{j,g_j}$, then

$$\mathbf{J} = \bigoplus_{j \in [U]} \bigoplus_{\ell=1}^{g_j} \mathbf{J}_{j,\ell}, \quad \mathbf{J}_{j,\ell} = \lambda_j \mathbf{I}_{s_{j,\ell}} + \mathbf{N}_{s_{j,\ell}},$$

where $\mathbf{N}_k$ is a $k \times k$ matrix, nonzero only on its main superdiagonal that has entries all 1.

$$k=3: \quad \mathbf{N}_k = \begin{pmatrix} 0 & 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 \end{pmatrix} \quad \mathbf{J} = \begin{pmatrix} \lambda & 1 & 0 \\ 0 & \lambda & 1 \\ 0 & 0 & \lambda \end{pmatrix}$$

$$A = \begin{pmatrix} 2 & 1 & & \\ & 2 & & \\ & & 2 & 1 \\ & & & 2 \end{pmatrix}$$

$$u = 1$$

$$\lambda_1 = 2 \quad \begin{cases} a_1 = 5 \\ g_1 = 2 \end{cases}$$

a_1 is the sum of $g_1 = 2$ integers

$$a_1 = 5 = 2 + 3$$

$$s_{1,1} + s_{1,2}$$

$$J = \bigoplus_{j=1}^2 J_{1,j}$$

$$J_{1,1} \in \mathbb{C}^{s_{1,1} \times s_{1,1}} = \mathbb{C}^{2 \times 2}$$

$$\begin{pmatrix} 2 & 1 \\ 0 & 2 \end{pmatrix}$$

$$J_{1,2} \in \mathbb{C}^{s_{1,2} \times s_{1,2}} = \mathbb{C}^{3 \times 3}$$

$$\begin{pmatrix} 2 & 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 2 & 1 \\ 0 & 0 & 2 \end{pmatrix}$$

To diagonalizability and beyond

“Most” square matrices are diagonalizable.

This is (incredibly) powerful: a symmetric linear change of basis of the input and output spaces results in a diagonal linear operator.

The particular change of basis can be quite anisotropic (and non-isometric) in nature.

Not all square matrices are diagonalizable. However, ...

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- ...all square matrices are bidiagonalizable (Jordan normal form)
 - ...all square matrices are unitarily triangularizable (Schur decomposition)
- While triangularizability is not as clean as diagonalizability, that there are unitary transformations accomplishing this is very attractive.

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Are there matrices that are *unitarily* diagonalizable?

A “spectral” theorem

A seemingly unrelated algebraic definition is our starting point.

Definition

A matrix $\mathbf{A} \in \mathbb{C}^{n \times n}$ is *Hermitian* if $\mathbf{A} = \mathbf{A}^*$.

(Hermitian matrices are also called *self-adjoint*, or *symmetric* when $\mathbf{A}$ is real-valued.)

$$A = \begin{pmatrix} 0 & 1 \\ 1 & 0 \end{pmatrix}$$

$$A = \begin{pmatrix} 0 & i \\ -i & 0 \end{pmatrix}$$

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Theorem (Spectral Theorem for Hermitian matrices)

If $\mathbf{A} \in \mathbb{C}^{n \times n}$ is Hermitian, then it is unitarily diagonalizable with real eigenvalues.

(Its spectrum is real-valued, and the similarity matrix accomplishing diagonalization is unitary.)

Proof: (i) $\mathbf{A}$ has real eigenvalues.

Let $(\lambda, \underline{v})$ be an eigenpair of $\mathbf{A}$, $\|\underline{v}\|_2 \neq 0$

$$\underline{\mathbf{A}} = \underline{\mathbf{A}}^* \Rightarrow \underset{||}{v^*} \underset{||}{\mathbf{A}} \underset{||}{v} = \langle \underset{||}{\mathbf{A}v}, \underset{||}{v} \rangle$$

$$\underset{||}{(v^* \mathbf{A} v)^*} = \underset{||}{v^* \mathbf{A}^* v} = \underset{||}{v^* \mathbf{A} v} = \underset{||}{\langle v, \mathbf{A} v \rangle}$$

$$\left. \begin{aligned} \langle \underset{\parallel}{A} \underset{\parallel}{v}, \underset{\parallel}{v} \rangle &= \langle \lambda \underset{\parallel}{v}, \underset{\parallel}{v} \rangle = \lambda \langle \underset{\parallel}{v}, \underset{\parallel}{v} \rangle = \lambda \|\underset{\parallel}{v}\|_2^2 \\ \langle \underset{\parallel}{v}, \underset{\parallel}{A} \underset{\parallel}{v} \rangle &= \langle \underset{\parallel}{v}, \lambda \underset{\parallel}{v} \rangle = \lambda^* \langle \underset{\parallel}{v}, \underset{\parallel}{v} \rangle = \lambda^* \|\underset{\parallel}{v}\|_2^2 \end{aligned} \right\} \lambda \in \mathbb{R}$$

(ii) $\underline{A}$ is unitarily diagonalizable.

Strategy: induction

$$\underline{A} \in \mathbb{C}^{1 \times 1} \quad \underline{A} = \underset{\substack{\nearrow \\ \text{unitary} \\ \text{matrix}}}{[1]} [\underset{\nearrow}{A}] [\underset{\nearrow}{1}]^* \quad \checkmark$$

inductive hypoth: suppose $\underline{B} \in \mathbb{C}^{(n-1) \times (n-1)}$ is Hermitian. Then $\underline{B} = \underline{V} \underline{\Sigma} \underline{V}^*$.

$\underline{V}$: unitary

$\underline{\Sigma}$: diagonal, real!

$$\text{Let } \underline{A} \in \mathbb{C}^{n \times n}, \quad \underline{A} = \underline{A}^*$$

Let $(\lambda, \underline{v}_1)$ be an eigenpair of $\underline{A}$,
without loss assume $\|\underline{v}_1\|_2^2 = 1$.

Let $\{\underline{w}_2, \dots, \underline{w}_n\}$ be an orthonormal completion of $\mathbb{C}^n$ wrt $\underline{v}_1$

$$\Rightarrow \underline{U} = \begin{bmatrix} \underset{1}{\underline{v}_1} & \underset{1}{\underline{w}_2} & \dots & \underset{1}{\underline{w}_n} \end{bmatrix} \text{ is unitary.}$$

Consider $\underline{A}_1 = \underline{U}^* \underline{A} \underline{U}$ (NB: $\underline{A}_1$ is Hermitian)

$$= \begin{pmatrix} \underline{v}_1^* \\ \underline{w}_2^* \\ \vdots \\ \underline{w}_n^* \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} \underline{A} \underline{v}_1 & \underline{A} \underline{w}_2 & \dots & \underline{A} \underline{w}_n \\ | & | & & | \end{pmatrix}$$

$$= \begin{pmatrix} \langle \underline{A} \underline{v}_1, \underline{v}_1 \rangle & \langle \underline{A} \underline{w}_2, \underline{v}_1 \rangle & \dots & \langle \underline{A} \underline{w}_n, \underline{v}_1 \rangle \\ \langle \underline{A} \underline{v}_1, \underline{w}_2 \rangle & \ddots & & \vdots \\ \vdots & & \ddots & \vdots \\ \langle \underline{A} \underline{v}_1, \underline{w}_n \rangle & \dots & \dots & \langle \underline{A} \underline{w}_n, \underline{w}_n \rangle \end{pmatrix}$$

Note: $\langle \underline{A} \underline{v}_1, \underline{v}_1 \rangle = \lambda \langle \underline{v}_1, \underline{v}_1 \rangle = \lambda$

$\langle \underline{A} \underline{v}_1, \underline{w}_j \rangle = \lambda \langle \underline{v}_1, \underline{w}_j \rangle = 0$

$$= \begin{pmatrix} \lambda & \langle \underline{A} \underline{w}_2, \underline{v}_1 \rangle & \dots & \langle \underline{A} \underline{w}_n, \underline{v}_1 \rangle \\ 0 & \ddots & & \vdots \\ \vdots & \ddots & \ddots & \vdots \\ 0 & \dots & \dots & \langle \underline{A} \underline{w}_n, \underline{w}_n \rangle \end{pmatrix}$$

$\underline{A}_1 = \underline{A}_1^*$ $\rightarrow$

$$= \begin{pmatrix} \lambda & 0 & \dots & 0 \\ 0 & \underline{W}^* \underline{A} \underline{W} & & \\ \vdots & & \ddots & \\ 0 & & & \end{pmatrix} \quad \underline{W} = \begin{pmatrix} \underline{w}_2 \\ \vdots \\ \underline{w}_n \end{pmatrix}$$

(n x (n-1))

NB: $\underline{W}^* \underline{A} \underline{W}$ is Hermitian, is (n-1) x (n-1)

$$\Rightarrow W^* A W = \underbrace{U}_{(n-1), \text{ unitary}} \underbrace{\Sigma}_{\text{diagonal, real}} \underbrace{U^*}_{\text{real}}$$

$$\Rightarrow \underline{A}_1 = \begin{pmatrix} \lambda & \text{---} 0 \text{---} \\ 0 & \underline{U} \underline{\Sigma} \underline{U}^* \end{pmatrix}$$

$$= \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 0^* \\ 0 & \underline{U} \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} \lambda & \\ & \underline{\Sigma} \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 0^* \\ 0 & \underline{U} \end{pmatrix}^*$$

Since $\underline{A}_1 = \underline{V}^* \underline{A} \underline{V}$

$$\Rightarrow \underline{A} = \underline{V} \underline{A}_1 \underline{V}^*$$

$$= \underbrace{\underline{V} \begin{pmatrix} 1 & \\ & \underline{U} \end{pmatrix}}_{\text{is unitary}} \underbrace{\begin{pmatrix} \lambda & \\ & \underline{\Sigma} \end{pmatrix}}_{\text{diagonal}} \underbrace{\left[\underline{V} \begin{pmatrix} 1 & \\ & \underline{U} \end{pmatrix} \right]^*}_{\checkmark}$$

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(Hermitian matrices are also called *self-adjoint*, or *symmetric* when $\mathbf{A}$ is real-valued.)

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If $\mathbf{A} \in \mathbb{C}^{n \times n}$ is Hermitian, then it is unitarily diagonalizable with real eigenvalues.

(Its spectrum is real-valued, and the similarity matrix accomplishing diagonalization is unitary.)

$$A = U \Lambda U^*$$

Hermitian matrices are *very* common in applications, and the spectral theorem has numerous uses.

Why is this useful?

$$\underline{A} = \underline{U} \underline{\Lambda} \underline{U}^* = \begin{pmatrix} | & & | \\ u_1 & \dots & u_n \\ | & & | \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} - & \lambda_1 u_1^* & - \\ & \vdots & \\ - & \lambda_n u_n^* & - \end{pmatrix}$$

$$= \begin{pmatrix} \lambda_1 u_1 & & \\ & \ddots & \\ & & \lambda_n u_n \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} -u_1^2 & \\ & \ddots \\ & & -u_n^2 \end{pmatrix}$$

Application I: Geometric interpretation of Hermitian matrices

If $\mathbf{A} \in \mathbb{C}^{n \times n}$ is unitarily diagonalizable, then it can be written as

$$\mathbf{A} = \mathbf{U} \mathbf{\Lambda} \mathbf{U}^* = \sum_{j=1}^n \lambda_j \mathbf{u}_j \mathbf{u}_j^*,$$

where $\{\mathbf{u}_j\}_{j=1}^n$ are the columns of $\mathbf{U}$.

$j \in [n]: \quad \underline{\mathbf{u}_j \mathbf{u}_j^*}$ is Hermitian, idempotent
orthog. projector.

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where $\{\mathbf{u}_j\}_{j=1}^n$ are the columns of $\mathbf{U}$.

I.e., Hermitian matrices (an algebraic property) have strong geometric interpretation: they are “just” diagonal matrices in a rotated/reflected orthonormal frame.

Application II: The induced 2-norm

The *spectral radius* of a matrix $\mathbf{A}$ is

$$\rho(\mathbf{A}) := \max_{j=1, \dots, n} |\lambda_j(\mathbf{A})|$$

If $\mathbf{A}$ is Hermitian, then $\|\mathbf{A}\|_2 = \rho(\mathbf{A})$.

This is direct from the definition of the induced 2-norm.

(Recall: $\|\mathbf{A}\|_2 = \max_{\|x\|_2=1} \|\mathbf{A}x\|_2$)

[This is not true for general square A ,

e.g. $A = \begin{pmatrix} 0 & 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 \end{pmatrix}$)

Why? $A = A^*$, let $\{\lambda_1, \dots, \lambda_n\} = \text{spec}(A) \subseteq \mathbb{R}$

Let $\|x\|_2 = 1$

$$\|\mathbf{A}x\|_2^2 = \left\| \sum_{j=1}^n \lambda_j u_j u_j^* x \right\|_2^2 = \left\| \sum_{j=1}^n \lambda_j P_j x \right\|_2^2$$

$P_j = u_j u_j^*$

Pythagorean
thm.

$$\begin{aligned}
 &= \sum_{j=1}^n \|\lambda_j P_j x\|_2^2 = \sum_{j=1}^n |\lambda_j|^2 \|P_j x\|_2^2 \\
 &\leq \sum_{j=1}^n \rho(A)^2 \|P_j x\|_2^2 \\
 &= \rho(A)^2 \sum_{j=1}^n \|P_j x\|_2^2 \\
 &= \rho(A)^2 \underbrace{\left\| \sum_{j=1}^n P_j x \right\|_2^2}_{\|x\|_2^2} \\
 &= \rho(A)^2
 \end{aligned}$$

(it's a sharp bound: $\underline{x} = \underline{u}_n$,
assuming $|\lambda_n| = \rho(A)$)

Application III: The “A norm”

A matrix $\mathbf{A} \in \mathbb{C}^{n \times n}$ is Hermitian positive definite (sometimes *symmetric* positive-definite or “spd”) if it’s Hermitian and its (real) spectrum is strictly positive.

(Respectively, positive semi-definite if the spectrum is non-negative.)

$$A \text{ spd} \Rightarrow A = A^*, \text{ and } \text{spec}(A) \subset (0, \infty)$$

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Such matrices actually define a norm: $\|\mathbf{x}\|_{\mathbf{A}} := \sqrt{\mathbf{x}^* \mathbf{A} \mathbf{x}}$. For positive-semidefinite $\mathbf{A}$, this expression is generally only a seminorm.

$$= \sqrt{\langle \mathbf{A} \mathbf{x}, \mathbf{x} \rangle}$$

Application IV: Matrix square roots

There is a functional calculus on spd matrices.

For example, a matrix $\mathbf{B}$ is the square root of a matrix $\mathbf{A}$ if $\mathbf{A} = \mathbf{B}^2$.

$$"B = \sqrt{A}"$$

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Example

If $\mathbf{A}$ is spd, compute a matrix square root of $\mathbf{A}$.

$$A = U \Lambda U^* \quad , \quad \Lambda = \text{diag}(\lambda_1, \dots, \lambda_n), \quad \lambda_j > 0$$

$\Downarrow$

$\sqrt{\Lambda}$ "makes sense"

$$\text{"diag}(\sqrt{\lambda_1}, \dots, \sqrt{\lambda_n}) \Rightarrow (\sqrt{\Lambda})^2 = \Lambda$$

Check: $B = U \sqrt{\Lambda} U^*$ satisfies $B^2 = A$

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Theorem

If $\mathbf{A}$ is spd, then there is a unique spd square root $\mathbf{B}$ of $\mathbf{A}$, i.e., $\mathbf{B}^2 = \mathbf{A}$.

$$\underline{\text{Ex:}} \quad \mathbf{A} \text{ spd}, \quad \mathbf{B}^2 = \mathbf{A}, \quad \mathbf{B} \text{ spd}$$

$$\|x\|_{\mathbf{A}} = \|Bx\|_2$$

"

$$\sqrt{\langle Ax, x \rangle}$$

Application V: Quadratic forms

Given a Hermitian matrix $\mathbf{A} \in \mathbb{C}^{n \times n}$, the function,

$$\|x\|_{\mathbf{A}}^2 := Q_{\mathbf{A}}(\mathbf{x}) := \mathbf{x}^* \mathbf{A} \mathbf{x},$$

is a **quadratic form**, i.e., a real-valued quadratic function on $\mathbb{C}^n$. The eigendecomposition of $\mathbf{A}$ uniquely defines the behavior of $Q_{\mathbf{A}}$.

$$A \text{ Hermitian} \Rightarrow A x = \sum_{j=1}^n \lambda_j \langle x, u_j \rangle u_j$$

$$x = U U^* x = \sum_j u_j u_j^* x = \sum_{j=1}^n \langle x, u_j \rangle u_j$$

$$\Rightarrow Q_{\mathbf{A}}(x) = \langle A x, x \rangle = \sum_j \lambda_j |\langle x, u_j \rangle|^2 \in \mathbb{R}$$

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Let the following vectors form an orthonormal eigenbasis, partitioned according to the positive, negative, and zero eigenvalues of $\mathbf{A}$, respectively:

$$\{\mathbf{v}_i^+\}_{i \in [n^+]}, \quad \{\mathbf{v}_i^-\}_{i \in [n^-]}, \quad \{\mathbf{v}_i^0\}_{i \in [n^0]},$$

where $n = n^+ + n^- + n^0$. Then clearly:

$$Q_{\mathbf{A}}(\mathbf{v}_i^+) > 0,$$

$$Q_{\mathbf{A}}(\mathbf{v}_i^-) < 0,$$

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Generalizing this a bit:

$$\left. \begin{array}{l} V^+ := \text{span} \{ \mathbf{v}_i^+ \}_{i \in [n^+]} , \\ V^- := \text{span} \{ \mathbf{v}_i^- \}_{i \in [n^-]} , \\ V^0 := \text{span} \{ \mathbf{v}_i^0 \}_{i \in [n^0]} \end{array} \right\} \Rightarrow \left\{ \begin{array}{l} Q_{\mathbf{A}}(\mathbf{x}) > 0 \text{ if } \mathbf{x} \in V^+ \setminus \{\mathbf{0}\} \\ Q_{\mathbf{A}}(\mathbf{x}) < 0 \text{ if } \mathbf{x} \in V^- \setminus \{\mathbf{0}\} \\ Q_{\mathbf{A}}(\mathbf{x}) = 0 \text{ if } \mathbf{x} \in V^0 \end{array} \right.$$

where $\mathbb{C}^n = V^+ \oplus V^- \oplus V^0$.

Rayleigh quotients, I

A final application of Hermitian matrices is a *variational* characterization of eigenvalues. We need some buildup for this.

Let $\mathbf{A} \in \mathbb{C}^{n \times n}$ be any square matrix, and let $\mathbf{x} \in \mathbb{C}^n \setminus \{\mathbf{0}\}$ be a vector.

The Rayleigh Quotient (of $\mathbf{A}$ at $\mathbf{x}$) is the (complex) scalar,

$$R_{\mathbf{A}}(\mathbf{x}) := \frac{Q_{\mathbf{A}}(\mathbf{x})}{\|\mathbf{x}\|_2^2} = \frac{\mathbf{x}^* \mathbf{A} \mathbf{x}}{\mathbf{x}^* \mathbf{x}} = \frac{\langle \mathbf{A} \mathbf{x}, \mathbf{x} \rangle}{\langle \mathbf{x}, \mathbf{x} \rangle}, \quad \mathbf{x} \neq \mathbf{0}$$

Ostensibly, if $(\lambda, \mathbf{v})$ is an eigenpair of $\mathbf{A}$, then $R_{\mathbf{A}}(\mathbf{v}) = \lambda$.

Q: what values can $R_{\mathbf{A}}$ take?
 $R_{\mathbf{A}}(\mathbf{x}) \in \mathbb{C}$

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Ostensibly, if $(\lambda, \mathbf{v})$ is an eigenpair of $\mathbf{A}$, then $R_{\mathbf{A}}(\mathbf{v}) = \lambda$.

The numerical range of $\mathbf{A}$ is the set of all possible values of $R_{\mathbf{A}}$:

$$W(\mathbf{A}) := R_{\mathbf{A}}(\mathbb{C}^n \setminus \{\mathbf{0}\}).$$

One can view $W(\mathbf{A})$ as the image of the Rayleigh quotient over all $\mathbb{C}^n$, but also just as the image of the Rayleigh quotient over the unit sphere in $\mathbb{C}^n$. $(\|\mathbf{x}\|_2 = 1)$

$W(\mathbf{A})$ is some set in $\mathbb{C}$, regardless of the dimension n of $\mathbf{A}$.

Clearly we know $\lambda(\mathbf{A}) \subset W(\mathbf{A})$.

Rayleigh quotients, II

There is a rather more interesting property of the numerical range.

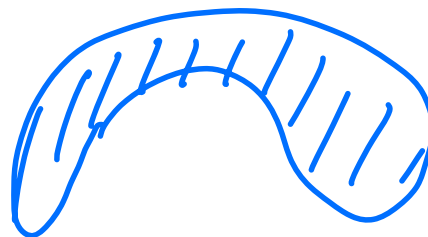
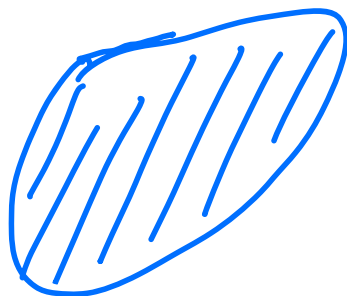
Theorem (Hausdorff-Toeplitz Theorem)

$W(\mathbf{A})$ is a compact and convex set in $\mathbb{C}$.

Compactness: $W(\mathbf{A})$ is the image of a compact set (unit sphere in $\mathbb{C}^n$) under a continuous function ($R_{\mathbf{A}}(\cdot)$).

Possible "shapes" of $w(\mathbf{A})$:

$\mathbb{C}$



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For certain classes of matrices, the Rayleigh quotient is a little more transparent.

For example, if $\mathbf{A}$ is Hermitian, then $R_{\mathbf{A}}(\mathbf{x}) \in \mathbb{R}$, so $W(\mathbf{A}) \subset \mathbb{R}$.

why?

$$A = U \Lambda U^*$$

$$Q_A(x) = \underbrace{x^* U \Lambda U^* x}_{\text{can show: } Q_{\Lambda}^*(U^* x) = Q_{\Lambda}(U^* x)} = Q_{\Lambda}(U^* x)$$

can show: $Q_{\Lambda}^*(U^* x) = Q_{\Lambda}(U^* x)$

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In fact, something more precise is true

Theorem

Proof idea: similar to showing $\rho(\mathbf{A}) = \|\mathbf{A}\|_2$

If $\mathbf{A}$ is Hermitian, then

$$\lambda_{\min}(\mathbf{A}) \leq R_{\mathbf{A}}(\mathbf{x}) \leq \lambda_{\max}(\mathbf{A}),$$

$$\mathbf{x} \in \mathbb{C}^n \setminus \{\mathbf{0}\}.$$

An immediate corollary: If $\mathbf{A}$ is Hermitian, then $W(\mathbf{A}) = [\lambda_{\min}(\mathbf{A}), \lambda_{\max}(\mathbf{A})]$.

$$\mathbf{A} = \mathbf{A}^* \implies$$

A handwritten diagram illustrating the numerical range of a Hermitian matrix. It shows a horizontal line segment on the real axis, with the left endpoint labeled $\lambda_{\min}$ and the right endpoint labeled $\lambda_{\max}$. The segment is enclosed in square brackets, and an arrow points from the right bracket to the symbol $\mathbb{R}$, indicating that the numerical range is a subset of the real numbers.

Rayleigh quotients, III

Let $\mathbf{A} \in \mathbb{C}^{n \times n}$ be Hermitian. Consider a subspace $V \subset \mathbb{C}^n$. *Say $\dim V = k \leq n$*

The image of $V \setminus \{\mathbf{0}\}$ under the Rayleigh quotient is some subset of $W(\mathbf{A}) \subset \mathbb{R}$.

A handwritten diagram in blue ink showing a horizontal line segment representing an interval on the real number line. The left endpoint is labeled $\lambda_{\min}$ and the right endpoint is labeled $\lambda_{\max}$. The interval is enclosed in square brackets $[$ and $]$. To the right of the right bracket, there is an arrow pointing to the right, followed by the symbol $\mathbb{R}$.

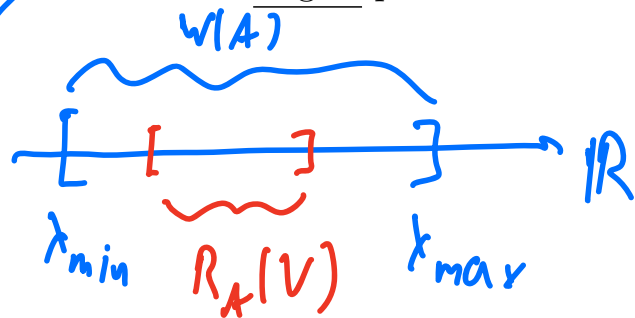
Rayleigh quotients, III

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The image of $V \setminus \{0\}$ under the Rayleigh quotient is some subset of $W(\mathbf{A}) \subset \mathbb{R}$.

- $\min_{\mathbf{x} \in V \setminus \{0\}} R_{\mathbf{A}}(\mathbf{x}) \geq \lambda_{\min}(\mathbf{A})$, with equality when V contains an eigenvector for $\lambda_{\min}(\mathbf{A})$.

What is the largest possible minimum value?



$$\dim V = k \Rightarrow \min_{\dim V = k} \min_{\mathbf{x} \in V \setminus \{0\}} R_{\mathbf{A}}(\mathbf{x}) = \lambda_{\min}(\mathbf{A})$$

For arbitrary V , $\dim V = k$, how
big can I make $\min_{\mathbf{x} \in V} R_{\mathbf{A}}(\mathbf{x})$

Idea: $k=1$ choose $V = \text{span}\{\mathbf{v}_{\max}\}$

$$\Rightarrow \max_{\dim V = 1} \min_{\mathbf{x} \in V} R_{\mathbf{A}}(\mathbf{x}) = \lambda_{\max}$$

$k=2$: Takes "one" dimension to push the interval $R_A(V)$ up to $\lambda_{\max}$.

$$v_{\max} \in V$$

The "second" dimension of V can be chosen as the eigenvector associated to second largest eigenvalue,

$$\text{If } \lambda_1 \leq \lambda_2 \leq \dots \leq \lambda_n$$

$$\text{choose } V = \text{span} \{v_{n-1}, v_n\}$$

$$\Rightarrow R_A(V) = [\lambda_{n-1}, \lambda_n]$$

$$\max_{\dim V=2} \min_{x \in V} R_A(x) = \lambda_{n-1}$$

Rayleigh quotients, III

Let $\mathbf{A} \in \mathbb{C}^{n \times n}$ be Hermitian. Consider a subspace $V \subset \mathbb{C}^n$.

The image of $V \setminus \{\mathbf{0}\}$ under the Rayleigh quotient is some subset of $W(\mathbf{A}) \subset \mathbb{R}$.

- $\min_{\mathbf{x} \in V \setminus \{\mathbf{0}\}} R_{\mathbf{A}}(\mathbf{x}) \geq \lambda_{\min}(\mathbf{A})$, with equality when V contains an eigenvector for $\lambda_{\min}(\mathbf{A})$.
What is the largest possible minimum value?
- $\max_{\mathbf{x} \in V \setminus \{\mathbf{0}\}} R_{\mathbf{A}}(\mathbf{x}) \leq \lambda_{\max}(\mathbf{A})$, with equality when V contains an eigenvector for $\lambda_{\max}(\mathbf{A})$.
What is the smallest possible maximum value?

The “min-max” theorem

Theorem (Courant-Fischer-Weyl “min-max”)

Let $\mathbf{A} \in \mathbb{C}^{n \times n}$ be Hermitian, with eigenvalues $\lambda_1 \leq \lambda_2 \leq \dots \leq \lambda_n$. Then for each $1 \leq k \leq n$,

$$\lambda_k = \min_{\substack{V \subset \mathbb{C}^n \\ \dim V = k}} \max_{\mathbf{x} \in V \setminus \{\mathbf{0}\}} R_{\mathbf{A}}(\mathbf{x})$$

$$\lambda_k = \max_{\substack{V \subset \mathbb{C}^n \\ \dim V = n-k+1}} \min_{\mathbf{x} \in V \setminus \{\mathbf{0}\}} R_{\mathbf{A}}(\mathbf{x})$$

In addition, if $(\mathbf{u}_j)_{j=1}^n$ are the eigenvectors associated with $(\lambda_j)_{j=1}^n$, then:

- $V = \text{span}\{\mathbf{u}_1, \dots, \mathbf{u}_k\}$ achieves the outer minimum
- $V = \text{span}\{\mathbf{u}_k, \dots, \mathbf{u}_n\}$ achieves the outer maximum

Cauchy interlacing theorem

A matrix $\mathbf{B}$ is a **compression** of $\mathbf{A}$ if $\mathbf{B} = \mathbf{Q}^* \mathbf{A} \mathbf{Q}$ for some $\mathbf{Q} \in \mathbb{C}^{n \times r}$ with orthonormal columns.

$$\mathbf{B} \in \mathbb{C}^{r \times r} \quad (r < n)$$

Cauchy interlacing theorem

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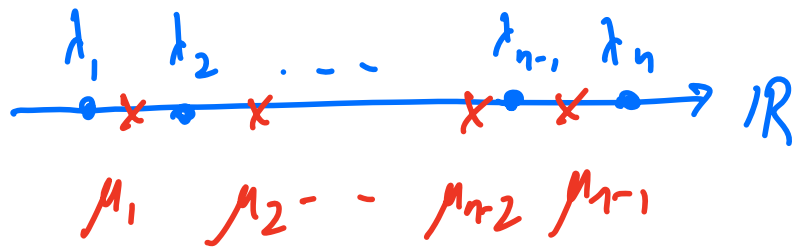
Just one consequence of the min-max theorem:

Theorem (Cauchy interlacing)

Let $\mathbf{B} \in \mathbb{C}^{(n-1) \times (n-1)}$ be a compression of a Hermitian matrix $\mathbf{A} \in \mathbb{C}^{n \times n}$. If $\mathbf{A}$ has eigenvalues $\lambda_1 \leq \lambda_2 \leq \dots \leq \lambda_n$, and $\mathbf{B}$ has eigenvalues $\mu_1 \leq \dots \leq \mu_{n-1}$, then

$$\lambda_j \leq \mu_j \leq \lambda_{j+1},$$

for all $j = 1, \dots, n-1$.



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