# Computational Decision Making for Regular People

## *01: Introduction*

October 15, 2024

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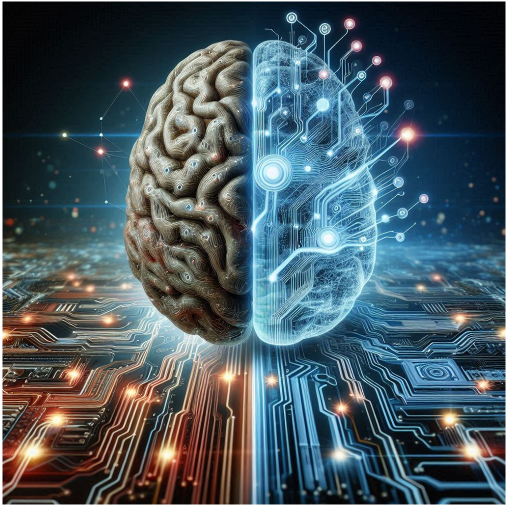
# Today's Outline

1. Mathematical Modeling
2. Optimization
3. What kinds of things can be optimized?
4. General form of an optimization problem
5. A note on optimization theory
6. How to formulate an optimization problem
   - 6.1 The objective function
   - 6.2 Decision variables
   - 6.3 Parameters
   - 6.4 Constraints
7. Basic Examples



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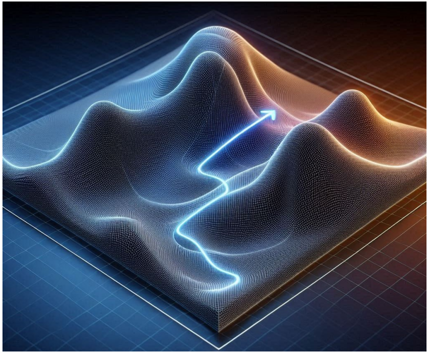
# Mathematical Modeling

| How we think about a problem | How a computer thinks about a problem |
|---|---|
| ▶ Consider what a good outcome looks like<br>▶ Consider different ramifications of different decisions<br>▶ utilitarian ethics, virtue ethics, deontological ethics, ... | ▶ Quantify the quality of a solution<br>▶ Combine all ramifications into one quantity<br>▶ utilitarian objective only* |
| ▶ Discrete decisions (yes/no, 1,2,3, etc.)<br>▶ Continuous decisions<br>▶ Constraints against undesirable or infeasible decisions | ▶ Discrete decisions (yes/no, 1,2,3, etc.)<br>▶ Continuous decisions<br>▶ Constraints against undesirable or infeasible decisions |

# Optimization

*the action of making the best or most effective use of a situation or resource.*[1]

- Given a set of possible decisions, determine the best one(s)
- The way this determination is made depends on the nature of the set of decisions
  - If a human is executing this determination, the procedure will be unique to that person
  - If a computer algorithm is executing this determination, the procedure will be unique to that computer algorithm



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[1] Oxford Languages

# What Kinds of Things Can Be Optimized?

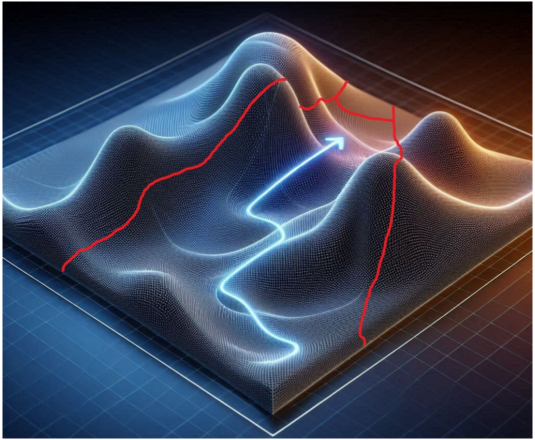
- What kinds of things can be optimized (using a computer)?
- If you can represent it using mathematical modeling, it (theoretically) can be optimized.
- Some problems are still too difficult for even modern computer algorithms to solve
  - Problems with lots and lots of variables
  - Problems with lots and lots of constraints
  - Problems that "don't behave well"
    - Lots of really good outcomes that lie very close to really bad outcomes
    - Lots of outcomes that are equally good
    - Good outcomes that are separated by bad outcomes
    - Really nuanced constraints
    - etc.

# General Form of an Optimization Problem

$$\min_{\overline{X}} f(\overline{X})$$

$$- - - \ subject \ to \ (s.t.) \ - - -$$

$$\overline{X} \in \mathbf{S}$$



- We must define:
  - $\overline{X}$
  - $f(\overline{X})$
  - $\mathbf{S}$

# Optimization Theory

- This is a very active field of research
- It gets quite complicated and "mathy" very quickly
- I'll only emphasize two points:

$$\min_{\overline{X}} f(\overline{X})$$

$$s.t.\ \overline{X} \in \mathbf{S}$$

**If we can keep $f(\overline{X})$ and S as linear as possible, the computer algorithms are MUCH faster.**

**If we can't keep things linear, "Bilinear" is the next best thing.**

- Linear: $\alpha X + \beta Y + \gamma Z$
- Bilinear: $\alpha XY$ or $\alpha X^2$
- Non-linear:
  - $\alpha\sqrt{X}$
  - $\alpha \log(X)$
  - etc.

# Formulating Optimization Problems

Key Elements:

In order how I would conceptualize them:

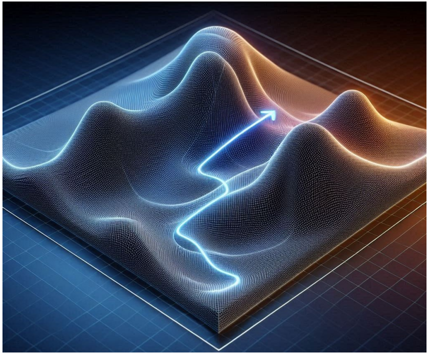
1. Objective Function ($f(\overline{X})$)
2. Decision Variables ($\overline{X}$)
3. Parameters ($\overline{\alpha}$)
4. Constraints ($\mathbf{S}$)

In order how I would write / code them:

1. Sets
2. Parameters ($\overline{\alpha}$)
3. Decision Variables ($\overline{X}$)
4. Constraints ($\mathbf{S}$)
5. Objective Function ($f(\overline{X})$)

# Objective Function ($f(\overline{X})$)

- What am I trying to accomplish?
- What am I trying to minimize (or maximize)?
- How do different decisions change the outcome?



Examples:

- Minimize cost
- Minimize risk
- Maximize probability of reaching a goal
- Maximize comfort

# Decision Variables ($\overline{X}$)

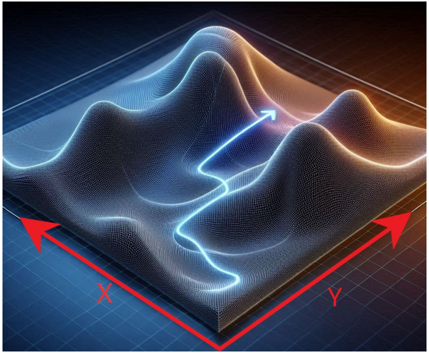
- What decisions can I make?
- In what parts of this problem is there any flexibility?

Important Note:

- Be open-minded here: often the best way to formulate a problem is to consider each individual part of a problem as it's own variable.
- Don't just consider the main decisions, consider the smaller decisions that contribute to (or even strictly define) the main decisions

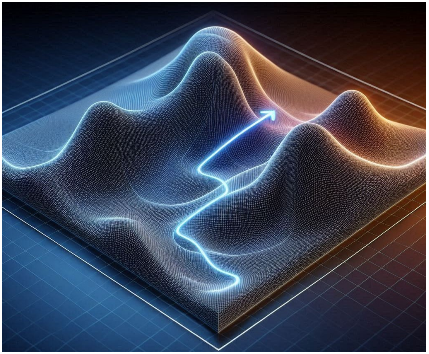
Examples:

- How much of a certain item to buy
- How much of a budget category to allot for that item



# Parameters ($\overline{\alpha}$)

- What parts of the problem are fixed or immovable?
- While the Objective function defines the general shape of the mountain, the parameters define the height of the peaks, the steepness of the slopes, etc.



Examples:

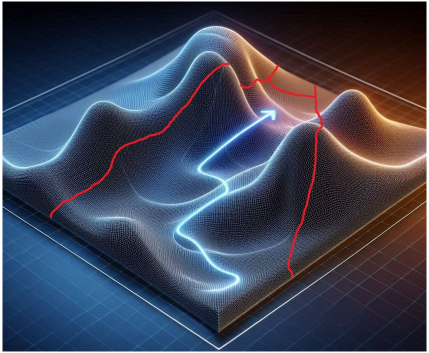
- Cost of a certain item
- Total amount of time available
- The minimum probability of reaching a goal that we are willing to accept

# Constraints (**S**)

- What sets of decisions are incompatible?
- What is the nature of an individual decision? (Binary, Continuous, etc.)
- How do different decision variables relate to each other?

Examples:

- We cannot spend more in a budget category than the total allotment for that category.
- The amount of money spent in a budget category is strictly equal to the sum of transactions that lies in that category.
- The calculated probability of reaching a goal must be greater than the minimum value we specified.



# Sets

- Often there are several variables, parameters, constraints, etc. that are repeated for a given set of values.
- We can write the general idea behind that variable, parameter, constraint, etc. by simply writing it once and indicating that it should be repeated for every element in a set.
- In math, it looks like this:

$$\forall e \in \mathbf{E}$$

"for all elements $e$ in the set $\mathbf{E}$"

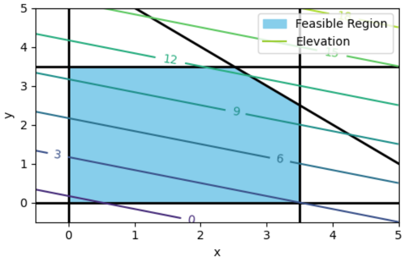
- Some variables, parameters, constraints, etc. can be defined over multiple sets:

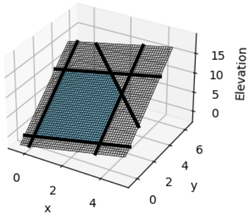
$$\forall c \in \mathbf{C}, t \in \mathbf{T}$$

Examples:

- A set of all time periods
  - An individual variable must be defined for each time period
- A set of all budget categories
  - A spending limit constraint must be specified for each budget category
- A set of all tasks that need to be done
  - A parameter specifying the time it takes to perform each task must be specified for each task
- Variables belonging to multiple sets:
  - An budget allotment variable must be defined for each budget category $c \in \mathbf{C}$ for each time period $t \in \mathbf{T}$.
  - We'll call this variable "$A_{c,t}$"

# A Visual Example (Linear)




$$\max_{X,Y} X + 3Y - 0.5$$

$$s.t. \quad X \geq 0$$

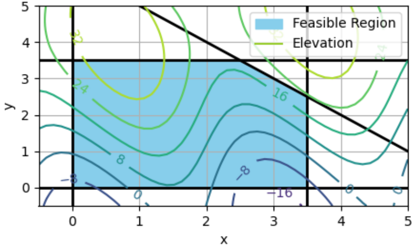
$$Y \geq 0$$

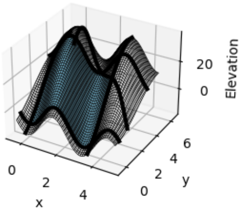
$$X \leq 3.5$$

$$Y \leq 3.5$$

$$X + Y \leq 6$$

# A Visual Example (Nonlinear)




$$\max_{X,Y} f(X, Y)$$

$$s.t. \quad X \geq 0$$

$$Y \geq 0$$

$$X \leq 3.5$$

$$Y \leq 3.5$$

$$X + Y \leq 6$$

# Example: Classic Economics Problem

*Jack and Jill find themselves on an abandoned island and need food and shelter. Jack can either build 5 shingles per hour or can catch 2 fish per hour. Jill can either build 9 shingles per hour or can catch 3 fish per hour. They only need 25 shingles but would welcome as much fish as they can get. They each have 8 hours to work in a day. What's the best way they can spend their time to maximize the amount of food and shelter (equally prioritized)?*

Take a minute to think about the problem on your own:

1. Objective Function ($f(\overline{X})$)
2. Decision Variables ($\overline{X}$)
3. Parameters ($\overline{\alpha}$)
4. Constraints (**S**)

# Example: Classic Economics Problem

**First conceptualize the problem:**

- Objective: Maximize the number of products produced according so some priority scheme
- Variables:
  - How many hours each person spends on producing each product
  - The amount of each product that gets made
- Parameters:
  - How much product can be made by each person per hour
  - How must time there is in a day
  - The number of shingles they need
  - The priority between each product
- Constraints:
  - Each person can only work between 0 and 8 hours in a day
  - The amount of each product produced should be directly determined by how many hours each person spends making that product
  - The number of shingles should be limited to 25
- Sets:
  - A set of all people involved
  - A set of all products involved

# Example: Classic Economics Problem

**Then write the problem using mathematical modeling:**

1. Define Sets:
   - $p \in \mathbf{P} = \{Jack, Jill\}$: A set of all people involved
   - $r \in \mathbf{R} = \{Shingles, Fish\}$: A set of all products involved
2. Define Parameters:
   - $\alpha_{p,r}$: How much product can be made by each person per hour

| $\alpha_{p,r}$ | *Jack* | *Jill* |
|---|---|---|
| *Shingles* | 5 | 9 |
| *Fish* | 2 | 3 |

   - $\tau^{DAY} = 8$: How much time there is to work in a day
   - $\kappa = 25$: The number of shingles they need

2. Parameters (cont.):
   - $\rho_r = 1$: The priority between each product
3. Define Decision Variables:
   - $H_{p,r} \quad \forall p \in \mathbf{P}, r \in \mathrm{R}$: The number of ours each person should spend making each product in a day
   - $N_r \quad \forall r \in \mathbf{R}$: The amount of each product that gets made
4. Define Constraints:
   - Each person can only work between 0 and 8 hours in a day

$$0 \leq \sum_{r \in \mathbf{R}} H_{p,r} \leq \tau^{DAY} \quad \forall p \in \mathbf{P}$$

# Example: Classic Economics Problem

4. Constraints (cont.):
   - The amount of each product produced should be directly determined by how many hours each person spends making that product

$$N_r = \sum_{p \in \mathbf{P}} \alpha_{p,r} H_{p,r} \quad \forall r \in \mathbf{R}$$

   - The number of shingles should be limited to 25

$$N_{Shingles} = \kappa$$

5. Define Objective:
   - Maximize the number of products produced according so some priority scheme

$$\max \sum_{r \in \mathbf{R}} \rho_r N_r$$

— — — FULL FORMULATION — — —

$$\max_{H_{p,r}, N_r} \sum_{r \in \mathbf{R}} \rho_r N_r$$

$$s.t. \quad 0 \leq \sum_{r \in \mathbf{R}} H_{p,r} \leq \tau^{DAY} \quad \forall p \in \mathbf{P}$$

$$N_r = \sum_{p \in \mathbf{P}} \alpha_{p,r} H_{p,r} \quad \forall r \in \mathbf{R}$$

$$N_{Shingles} = \kappa$$

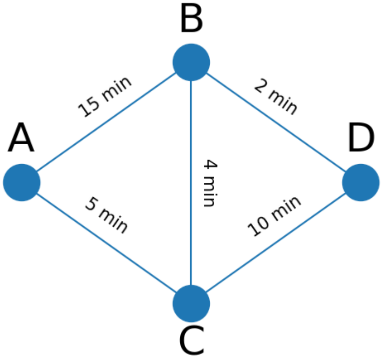
* Notice how the objective and all constraints are linear

# Example: Route Planning Problem

*Given the roads indicated in the graph below, what's the fastest way to get from point A to point D?*

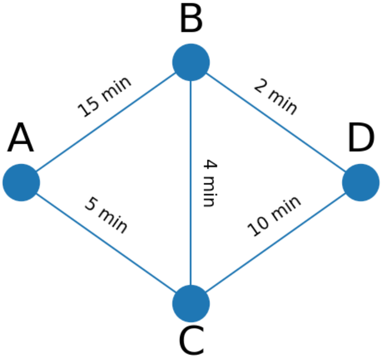
Take a minute to think about the problem on your own:

1. Objective Function ($f(\overline{X})$)
2. Decision Variables ($\overline{X}$)
3. Parameters ($\overline{\alpha}$)
4. Constraints ($\mathbf{S}$)



# Example: Route Planning Problem

**First conceptualize the problem:**




- Objective: Minimize the time spent traveling
- Variables:
  - Whether or not to travel down each stretch of road
  - Whether or not to visit each point
- Parameters:
  - How long each stretch of road is
  - Which roads connect to which points
- Constraints:
  - If I travel into a point, I must travel out of it.
  - I have to visit point A and point D

# Example: Route Planning Problem

**Then write the problem using mathematical modeling:**

1. Define Sets:
   - $p \in \mathbf{P} = \{A, B, C, D\}$: A set of all points
   - $p \in \mathbf{P}^{NON-TERM} = \{B, C\}$: A set of all points other than the terminal (starting and ending) points
   - $p \in \mathbf{P}^{TERM} = \{A, D\}$: A set of all the terminal points
   - $r \in \mathbf{R} = \{AB, AC, BC, BD, CD\}$: A set of all roads
   - $r \in \mathbf{R}_p$: A set of all roads that touch point $p$

| $p$ | $\mathbf{R}_p$ |
|---|---|
| $A$ | $\{AB, AC\}$ |
| $B$ | $\{AB, BC, BD\}$ |
| $C$ | $\{AC, BC, CD\}$ |
| $D$ | $\{BD, CD\}$ |

2. Define Parameters:
   - $\delta_r$: The time it takes to travel road $r$

| $r$ | $\delta_r(minutes)$ |
|---|---|
| $AB$ | 15 |
| $AC$ | 5 |
| $BC$ | 4 |
| $BD$ | 2 |
| $CD$ | 10 |

3. Define Decision Variables:
   - $X_r \quad \forall r \in \mathbf{R}$: Whether or not to travel down road $r$ (**Binary Variable**)
   - $Y_p \quad \forall p \in \mathbf{P}$: Whether or not to visit point $p$ (**Binary Variable**)

# Example: Route Planning Problem

4. Define Constraints:
   - If I travel into a point, I must travel out of it

$$\sum_{r \in \mathbf{R}_p} X_r = 2Y_p \quad \forall p \in \mathbf{P}^{NON-TERM}$$

$$\sum_{r \in \mathbf{R}_p} X_r = Y_p \quad \forall p \in \mathbf{P}^{TERM}$$

   - I have to visit point A and point D

$$Y_p = 1 \quad \forall p \in \mathbf{P}^{TERM}$$

5. Define Objective:
   - Minimize the amount of time spent traveling

$$\min_{X_r, Y_p} \sum_{r \in \mathbf{R}} \delta_r X_r$$

— — — FULL FORMULATION — — —

$$\min_{X_r, Y_p} \sum_{r \in \mathbf{R}} \delta_r X_r$$

$$\begin{aligned} s.t. \quad & \sum_{r \in \mathbf{R}_p} X_r = 2Y_p \quad \forall p \in \mathbf{P}^{NON-TERM} \\ & \sum_{r \in \mathbf{R}_p} X_r = Y_p \quad \forall p \in \mathbf{P}^{TERM} \\ & Y_p = 1 \quad \forall p \in \mathbf{P}^{TERM} \\ & X_r, Y_p \in \{0, 1\} \end{aligned}$$

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* Notice how the objective and all constraints are linear

# Next Class

- Visit the course website:

QR Code to Course Website

- These slides are posted in the Lecture 01 folder.

- Python / Optimization coding crash course
- Go the the Lecture 02 folder on the course website
  - Follow the instructions on "slides.pdf" in the Lecture 02 folder.
  - The more you can do on your own before class the more time we'll have to answer questions and do example next class.
- Please bring your laptops to class!