

# Lecture 6: Value Function Approximation

David Silver

# Outline

1 Introduction

2 Incremental Methods



3 Batch Methods



# Outline

## 1 Introduction

## 2 Incremental Methods

## 3 Batch Methods

# Large-Scale Reinforcement Learning



Reinforcement learning can be used to solve *large problems*, e.g.

- Backgammon:  $10^{20}$  states
- Computer Go:  $10^{170}$  states
- Helicopter: continuous state space



# Large-Scale Reinforcement Learning

Reinforcement learning can be used to solve *large* problems, e.g.

- Backgammon:  $10^{20}$  states
- Computer Go:  $10^{170}$  states
- Helicopter: continuous state space

How can we scale up the model-free methods for *prediction* and *control* from the last two lectures?

# Value Function Approximation

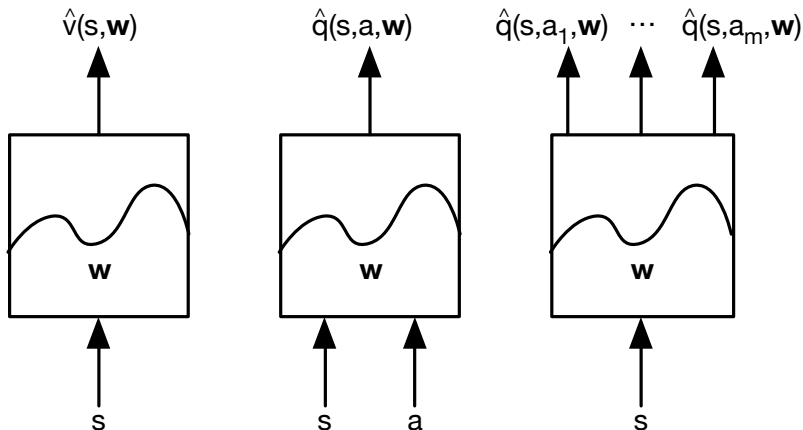
- So far we have represented value function by a *lookup table*
  - Every state  $s$  has an entry  $V(s)$
  - Or every state-action pair  $s, a$  has an entry  $Q(s, a)$
- Problem with large MDPs:
  - There are too many states and/or actions to store in memory
  - It is too slow to learn the value of each state individually
- Solution for large MDPs:
  - Estimate value function with *function approximation*

$$\hat{v}(s, \mathbf{w}) \approx v_{\pi}(s)$$
$$\text{or } \hat{q}(s, a, \mathbf{w}) \approx q_{\pi}(s, a)$$



- Generalise from seen states to unseen states
- Update parameter  $\mathbf{w}$  using MC or TD learning

# Types of Value Function Approximation



# Which Function Approximator?

There are many function approximators, e.g.

- Linear combinations of features
- Neural network
- Decision tree
- Nearest neighbour
- Fourier / wavelet bases
- ...



# Which Function Approximator?



We consider differentiable function approximators, e.g.

- Linear combinations of features
- Neural network
- Decision tree
- Nearest neighbour
- Fourier / wavelet bases
- ...

Furthermore, we require a training method that is suitable for **non-stationary**, **non-iid** data

# Outline

1 Introduction

2 Incremental Methods

3 Batch Methods

# Gradient Descent

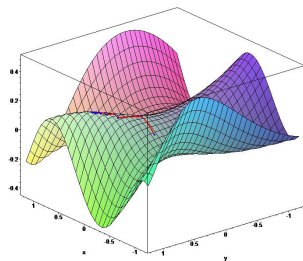
- Let  $J(\mathbf{w})$  be a differentiable function of parameter vector  $\mathbf{w}$
- Define the *gradient* of  $J(\mathbf{w})$  to be

$$\nabla_{\mathbf{w}} J(\mathbf{w}) = \begin{pmatrix} \frac{\partial J(\mathbf{w})}{\partial \mathbf{w}_1} \\ \vdots \\ \frac{\partial J(\mathbf{w})}{\partial \mathbf{w}_n} \end{pmatrix}$$

- To find a local minimum of  $J(\mathbf{w})$
- Adjust  $\mathbf{w}$  in direction of -ve gradient

$$\Delta \mathbf{w} = -\frac{1}{2} \alpha \nabla_{\mathbf{w}} J(\mathbf{w})$$

where  $\alpha$  is a step-size parameter



# Value Function Approx. By Stochastic Gradient Descent

- Goal: find parameter vector  $\mathbf{w}$  minimising mean-squared error between approximate value fn  $\hat{v}(s, \mathbf{w})$  and true value fn  $v_\pi(s)$

$$J(\mathbf{w}) = \mathbb{E}_\pi [(v_\pi(S) - \hat{v}(S, \mathbf{w}))^2]$$

- Gradient descent finds a local minimum

$$\begin{aligned}\Delta \mathbf{w} &= -\frac{1}{2} \alpha \nabla_{\mathbf{w}} J(\mathbf{w}) \\ &= \alpha \mathbb{E}_\pi [(v_\pi(S) - \hat{v}(S, \mathbf{w})) \nabla_{\mathbf{w}} \hat{v}(S, \mathbf{w})]\end{aligned}$$

- Stochastic gradient descent *samples* the gradient

$$\Delta \mathbf{w} = \alpha (v_\pi(S) - \hat{v}(S, \mathbf{w})) \nabla_{\mathbf{w}} \hat{v}(S, \mathbf{w})$$

- Expected update is equal to full gradient update

# Feature Vectors

- Represent state by a *feature vector*

$$\mathbf{x}(S) = \begin{pmatrix} \mathbf{x}_1(S) \\ \vdots \\ \mathbf{x}_n(S) \end{pmatrix}$$

- For example:

- Distance of robot from landmarks
- Trends in the stock market
- Piece and pawn configurations in chess



# Linear Value Function Approximation

- Represent value function by a linear combination of features

$$\hat{v}(S, \mathbf{w}) = \mathbf{x}(S)^\top \mathbf{w} = \sum_{j=1}^n \mathbf{x}_j(S) \mathbf{w}_j$$

- Objective function is quadratic in parameters  $\mathbf{w}$

$$J(\mathbf{w}) = \mathbb{E}_\pi \left[ (v_\pi(S) - \mathbf{x}(S)^\top \mathbf{w})^2 \right]$$

- Stochastic gradient descent converges on *global* optimum
- Update rule is particularly simple

$$\nabla_{\mathbf{w}} \hat{v}(S, \mathbf{w}) = \mathbf{x}(S)$$

$$\Delta \mathbf{w} = \alpha (v_\pi(S) - \hat{v}(S, \mathbf{w})) \mathbf{x}(S)$$

Update = *step-size*  $\times$  *prediction error*  $\times$  *feature value*

# Table Lookup Features

- Table lookup is a special case of linear value function approximation
- Using *table lookup features*



$$\mathbf{x}^{table}(S) = \begin{pmatrix} \mathbf{1}(S = s_1) \\ \vdots \\ \mathbf{1}(S = s_n) \end{pmatrix}$$

- Parameter vector  $\mathbf{w}$  gives value of each individual state

$$\hat{v}(S, \mathbf{w}) = \begin{pmatrix} \mathbf{1}(S = s_1) \\ \vdots \\ \mathbf{1}(S = s_n) \end{pmatrix} \cdot \begin{pmatrix} \mathbf{w}_1 \\ \vdots \\ \mathbf{w}_n \end{pmatrix}$$

# Incremental Prediction Algorithms

- Have assumed true value function  $v_\pi(s)$  given by supervisor
- But in RL there is no supervisor, only rewards
- In practice, we substitute a *target* for  $v_\pi(s)$ 
  - For MC, the target is the return  $G_t$

$$\Delta \mathbf{w} = \alpha(\textcolor{red}{G}_t - \hat{v}(S_t, \mathbf{w})) \nabla_{\mathbf{w}} \hat{v}(S_t, \mathbf{w})$$

- For TD(0), the target is the TD target  $R_{t+1} + \gamma \hat{v}(S_{t+1}, \mathbf{w})$

$$\Delta \mathbf{w} = \alpha(\textcolor{red}{R}_{t+1} + \gamma \hat{v}(S_{t+1}, \mathbf{w}) - \hat{v}(S_t, \mathbf{w})) \nabla_{\mathbf{w}} \hat{v}(S_t, \mathbf{w})$$

- For TD( $\lambda$ ), the target is the  $\lambda$ -return  $G_t^\lambda$

$$\Delta \mathbf{w} = \alpha(\textcolor{red}{G}_t^\lambda - \hat{v}(S_t, \mathbf{w})) \nabla_{\mathbf{w}} \hat{v}(S_t, \mathbf{w})$$



# Monte-Carlo with Value Function Approximation

- Return  $G_t$  is an unbiased, noisy sample of true value  $v_\pi(S_t)$
- Can therefore apply supervised learning to “training data”:

$$\langle S_1, G_1 \rangle, \langle S_2, G_2 \rangle, \dots, \langle S_T, G_T \rangle$$

- For example, using *linear Monte-Carlo policy evaluation*

$$\begin{aligned}\Delta \mathbf{w} &= \alpha(\textcolor{red}{G}_t - \hat{v}(S_t, \mathbf{w})) \nabla_{\mathbf{w}} \hat{v}(S_t, \mathbf{w}) \\ &= \alpha(G_t - \hat{v}(S_t, \mathbf{w})) \mathbf{x}(S_t)\end{aligned}$$

- Monte-Carlo evaluation converges to a local optimum
- Even when using non-linear value function approximation

# TD Learning with Value Function Approximation

- The TD-target  $R_{t+1} + \gamma \hat{v}(S_{t+1}, \mathbf{w})$  is a *biased* sample of true value  $v_\pi(S_t)$
- Can still apply supervised learning to “training data”:

$$\langle S_1, R_2 + \gamma \hat{v}(S_2, \mathbf{w}) \rangle, \langle S_2, R_3 + \gamma \hat{v}(S_3, \mathbf{w}) \rangle, \dots, \langle S_{T-1}, R_T \rangle$$



- For example, using *linear*  $TD(0)$

$$\begin{aligned} \Delta \mathbf{w} &= \alpha (\mathbf{R} + \gamma \hat{v}(S', \mathbf{w}) - \hat{v}(S, \mathbf{w})) \nabla_{\mathbf{w}} \hat{v}(S, \mathbf{w}) \\ &= \alpha \delta \mathbf{x}(S) \end{aligned}$$

- Linear  $TD(0)$  converges (close) to global optimum

# TD( $\lambda$ ) with Value Function Approximation

- The  $\lambda$ -return  $G_t^\lambda$  is also a biased sample of true value  $v_\pi(s)$
- Can again apply supervised learning to “training data”:

$$\langle S_1, G_1^\lambda \rangle, \langle S_2, G_2^\lambda \rangle, \dots, \langle S_{T-1}, G_{T-1}^\lambda \rangle$$

- Forward view linear TD( $\lambda$ )

$$\begin{aligned}\Delta \mathbf{w} &= \alpha(\mathbf{G}_t^\lambda - \hat{v}(S_t, \mathbf{w})) \nabla_{\mathbf{w}} \hat{v}(S_t, \mathbf{w}) \\ &= \alpha(\mathbf{G}_t^\lambda - \hat{v}(S_t, \mathbf{w})) \mathbf{x}(S_t)\end{aligned}$$

- Backward view linear TD( $\lambda$ )

$$\begin{aligned}\delta_t &= R_{t+1} + \gamma \hat{v}(S_{t+1}, \mathbf{w}) - \hat{v}(S_t, \mathbf{w}) \\ E_t &= \gamma \lambda E_{t-1} + \mathbf{x}(S_t) \\ \Delta \mathbf{w} &= \alpha \delta_t E_t\end{aligned}$$

# TD( $\lambda$ ) with Value Function Approximation

- The  $\lambda$ -return  $G_t^\lambda$  is also a biased sample of true value  $v_\pi(s)$
- Can again apply supervised learning to “training data”:

$$\langle S_1, G_1^\lambda \rangle, \langle S_2, G_2^\lambda \rangle, \dots, \langle S_{T-1}, G_{T-1}^\lambda \rangle$$

- Forward view linear TD( $\lambda$ )

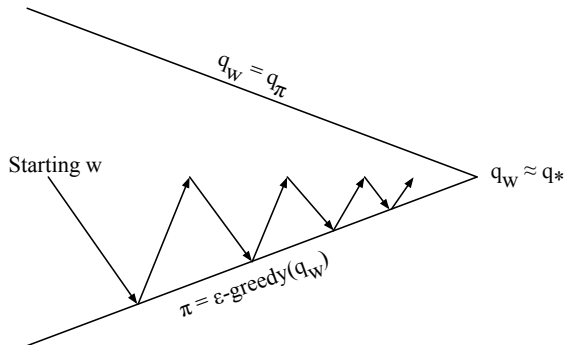
$$\begin{aligned}\Delta \mathbf{w} &= \alpha(\mathbf{G}_t^\lambda - \hat{v}(S_t, \mathbf{w})) \nabla_{\mathbf{w}} \hat{v}(S_t, \mathbf{w}) \\ &= \alpha(\mathbf{G}_t^\lambda - \hat{v}(S_t, \mathbf{w})) \mathbf{x}(S_t)\end{aligned}$$

- Backward view linear TD( $\lambda$ )

$$\begin{aligned}\delta_t &= R_{t+1} + \gamma \hat{v}(S_{t+1}, \mathbf{w}) - \hat{v}(S_t, \mathbf{w}) \\ E_t &= \gamma \lambda E_{t-1} + \mathbf{x}(S_t) \\ \Delta \mathbf{w} &= \alpha \delta_t E_t\end{aligned}$$

Forward view and backward view linear TD( $\lambda$ ) are equivalent

# Control with Value Function Approximation



Policy evaluation **Approximate** policy evaluation,  $\hat{q}(\cdot, \cdot, \mathbf{w}) \approx q_\pi$

Policy improvement  $\epsilon$ -greedy policy improvement

## Action-Value Function Approximation

- Approximate the action-value function

$$\hat{q}(S, A, \mathbf{w}) \approx q_{\pi}(S, A)$$

- Minimise mean-squared error between approximate action-value fn  $\hat{q}(S, A, \mathbf{w})$  and true action-value fn  $q_{\pi}(S, A)$

$$J(\mathbf{w}) = \mathbb{E}_{\pi} [(q_{\pi}(S, A) - \hat{q}(S, A, \mathbf{w}))^2]$$

- Use stochastic gradient descent to find a local minimum

$$-\frac{1}{2} \nabla_{\mathbf{w}} J(\mathbf{w}) = (q_{\pi}(S, A) - \hat{q}(S, A, \mathbf{w})) \nabla_{\mathbf{w}} \hat{q}(S, A, \mathbf{w})$$

$$\Delta \mathbf{w} = \alpha (q_{\pi}(S, A) - \hat{q}(S, A, \mathbf{w})) \nabla_{\mathbf{w}} \hat{q}(S, A, \mathbf{w})$$

# Linear Action-Value Function Approximation

- Represent state *and* action by a *feature vector*

$$\mathbf{x}(S, A) = \begin{pmatrix} \mathbf{x}_1(S, A) \\ \vdots \\ \mathbf{x}_n(S, A) \end{pmatrix}$$

- Represent action-value fn by linear combination of features

$$\hat{q}(S, A, \mathbf{w}) = \mathbf{x}(S, A)^\top \mathbf{w} = \sum_{j=1}^n \mathbf{x}_j(S, A) \mathbf{w}_j$$

- Stochastic gradient descent update

$$\nabla_{\mathbf{w}} \hat{q}(S, A, \mathbf{w}) = \mathbf{x}(S, A)$$

$$\Delta \mathbf{w} = \alpha (q_\pi(S, A) - \hat{q}(S, A, \mathbf{w})) \mathbf{x}(S, A)$$

# Incremental Control Algorithms

- Like prediction, we must substitute a *target* for  $q_\pi(S, A)$ 
  - For MC, the target is the return  $G_t$

$$\Delta \mathbf{w} = \alpha(\mathbf{G}_t - \hat{q}(S_t, A_t, \mathbf{w})) \nabla_{\mathbf{w}} \hat{q}(S_t, A_t, \mathbf{w})$$

- For TD(0), the target is the TD target  $R_{t+1} + \gamma Q(S_{t+1}, A_{t+1})$

$$\Delta \mathbf{w} = \alpha(\mathbf{R}_{t+1} + \gamma \hat{q}(S_{t+1}, A_{t+1}, \mathbf{w}) - \hat{q}(S_t, A_t, \mathbf{w})) \nabla_{\mathbf{w}} \hat{q}(S_t, A_t, \mathbf{w})$$

- For forward-view TD( $\lambda$ ), target is the action-value  $\lambda$ -return

$$\Delta \mathbf{w} = \alpha(\mathbf{q}_t^\lambda - \hat{q}(S_t, A_t, \mathbf{w})) \nabla_{\mathbf{w}} \hat{q}(S_t, A_t, \mathbf{w})$$

- For backward-view TD( $\lambda$ ), equivalent update is

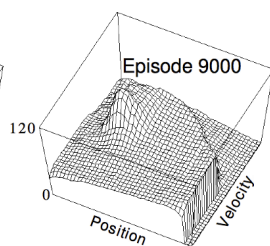
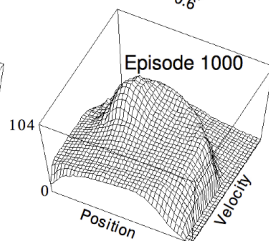
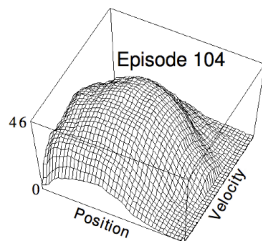
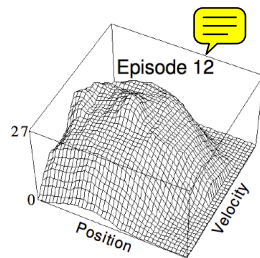
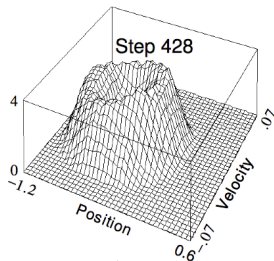
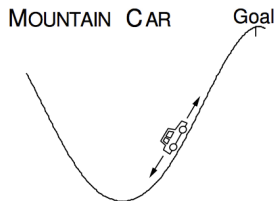
$$\delta_t = R_{t+1} + \gamma \hat{q}(S_{t+1}, A_{t+1}, \mathbf{w}) - \hat{q}(S_t, A_t, \mathbf{w})$$

$$E_t = \gamma \lambda E_{t-1} + \nabla_{\mathbf{w}} \hat{q}(S_t, A_t, \mathbf{w})$$

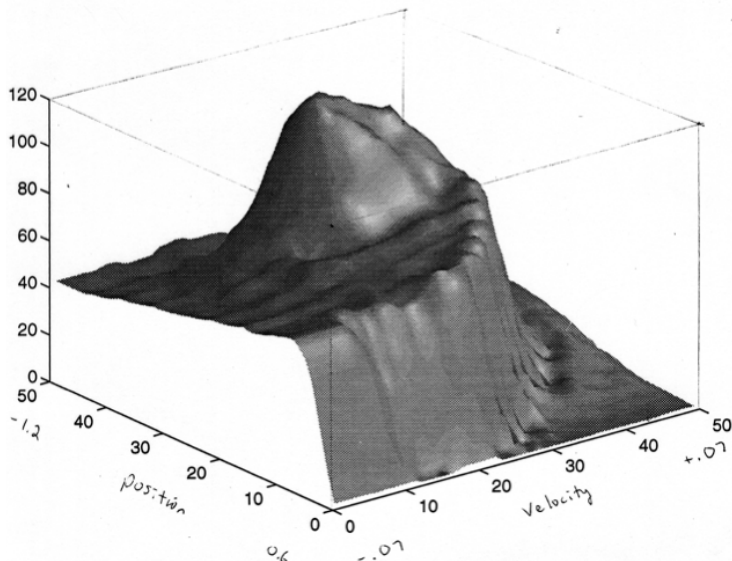
$$\Delta \mathbf{w} = \alpha \delta_t E_t$$



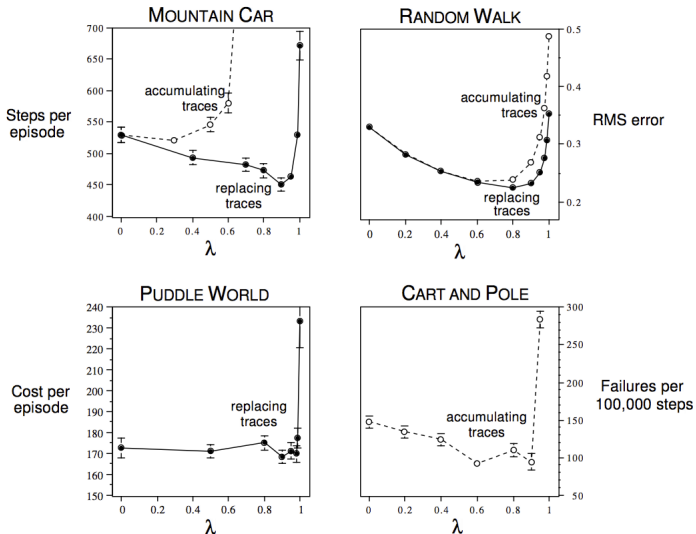
# Linear Sarsa with Coarse Coding in Mountain Car



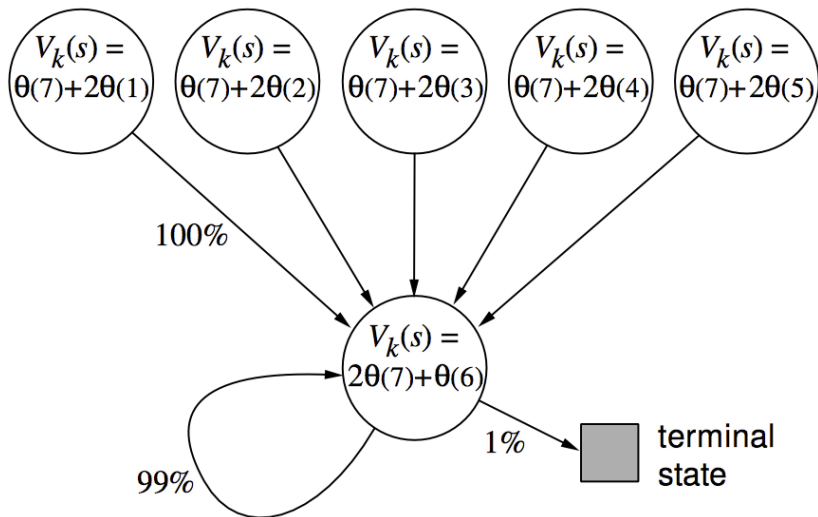
# Linear Sarsa with Radial Basis Functions in Mountain Car



# Study of $\lambda$ : Should We Bootstrap?

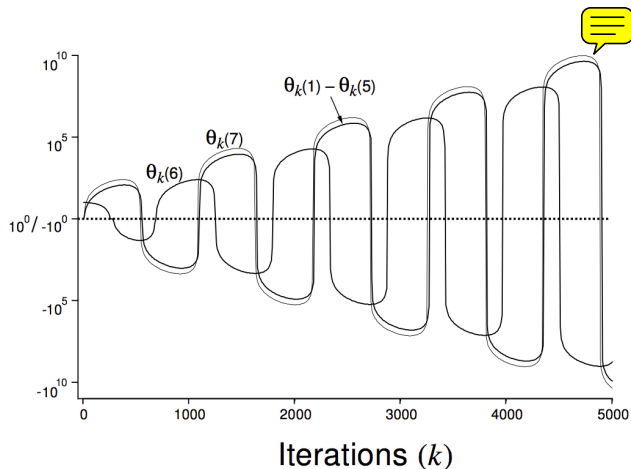


# Baird's Counterexample



# Parameter Divergence in Baird's Counterexample

Parameter  
values,  $\theta_k(i)$   
(log scale,  
broken at  $\pm 1$ )



# Convergence of Prediction Algorithms


On/Off-Policy	Algorithm	Table Lookup	Linear	Non-Linear
On-Policy	MC	✓	✓	✓
	TD(0)	✓	✓	✗
	TD( $\lambda$ )	✓	✓	✗
Off-Policy	MC	✓	✓	✓
	TD(0)	✓	✗	✗
	TD( $\lambda$ )	✓	✗	✗

# Gradient Temporal-Difference Learning

- TD does not follow the gradient of *any* objective function
- This is why TD can diverge when off-policy or using non-linear function approximation
- Gradient TD follows true gradient of projected Bellman error**

On/Off-Policy	Algorithm	Table Lookup	Linear	Non-Linear
On-Policy	MC	✓	✓	✓
	TD	✓	✓	✗
	Gradient TD	✓	✓	✓
Off-Policy	MC	✓	✓	✓
	TD	✓	✗	✗
	Gradient TD	✓	✓	✓

# Convergence of Control Algorithms

Algorithm	Table Lookup	Linear	Non-Linear
Monte-Carlo Control	✓	(✓) 	✗
Sarsa	✓	(✓)	✗
Q-learning	✓	✗	✗
Gradient Q-learning	✓	✓	✗

(✓) = chatters around near-optimal value function



# Outline

1 Introduction

2 Incremental Methods

**3 Batch Methods**

# Batch Reinforcement Learning



- Gradient descent is simple and appealing
- But it is *not* sample efficient
- Batch methods seek to find the best fitting value function
- Given the agent's experience ("training data")

# Least Squares Prediction

- Given value function approximation  $\hat{v}(s, \mathbf{w}) \approx v_\pi(s)$
- And *experience*  $\mathcal{D}$  consisting of  $\langle \text{state}, \text{value} \rangle$  pairs

$$\mathcal{D} = \{ \langle s_1, v_1^\pi \rangle, \langle s_2, v_2^\pi \rangle, \dots, \langle s_T, v_T^\pi \rangle \}$$

- Which parameters  $\mathbf{w}$  give the *best fitting* value fn  $\hat{v}(s, \mathbf{w})$ ?
- Least squares algorithms find parameter vector  $\mathbf{w}$  minimising sum-squared error between  $\hat{v}(s_t, \mathbf{w})$  and target values  $v_t^\pi$ ,

$$\begin{aligned} LS(\mathbf{w}) &= \sum_{t=1}^T (v_t^\pi - \hat{v}(s_t, \mathbf{w}))^2 \\ &= \mathbb{E}_{\mathcal{D}} [(v^\pi - \hat{v}(s, \mathbf{w}))^2] \end{aligned}$$

# Stochastic Gradient Descent with Experience Replay

Given experience consisting of  $\langle \text{state}, \text{value} \rangle$  pairs

$$\mathcal{D} = \{ \langle s_1, v_1^\pi \rangle, \langle s_2, v_2^\pi \rangle, \dots, \langle s_T, v_T^\pi \rangle \}$$

Repeat:

- 1 Sample state, value from experience

$$\langle s, v^\pi \rangle \sim \mathcal{D}$$

- 2 Apply stochastic gradient descent update

$$\Delta \mathbf{w} = \alpha (v^\pi - \hat{v}(s, \mathbf{w})) \nabla_{\mathbf{w}} \hat{v}(s, \mathbf{w})$$

# Stochastic Gradient Descent with Experience Replay

Given experience consisting of  $\langle \text{state}, \text{value} \rangle$  pairs

$$\mathcal{D} = \{ \langle s_1, v_1^\pi \rangle, \langle s_2, v_2^\pi \rangle, \dots, \langle s_T, v_T^\pi \rangle \}$$

Repeat:

- 1 Sample state, value from experience

$$\langle s, v^\pi \rangle \sim \mathcal{D}$$

- 2 Apply stochastic gradient descent update

$$\Delta \mathbf{w} = \alpha (v^\pi - \hat{v}(s, \mathbf{w})) \nabla_{\mathbf{w}} \hat{v}(s, \mathbf{w})$$

Converges to least squares solution

$$\mathbf{w}^\pi = \underset{\mathbf{w}}{\operatorname{argmin}} LS(\mathbf{w})$$

# Experience Replay in Deep Q-Networks (DQN)

DQN uses **experience replay** and **fixed Q-targets**



- Take action  $a_t$  according to  $\epsilon$ -greedy policy
- Store transition  $(s_t, a_t, r_{t+1}, s_{t+1})$  in replay memory  $\mathcal{D}$
- Sample random mini-batch of transitions  $(s, a, r, s')$  from  $\mathcal{D}$
- Compute Q-learning targets w.r.t. old, fixed parameters  $w^-$
- Optimise MSE between Q-network and Q-learning targets



$$\mathcal{L}_i(w_i) = \mathbb{E}_{s,a,r,s' \sim \mathcal{D}_i} \left[ \left( r + \gamma \max_{a'} Q(s', a'; w_i^-) - Q(s, a; w_i) \right)^2 \right]$$

- Using variant of stochastic gradient descent



# DQN in Atari

- End-to-end learning of values  $Q(s, a)$  from pixels  $s$
- Input state  $s$  is stack of raw pixels from last 4 frames
- Output is  $Q(s, a)$  for 18 joystick/button positions
- Reward is change in score for that step



Network architecture and hyperparameters fixed across all games

# DQN Results in Atari





# How much does DQN help?

	Replay Fixed-Q	Replay Q-learning	No replay Fixed-Q	No replay Q-learning
Breakout	316.81	240.73	10.16	3.17
Enduro	1006.3	831.25	141.89	29.1
River Raid	7446.62	4102.81	2867.66	1453.02
Seaquest	2894.4	822.55	1003	275.81
Space Invaders	1088.94	826.33	373.22	301.99

# Linear Least Squares Prediction

- Experience replay finds least squares solution
- But it may take many iterations
- Using *linear* value function approximation  $\hat{v}(s, \mathbf{w}) = \mathbf{x}(s)^\top \mathbf{w}$
- We can solve the least squares solution directly

## Linear Least Squares Prediction (2)

- At minimum of  $LS(\mathbf{w})$ , the expected update must be zero

$$\mathbb{E}_{\mathcal{D}} [\Delta \mathbf{w}] = 0$$

$$\alpha \sum_{t=1}^T \mathbf{x}(s_t)(v_t^{\pi} - \mathbf{x}(s_t)^{\top} \mathbf{w}) = 0$$

$$\sum_{t=1}^T \mathbf{x}(s_t) v_t^{\pi} = \sum_{t=1}^T \mathbf{x}(s_t) \mathbf{x}(s_t)^{\top} \mathbf{w}$$



$$\mathbf{w} = \left( \sum_{t=1}^T \mathbf{x}(s_t) \mathbf{x}(s_t)^{\top} \right)^{-1} \sum_{t=1}^T \mathbf{x}(s_t) v_t^{\pi}$$

- For  $N$  features, direct solution time is  $O(N^3)$
- Incremental solution time is  $O(N^2)$  using Sherman-Morrison

# Linear Least Squares Prediction Algorithms

- We do not know true values  $v_t^\pi$
- In practice, our “training data” must use noisy or biased samples of  $v_t^\pi$

**LSMC** Least Squares Monte-Carlo uses return

$$v_t^\pi \approx G_t$$

**LSTD** Least Squares Temporal-Difference uses TD target

$$v_t^\pi \approx R_{t+1} + \gamma \hat{v}(S_{t+1}, \mathbf{w})$$

**LSTD( $\lambda$ )** Least Squares TD( $\lambda$ ) uses  $\lambda$ -return

$$v_t^\pi \approx G_t^\lambda$$

- In each case solve directly for fixed point of MC / TD / TD( $\lambda$ )

# Linear Least Squares Prediction Algorithms (2)

LSMC

$$0 = \sum_{t=1}^T \alpha (G_t - \hat{v}(S_t, \mathbf{w})) \mathbf{x}(S_t)$$

$$\mathbf{w} = \left( \sum_{t=1}^T \mathbf{x}(S_t) \mathbf{x}(S_t)^\top \right)^{-1} \sum_{t=1}^T \mathbf{x}(S_t) G_t$$

LSTD

$$0 = \sum_{t=1}^T \alpha (R_{t+1} + \gamma \hat{v}(S_{t+1}, \mathbf{w}) - \hat{v}(S_t, \mathbf{w})) \mathbf{x}(S_t)$$

$$\mathbf{w} = \left( \sum_{t=1}^T \mathbf{x}(S_t) (\mathbf{x}(S_t) - \gamma \mathbf{x}(S_{t+1}))^\top \right)^{-1} \sum_{t=1}^T \mathbf{x}(S_t) R_{t+1}$$

LSTD( $\lambda$ )

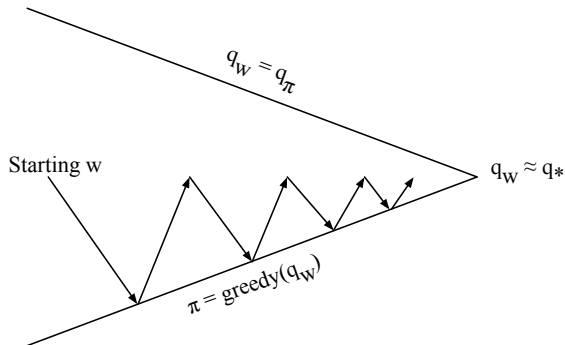
$$0 = \sum_{t=1}^T \alpha \delta_t E_t$$

$$\mathbf{w} = \left( \sum_{t=1}^T E_t (\mathbf{x}(S_t) - \gamma \mathbf{x}(S_{t+1}))^\top \right)^{-1} \sum_{t=1}^T E_t R_{t+1}$$

# Convergence of Linear Least Squares Prediction Algorithms

On/Off-Policy	Algorithm	Table Lookup	Linear	Non-Linear
On-Policy	MC	✓	✓	✓
	LSMC	✓	✓	-
	TD	✓	✓	✗
	LSTD	✓	✓	-
Off-Policy	MC	✓	✓	✓
	LSMC	✓	✓	-
	TD	✓	✗	✗
	LSTD	✓	✓	-

# Least Squares Policy Iteration



Policy evaluation Policy evaluation by least squares Q-learning

Policy improvement Greedy policy improvement

# Least Squares Action-Value Function Approximation

- Approximate action-value function  $q_\pi(s, a)$
- using linear combination of features  $\mathbf{x}(s, a)$

$$\hat{q}(s, a, \mathbf{w}) = \mathbf{x}(s, a)^\top \mathbf{w} \approx q_\pi(s, a)$$

- Minimise least squares error between  $\hat{q}(s, a, \mathbf{w})$  and  $q_\pi(s, a)$
- from experience generated using policy  $\pi$
- consisting of  $\langle (state, action), value \rangle$  pairs

$$\mathcal{D} = \{ \langle (s_1, a_1), v_1^\pi \rangle, \langle (s_2, a_2), v_2^\pi \rangle, \dots, \langle (s_T, a_T), v_T^\pi \rangle \}$$



# Least Squares Control

- For policy evaluation, we want to efficiently use all experience
- For control, we also want to improve the policy
- This experience is generated from many policies
- So to evaluate  $q_\pi(S, A)$  we must learn **off-policy**
- We use the same idea as Q-learning:
  - Use experience generated by old policy  
 $S_t, A_t, R_{t+1}, S_{t+1} \sim \pi_{old}$
  - Consider alternative successor action  $A' = \pi_{new}(S_{t+1})$
  - Update  $\hat{q}(S_t, A_t, \mathbf{w})$  towards value of alternative action  
 $R_{t+1} + \gamma \hat{q}(S_{t+1}, A', \mathbf{w})$

# Least Squares Q-Learning

- Consider the following linear Q-learning update

$$\begin{aligned}\delta &= R_{t+1} + \gamma \hat{q}(S_{t+1}, \pi(S_{t+1}), \mathbf{w}) - \hat{q}(S_t, A_t, \mathbf{w}) \\ \Delta \mathbf{w} &= \alpha \delta \mathbf{x}(S_t, A_t)\end{aligned}$$

- LSTDQ algorithm: solve for total update = zero

$$0 = \sum_{t=1}^T \alpha (R_{t+1} + \gamma \hat{q}(S_{t+1}, \pi(S_{t+1}), \mathbf{w}) - \hat{q}(S_t, A_t, \mathbf{w})) \mathbf{x}(S_t, A_t)$$

$$\mathbf{w} = \left( \sum_{t=1}^T \mathbf{x}(S_t, A_t) (\mathbf{x}(S_t, A_t) - \gamma \mathbf{x}(S_{t+1}, \pi(S_{t+1})))^\top \right)^{-1} \sum_{t=1}^T \mathbf{x}(S_t, A_t) R_{t+1}$$

# Least Squares Policy Iteration Algorithm

- The following pseudocode uses LSTDQ for policy evaluation
- It repeatedly re-evaluates experience  $\mathcal{D}$  with different policies

**function LSPI-TD**( $\mathcal{D}, \pi_0$ )

$\pi' \leftarrow \pi_0$

**repeat**

$\pi \leftarrow \pi'$

$Q \leftarrow \text{LSTDQ}(\pi, \mathcal{D})$

**for all**  $s \in \mathcal{S}$  **do**

$\pi'(s) \leftarrow \underset{a \in \mathcal{A}}{\operatorname{argmax}} Q(s, a)$

**end for**

**until** ( $\pi \approx \pi'$ )

**return**  $\pi$

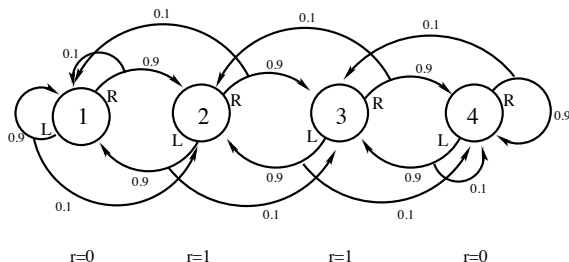
**end function**

# Convergence of Control Algorithms

Algorithm	Table Lookup	Linear	Non-Linear
Monte-Carlo Control	✓	(✓)	✗
Sarsa	✓	(✓)	✗
Q-learning	✓	✗	✗
LSPI	✓	(✓)	-

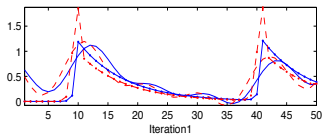
(✓) = chatters around near-optimal value function

# Chain Walk Example

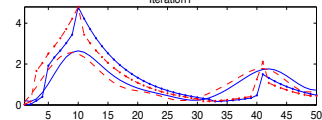


- Consider the 50 state version of this problem
- Reward  $+1$  in states 10 and 41, 0 elsewhere
- Optimal policy: R (1-9), L (10-25), R (26-41), L (42, 50)
- Features: 10 evenly spaced Gaussians ( $\sigma = 4$ ) for each action
- Experience: 10,000 steps from random walk policy

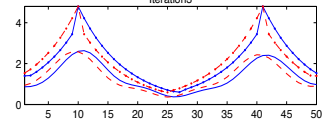
# LSPI in Chain Walk: Action-Value Function



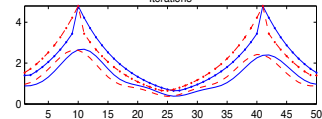
Iteration1



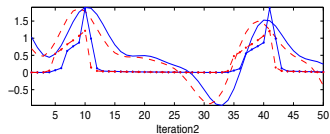
Iteration3



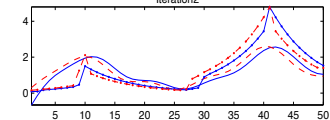
Iteration5



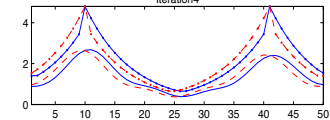
Iteration7



Iteration2

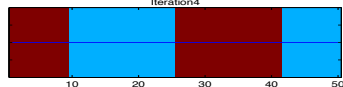
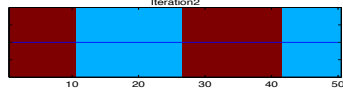
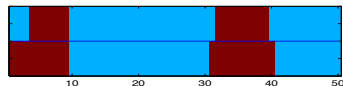
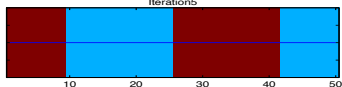
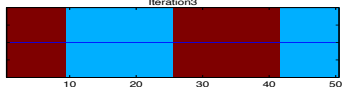
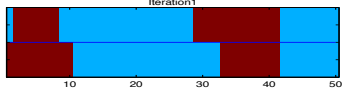
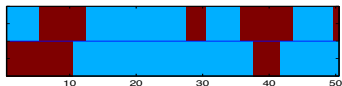


Iteration4



Iteration6

# LSPI in Chain Walk: Policy



# Questions?