

Universitext

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The 1-2-3 of Modular Forms

Lectures at a Summer School
in Nordfjordeid, Norway

 Springer

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ISBN 978-3-540-74117-6

e-ISBN 978-3-540-74119-0

DOI 10.1007/978-3-540-74119-0

Library of Congress Control Number: 2007939406

Mathematics Subject Classification (2000): 14-01, 11Gxx, 14Gxx

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Typesetting and Production: LE- \TeX Jelonek, Schmidt & Vöckler GbR, Leipzig, Germany
Cover design: WMX Design GmbH, Heidelberg, Germany

Printed on acid-free paper

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

springer.com

Preface

This book grew out of lectures given at the summer school on “Modular Forms and their Applications” at the Sophus Lie Conference center in Nordfjordeid in June 2004. This center, set beautifully in the fjords of the west coast of Norway, has been the site of annual summer schools in algebra and algebraic geometry since 1996. The schools are a joint effort between the universities in Bergen, Oslo, Tromsø and Trondheim. They are primarily aimed at graduate students in Norway, but also attract a large number of students from other parts of the world. The theme varies among central topics in contemporary mathematics, but the format is the same: three leading experts give independent but connected series of lectures, and give exercises that the students work on in evening sessions.

In 2004 the organizing committee consisted of Stein Arild Strømme (Bergen), Geir Ellingsrud and Kristian Ranestad (Oslo) and Alexei Rudakov (Trondheim). We wanted to have a summer school that introduced the students both to the beauty of modular forms and to their varied applications in other areas of mathematics, and were very fortunate to have Don Zagier, Jan Bruinier and Gerard van der Geer give the lectures.

The lectures were organized in three series that are reflected in the title of this book both by their numbering and their content. The first series treats the classical one-variable theory and some of its many applications in number theory, algebraic geometry and mathematical physics.

The second series, which has a more geometric flavor, gives an introduction to the theory of Hilbert modular forms in two variables and to Hilbert modular surfaces. In particular, it discusses Borcherds products and some geometric and arithmetic applications.

The third gives an introduction to Siegel modular forms, both scalar- and vector-valued, especially Siegel modular forms of degree 2, which are functions of three complex variables. It presents a beautiful application of the theory of curves over finite fields to Siegel modular forms by providing evidence for

a conjecture of Harder on congruences between elliptic and Siegel modular forms.

Günter Harder came forward with this conjecture in a colloquium lecture in Bonn in 2003. He kindly allowed us to include his notes for this colloquium talk in Bonn on the subject. Even though the three lecture series are strongly connected, each of them is self contained and can be read independently of the others.

There is quote ascribed (perhaps apocryphally) to Martin Eichler, saying that there are five fundamental operations in mathematics: addition, subtraction, multiplication, division and modular forms. We hope this book will help convince newcomers and oldtimers alike that this is only partially an exaggeration.

Oslo, July 2007

Kristian Ranestad

Contents

Elliptic Modular Forms and Their Applications

<i>Don Zagier</i>	1
Foreword	1
1 Basic Definitions	3
1.1 Modular Groups, Modular Functions and Modular Forms	3
1.2 The Fundamental Domain of the Full Modular Group	5
♠ Finiteness of Class Numbers	7
1.3 The Finite Dimensionality of $M_k(\Gamma)$	8
2 First Examples: Eisenstein Series and the Discriminant Function ...	12
2.1 Eisenstein Series and the Ring Structure of $M_*(\Gamma_1)$	12
2.2 Fourier Expansions of Eisenstein Series	15
♠ Identities Involving Sums of Powers of Divisors	18
2.3 The Eisenstein Series of Weight 2	18
2.4 The Discriminant Function and Cusp Forms.....	20
♠ Congruences for $\tau(n)$	23
3 Theta Series	24
3.1 Jacobi's Theta Series	25
♠ Sums of Two and Four Squares	26
♠ The Kac–Wakimoto Conjecture	31
3.2 Theta Series in Many Variables	31
♠ Invariants of Even Unimodular Lattices	33
♠ Drums Whose Shape One Cannot Hear.....	36
4 Hecke Eigenforms and L -series	37
4.1 Hecke Theory	37
4.2 L -series of Eigenforms	39
4.3 Modular Forms and Algebraic Number Theory	41
♠ Binary Quadratic Forms of Discriminant -23	42
4.4 Modular Forms Associated to Elliptic Curves and Other Varieties	44

	♠	Fermat's Last Theorem	46
5		Modular Forms and Differential Operators	48
5.1		Derivatives of Modular Forms	48
	♠	Modular Forms Satisfy Non-Linear Differential Equations	49
	♠	Moments of Periodic Functions	50
5.2		Rankin–Cohen Brackets and Cohen–Kuznetsov Series	53
	♠	Further Identities for Sums of Powers of Divisors	56
	♠	Exotic Multiplications of Modular Forms	56
5.3		Quasimodular Forms	58
	♠	Counting Ramified Coverings of the Torus	60
5.4		Linear Differential Equations and Modular Forms	61
	♠	The Irrationality of $\zeta(3)$	64
	♠	An Example Coming from Percolation Theory	66
6		Singular Moduli and Complex Multiplication	66
6.1		Algebraicity of Singular Moduli	67
	♠	Strange Approximations to π	73
	♠	Computing Class Numbers	74
	♠	Explicit Class Field Theory for Imaginary Quadratic Fields	75
	♠	Solutions of Diophantine Equations	76
6.2		Norms and Traces of Singular Moduli	77
	♠	Heights of Heegner Points	79
	♠	The Borcherds Product Formula	83
6.3		Periods and Taylor Expansions of Modular Forms	83
	♠	Two Transcendence Results	85
	♠	Hurwitz Numbers	85
	♠	Generalized Hurwitz Numbers	89
6.4		CM Elliptic Curves and CM Modular Forms	90
	♠	Factorization, Primality Testing, and Cryptography	92
	♠	Central Values of Hecke L -Series	95
	♠	Which Primes are Sums of Two Cubes?	97
		References and Further Reading	99

Hilbert Modular Forms and Their Applications

		<i>Jan Hendrik Bruinier</i>	105
		Introduction	105
1		Hilbert Modular Surfaces	106
1.1		The Hilbert Modular Group	106
1.2		The Baily–Borel Compactification	109
		Siegel Domains	111
1.3		Hilbert Modular Forms	113
1.4		$M_k(\Gamma)$ is Finite Dimensional	118
1.5		Eisenstein Series	119
		Restriction to the Diagonal	122
		The Example $\mathbb{Q}(\sqrt{5})$	123

1.6	The L -function of a Hilbert Modular Form	125
2	The Orthogonal Group $O(2, n)$	127
2.1	Quadratic Forms	128
2.2	The Clifford Algebra	129
2.3	The Spin Group	133
	Quadratic Spaces in Dimension Four	135
2.4	Rational Quadratic Spaces of Type $(2, n)$	136
	The Grassmannian Model	136
	The Projective Model	137
	The Tube Domain Model	137
	Lattices	138
	Heegner Divisors	140
2.5	Modular Forms for $O(2, n)$	140
2.6	The Siegel Theta Function	141
2.7	The Hilbert Modular Group as an Orthogonal Group	143
	Hirzebruch–Zagier Divisors	145
3	Additive and Multiplicative Liftings	146
3.1	The Doi–Naganuma Lift	146
3.2	Borcherds Products	150
	Local Borcherds Products	150
	The Borcherds Lift	154
	Obstructions	158
	Examples	160
3.3	Automorphic Green Functions	162
	A Second Approach	167
3.4	CM Values of Hilbert Modular Functions	168
	Singular Moduli	168
	CM Extensions	171
	CM Cycles	172
	CM Values of Borcherds Products	173
	Examples	175
	References	176

Siegel Modular Forms and Their Applications

	<i>Gerard van der Geer</i>	181
1	Introduction	181
2	The Siegel Modular Group	183
3	Modular Forms	187
4	The Fourier Expansion of a Modular Form	189
5	The Siegel Operator and Eisenstein Series	192
6	Singular Forms	194
7	Theta Series	195
8	The Fourier–Jacobi Development of a Siegel Modular Form	196
9	The Ring of Classical Siegel Modular Forms for Genus Two	198

10 Moduli of Principally Polarized Complex Abelian Varieties 201

11 Compactifications 204

12 Intermezzo: Roots and Representations 207

13 Vector Bundles Defined by Representations 209

14 Holomorphic Differential Forms 210

15 Cusp Forms and Geometry 212

16 The Classical Hecke Algebra 213

17 The Satake Isomorphism 215

18 Relations in the Hecke Algebra 218

19 Satake Parameters 219

20 L -functions 220

21 Liftings 221

22 The Moduli Space of Principally Polarized Abelian Varieties 226

23 Elliptic Curves over Finite Fields 226

24 Counting Points on Curves of Genus 2 230

25 The Ring of Vector-Valued Siegel Modular Forms for Genus 2 232

26 Harder's Conjecture 235

27 Evidence for Harder's Conjecture 237

References 241

A Congruence Between a Siegel and an Elliptic Modular Form

Günter Harder 247

1 Elliptic and Siegel Modular Forms 247

2 The Hecke Algebra and a Congruence 250

3 The Special Values of the L -function 252

4 Cohomology with Coefficients 253

5 Why the Denominator? 257

6 Arithmetic Implications 258

References 259

Appendix 260

Index 263