Integral formulas for Fourier coefficients

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Partial Differential Equations
Lecture 6

Recall: Relative to the inner product

$$\langle f, g\rangle = \int_{-\pi}^{\pi} f(x)g(x)\,dx$$

the functions

$$1, \cos(x), \cos(2x), \cos(3x), \ldots \sin(x), \sin(2x), \sin(3x), \ldots$$

satisfy the *orthogonality relations*

$$\langle \cos(mx), \sin(nx)\rangle = 0,$$

$$\langle \cos(mx), \cos(nx)\rangle = \begin{cases} 0 & \text{if } m \neq n, \\ \pi & \text{if } m = n \neq 0, \\ 2\pi & \text{if } m = n = 0, \end{cases}$$

$$\langle \sin(mx), \sin(nx)\rangle = \begin{cases} 0 & \text{if } m \neq n, \\ \pi & \text{if } m = n. \end{cases}$$

By the linearity of the inner product, if

$$f(x) = a_0 + \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \left(a_n \cos(nx) + b_n \sin(nx)\right),$$

then

$$\begin{aligned}\langle f(x), \cos(mx)\rangle &= a_0 \overbrace{\langle 1, \cos(mx)\rangle}^{=0 \text{ unless } m=0} + \sum_{n=1}^{\infty}\Big(a_n \overbrace{\langle \cos(nx), \cos(mx)\rangle}^{=0 \text{ unless } m=n} \\ &\quad + b_n \underbrace{\langle \sin(nx), \cos(mx)\rangle}_{=0}\Big) \\ &= a_m \langle \cos(mx), \cos(mx)\rangle\end{aligned}$$

$$\Rightarrow \quad a_m = \frac{\langle f(x), \cos(mx)\rangle}{\langle \cos(mx), \cos(mx)\rangle}$$

Likewise, one can show that

$$b_m = \frac{\langle f(x), \sin(mx)\rangle}{\langle \sin(mx), \sin(mx)\rangle}.$$

Expressing the inner products as integrals gives:

Theorem (Euler's Formulas)

If f is 2π-periodic and piecewise smooth, then its Fourier coefficients are given by

$$\begin{aligned}
a_0 &= \frac{\langle f(x), 1\rangle}{\langle 1, 1\rangle} = \frac{1}{2\pi}\int_{-\pi}^{\pi} f(x)\,dx,\\
a_n &= \frac{\langle f(x), \cos(nx)\rangle}{\langle \cos(nx), \cos(nx)\rangle} = \frac{1}{\pi}\int_{-\pi}^{\pi} f(x)\cos(nx)\,dx \quad (n \neq 0),\\
b_n &= \frac{\langle f(x), \sin(nx)\rangle}{\langle \sin(nx), \sin(nx)\rangle} = \frac{1}{\pi}\int_{-\pi}^{\pi} f(x)\sin(nx)\,dx.
\end{aligned}$$

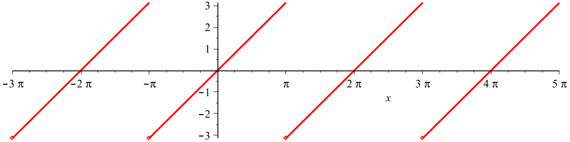
Remarks

- Technically we should have used $\frac{f(x+)+f(x-)}{2}$. However, the integrals cannot distinguish between this and $f(x)$.
- Because all the functions in question are 2π-periodic, we can integrate over *any* convenient interval of length 2π.
- If $f(x)$ is an odd function, so is $f(x)\cos(nx)$, and so $a_n = 0$ for all $n \geq 0$.
- If $f(x)$ is an even function, then $f(x)\sin(nx)$ is odd, and so $b_n = 0$ for all $n \geq 1$.

Example

Find the Fourier series for the 2π-periodic function that satisfies $f(x) = x$ for $-\pi < x \leq \pi$.

The graph of f (a *sawtooth wave*):



Because f is odd, we know

$$a_n = 0 \quad (n \geq 0).$$

According to Euler's formula:

$$\begin{aligned} b_n &= \frac{1}{\pi}\int_{-\pi}^{\pi} x\sin(nx)\,dx \\ &= \frac{1}{\pi}\left(\frac{-x\cos(nx)}{n} + \frac{\sin(nx)}{n^2}\bigg|_{-\pi}^{\pi}\right) \\ &= \frac{1}{\pi}\left(\frac{-\pi\cos(n\pi)}{n} - \frac{\pi\cos(-n\pi)}{n}\right) \\ &= \frac{-2\cos(n\pi)}{n} = \frac{(-1)^{n+1}2}{n}. \end{aligned}$$

Therefore, the Fourier series of f is

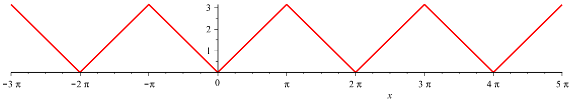
$$\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{(-1)^{n+1}2}{n}\sin(nx) = 2\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{(-1)^{n+1}\sin(nx)}{n}.$$

Remark: Except where it is discontinuous, this series equals $f(x)$.

Example

Find the Fourier series of the 2π-periodic function satisfying $f(x) = |x|$ for $-\pi \leq x < \pi$.

The graph of f (a *triangular wave*):



This time, since f is even,

$$b_n = 0 \quad (n \geq 1).$$

By Euler's formula we have

$$a_0 = \frac{1}{2\pi}\int_{-\pi}^{\pi} |x|\,dx = \frac{1}{\pi}\int_0^{\pi} x\,dx = \frac{1}{\pi}\left.\frac{x^2}{2}\right|_0^{\pi} = \frac{\pi}{2}$$

and for $n \geq 1$

$$\begin{aligned} a_n &= \frac{1}{\pi}\int_{-\pi}^{\pi} \underbrace{|x|\cos(nx)}_{\text{even}}\,dx = \frac{2}{\pi}\int_0^{\pi} x\cos(nx)\,dx \\ &= \frac{2}{\pi}\left(\frac{x\sin(nx)}{n} + \left.\frac{\cos(nx)}{n^2}\right|_0^{\pi}\right) = \frac{2}{\pi}\left(\frac{\cos(n\pi)}{n^2} - \frac{1}{n^2}\right) \\ &= \frac{2}{\pi n^2}((-1)^n - 1) = \begin{cases} \dfrac{-4}{\pi n^2} & \text{if } n \text{ is odd,} \\ 0 & \text{if } n \text{ is even.} \end{cases} \end{aligned}$$

In the Fourier series we may therefore omit the terms in which n is even, and assume that $n = 2k+1$, $k \geq 0$:

$$a_0 + \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} a_n \cos(nx) = \frac{\pi}{2} + \sum_{k=0}^{\infty} \frac{-4}{\pi(2k+1)^2} \cos((2k+1)x)$$
$$= \frac{\pi}{2} - \frac{4}{\pi} \sum_{k=0}^{\infty} \frac{\cos((2k+1)x)}{(2k+1)^2}.$$

Remarks:

- Since k is simply an index of summation, we are free to replace it with n again, yielding

$$\frac{\pi}{2} - \frac{4}{\pi} \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} \frac{\cos((2n+1)x)}{(2n+1)^2}.$$

- Because $f(x)$ is continuous everywhere, this equals $f(x)$ at all points.

Example

Use the result of the previous exercise to show that

$$1 + \frac{1}{9} + \frac{1}{25} + \frac{1}{49} + \cdots = \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} \frac{1}{(2n+1)^2} = \frac{\pi^2}{8}.$$

If we set $x = 0$ in the previous example, we get

$$0 = f(0) = \frac{\pi}{2} - \frac{4}{\pi} \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} \frac{\cos(0)}{(2n+1)^2} = \frac{\pi}{2} - \frac{4}{\pi} \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} \frac{1}{(2n+1)^2}$$

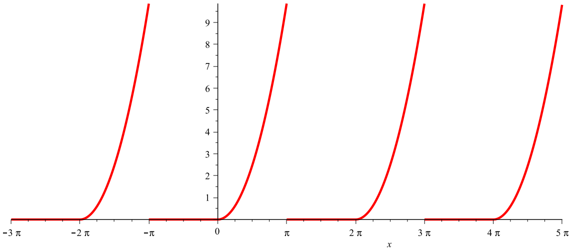
Solving for the series gives the result.

Remark: In Calculus II you learned that this series converges, but were unable to obtain its exact value.

Example

Find the Fourier series of the 2π-periodic function satisfying $f(x) = 0$ for $-\pi \leq x < 0$ and $f(x) = x^2$ for $0 \leq x < \pi$.

The graph of f:



Because f is neither even nor odd, we must compute all of its Fourier coefficients directly.

Since $f(x) = 0$ for $-\pi \le x < 0$, Euler's formulas become

$$a_0 = \frac{1}{2\pi}\int_0^\pi x^2\,dx = \frac{1}{2\pi}\left(\frac{x^3}{3}\bigg|_0^\pi\right) = \frac{\pi^2}{6}$$

and for $n \ge 1$

$$a_n = \frac{1}{\pi}\int_0^\pi x^2\cos(nx)\,dx = \frac{1}{\pi}\left(\frac{x^2\sin(nx)}{n} + \frac{2x\cos(nx)}{n^2} - \frac{2\sin(nx)}{n^3}\bigg|_0^\pi\right)$$
$$= \frac{1}{\pi}\cdot\frac{2\pi\cos(n\pi)}{n^2} = \frac{2(-1)^n}{n^2},$$

$$b_n = \frac{1}{\pi}\int_0^\pi x^2\sin(nx)\,dx = \frac{1}{\pi}\left(-\frac{x^2\cos(nx)}{n} + \frac{2x\sin(nx)}{n^2} + \frac{2\cos(nx)}{n^3}\bigg|_0^\pi\right)$$
$$= \frac{1}{\pi}\left(-\frac{\pi^2\cos(n\pi)}{n} + \frac{2\cos(n\pi)}{n^3} - \frac{2}{n^3}\right) = \frac{(-1)^{n+1}\pi}{n} + \frac{2((-1)^n - 1)}{\pi n^3}.$$

Therefore the Fourier series of f is

$$\frac{\pi^2}{6}+\sum_{n=1}^{\infty}\left(\frac{2(-1)^n}{n^2}\cos(nx)+\left(\frac{(-1)^{n+1}\pi}{n}+\frac{2((-1)^n-1)}{\pi n^3}\right)\sin(nx)\right).$$

This will agree with $f(x)$ everywhere it's continuous.

Convergence of Fourier series

Given a Fourier series

$$a_0 + \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \left(a_n \cos(nx) + b_n \sin(nx)\right) \tag{1}$$

let its Nth *partial sum* be

$$s_N(x) = a_0 + \sum_{n=1}^{N} \left(a_n \cos(nx) + b_n \sin(nx)\right). \tag{2}$$

According to the definition of an infinite series, the Fourier series (1) is equal to

$$\lim_{N\to\infty} s_N(x).$$

According to the definition of the limit:

- We can *approximate* the (infinite) Fourier series (1) by the (finite) partial sums (2).
- The approximation of (1) by (2) improves (indefinitely) as we increase N.

Because $s_N(x)$ is a *finite* sum, we can use a computer to graph it.

In this way, we can visualize the convergence of a Fourier series.

Let's look at some examples...

These examples illustrate the following results. In both, $f(x)$ is 2π-periodic and piecewise smooth.

Theorem (Uniform convergence of Fourier series)

If $f(x)$ is continuous everywhere, then the partial sums $s_N(x)$ of its Fourier series converge uniformly *to $f(x)$ as $N \to \infty$.*
That is, by choosing N large enough we can make $s_N(x)$ arbitrarily close to $f(x)$ for all *x* simultaneously*.*

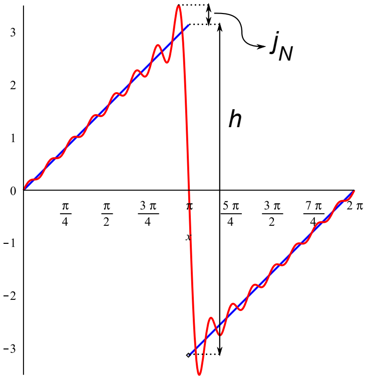
Theorem (Wilbraham-Gibbs phenomenon)

If $f(x)$ has a jump discontinuity at $x = c$, then the partial sums $s_N(x)$ of its Fourier series always "overshoot" $f(x)$ near $x = c$.
More precisely, as $N \to \infty$, the the ratio between the peak of the overshoot and the height of the jump tends to

$$\frac{1}{\pi}\int_0^{\pi} \frac{\sin t}{t}\,dt - \frac{1}{2} = 0.08948\ldots \quad \textit{(about 9\% of the jump).}$$

The Wilbraham-Gibbs phenomenon

A function $f(x)$ (in blue) with a jump discontinuity and a partial sum $s_N(x)$ (in red) of its Fourier series:



$$\lim_{N\to\infty} \frac{j_N}{h} = 0.08948\ldots$$