Script 17

Sequences and Series of Functions

6/23: **Definition 17.1.** Let $A \subset \mathbb{R}$, and consider $X = \{f : A \to \mathbb{R}\}$, the collection of real-valued functions on A. A **sequence of functions** (on A) is an ordered list $(f_1, f_2, f_3, \dots)$ which we will denote (f_n), where each $f_n \in X$. (More formally, we can think of the sequence as a function $F : \mathbb{N} \to X$, where $f_n = F(n)$, for each $n \in \mathbb{N}$, but this degree of formality is not particularly helpful.)

We can take the sequence to start at any $n_0 \in \mathbb{Z}$ and not just at 1, just like we did for sequences of real numbers.

Definition 17.2. The sequence (f_n) **converges pointwise** to a function $f : A \to \mathbb{R}$ if for all $x \in A$ and $\epsilon > 0$, there exists $N \in \mathbb{N}$ such that if $n \geq N$, then $|f_n(x) - f(x)| < \epsilon$. In other words, we have that for all $x \in A$, $\lim_{n\to\infty} f_n(x) = f(x)$.

Definition 17.3. The sequence (f_n) **converges uniformly** to a function $f : A \to \mathbb{R}$ if for all $\epsilon > 0$, there exists $N \in \mathbb{N}$ such that if $n \geq N$, then $|f_n(x) - f(x)| < \epsilon$ for every $x \in A$.

Equivalently, the sequence (f_n) **converges uniformly** to a function $f : A \to \mathbb{R}$ if for all $\epsilon > 0$, there exists $N \in \mathbb{N}$ such that if $n \geq N$, then $\sup_{x\in A} |f_n(x) - f(x)| < \epsilon$.

Exercise 17.4. Suppose that a sequence (f_n) converges pointwise to a function f. Prove that if (f_n) converges uniformly to a function g, then $f = g$.

Proof. To prove that $f = g$, Definition 1.16 tells us that it will suffice to show that $f(x) = g(x)$ for all $x \in A$. Suppose for the sake of contradiction that $f(x) \neq g(x)$ for some $x \in A$. Since (f_n) converges pointwise to f by hypothesis, Definition 17.2 implies that for all $\epsilon > 0$, there exists $N_1 \in \mathbb{N}$ such that if $n \geq N_1$, then $|f_n(x) - f(x)| < \epsilon$. Additionally, since (f_n) converges uniformly to g by hypothesis, Definition 17.3 asserts that for all $\epsilon > 0$, there exists $N_2 \in \mathbb{N}$ such that if $n \geq N_2$, then $|f_n(x) - g(x)| < \epsilon$.

WLOG, let $f(x) > g(x)$. Choose $\epsilon = \frac{f(x)-g(x)}{2}$, and let $N = \max(N_1, N_2)$. Since $N \geq N_1$, $|f_N(x) - f(x)| < \frac{f(x)-g(x)}{2}$. Similarly, $|f_N(x) - g(x)| < \frac{f(x)-g(x)}{2}$. But this implies that

$$
\begin{aligned}
f(x) - g(x) &= |f(x) - f_N(x) + f_N(x) - g(x)| \\
&\leq |f(x) - f_N(x)| + |f_N(x) - g(x)| && \text{Lemma 8.8} \\
&= |f_N(x) - f(x)| + |f_N(x) - g(x)| && \text{Exercise 8.5} \\
&< \frac{f(x) - g(x)}{2} + \frac{f(x) - g(x)}{2} \\
&= f(x) - g(x)
\end{aligned}
$$

a contradiction. □

Exercise 17.5. For each of the following sequences of functions, determine what function the sequence (f_n) converges to pointwise. Does the sequence converge uniformly to this function?

(a) For $n \in \mathbb{N}$, let $f_n : [0, 1] \to \mathbb{R}$ be given by $f_n(x) = x^n$.

Answer. Converges to the function $f : [0, 1] \to \mathbb{R}$ defined by

$$f(x) = \begin{cases} 0 & x < 1 \\ 1 & x = 1 \end{cases}$$

Does not converge uniformly. □

(b) For $n \in \mathbb{N}$, let $f_n : \mathbb{R} \to \mathbb{R}$ be given by $f_n(x) = \frac{\sin(nx)}{n}$. (For the purposes of this example, you may assume basic knowledge of sine.)

Answer. Converges to the function $f : \mathbb{R} \to \mathbb{R}$ defined by $f(x) = 0$. Does converge uniformly. □

(c) For $n \in \mathbb{N}$, let $f_n : [0, 1] \to \mathbb{R}$ be given by

$$f_n(x) = \begin{cases} n^2 x & 0 \leq x \leq \frac{1}{n} \\ n(2 - nx) & \frac{1}{n} \leq x \leq \frac{2}{n} \\ 0 & \frac{2}{n} \leq x \leq 1 \end{cases}$$

Answer. Converges to the function $f : [0, 1] \to \mathbb{R}$ defined by $f(x) = 0$. Does converge uniformly. □