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Lectures on Symplectic Geometry

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Foreword

These notes approximately transcribe a 15-week course on symplectic geometry I taught at UC Berkeley in the Fall of 1997.

The course at Berkeley was greatly inspired in content and style by Victor Guillemin, whose masterly teaching of beautiful courses on topics related to symplectic geometry at MIT, I was lucky enough to experience as a graduate student. I am very thankful to him!

That course also borrowed from the 1997 Park City summer courses on symplectic geometry and topology, and from many talks and discussions of the symplectic geometry group at MIT. Among the regular participants in the MIT informal symplectic seminar 93–96, I would like to acknowledge the contributions of Allen Knutson, Chris Woodward, David Metzler, Eckhard Meinrenken, Elisa Prato, Eugene Lerman, Jonathan Weitsman, Lisa Jeffrey, Reyer Sjamaar, Shaun Martin, Stephanie Singer, Sue Tolman and, last but not least, Yael Karshon.

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Berkeley, November 1998
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Contents

Foreword	v
Introduction	xiii
Part I Symplectic Manifolds	
1 Symplectic Forms	3
1.1 Skew-Symmetric Bilinear Maps	3
1.2 Symplectic Vector Spaces	4
1.3 Symplectic Manifolds	6
1.4 Symplectomorphisms	7
Homework 1: Symplectic Linear Algebra	8
2 Symplectic Form on the Cotangent Bundle	9
2.1 Cotangent Bundle	9
2.2 Tautological and Canonical Forms in Coordinates	10
2.3 Coordinate-Free Definitions	10
2.4 Naturality of the Tautological and Canonical Forms	11
Homework 2: Symplectic Volume	14
Part II Symplectomorphisms	
3 Lagrangian Submanifolds	17
3.1 Submanifolds	17
3.2 Lagrangian Submanifolds of T^*X	18
3.3 Conormal Bundles	19
3.4 Application to Symplectomorphisms	20
Homework 3: Tautological Form and Symplectomorphisms	22

4	Generating Functions	25
4.1	Constructing Symplectomorphisms	25
4.2	Method of Generating Functions	26
4.3	Application to Geodesic Flow	28
	Homework 4: Geodesic Flow	30
5	Recurrence	33
5.1	Periodic Points	33
5.2	Billiards	35
5.3	Poincaré Recurrence	36
Part III Local Forms		
6	Preparation for the Local Theory	41
6.1	Isotopies and Vector Fields	41
6.2	Tubular Neighborhood Theorem	43
6.3	Homotopy Formula	45
	Homework 5: Tubular Neighborhoods in \mathbb{R}^n	47
7	Moser Theorems	49
7.1	Notions of Equivalence for Symplectic Structures	49
7.2	Moser Trick	50
7.3	Moser Relative Theorem	52
8	Darboux-Moser-Weinstein Theory	55
8.1	Darboux Theorem	55
8.2	Lagrangian Subspaces	56
8.3	Weinstein Lagrangian Neighborhood Theorem	57
	Homework 6: Oriented Surfaces	60
9	Weinstein Tubular Neighborhood Theorem	61
9.1	Observation from Linear Algebra	61
9.2	Tubular Neighborhoods	61
9.3	Application 1: Tangent Space to the Group of Symplectomorphisms	63
9.4	Application 2: Fixed Points of Symplectomorphisms	65
Part IV Contact Manifolds		
10	Contact Forms	69
10.1	Contact Structures	69
10.2	Examples	70
10.3	First Properties	71
	Homework 7: Manifolds of Contact Elements	73

11	Contact Dynamics	75
11.1	Reeb Vector Fields	75
11.2	Symplectization	76
11.3	Conjectures of Seifert and Weinstein	77

Part V Compatible Almost Complex Structures

12	Almost Complex Structures	83
12.1	Three Geometries	83
12.2	Complex Structures on Vector Spaces	84
12.3	Compatible Structures	86

Homework 8: Compatible Linear Structures

88

13	Compatible Triples	89
13.1	Compatibility	89
13.2	Triple of Structures	90
13.3	First Consequences	91

Homework 9: Contractibility

92

14	Dolbeault Theory	93
14.1	Splittings	93
14.2	Forms of Type (ℓ, m)	94
14.3	J -Holomorphic Functions	95
14.4	Dolbeault Cohomology	96

Homework 10: Integrability

98

Part VI Kähler Manifolds

15	Complex Manifolds	101
15.1	Complex Charts	101
15.2	Forms on Complex Manifolds	103
15.3	Differentials	104

Homework 11: Complex Projective Space

107

16	Kähler Forms	109
16.1	Kähler Forms	109
16.2	An Application	111
16.3	Recipe to Obtain Kähler Forms	112
16.4	Local Canonical Form for Kähler Forms	113

Homework 12: The Fubini-Study Structure

115

17	Compact Kähler Manifolds	117
17.1	Hodge Theory	117
17.2	Immediate Topological Consequences	119
17.3	Compact Examples and Counterexamples	120
17.4	Main Kähler Manifolds	122

Part VII Hamiltonian Mechanics

18	Hamiltonian Vector Fields	127
18.1	Hamiltonian and Symplectic Vector Fields	127
18.2	Classical Mechanics	129
18.3	Brackets	130
18.4	Integrable Systems	131

	Homework 13: Simple Pendulum	134
--	-------------------------------------	-----

19	Variational Principles	135
19.1	Equations of Motion	135
19.2	Principle of Least Action	136
19.3	Variational Problems	137
19.4	Solving the Euler-Lagrange Equations	138
19.5	Minimizing Properties	140

	Homework 14: Minimizing Geodesics	141
--	--	-----

20	Legendre Transform	143
20.1	Strict Convexity	143
20.2	Legendre Transform	144
20.3	Application to Variational Problems	145

	Homework 15: Legendre Transform	147
--	--	-----

Part VIII Moment Maps

21	Actions	151
21.1	One-Parameter Groups of Diffeomorphisms	151
21.2	Lie Groups	152
21.3	Smooth Actions	152
21.4	Symplectic and Hamiltonian Actions	153
21.5	Adjoint and Coadjoint Representations	154

	Homework 16: Hermitian Matrices	156
--	--	-----

22	Hamiltonian Actions	157
22.1	Moment and Comoment Maps	157
22.2	Orbit Spaces	159

22.3	Preview of Reduction	160
22.4	Classical Examples	161
	Homework 17: Coadjoint Orbits	163
Part IX Symplectic Reduction		
23	The Marsden-Weinstein-Meyer Theorem	167
23.1	Statement	167
23.2	Ingredients	168
23.3	Proof of the Marsden-Weinstein-Meyer Theorem	171
24	Reduction	173
24.1	Noether Principle	173
24.2	Elementary Theory of Reduction	173
24.3	Reduction for Product Groups	175
24.4	Reduction at Other Levels	176
24.5	Orbifolds	176
	Homework 18: Spherical Pendulum	178
Part X Moment Maps Revisited		
25	Moment Map in Gauge Theory	183
25.1	Connections on a Principal Bundle	183
25.2	Connection and Curvature Forms	184
25.3	Symplectic Structure on the Space of Connections	186
25.4	Action of the Gauge Group	187
25.5	Case of Circle Bundles	187
	Homework 19: Examples of Moment Maps	191
26	Existence and Uniqueness of Moment Maps	193
26.1	Lie Algebras of Vector Fields	193
26.2	Lie Algebra Cohomology	194
26.3	Existence of Moment Maps	195
26.4	Uniqueness of Moment Maps	196
	Homework 20: Examples of Reduction	198
27	Convexity	199
27.1	Convexity Theorem	199
27.2	Effective Actions	201
27.3	Examples	202
	Homework 21: Connectedness	204

Part XI Symplectic Toric Manifolds

28	Classification of Symplectic Toric Manifolds	209
28.1	Delzant Polytopes	209
28.2	Delzant Theorem	211
28.3	Sketch of Delzant Construction	212
29	Delzant Construction	215
29.1	Algebraic Set-Up	215
29.2	The Zero-Level	216
29.3	Conclusion of the Delzant Construction	218
29.4	Idea Behind the Delzant Construction	219
	Homework 22: Delzant Theorem	221
30	Duistermaat-Heckman Theorems	223
30.1	Duistermaat-Heckman Polynomial	223
30.2	Local Form for Reduced Spaces	225
30.3	Variation of the Symplectic Volume	227
	Homework 23: S^1-Equivariant Cohomology	229
	References	233
	Index	239

Introduction

The goal of these notes is to provide a fast introduction to symplectic geometry.

A symplectic form is a closed nondegenerate 2-form. A symplectic manifold is a manifold equipped with a symplectic form. Symplectic geometry is the geometry of symplectic manifolds. Symplectic manifolds are necessarily even-dimensional and orientable, since nondegeneracy says that the top exterior power of a symplectic form is a volume form. The closedness condition is a natural differential equation, which forces all symplectic manifolds to be locally indistinguishable. (These assertions will be explained in Lecture 1 and Homework 2.)

The list of questions on symplectic forms begins with those of existence and uniqueness on a given manifold. For specific symplectic manifolds, one would like to understand the geometry and the topology of special submanifolds, the dynamics of certain vector fields or systems of differential equations, the symmetries and extra structure, etc.

Two centuries ago, symplectic geometry provided a language for classical mechanics. Through its recent huge development, it conquered an independent and rich territory, as a central branch of differential geometry and topology. To mention just a few key landmarks, one may say that symplectic geometry began to take its modern shape with the formulation of the Arnold conjectures in the 60's and with the foundational work of Weinstein in the 70's. A paper of Gromov [49] in the 80's gave the subject a whole new set of tools: pseudo-holomorphic curves. Gromov also first showed that important results from complex Kähler geometry remain true in the more general symplectic category, and this direction was continued rather dramatically in the 90's in the work of Donaldson on the topology of symplectic manifolds and their symplectic submanifolds, and in the work of Taubes in the context of the Seiberg-Witten invariants. Symplectic geometry is significantly stimulated by important interactions with global analysis, mathematical physics, low-dimensional topology, dynamical systems, algebraic geometry, integrable systems, microlocal analysis, partial differential equations, representation theory, quantization, equivariant cohomology, geometric combinatorics, etc.

As a curiosity, note that two centuries ago the name *symplectic geometry* did not exist. If you consult a major English dictionary, you are likely to find that *symplectic*

is the name for a bone in a fish's head. However, as clarified in [105], the word *symplectic* in mathematics was coined by Weyl [110, p.165] who substituted the Latin root in *complex* by the corresponding Greek root, in order to label the symplectic group. Weyl thus avoided that this group connote the complex numbers, and also spared us from much confusion that would have arisen, had the name remained the former one in honor of Abel: *abelian linear group*.

This text is essentially the set of notes of a 15-week course on symplectic geometry with 2 hour-and-a-half lectures per week. The course targeted second-year graduate students in mathematics, though the audience was more diverse, including advanced undergraduates, post-docs and graduate students from other departments. The present text should hence still be appropriate for a second-year graduate course or for an independent study project.

There are scattered short exercises throughout the text. At the end of most lectures, some longer guided problems, called homework, were designed to complement the exposition or extend the reader's understanding.

Geometry of manifolds was the basic prerequisite for the original course, so the same holds now for the notes. In particular, some familiarity with de Rham theory and classical Lie groups is expected.

As for conventions: unless otherwise indicated, all vector spaces are real and finite-dimensional, all maps are smooth (i.e., C^∞) and all manifolds are smooth, Hausdorff and second countable.

Here is a brief summary of the contents of this book. Parts I–III explain classical topics, including cotangent bundles, symplectomorphisms, lagrangian submanifolds and local forms. Parts IV–VI concentrate on important related areas, such as contact geometry and Kähler geometry. Classical hamiltonian theory enters in Parts VII–VIII, starting the second half of this book, which is devoted to a selection of themes from hamiltonian dynamical systems and symmetry. Parts IX–XI discuss the moment map whose preponderance has been growing steadily for the past twenty years.

There are by now excellent references on symplectic geometry, a subset of which is in the bibliography. However, the most efficient introduction to a subject is often a short elementary treatment, and these notes attempt to serve that purpose. The author hopes that these notes provide a taste of areas of current research, and will prepare the reader to explore recent papers and extensive books in symplectic geometry, where the pace is much faster.