CS/DSC/AI 391L: Machine Learning

Homework 2 - Theory

Lecture: Prof. Adam Klivans

Keywords: Perceptron, SGD, Boosting

Instructions: Please either typeset your answers (LaTeX recommended) or write them very clearly and legibly and scan them, and upload the PDF on edX. Legibility and clarity are critical for fair grading.

1. [**10 points**] Consider running the Perceptron algorithm on a training set S arranged in a certain order. Now suppose we run it with the same initial weights and on the *same* training set but in a different order, S'. Does Perceptron make the same number of mistakes? Does it end up with the same final weights? If so, prove it. If not, give a counterexample, i.e. an S and S' where order matters.

2. [**10 points**] We have mainly focused on squared loss, but there are other interesting losses in machine learning. Consider the following loss function which we denote by $\phi(z) = \max(0, -z)$. Let S be a training set $(x^1, y^1), \ldots, (x^m, y^m)$ where each $x^i \in \mathbb{R}^n$ and $y^i \in \{-1, 1\}$. Consider running stochastic gradient descent (SGD) to find a weight vector w that minimizes $\frac{1}{m}\sum_{i=1}^{m} \phi(y^i \cdot w^T x^i)$. Explain the explicit relationship between this algorithm and the Perceptron algorithm. Recall that for SGD, the update rule when the i^{th} example is picked at random is
$$w_{\text{new}} = w_{\text{old}} - \eta \nabla \phi\left(y^i w^T x^i\right).$$
Note: You do not need to be overly concerned about the discontinuity at $\phi(0)$, so you can ignore this when calculating the gradient for this problem.

3. [**6 points**] Here we will give an illustrative example of a weak learner for a simple concept class. Let the domain be the real line, $\mathbb{R}$, and let $\mathcal{C}$ refer to the concept class of "3-piece classifiers", which are functions of the following form: for $\theta_1 < \theta_2$ and $b \in \{-1, 1\}$, $h_{\theta_1,\theta_2,b}(x)$ is b if $x \in [\theta_1, \theta_2]$ and $-b$ otherwise. In other words, they take a certain Boolean value inside a certain interval and the opposite value everywhere else. For example, $h_{10,20,1}(x)$ would be $+1$ on $[10, 20]$, and -1 everywhere else. Let $\mathcal{H}$ refer to the simpler class of "decision stumps", i.e. functions $h_{\theta,b}$ such that $h(x)$ is b for all $x \leq \theta$ and $-b$ otherwise.

   (a) Show formally that for any distribution on $\mathbb{R}$ (assume finite support, for simplicity; i.e., assume the distribution is bounded within $[-B, B]$ for some large B) and any unknown labeling function $c \in \mathcal{C}$ that is a 3-piece classifier, there exists a decision stump $h \in \mathcal{H}$ that has error at most 1/3, i.e. $\mathbb{P}[h(x) \neq c(x)] \leq 1/3$.

   (b) Describe a simple, efficient procedure for finding a decision stump that minimizes error with respect to a finite training set of size m. Such a procedure is called an empirical risk minimizer (ERM).

   (c) Give a short intuitive explanation for why we should expect that we can easily pick m sufficiently large that the training error is a good approximation of the true error, i.e. why we can ensure generalization. (Your answer should relate to what we have gained in going from requiring a learner for $\mathcal{C}$ to requiring a learner for $\mathcal{H}$.) This lets us conclude that we can weakly learn $\mathcal{C}$ using $\mathcal{H}$.

4. [**10 points**] Consider an iteration of the AdaBoost algorithm (using notation from the video lecture on Boosting) where we have obtained classifer h_t. Show that with respect to the distribution D_{t+1} generated for the next iteration, h_t has accuracy exactly $1/2$.