

## Statistical Inference for Engineers and Data Scientists

A mathematically accessible and up-to-date introduction to the tools needed to address modern inference problems in engineering and data science, ideal for graduate students taking courses on statistical inference and detection and estimation, and an invaluable reference for researchers and professionals.

With a wealth of illustrations and examples to explain the key features of the theory and to connect with real-world applications, additional material to explore more advanced concepts, and numerous end-of-chapter problems to test the reader's knowledge, this textbook is the "go-to" guide for learning about the core principles of statistical inference and its application in engineering and data science.

The password-protected Solutions Manual and the Image Gallery from the book are available at [www.cambridge.org/Moulin](http://www.cambridge.org/Moulin).

**Pierre Moulin** is a professor in the ECE Department at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. His research interests include statistical inference, machine learning, detection and estimation theory, information theory, statistical signal, image, and video processing, and information security. Moulin is a Fellow of the IEEE, and served as a Distinguished Lecturer for the IEEE Signal Processing Society. He has received two best paper awards from the IEEE Signal Processing Society and the US National Science Foundation CAREER Award. He was founding Editor-in-Chief of the *IEEE Transactions on Information Security and Forensics*.

**Venugopal V. Veeravalli** is the Henry Magnuski Professor in the ECE Department at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. His research interests include statistical inference and machine learning, detection and estimation theory, and information theory, with applications to data science, wireless communications, and sensor networks. Veeravalli is a Fellow of the IEEE, and served as a Distinguished Lecturer for the IEEE Signal Processing Society. Among the awards he has received are the IEEE Browder J. Thompson Best Paper Award, the National Science Foundation CAREER Award, the Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers (PECASE), and the Wald Prize in Sequential Analysis.

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Pierre Moulin , Venugopal Veeravalli

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# Statistical Inference for Engineers and Data Scientists

PIERRE MOULIN

University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

VENUGOPAL V. VEERAVALLI

University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign



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***We balance probabilities and choose the most likely***  
**– Sherlock Holmes**

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## Brief Contents

	<i>Preface</i>	<i>page</i> xvii
	<i>List of Acronyms</i>	xx
<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
	<b>Part I Hypothesis Testing</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Binary Hypothesis Testing</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Multiple Hypothesis Testing</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Composite Hypothesis Testing</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Signal Detection</b>	<b>105</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Convex Statistical Distances</b>	<b>145</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Performance Bounds for Hypothesis Testing</b>	<b>160</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>Large Deviations and Error Exponents for Hypothesis Testing</b>	<b>184</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>Sequential and Quickest Change Detection</b>	<b>208</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>Detection of Random Processes</b>	<b>231</b>
	<b>Part II Estimation</b>	<b>257</b>
<b>11</b>	<b>Bayesian Parameter Estimation</b>	<b>259</b>
<b>12</b>	<b>Minimum Variance Unbiased Estimation</b>	<b>280</b>
<b>13</b>	<b>Information Inequality and Cramér–Rao Lower Bound</b>	<b>297</b>
<b>14</b>	<b>Maximum Likelihood Estimation</b>	<b>319</b>

<b>15</b>	<b>Signal Estimation</b>	358
<b>Appendix A</b>	<b>Matrix Analysis</b>	384
<b>Appendix B</b>	<b>Random Vectors and Covariance Matrices</b>	390
<b>Appendix C</b>	<b>Probability Distributions</b>	391
<b>Appendix D</b>	<b>Convergence of Random Sequences</b>	393
	<i>Index</i>	395



## Contents

	<i>Preface</i>	<i>page</i> xvii
	<i>List of Acronyms</i>	xx
<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
	1.1 Background	1
	1.2 Notation	1
	1.2.1 Probability Distributions	2
	1.2.2 Conditional Probability Distributions	2
	1.2.3 Expectations and Conditional Expectations	3
	1.2.4 Unified Notation	3
	1.2.5 General Random Variables	3
	1.3 Statistical Inference	4
	1.3.1 Statistical Model	5
	1.3.2 Some Generic Estimation Problems	6
	1.3.3 Some Generic Detection Problems	6
	1.4 Performance Analysis	7
	1.5 Statistical Decision Theory	7
	1.5.1 Conditional Risk and Optimal Decision Rules	8
	1.5.2 Bayesian Approach	9
	1.5.3 Minimax Approach	10
	1.5.4 Other Non-Bayesian Rules	11
	1.6 Derivation of Bayes Rule	12
	1.7 Link Between Minimax and Bayesian Decision Theory	14
	1.7.1 Dual Concept	14
	1.7.2 Game Theory	15
	1.7.3 Saddlepoint	15
	1.7.4 Randomized Decision Rules	16
	Exercises	18
	References	21
	<b>Part I Hypothesis Testing</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Binary Hypothesis Testing</b>	<b>25</b>
	2.1 General Framework	25
	2.2 Bayesian Binary Hypothesis Testing	26

x	<b>Contents</b>	
	2.2.1 Likelihood Ratio Test	27
	2.2.2 Uniform Costs	28
	2.2.3 Examples	28
2.3	Binary Minimax Hypothesis Testing	32
	2.3.1 Equalizer Rules	33
	2.3.2 Bayes Risk Line and Minimum Risk Curve	34
	2.3.3 Differentiable $V(\pi_0)$	35
	2.3.4 Nondifferentiable $V(\pi_0)$	35
	2.3.5 Randomized LRTs	37
	2.3.6 Examples	38
2.4	Neyman–Pearson Hypothesis Testing	40
	2.4.1 Solution to the NP Optimization Problem	41
	2.4.2 NP Rule	42
	2.4.3 Receiver Operating Characteristic	43
	2.4.4 Examples	44
	2.4.5 Convex Optimization	46
	Exercises	47
<b>3</b>	<b>Multiple Hypothesis Testing</b>	54
	3.1 General Framework	54
	3.2 Bayesian Hypothesis Testing	55
	3.2.1 Optimal Decision Regions	56
	3.2.2 Gaussian Ternary Hypothesis Testing	58
	3.3 Minimax Hypothesis Testing	58
	3.4 Generalized Neyman–Pearson Detection	62
	3.5 Multiple Binary Tests	62
	3.5.1 Bonferroni Correction	63
	3.5.2 False Discovery Rate	64
	3.5.3 Benjamini–Hochberg Procedure	65
	3.5.4 Connection to Bayesian Decision Theory	66
	Exercises	67
	References	70
<b>4</b>	<b>Composite Hypothesis Testing</b>	71
	4.1 Introduction	71
	4.2 Random Parameter $\Theta$	72
	4.2.1 Uniform Costs Over Each Hypothesis	73
	4.2.2 Nonuniform Costs Over Hypotheses	76
	4.3 Uniformly Most Powerful Test	77
	4.3.1 Examples	77
	4.3.2 Monotone Likelihood Ratio Theorem	79
	4.3.3 Both Composite Hypotheses	80
	4.4 Locally Most Powerful Test	82
	4.5 Generalized Likelihood Ratio Test	84

	4.5.1 GLRT for Gaussian Hypothesis Testing	84
	4.5.2 GLRT for Cauchy Hypothesis Testing	86
4.6	Random versus Nonrandom $\theta$	87
4.7	Non-Dominated Tests	88
4.8	Composite $m$ -ary Hypothesis Testing	90
	4.8.1 Random Parameter $\Theta$	90
	4.8.2 Non-Dominated Tests	91
	4.8.3 $m$ -GLRT	92
4.9	Robust Hypothesis Testing	92
	4.9.1 Robust Detection with Conditionally Independent Observations	96
	4.9.2 Epsilon-Contamination Class	97
	Exercises	99
	References	103
<b>5</b>	<b>Signal Detection</b>	<b>105</b>
	5.1 Introduction	105
	5.2 Problem Formulation	106
	5.3 Detection of Known Signal in Independent Noise	107
	5.3.1 Signal in i.i.d. Gaussian Noise	107
	5.3.2 Signal in i.i.d. Laplacian Noise	108
	5.3.3 Signal in i.i.d. Cauchy Noise	110
	5.3.4 Approximate NP Test	111
	5.4 Detection of Known Signal in Correlated Gaussian Noise	112
	5.4.1 Reduction to i.i.d. Noise Case	113
	5.4.2 Performance Analysis	114
	5.5 $m$ -ary Signal Detection	115
	5.5.1 Bayes Classification Rule	116
	5.5.2 Performance Analysis	116
	5.6 Signal Selection	117
	5.6.1 i.i.d. Noise	118
	5.6.2 Correlated Noise	118
	5.7 Detection of Gaussian Signals in Gaussian Noise	120
	5.7.1 Detection of a Gaussian Signal in White Gaussian Noise	121
	5.7.2 Detection of i.i.d. Zero-Mean Gaussian Signal	122
	5.7.3 Diagonalization of Signal Covariance	123
	5.7.4 Performance Analysis	125
	5.7.5 Gaussian Signals With Nonzero Mean	126
	5.8 Detection of Weak Signals	127
	5.9 Detection of Signal with Unknown Parameters in White Gaussian Noise	128
	5.9.1 General Approach	129
	5.9.2 Linear Gaussian Model	130
	5.9.3 Nonlinear Gaussian Model	130
	5.9.4 Discrete Parameter Set	132
	5.10 Deflection-Based Detection of Non-Gaussian Signal in Gaussian Noise	135

	Exercises	139
	References	143
<b>6</b>	<b>Convex Statistical Distances</b>	<b>145</b>
	6.1 Kullback–Leibler Divergence	145
	6.2 Entropy and Mutual Information	147
	6.3 Chernoff Divergence, Chernoff Information, and Bhattacharyya Distance	149
	6.4 Ali–Silvey Distances	151
	6.5 Some Useful Inequalities	155
	Exercises	156
	References	158
<b>7</b>	<b>Performance Bounds for Hypothesis Testing</b>	<b>160</b>
	7.1 Simple Lower Bounds on Conditional Error Probabilities	160
	7.2 Simple Lower Bounds on Error Probability	162
	7.3 Chernoff Bound	163
	7.3.1 Moment-Generating and Cumulant-Generating Functions	163
	7.3.2 Chernoff Bound	164
	7.4 Application of Chernoff Bound to Binary Hypothesis Testing	167
	7.4.1 Exponential Upper Bounds on $P_F$ and $P_M$	168
	7.4.2 Bayesian Error Probability	170
	7.4.3 Lower Bound on ROC	172
	7.4.4 Example	172
	7.5 Bounds on Classification Error Probability	173
	7.5.1 Upper and Lower Bounds in Terms of Pairwise Error Probabilities	173
	7.5.2 Bonferroni’s Inequalities	176
	7.5.3 Generalized Fano’s Inequality	176
	7.6 Appendix: Proof of Theorem 7.4	178
	Exercises	181
	References	183
<b>8</b>	<b>Large Deviations and Error Exponents for Hypothesis Testing</b>	<b>184</b>
	8.1 Introduction	184
	8.2 Chernoff Bound for Sum of i.i.d. Random Variables	185
	8.2.1 Cramér’s Theorem	185
	8.2.2 Why is the Central Limit Theorem Inapplicable Here?	186
	8.3 Hypothesis Testing with i.i.d. Observations	187
	8.3.1 Bayesian Hypothesis Testing with i.i.d. Observations	188
	8.3.2 Neyman–Pearson Hypothesis Testing with i.i.d. Observations	189
	8.3.3 Hoeffding Problem	189
	8.3.4 Example	191
	8.4 Refined Large Deviations	194
	8.4.1 The Method of Exponential Tilting	194

	8.4.2 Sum of i.i.d. Random Variables	195
	8.4.3 Lower Bounds on Large-Deviations Probabilities	198
	8.4.4 Refined Asymptotics for Binary Hypothesis Testing	199
	8.4.5 Non-i.i.d. Components	200
	8.5 Appendix: Proof of Lemma 8.1	202
	Exercises	203
	References	206
<b>9</b>	<b>Sequential and Quickest Change Detection</b>	<b>208</b>
	9.1 Sequential Detection	208
	9.1.1 Problem Formulation	208
	9.1.2 Stopping Times and Decision Rules	209
	9.1.3 Two Formulations of the Sequential Hypothesis Testing Problem	209
	9.1.4 Sequential Probability Ratio Test	210
	9.1.5 SPRT Performance Evaluation	212
	9.2 Quickest Change Detection	217
	9.2.1 Minimax Quickest Change Detection	219
	9.2.2 Bayesian Quickest Change Detection	223
	Exercises	227
	References	229
<b>10</b>	<b>Detection of Random Processes</b>	<b>231</b>
	10.1 Discrete-Time Random Processes	231
	10.1.1 Periodic Stationary Gaussian Processes	232
	10.1.2 Stationary Gaussian Processes	234
	10.1.3 Markov Processes	235
	10.2 Continuous-Time Processes	238
	10.2.1 Covariance Kernel	239
	10.2.2 Karhunen–Loève Transform	240
	10.2.3 Detection of Known Signals in Gaussian Noise	244
	10.2.4 Detection of Gaussian Signals in Gaussian Noise	246
	10.3 Poisson Processes	248
	10.4 General Processes	250
	10.4.1 Likelihood Ratio	250
	10.4.2 Ali–Silvey Distances	252
	10.5 Appendix: Proof of Proposition 10.1	253
	Exercises	254
	References	256
<b>Part II Estimation</b>		<b>257</b>
<b>11</b>	<b>Bayesian Parameter Estimation</b>	<b>259</b>
	11.1 Introduction	259

11.2	Bayesian Parameter Estimation	259
11.3	MMSE Estimation	260
11.4	MMAE Estimation	262
11.5	MAP Estimation	263
11.6	Parameter Estimation for Linear Gaussian Models	265
11.7	Estimation of Vector Parameters	266
11.7.1	Vector MMSE Estimation	267
11.7.2	Vector MMAE Estimation	267
11.7.3	Vector MAP Estimation	267
11.7.4	Linear MMSE Estimation	268
11.7.5	Vector Parameter Estimation in Linear Gaussian Models	269
11.7.6	Other Cost Functions for Bayesian Estimation	270
11.8	Exponential Families	270
11.8.1	Basic Properties	271
11.8.2	Conjugate Priors	273
	Exercises	276
	References	279
<b>12</b>	<b>Minimum Variance Unbiased Estimation</b>	<b>280</b>
12.1	Nonrandom Parameter Estimation	280
12.2	Sufficient Statistics	281
12.3	Factorization Theorem	283
12.4	Rao–Blackwell Theorem	284
12.5	Complete Families of Distributions	286
12.5.1	Link Between Completeness and Sufficiency	288
12.5.2	Link Between Completeness and MVUE	289
12.5.3	Link Between Completeness and Exponential Families	289
12.6	Discussion	291
12.7	Examples: Gaussian Families	291
	Exercises	294
	References	296
<b>13</b>	<b>Information Inequality and Cramér–Rao Lower Bound</b>	<b>297</b>
13.1	Fisher Information and the Information Inequality	297
13.2	Cramér–Rao Lower Bound	300
13.3	Properties of Fisher Information	302
13.4	Conditions for Equality in Information Inequality	305
13.5	Vector Parameters	306
13.6	Information Inequality for Random Parameters	311
13.7	Biased Estimators	312
13.8	Appendix: Derivation of (13.16)	314
	Exercises	315
	References	318

<b>14</b>	<b>Maximum Likelihood Estimation</b>	319
14.1	Introduction	319
14.2	Computation of ML Estimates	320
14.3	Invariance to Reparameterization	322
14.4	MLE in Exponential Families	323
14.4.1	Mean-Value Parameterization	324
14.4.2	Relation to MVUEs	324
14.4.3	Asymptotics	325
14.5	Estimation of Parameters on Boundary	327
14.6	Asymptotic Properties for General Families	329
14.6.1	Consistency	329
14.6.2	Asymptotic Efficiency and Normality	331
14.7	Nonregular ML Estimation Problems	334
14.8	Nonexistence of MLE	335
14.9	Non-i.i.d. Observations	338
14.10	M-Estimators and Least-Squares Estimators	338
14.11	Expectation-Maximization (EM) Algorithm	339
14.11.1	General Structure of the EM Algorithm	340
14.11.2	Convergence of EM Algorithm	341
14.11.3	Examples	341
14.12	Recursive Estimation	347
14.12.1	Recursive MLE	347
14.12.2	Recursive Approximations to Least-Squares Solution	349
14.13	Appendix: Proof of Theorem 14.2	350
14.14	Appendix: Proof of Theorem 14.4	351
	Exercises	352
	References	356
<b>15</b>	<b>Signal Estimation</b>	358
15.1	Linear Innovations	358
15.2	Discrete-Time Kalman Filter	360
15.2.1	Time-Invariant Case	365
15.3	Extended Kalman Filter	367
15.4	Nonlinear Filtering for General Hidden Markov Models	369
15.5	Estimation in Finite Alphabet Hidden Markov Models	372
15.5.1	Viterbi Algorithm	373
15.5.2	Forward-Backward Algorithm	375
15.5.3	Baum–Welch Algorithm for HMM Learning	378
	Exercises	381
	References	383
<b>Appendix A</b>	<b>Matrix Analysis</b>	384
<b>Appendix B</b>	<b>Random Vectors and Covariance Matrices</b>	390

<b>Appendix C</b>	<b>Probability Distributions</b>	391
<b>Appendix D</b>	<b>Convergence of Random Sequences</b>	393
	<i>Index</i>	395



## Preface

In the engineering context, statistical inference has traditionally been ubiquitous in areas as diverse as signal processing, communications, and control. Historically, one of the most celebrated applications of statistical inference theory was the development of radar systems, which was a major turning point during World War II. During the following decades, the theory has been expanded considerably and has provided solutions to an impressive variety of technical problems, including reliable detection, identification, and recovery of radio and television signals, of underwater signals, and of speech signals; reliable communication of data on point-to-point links and on information networks; and control of plants. In the last decade or so, the reach of this theory has expanded even further, finding applications in biology, security (detection of threats), and analysis of big data.

In a broad sense, statistical inference theory addresses problems of detection and estimation. The underlying theory is foundational for machine learning and data science, as it provides golden standards (fundamental performance limits), which, in some cases, can be approached asymptotically by learning algorithms. In order to develop a deep understanding of machine learning, where one does not assume a prior statistical model for the data, one first needs to thoroughly understand model-based statistical inference, which is the subject of this book.

This book is intended to provide a unifying and insightful view, and a fundamental understanding of statistical inference for engineers and data scientists. It should serve both as a textbook and as a modern reference for researchers and practitioners. The core principles of statistical inference are introduced and illustrated with numerous examples that are designed to be accessible to the broadest possible audience, without relying on domain-specific knowledge. The examples are designed to emphasize key features of the theory and the implications of the assumptions made (e.g., assuming prior distributions and cost functions) and the subtleties that arise when applying the theory.

After an introductory chapter, the book is divided into two main parts. The first part (Chapters 2–10) covers hypothesis testing, where the quantity being inferred (*state*) takes on a finite set of values. The second part (Chapters 11–15) covers estimation, where the state is not restricted to a finite set. A summary of the contents of the chapters is as follows:

- In Chapter 1, the problems of hypothesis testing and estimation are introduced through examples, and then cast in the general framework of statistical decision theory. Various approaches (e.g., Bayes, minimax) to solving statistical decision making

problems are defined and compared. The notation used in the book is also defined in this chapter.

- In Chapter 2, the focus is on binary hypothesis testing, where the state takes one of two possible values. The three basic formulations of the binary hypothesis testing problem, namely, Bayesian, minimax, and Neyman–Pearson, are described along with illustrative examples.
- In Chapter 3, the methods developed in Chapter 2 are extended to the case of  $m$ -ary hypothesis testing, with  $m > 2$ . This chapter also includes a discussion of the problem of designing  $m$  binary tests simultaneously and obtaining performance guarantees for the collection of tests (rather than for each individual test).
- In Chapter 4, the problem of composite hypothesis testing is studied, where each hypothesis may be associated with more than one probability distribution. Uniformly most powerful (UMP), locally most powerful (LMP), generalized likelihood ratio (GLR), non-dominated, and robust tests are developed to address the composite nature of the hypotheses.
- In Chapter 5, the principles developed in the previous chapters are applied to the problem of detecting a signal, which is a finite sequence, observed in noise. Various models for the signal and noise are considered, along with a discussion of the structures of the optimal tests.
- In Chapter 6, various notions of distances between two distributions are introduced, along with their relationships. These distance metrics prove to be useful in deriving bounds on the performance of the tests for hypothesis testing problems. This chapter should also be of independent interest to researchers from other fields where such distance metrics find applications.
- In Chapter 7, analytically tractable performance bounds for hypothesis testing are derived. Of central interest are upper and lower bounds on error probabilities of optimal tests. A key tool that is used in deriving these bounds is the Chernoff bound, which is discussed in great detail in this chapter.
- In Chapter 8, large-deviations theory, whose basis is the Chernoff bound studied in Chapter 7, is used to derive performance bounds on hypothesis testing with a large number of independent and identically distributed observations under each hypothesis. The asymptotics of these methods are also studied, and tight approximations that are based on the method of exponential tilting are presented.
- In Chapter 9, the problem of hypothesis testing is studied in a sequential setting where we are allowed to choose when to stop taking observations before making a decision. The related problem of quickest change detection is also studied, where the observations undergo a change in distribution at some unknown time and the goal is to detect the change as quickly as possible, subject to false-alarm constraints.
- In Chapter 10, hypothesis testing is studied in the setting where the observations are realizations of random processes. Notions of Kullback–Leibler and Chernoff divergence rates, and Radon–Nikodym derivatives between two distributions on random processes are introduced and exploited to develop detection schemes.
- In Chapter 11, the Bayesian approach to parameter estimation is discussed, where the unknown parameter is modeled as random. The cases of scalar- and vector-valued

parameter estimation are studied separately to emphasize the similarities and differences between these two cases.

- In Chapter 12, several methods are introduced for constructing good estimators when prior probabilistic models are not available for the unknown parameter. The notions of unbiasedness and minimum-variance unbiased estimation are defined, along with notions of sufficient statistics and completeness. Exponential families are studied in detail.
- In Chapter 13, the information inequality is studied for both scalar and vector valued parameters. This fundamental inequality, when applied to unbiased estimators, results in the powerful Cramér–Rao lower bound (CRLB) on the variance.
- In Chapter 14, the focus is on the maximum likelihood (ML) approach to parameter estimation. Properties of the ML estimator are studied in the asymptotic setting where the number of observations goes to infinity. Recursive ways to compute (approximations to) ML estimators are studied, along with the practically useful expectation-maximization (EM) algorithm.
- In Chapter 15, we shift away from parameter estimation and study the problem of estimating a discrete-time random signal using noisy observations of the signal. The celebrated Kalman filter is studied in detail, along with some extensions to nonlinear filtering. The chapter ends with a discussion of estimation in finite alphabet hidden Markov models (HMMs).

The main audience for this book is graduate students and researchers that have completed a first-year graduate course in probability. The material in this book should be accessible to engineers and data scientists working in industry, assuming they have the necessary probability background.

This book is intended for a one-semester graduate-level course, as it is taught at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The core of such a course (about two-thirds) could be formed using the material from Chapter 1, Chapter 2, Sections 3.1–3.4, Sections 4.1–4.6, Sections 6.1–6.3, Chapter 7, Sections 8.1 and 8.2, Chapter 11, Chapter 12, Sections 13.1–13.5, Sections 14.1–14.6, Section 14.11, and Sections 15.1–15.3. The remaining third of the course could cover selected topics from the remaining material at the discretion of the instructor.

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This book is the result of course notes developed by the authors over a period of more than 20 years as they alternated teaching a graduate-level course on the topic in the Electrical and Computer Engineering department at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The authors gratefully acknowledge the invaluable feedback and help that they received from the students in this course over the years.

Finally, the authors are thankful to their families for their love and support over the years.

## Acronyms

a.s.	almost surely
ADD	average detection delay
AUC	area under the curve
BH	Benjamini–Hochberg
CADD	conditional average detection delay
cdf	cumulative distribution function
CFAR	constant false-alarm rate
CLT	Central Limit Theorem
cgf	cumulant-generating function
CRLB	Cramér–Rao lower bound
CuSum	cumulative sum
$\xrightarrow{d}$	convergence in distribution
DFT	discrete fourier transform
EKF	extended Kalman filter
EM	expectation-maximization
FAR	false-alarm rate
FDR	false discovery rate
FWER	family-wise error rate
GLR	generalized likelihood ratio
GLRT	generalized likelihood ratio test
GSNR	generalized signal-to-noise ratio
HMM	hidden Markov model
i.i.d.	independent and identically distributed
i.p.	in probability
JSB	joint stochastic boundedness
KF	Kalman filter
KL	Kullback–Leibler
LFD	least favorable distribution
LLRT	log-likelihood ratio test
LMMSE	linear minimum mean squared-error
LMP	locally most powerful
LMS	least mean squares
LRT	likelihood ratio test
MAP	maximum <i>a posteriori</i>
mgf	moment-generating function

---

ML	maximum likelihood
MLE	maximum likelihood estimator
MMAE	minimum mean absolute-error
MMSE	minimum mean squared-error
MOM	method of moments
MPE	minimum probability of error
m.s.	mean squares
MVUE	minimum-variance unbiased estimator
MSE	mean squared-error
NLF	nonlinear filter
NP	Neyman–Pearson
pdf	probability density function
PFA	probability of false alarm
pmf	probability mass function
QCD	quickest change detection
RLS	recursive least squares
ROC	receiver operating characteristic
SAGE	space-alternating generalized EM
SND	standard noncoherent detector
SNR	signal-to-noise ratio
SPRT	sequential probability ratio test
SR	Shiryaev–Roberts
UMP	uniformly most powerful
WADD	worst-case average detection delay
w.p.	with probability

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Pierre Moulin , Venugopal Veeravalli

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