Putnam Exam Seminar
Fall 2012

Quiz 11
November 14

Problem 1. Let G be a finite group of order n with identity element e. If $a_1, a_2, \ldots, a_n$ are n elements of G, not necessarily distinct, prove that there are integers p and q with $1 \leq p \leq q \leq n$ such that $a_p a_{p+1} \cdots a_q = e$.

Problem 2. Let S be a set of real numbers which is closed under multiplication (that is, if a and b are in S, then so is ab). Let T and U be disjoint subsets of S whose union is S. Given that the product of any *three* (not necessarily distinct) elements of T is in T and that the product of any three elements of U is in U, show that at least one of the two subsets T, U is closed under multiplication. [Putnam 1995, A1]

Problem 3. Let G be a group with identity e and $\phi : G \to G$ a function such that

$$\phi(g_1)\phi(g_2)\phi(g_3) = \phi(h_1)\phi(h_2)\phi(h_3)$$

whenever $g_1 g_2 g_3 = h_1 h_2 h_3$. Prove that there exists an element $a \in G$ so that $\psi(x) = a\phi(x)$ is a homomorphism (i.e. $\psi(xy) = \psi(x)\psi(y)$ for all $x, y \in G$). [Putnam 1997, A4]

Problem 4. Is there a finite abelian group G such that the product of the orders of all its elements is 2^{2009}? [Putnam 2009, A5]

Problem 5. Let G be a finite set of real $n \times n$ matrices $\{M_i\}$, $1 \leq i \leq r$, which form a group under matrix multiplication. Suppose that $\sum_{i=1}^{r} \operatorname{tr}(M_i) = 0$, where $\operatorname{tr}(A)$ denotes the trace of the matrix A. Prove that $\sum_{i=1}^{r} M_i$ is the $n \times n$ zero matrix. [Putnam 1985, B6]