MULTIVARIABLE CALCULUS

MATH S-21A

Unit 14: Lagrange

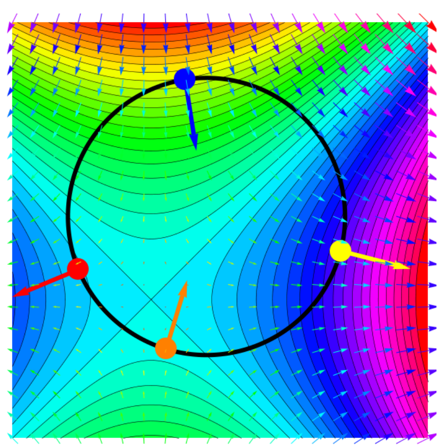
Lecture

14.1. When looking for maxima and minima of a function $f(x,y)$ in the presence of a **constraint** $g(x,y) = 0$, a necessary condition is that the gradients of f and g are parallel. The reason is that otherwise, we can move along the curve $g = c$ and increase the value of f. Indeed, the directional derivative of f in the direction tangent to the level curve is zero if and only if the tangent vector to g is perpendicular to the gradient of f. This can also include the case $\nabla g = [0,0]$.

Definition: The system of equations $\nabla f(x,y) = \lambda \nabla g(x,y), g(x,y) = 0$ for the three unknowns x, y, λ are called the **Lagrange equations**. The variable λ is a **Lagrange multiplier**.

Theorem: A maximum or minimum of $f(x,y)$ on the curve $g(x,y) = c$ is either a solution of the Lagrange equations or then is a critical point of g.

Proof. The condition that ∇f is parallel to ∇g either means $\nabla f = \lambda \nabla g$ or $\nabla f = 0$ or $\nabla g = 0$. The case $\nabla f = 0$ can be included in the Lagrange equation case with $\lambda = 0$. The case $\nabla g = 0$ however needs to be added as a special case because then only $\nabla g = \lambda \nabla f$ works with $\lambda = 0$. QED.



14.2. In higher dimensions, the statement is exactly the same: extrema of $f(\vec{x})$ under the constraint $g(\vec{x}) = c$ are either solutions of the Lagrange equations $\nabla f = \lambda \nabla g, g = c$ or points, where $\nabla g = \vec{0}$. But we also can have more than one constraint:

Theorem: Extrema of $f(x,y,z)$ under the constraint $g(x,y,z) = c, h(x,y,z) = d$ are either solutions of the Lagrange equations $\nabla f = \lambda \nabla g + \mu \nabla h, g = c, h = d$ or solutions to $\nabla g = 0, \nabla f(x,y,z) = \mu \nabla h, h = d$ or solutions to $\nabla h = 0, \nabla f = \lambda \nabla g, g = c$ or solutions to $\nabla g = \nabla h = 0$.

14.3. Remarks.
1) The conditions in the Lagrange theorem are equivalent to $\nabla f \times \nabla g = \vec{0}$ in dimensions 2 or 3.
2) With $g(x,y) = 0$, the Lagrange equations can also be written as $\nabla F(x,y,\lambda) = \vec{0}$, where $F(x,y,\lambda) = f(x,y) - \lambda g(x,y)$.
3) The two conditions in the theorem are equivalent to "$\nabla g = \lambda \nabla f$ or f has a critical point".
4) Constrained optimization problems work also in higher dimensions.
5) Can we avoid Lagrange? Sometimes. It is often done in single variable calculus. In order to maximize xy under the constraint $2x + 2y = 4$ for example, we solve for y in the second equation and extremize the single variable problem $f(x, y(x))$. This needs to be done carefully and the boundaries must be considered. To extremize $f(x,y) = y$ on $x^2 + y^2 = 1$ for example we need to maximize $\sqrt{1-x^2}$. We can differentiate to get the critical points but also have to look at the cases $x = 1$ and $x = -1$, where the actual minima and maxima occur. In general also, we can not do the substitution. To extremize $f(x,y) = x^2 + y^2$ with constraint $g(x,y) = x^4 + 3y^2 - 1 = 0$ for example, we solve $y^2 = (1 - x^4)/3$ and minimize $h(x) = f(x, y(x)) = x^2 + (1 - x^4)/3$. $h'(x) = 0$ gives $x = 0$. The find the maximum $(\pm 1, 0)$, we had to maximize $h(x)$ on $[-1, 1]$, which occurs at ± 1.
To extremize $f(x,y) = x^2 + y^2$ under the constraint $g(x,y) = p(x) + p(y) = 1$, where p is a complicated function in x which satisfies $p(0) = 0, p'(1) = 2$,the Lagrange equations $2x = \lambda p'(x), 2y = \lambda p'(y), p(x) + p(y) = 1$ can be solved with $x = 0, y = 1, \lambda = 1$. We can not solve $g(x,y) = 1$ however for y in an explicit way.
6) How do we determine whether a solution of the Lagrange equations is a maximum or minimum? Instead of introducing a second derivative test, we just make a list of critical points and pick the maximum and minimum. A second derivative test can be designed using second directional derivative in the direction of the tangent.
7) The Lagrange method also works with more constraints. The constraints $g = c, h = d$ define a curve in space. The gradient of f must now be in the plane spanned by the gradients of g and h because otherwise, we could move along the curve and increase f:

Examples

14.4. Minimize $f(x,y) = x^2 + 2y^2$ under the constraint $g(x,y) = x + y^2 = 1$. **Solution:** The Lagrange equations are $2x = \lambda, 4y = \lambda 2y$. If $y = 0$ then $x = 1$. If $y \neq 0$ we can divide the second equation by y and get $2x = \lambda, 4 = \lambda 2$ again showing $x = 1$. The point $x = 1, y = 0$ is the only solution.

14.5. Find the shortest distance from the origin to the curve $x^6 + 3y^2 = 1$. **Solution:** Minimize the function $f(x, y) = x^2 + y^2$ under the constraint $g(x, y) = x^6 + 3y^2 = 1$. The gradients are $\nabla f = [2x, 2y], \nabla g = [6x^5, 6y]$. The Lagrange equations $\nabla f = \lambda \nabla g$ lead to the system $2x = \lambda 6x^5, 2y = \lambda 6y, x^6 + 3y^2 - 1 = 0$. We get $\lambda = 1/3, x = x^5$, so that either $x = 0$ or 1 or -1. From the constraint equation $g = 1$, we obtain $y = \sqrt{(1 - x^6)/3}$. So, we have the solutions $(0, \pm\sqrt{1/3})$ and $(1, 0), (-1, 0)$. To see which is the minimum, just evaluate f on each of the points. $(0, \pm\sqrt{1/3})$ are the minima.

14.6. Which cylindrical soda cans of height h and radius r has minimal surface for fixed volume? **Solution:** The volume is $V(r, h) = h\pi r^2 = 1$. The surface area is $A(r, h) = 2\pi rh + 2\pi r^2$. With $x = h\pi, y = r$, you need to optimize $f(x, y) = 2xy + 2\pi y^2$ under the constrained $g(x, y) = xy^2 = 1$. Calculate $\nabla f(x, y) = (2y, 2x + 4\pi y), \nabla g(x, y) = (y^2, 2xy)$. The task is to solve $2y = \lambda y^2, 2x + 4\pi y = \lambda 2xy, xy^2 = 1$. The first equation gives $y\lambda = 2$. Putting that in the second one gives $2x + 4\pi y = 4x$ or $2\pi y = x$. The third equation finally reveals $2\pi y^3 = 1$ or $y = 1/(2\pi)^{1/3}, x = 2\pi(2\pi)^{1/3}$. This means $h = 0.54.., r = 2h = 1.08$. Remark: Other factors can influence the shape. For example, the can has to withstand a pressure up to 100 psi. A typical can of "Coca-Cola classic" with 3.7 volumes of CO_2 dissolve has at 75F an internal pressure of 55 psi, where PSI stands for pounds per square inch.

14.7. On the curve $g(x, y) = x^3 - y^2$ the function $f(x, y) = x$ obviously has a minimum $(0, 0)$. The Lagrange equations $\nabla f = \lambda \nabla g$ have no solutions. This is a case where the minimum is a solution to $\nabla g(x, y) = 0$.

14.8. Find the extrema of $f(x, y, z) = z$ on the sphere $g(x, y, z) = x^2 + y^2 + z^2 = 1$. Solution: compute the gradients $\nabla f(x, y, z) = (0, 0, 1)$, $\nabla g(x, y, z) = (2x, 2y, 2z)$ and solve $(0, 0, 1) = \nabla f = \lambda \nabla g = (2\lambda x, 2\lambda y, 2\lambda z), x^2 + y^2 + z^2 = 1$. The case $\lambda = 0$ is excluded by the third equation $1 = 2\lambda z$ so that the first two equations $2\lambda x = 0, 2\lambda y = 0$ give $x = 0, y = 0$. The 4'th equation gives $z = 1$ or $z = -1$. The minimum is the south pole $(0, 0, -1)$ the maximum the north pole $(0, 0, 1)$.

14.9. A dice shows k eyes with probability p_k with k in $\Omega = \{1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6\}$. A probability distribution is a non-negative function p on Ω which sums up to 1. It can be written as a vector $(p_1, p_2, p_3, p_4, p_5, p_6)$ with $p_1 + p_2 + p_3 + p_4 + p_5 + p_6 = 1$. The **entropy** of the probability vector $\vec{p}$ is defined as $f(\vec{p}) = -\sum_{i=1}^{6} p_i \log(p_i) = -p_1 \log(p_1) - p_2 \log(p_2) - ... - p_6 \log(p_6)$. Find the distribution p which maximizes entropy under the constrained $g(\vec{p}) = p_1 + p_2 + p_3 + p_4 + p_5 + p_6 = 1$. **Solution:** $\nabla f = (-1 - \log(p_1), \dots, -1 - \log(p_n))$, $\nabla g = (1, \dots, 1)$. The Lagrange equations are $-1 - \log(p_i) = \lambda, p_1 + \dots + p_6 = 1$, from which we get $p_i = e^{-(\lambda+1)}$. The last equation $1 = \sum_i \exp(-(\lambda+1)) = 6\exp(-(\lambda+1))$ fixes $\lambda = -\log(1/6) - 1$ so that $p_i = 1/6$. The distribution, where each event has the same probability is the distribution of maximal entropy. Maximal entropy means **least information content**. An unfair dice allows a cheating gambler or casino to gain profit. Cheating through asymmetric weight distributions can be avoided by making the dices transparent.

14.10. The probability that a chemical compound is in the state k is p_k. The energy of the state k is E_k. Nature tries to minimize the **free energy** $f(p_1, \dots, p_n) = -\sum_i p_i \log(p_i) + E_i p_i$ if the energies E_i are fixed. The probability distribution p_i minimizing this is called the **Gibbs distribution**. The constraint of course is $\sum_k p_k = 1$. We have $\nabla f = (-1 - \log(p_1) - E_1, \dots, -1 - \log(p_n) - E_n)$, $\nabla g = (1, \dots, 1)$. The Lagrange equation are $\log(p_i) = -1 - \lambda - E_i$, or $p_i = \exp(-E_i)C$, where $C = \exp(-1-\lambda)$. The constraint $g(p) = p_1 + \cdots + p_n = 1$ gives $C(\sum_i \exp(-E_i)) = 1$ so that $C = 1/(\sum_i e^{-E_i})$. The Gibbs solution is $p_k = \exp(-E_k)/\sum_i \exp(-E_i)$.

15. Homework

This homework is due on Tuesday, 7/19/2022.

Problem 14.1: A **solid bullet** made of a half sphere and a cylinder has the volume $V = 2\pi r^3/3 + \pi r^2 h$ and surface area $A = 2\pi r^2 + 2\pi r h + \pi r^2$. Doctor Manhattan designs a bullet with fixed volume and minimal area. With $g = 3V/\pi = 1$ and $f = A/\pi$ he therefore minimizes $f(h, r) = 3r^2 + 2rh$ under the constraint $g(h, r) = 2r^3 + 3r^2 h = 1$. Use the Lagrange method to find a local minimum of f under the constraint $g = 1$.

Problem 14.2: Find the cylindrical basket which is open on the top has has the largest volume for fixed area 3π. If x is the radius and y is the height, we have to extremize $f(x, y) = \pi x^2 y$ under the constraint $g(x, y) = 2\pi xy + \pi x^2 = 3\pi$. Use the method of Lagrange multipliers.

Problem 14.3: Find the extrema of the same function

$$f(x, y) = e^{-x^2-y^2}(x^2 + 2y^2)$$

you have seen in HW 13, but now on the entire disc $\{x^2 + y^2 \leq 4\ \}$ of radius 2. Besides the already found extrema **inside** the disk, now find also the extrema on the boundary.

Problem 14.4: Motivated by the Disney movie "Tangled", we want to build a hot air balloon with a cuboid mesh of dimension x, y, z which together with the top and bottom fortifications uses wires of total length $g(x, y, z) = 6x + 6y + 4z = 32$. Find the balloon with maximal volume $f(x, y, z) = xyz$.

Problem 14.5: Which pyramid of height h over a square $[-a, a] \times [-a, a]$ with surface area is $4a\sqrt{h^2 + a^2} + 4a^2 = 4$ has maximal volume $V(h, a) = 4ha^2/3$? By using new variables (x, y) and multiplying V with a constant, we get to the equivalent problem to maximize $f(x, y) = yx^2$ over the constraint $g(x, y) = x\sqrt{y^2 + x^2} + x^2 = 1$. Use the later variables.