Practice Midterm Exam

COM SCI 188: Intro to Robotics — Winter 2026

Question	Points
Multiple Choices	18
Fill in the Blank	12
Short Answers	15
DH Parameters	10
Camera Projection	15
FastSLAM	15
Sequential Decision Making	15
Total:	100

Grübler's Formula:

$$\begin{aligned}\text{dof} &= \underbrace{m(N-1)}_{\text{rigid body freedoms}} - \underbrace{\sum_{i=1}^{J} c_i}_{\text{joint constraints}} \\ &= m(N-1) - \sum_{i=1}^{J}(m - f_i) \\ &= m(N-1-J) + \sum_{i=1}^{J} f_i.\end{aligned}$$

m=3 for planar mechanism (2D)
m=6 for a spatial mechanism (3D)

MODERN ROBOTICS
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Joint type	dof f	Constraints c between two planar rigid bodies	Constraints c between two spatial rigid bodies
Revolute (R)	1	2	5
Prismatic (P)	1	2	5
Helical (H)	1	N/A	5
Cylindrical (C)	2	N/A	4
Universal (U)	2	N/A	4
Spherical (S)	3	N/A	3

Denavit–Hartenberg parameter definitions:

Parameter	**Definition**
a_{i-1}	Link length: distance from z_{i-1} to z_i along x_{i-1}
α_{i-1}	Link twist: angle from z_{i-1} to z_i about x_{i-1}
d_i	Link offset: distance from x_{i-1} to x_i along z_i
ϕ_i or θ_i	Joint angle: angle from x_{i-1} to x_i about z_i

$$^{i-1}T_i = \begin{bmatrix} \cos\theta_i & -\sin\theta_i\cos\alpha_{i-1} & \sin\theta_i\sin\alpha_{i-1} & a_{i-1}\cos\theta_i \\ \sin\theta_i & \cos\theta_i\cos\alpha_{i-1} & -\cos\theta_i\sin\alpha_{i-1} & a_{i-1}\sin\theta_i \\ 0 & \sin\alpha_{i-1} & \cos\alpha_{i-1} & d_i \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix}$$

θ	$\sin(\theta)$	$\cos(\theta)$
$0°$	0	1
$45°$	$\frac{\sqrt{2}}{2}$	$\frac{\sqrt{2}}{2}$
$90°$	1	0

PID controller:

$$u(t) = K_p e(t) + K_i \int_0^t e(\tau)\mathrm{d}\,\tau + K_\mathrm{d}\frac{\mathrm{d}e(t)}{\mathrm{d}t}$$

Definition of `argmax`: The `argmax` operator returns the argument (input value) that maximizes a function. For a function $f(x)$, we write:

$$x^* = \arg\max_{x\in X} f(x)$$

This means that x^* is the value of x that yields the largest value of $f(x)$.

Q 1 Multiple Choices

For each question below, select all that applies. Partial credit will be given, but selecting any incorrect option will result in no credit.

(a) (3 points) Which of the following correctly classifies the sensor?

A. LIDAR – passive, exteroceptive
B. IMU – active, exteroceptive
C. Joint encoder – active, exteroceptive
D. LIDAR – active, exteroceptive

(b) (3 points) A robot is said to be redundant if:

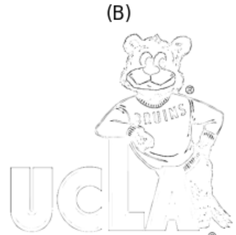
A. It has more than 6 DoF
B. It lacks sufficient DoF for the task
C. It has more DoF than required to complete the task
D. It has exactly the number of DoF needed for 3D pose control

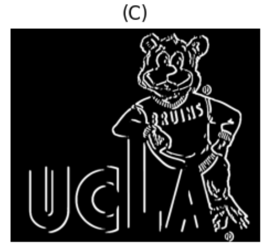
(c) (3 points) You apply the following convolutional kernel to the image:

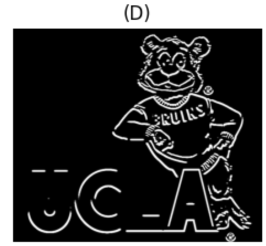
$$\begin{bmatrix} -1 & -2 & -3 & -2 & -1 \\ -2 & -4 & -6 & -4 & -2 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 2 & 4 & 6 & 4 & 2 \\ 1 & 2 & 3 & 2 & 1 \end{bmatrix}$$

What is the most likely resulting image after applying the kernel?

(A)


(B)


(C)


(D)


(d) (3 points) What is the likely result of increasing the derivative gain too much in a PID controller?

A. System becomes more responsive
B. System becomes slower to converge
C. System becomes overly damped and sensitive to noise
D. Control error increases steadily

(e) (3 points) In which of the scenarios is PRM more suitable than RRT?

A. A robot planning in a known, static environment

B. A robot solving many queries with different start and goal pairs

C. A robot operating in a dynamic environment with moving obstacles

D. A single, fast path is needed from a start to a goal in an unfamiliar environment

(f) (3 points) Which of the following are true about camera calibration?

A. The Kabsch algorithm is used to align 2D pixel coordinates across cameras

B. The Kabsch algorithm uses SVD to align two sets of 3D points

C. Extrinsic parameters describe camera distortion and perspective

D. Hand-eye calibration between an RGB-D camera and a robot's end-effector requires at least 3 non-collinear 3D point correspondences

Q 2 Fill in the Blank

(a) (3 points) While ____ learns a direct mapping from states to actions using supervised learning, ____ models trajectories as attractor-based systems that can generalize to new goals, and ____ aims to recover the underlying reward function that explains expert behavior.

(b) (3 points) Monte Carlo methods estimate solutions to complex problems by using ____ and performing ____ on the results.

(c) (3 points) In solving MDPs, ____ supports early stopping because it can monitor convergence of the algorithm, whereas ____ requires full policy evaluation steps before assessing convergence.

(d) (3 points) In EKF-SLAM, the ____ step uses the motion model to compute the predicted mean and covariance, while the ____ step incorporates sensor data using the observation model and updates the belief using ____ rule.

Options:

A. behavior cloning

B. inverse reinforcement learning

C. dynamic movement primitives

D. reinforcement learning

E. random sampling

F. statistical analysis

G. exhaustive search

H. symbolic reasoning

I. value iteration

J. policy iteration

K. update

L. prediction

M. Kalman

N. Bayes

O. resampling

Q 3 Short Answers

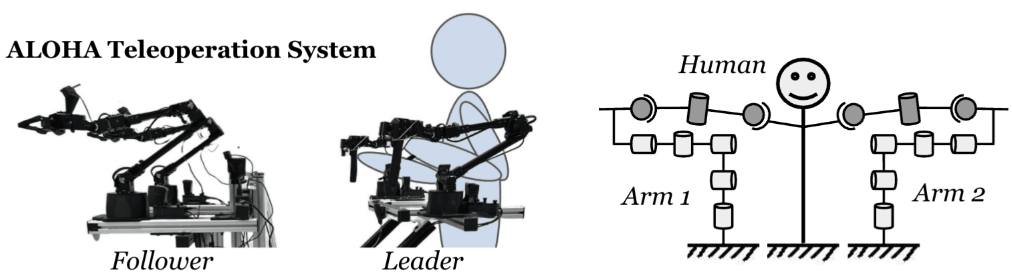
Provide a short answer to each questions.

(a) (4 points) If a small gear with 10 teeth drives a larger gear with 40 teeth, what is the gear ratio? How does it affect the output speed and torque?

(b) (3 points) What is the Markov property?

(c) (4 points) What are the two major challenges in imitation learning?

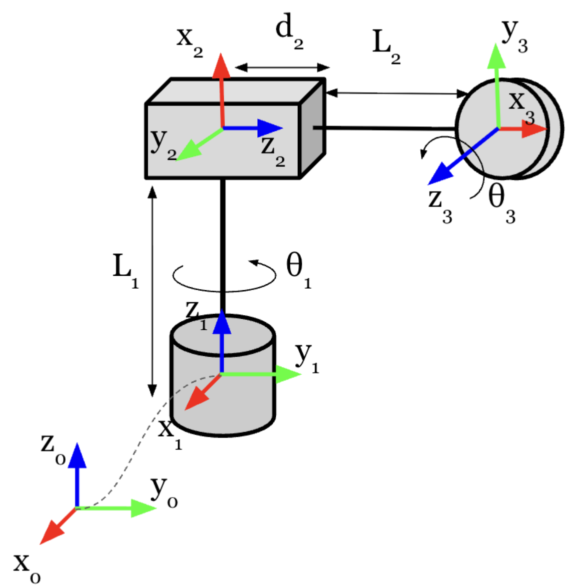
(d) (4 points) The ALOHA teleoperation system is a “puppeteering” setup where a human demonstrator kinesthetically move a set of leader arms that control the follower arms :



What is the DoF of the system formed by the human and the leader arms? (assume the demonstrator can only move their arms)

Q 4 DH Parameters

Consider the following RPR manipulator:



(a) (3 points) Write down the DH Paramters:

i	a_{i-1}	α_{i-1}	d_i	θ_i
1				
2				
3				

(b) (4 points) Derive the forward kinematics for this manipulator (find ${}^0T_3$)

(c) (3 points) Briefly describe what inverse kinematics is. Explain why solving inverse kinematics can be challenging for robotic manipulators.
(List at least two reasons.)

Q 5 Camera Projection

You are given a calibrated RGB camera and an RGB-D camera. A 2D pixel is predicted in the RGB image, and you want to estimate its corresponding 3D location using the RGB-D depth map. You will:

1. Convert pixels in the depth map into 3D points in the RGB-D camera frame,
2. Transform these 3D points into the RGB camera frame,
3. Project them into the RGB image, and
4. Find the 3D point whose projection is closest to the target pixel.

You are given:

- Depth map $D(u, v)$ from the RGB-D camera,
- Intrinsic matrices $K_{\text{RGB-D}}$ and K_{RGB},
- Extrinsic transformation $T =^{\text{RGB}} T_{\text{RGB-D}} \in SE(3)$.
- Target pixel $(u^*, v^*)_{RGB}$ in RGB image

(a) (4 points) Find the 3D point $\mathbf{P}_{\text{RGB-D}}$ corresponding to pixel (u, v) of the RGB-D image.

(b) (4 points) Transform ransform $\mathbf{P}_{\text{RGB-D}}$ into the RGB camera frame $\mathbf{P}_{\text{RGB}}$.

(c) (4 points) Provide the equation to project the transformed 3D point into RGB image coordinates (u', v').

(d) (3 points) Find the corresponding 3D point P^*_{RGB-D} closest to (u^*, v^*) in the RGB image.

Q 6 FastSLAM

FastSLAM is an algorithm that addresses the SLAM problem by combining:

- A particle filter to estimate the robot's trajectory,
- A set of local EKFs to estimate the locations of landmarks.

FastSLAM factorizes the joint posterior by representing the robot's trajectory uncertainty with particles, while maintaining an independent EKF for each landmark within every particle.

Suppose you are using FastSLAM with $M = 50$ particles. Each particle tracks its own pose and maintains a local map of $n = 20$ landmarks using EKFs.

(a) (3 points) What is an Extended Kalman Filter (EKF)? Briefly describe how it is used in state estimation.

(b) (2 points) How many EKFs are maintained across the entire set of particles?

(c) (5 points) What is the computational complexity of FastSLAM **per time step** in terms of the number of landmarks n and number of particles M?

(d) (5 points) In practice, when is FastSLAM computationally more efficient than EKF-SLAM? (Give a condition involving n and M)

Q 7 Sequential Decision Making

MDP, value iteration and policy iteration.

(a) (5 points) Match each term on the left with its corresponding euqation.

Term	Equation
Bellman Equation •	• $\pi_{\text{new}}(s) = \arg\max_a \sum_{s'} P(s'\|s,a)[R(s,a,s') + \gamma V^{\pi_{\text{old}}}(s')]$
Value Iteration •	• $\pi(s) = \arg\max_a \sum_{s'} P(s'\|s,a)[R(s,a,s') + \gamma V^{\pi}(s')]$
Policy Extraction •	• $V_k(s) = \max_a \sum_{s'} P(s'\|s,a)[R(s,a,s') + \gamma V_k(s')]$
Policy Evaluation •	• $V(s) = \max_a \sum_{s'} P(s'\|s,a)[R(s,a,s') + \gamma V(s')]$
Policy Improvement •	• $V^{\pi}_{k+1}(s) = \sum_{s'} P(s'\|s,\pi(s))[R(s,\pi(s),s') + \gamma V^{\pi}_{k}(s')]$

(b) (2 points) How does the value of the discount factor γ of an MDP influences the optimal policy behavior?

(c) (4 points) In state s, two actions are available:

- Action A: expected reward 3, next state value $V(s') = 10$.
- Action B: expected reward 2, next state value $V(s') = 20$.

Discount factor: $\gamma = 0.8$.
Compute the Q-values and select the best action.

(d) (4 points) A policy π always chooses Action A in state s:

- $R(s, A) = 4$,
- Next state is always s itself,
- Discount factor $\gamma = 0.95$.

Compute $V_{\pi}(s)$ under this policy.