

# Polarization

## FYS2150 Lab Report

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### Abstract

Studying the properties of linearly and circularly polarized light and testing how well the properties match up to theoretical predictions.

## 1 Introduction

## 2 Theory

### 2.1 Birefringence

Certain materials, such as Calcite crystal exhibit birefringent behavior, where it effectively has two separate refractive indices for light polarized at right angle to each other, meaning that when unpolarized light is passed through the crystal, two displaced images will be visible. Birefringence can occur for different reasons, but in the case of crystalline Calcite, it is due to the uniaxial geometry of its lattice (See fig. 7). Where light which is polarized is perpendicular to this optical axis will follow a certain, set refractive index, regardless of the crystals orientation.

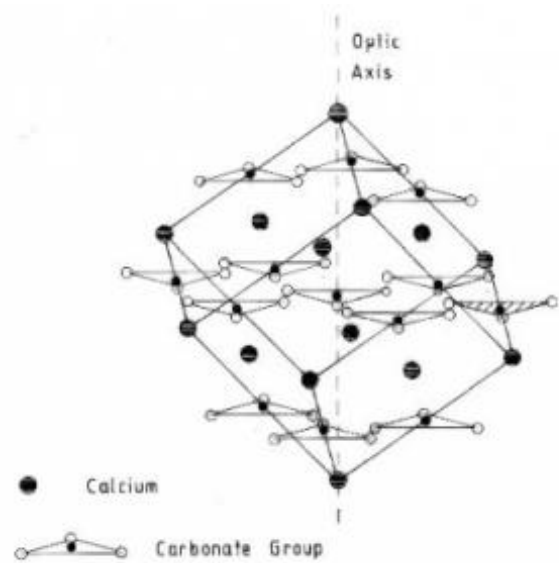


Figure 1: Crystalline structure of calcite (Source: <http://lecturedemo.ph.unimelb.edu.au/Optics/Crystal-optics/Oh-1-Calcite-Crystal-Model/Calcite-Diagram>)

## 3 Experimental Procedure

In order to minimize the effects that ambient light may have on the following experiments, the windows in the room were covered up and all lights not related to the experiment were turned off whilst data was being recorded, or observations were made.

In all subsequent parts of this report, the spectral lamp to which i refer is a sodium spectral lamp emitting close to monochromatic light of wavelength  $\lambda = 589\text{nm}$  in air.

### 3.1 Checking the polarization of the spectral lamp

In order to determine whether or not the light emitted from the spectral lamp is polarized, the intensity of light was measured using a luxmeter[1] after having gone through a polarization filter of variable angle acting as an analyzer, depicted in Fig 2. When changing the angle of the analyzer, we defined a positive and negative direction, which was kept for all subsequent measurements using polarization filters. The angle of the polarization filter was changed in  $10^\circ$  increments in the range  $-90^\circ$  to  $90^\circ$  and the intensity of the light measured by the luxmeter was noted for each angle.

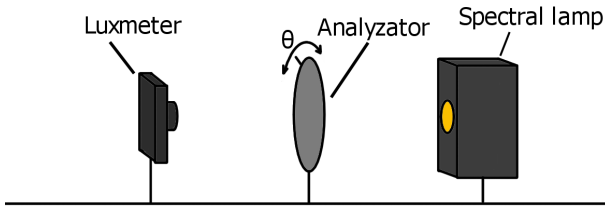


Figure 2: Apparatus to test the polarization of light emitted from a spectral lamp using a polarization filter with variable angle  $\theta$  as an analyzer and measuring the intensity of the filtered light using the luxmeter.

### 3.2 Testing Malus' law

In order to test Malus' law experimentally, we added a second polarization filter to our existing apparatus (see sect. 3.1), setting the first polarization filter to a fixed angle at  $0^\circ$  whilst the second one is used as the analyzer, depicted in Fig. 3. In order to minimize the effects that ambient light and other potential contaminants, the apparatus was kept as tightly stacked as possible. The intensity registered by the luxmeter was again measured in  $10^\circ$  increments in the range  $-90^\circ$  to  $90^\circ$  which was noted in the lab journal.

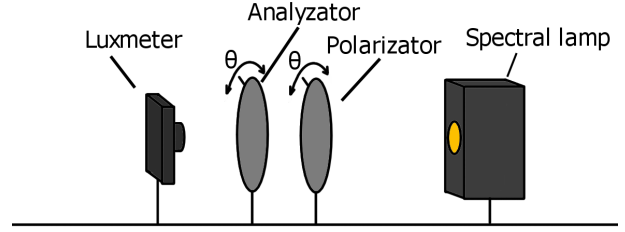


Figure 3: Apparatus to test Malus' law, where the polarizer is kept at a constant angle while the analyzer is varied.

Afterwards, a third polarization filter was placed after the analyzer and set to a fixed angle at  $90^\circ$  (see Fig. 4). The angle of the analyzer was once again varied as before, and the intensity recorded by the luxmeter was noted in the journal.

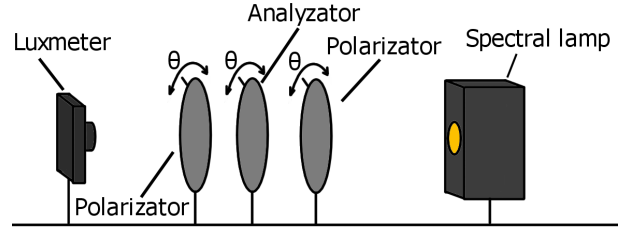


Figure 4: Alternative apparatus to test Malus' law, where the two polarizers are kept at a constant angle while the analyzer is varied.

### 3.3 Reflection of polarized light

In order to test how the intensity of S and P-polarized light, reflected from a prism with a varying angle of incidence, a modified spectroscope was used as shown in Fig. 5. The angle, and intensity was recorded digitally on a computer using capstone. The angle recorder only measured the change in angle from starting the recording, so there was a notable uncertainty in zeroing the apparatus before starting. The sights, used to read the angle manually were blocked by a cable, such that it could not be used properly, and the geometry of the spectrometer itself was not perfect. For large angles, i.e when the incident line is nearly parallel with the plane of reflection, it was observed that some of the light was transmitted through the prism rather than being reflected. This is likely due to the prism not being properly

aligned with the laser, which was reflected in the results. As such, the data for large angles  $\phi$  do not follow what is expected, which must be taken into account when reading the results.

As for making the measurements, the polarisator was set either parallel or tangential to the reflective plane of the prism and the prism was adjusted such that the reflective plane was parallel to the laser beam. Captstone was then started and the luxmeter and prism were slowly rotated until the angle between the laser and the luxmeter was roughly  $65^\circ$ . This was repeated for both S and P-polarized light.

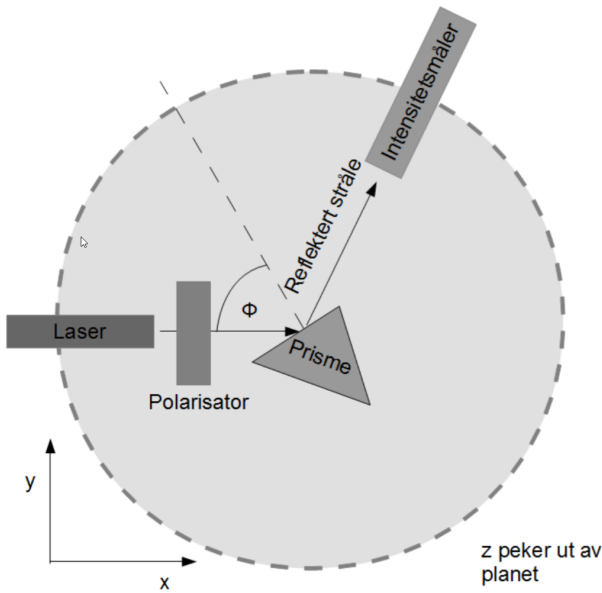


Figure 5: Modified spectrometer used to test how the intensity of reflected, polarized light changes with the angle of incidence.

### 3.4 Light transmitted through an angled glass plate

In order to investigate how light is transmitted through a glass plate, we used an apparatus as the one depicted in Fig. 6. The glass plate was oriented tangentially to the incoming, unpolarized light beam, and the angle which it made in the direction parallel to the beam could be adjusted. There was also an anglemeasurer with a marker which allowed us to read the angle which the glass plate had to the vertical axis. It was also noted that the glass plate used is of the same material as the prism used in section 3.3.

The distance between the single slit and convex lens was adjusted until the line projected onto the screen was in focus.

Afterwards, the polarization of the light after having passed through the glass plate was then observed by adjusting the analyzer for different angles of the glass plate. In particular, we adjusted the glass plate to the Brewster angle which was found for the prism in section 3.3.

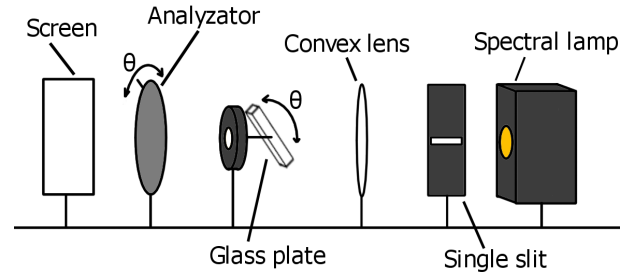


Figure 6

### 3.5 Observing birefringence in crystalline Calcite

We had two samples of crystalline calcite. One of which was naturally occurring sample, and another which was cut tangentially to its optical axis on two opposing sides. Both of the crystals were transparent<sup>1</sup>, and text was clearly readable when looking through them. The crystals were placed on an illuminated panel, on top of which was some text printed on transparent plastic. We then observed the text by looking through the two calcite crystals, both with and without a polarization filter acting as an Analyzer.

Afterwards, we used an apparatus as the one depicted in Fig. 7 to investigate how the crystals affected a thin beam of light which is passed through it. The crystals were held in between the analyzer and lens, and we investigated how the intensity of the dots projected on the screen varied as we changed the angle of the analyzer.

<sup>1</sup>I believe the particular type of calcite used is named Iceland spar, or at the very least, it looks quite similar to it. See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iceland\\_spar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iceland_spar)

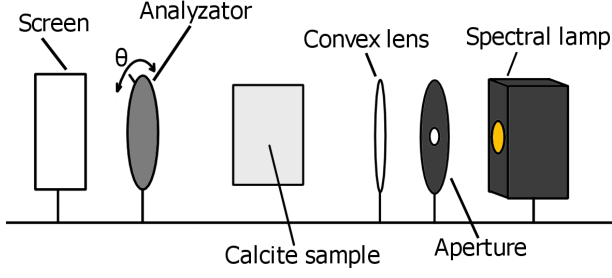


Figure 7: Apparature used to test both the qualitative effects on a thin beam of light being passed through a calcite sample as well as the polarization of this light, which is projected onto the screen.

### 3.6 Circular polarization of light using Calcite waveplates

In order to investigate the effect of the polarization of light emitted by the spectral lamp when passed through  $\lambda/2$  waveplates, where  $\lambda = 550$ , the most abundant wavelength of visible light emitted from the sodium spectral lamp, an aparature as depicted in Fig. 8 was prepared. The aparature allowed for the rotation of the waveplates along the axis paralell to the light being passed through it from the spectral lamp. There was however no markings on the waveplate to indicate its current orientation, which had to be determined by a methodic approach by the use of the analyzer.

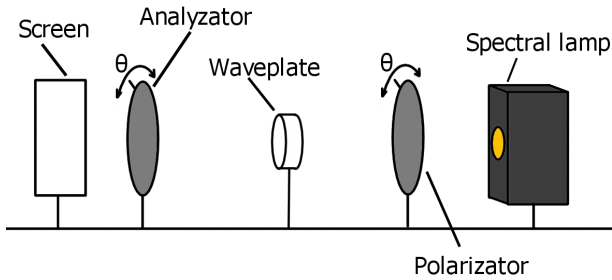


Figure 8: Aparature used to investigate how a calcite waveplate affects the polarization of polarized light

The polarizator was set to  $0^\circ$  and the analyzer to  $+90^\circ$ . The waveplate is then rotated untill the projected image was at a minima. As we did not have a luxmeter, this was purely based on the observed intensity of the projection on the screen. When the intensity minima is reached with this configuration, the optical axis is at either  $0^\circ$  or

$90^\circ$  to the vertical axis. We then adjusted the polarizator to  $+45^\circ$  and observed how the intensity of the projected light varied when adjusting the analyzer to different angles.

Afterwards, we added a second  $\lambda/4$  waveplate to the aparature, which in combination effectively yields a  $\lambda/2$  waveplate. The polarizator was then set to  $+45^\circ$  and the analyzer to  $-45^\circ$ . We then turned the newly added waveplate, while leaving the old one in its previous orientation. The new waveplate was turned untill the projected light reached an intensity maxima. Again, the when this maxima occured was based on our judgement, as no quantitative measurement regarding its intensity was made. When the maxima was reached, the analyzer was turned to  $+45^\circ$  and the intensity of the projected light was at a minimum.

## 4 Results

### 4.1 Polarization of light emitted by the Na spectral lamp

The polarization of light emitted by the Sodium spectral lamb was investigated using an analyzer, and measured intensities using the luxmeter is presented in Table 1. A graph of this data is also provided in Fig. 9 for further clarity.

Table 1: Measured intensity when passing unpolarized light through a single polarization filter,  $\theta$  denoting the angle of the filter. Aparature depicted in Fig. 2. A graph of this data set is shown in Fig. 9

$\theta$ [deg]	Intensity [Lux]
0	705
-10	701
-20	706
-30	718
-40	726
-50	734
-60	743
-70	751
-80	756
-90	759
10	703
20	713
30	719
40	726
50	736
60	745
70	753
80	758
90	754

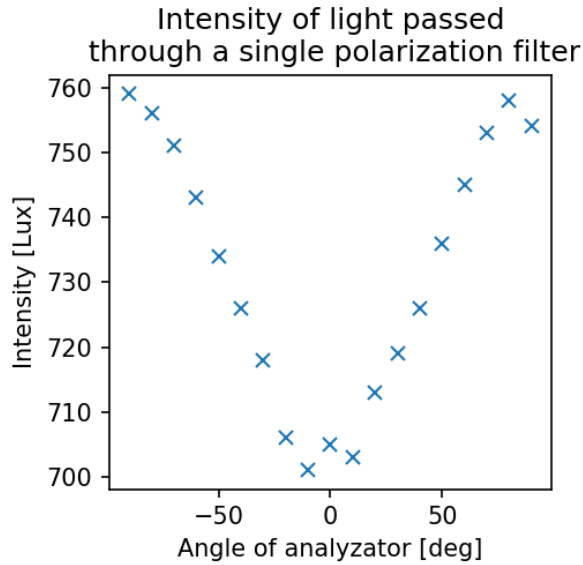


Figure 9: Graphical depiction of the data presented in table 1

## 4.2 Confirming Malus law

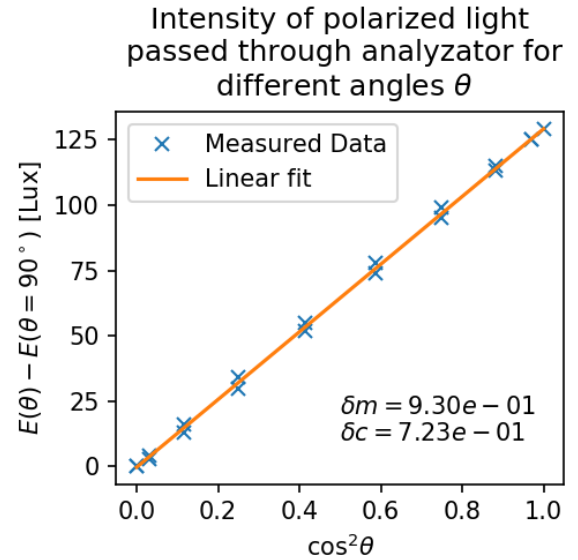


Figure 10:  $E(\theta)$  denotes the intensity of light measured by the luxmeter as a function of the angle of the analyzer.  $\delta m$  and  $\delta c$  denote the error of the constants  $m$ ,  $c$  in the linear fit of the form  $y = mx + c$ .

### 4.3 Intensity of reflected light for S and P polarized light

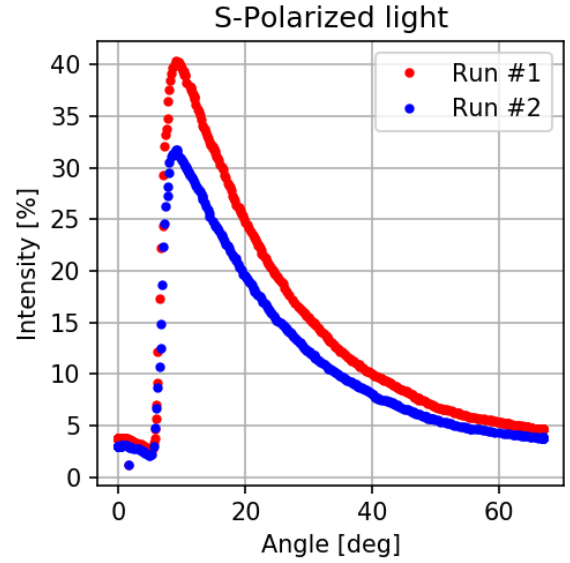


Figure 12: Intensity profile due to p-polarized light from two separate attempts of the experiment. Note that the measurements for angles prior to the peaks are to be ignored as discussed in the experimental section.

### 4.4 Polarization of light transmitted through glass plate

### 4.5 Observations when looking at light passed through crystalline Calcite

When observing text through the naturally occurring sample of crystalline calcite, the birefringence of calcite was observed by the text splitting into two, seemingly identical copies of each other. When placing a the small polarisation filter on top of the crystal and turning it, there were specific angles in which the text disappeared, one for each image. Without making any measurements, these angles seemed to be roughly  $90^\circ$  relative to each other. Meaning the two images of the text are tangentially polarized relative to each other.

When placing the sample in the aparature depicted in Fig. 7, there were two small circles of light projected onto the screen when the analyzer was set to  $0^\circ$  and  $90^\circ$ . Setting the analyzer to  $+45^\circ$  resulted in one of the circle disappearing, and setting it to  $-45^\circ$  made the other circle disappear.

When looking at the fabricated calcite sample, which was cut tangential to its optical axis. Only one image of the text was visible, and rotating a polarizing filter on top of it had no visible effect

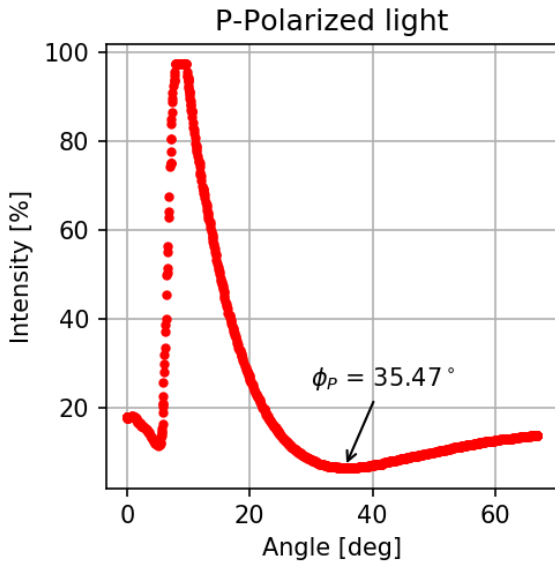


Figure 11: Intensity profile due to p-polarized light, where  $\phi_P$  denotes the Brewster angle. Note that the measurements for angles prior to the peak are to be ignored as discussed in the experimental section.

on the image. When investigating further, again using the apparatus depicted in Fig. 7, there was only one circle projected onto the screen and rotating the analyzer had no visible effect on its illuminosity.

## **5 Discussion**

## **6 Conclusion**

## References

- [1] Extech Instruments. Model 401025 digital light meter, [http://www.uio.no/studier/emner/matnat/fys/FYS2150/v18/kursmateriell/datablader-og-brukermanualer/extech\\_lysma%CC%8Aler\\_401025\\_manual.pdf](http://www.uio.no/studier/emner/matnat/fys/FYS2150/v18/kursmateriell/datablader-og-brukermanualer/extech_lysma%CC%8Aler_401025_manual.pdf). [http://www.uio.no/studier/emner/matnat/fys/FYS2150/v18/kursmateriell/datablader-og-brukermanualer/extech\\_lysma%CC%8Aler\\_401025\\_manual.pdf](http://www.uio.no/studier/emner/matnat/fys/FYS2150/v18/kursmateriell/datablader-og-brukermanualer/extech_lysma%CC%8Aler_401025_manual.pdf), 2005. [Online; accessed 30-May-2018].