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Giancarlo Travaglini

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GIANCARLO TRAVAGLINI

Università di Milano-Bicocca



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Frontmatter

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Giancarlo Travaglini

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Contents

	<i>Introduction</i>	<i>page ix</i>
	PART ONE ELEMENTARY NUMBER THEORY	1
1	Prelude	3
	1.1 Prime numbers and factorization	3
	1.2 Chebyshev’s theorem	11
2	Arithmetic functions and integer points	19
	2.1 Arithmetic functions and Dirichlet product	19
	2.2 $\mu(n)$	23
	2.3 $d(n)$ and $\sigma(n)$	25
	2.4 $r(n)$	33
	2.5 $\phi(n)$	35
3	Congruences	41
	3.1 Basic properties	42
	3.2 The theorems of Fermat and Euler	46
	3.3 Almost prime numbers	50
	3.4 The Chinese remainder theorem	56
	3.5 The RSA encryption	59
4	Quadratic reciprocity and Fourier series	65
	4.1 Quadratic residues	66
	4.2 Gauss sums	74
	4.3 Fourier series	76
	4.4 Another proof of the quadratic reciprocity law	83
5	Sums of squares	87
	5.1 The theorems of Minkowski and Dirichlet	87

viii	<i>Contents</i>	
	5.2 Sums of two squares	92
	5.3 Gaussian integers	94
	5.4 Sums of four squares	100
	PART TWO FOURIER ANALYSIS AND GEOMETRIC DISCREPANCY	105
6	Uniform distribution and completeness of the trigonometric system	107
	6.1 Kronecker's theorem	108
	6.2 Completeness of the trigonometric system	110
	6.3 The Weyl criterion	118
	6.4 Normal numbers	123
	6.5 Benford's law	127
7	Discrepancy and trigonometric approximation	134
	7.1 One-sided trigonometric approximation	135
	7.2 The Erdős–Turán inequality	138
	7.3 The inequalities of Koksma and Koksma–Hlawka	140
8	Integer points and Poisson summation formula	150
	8.1 Fourier integrals	150
	8.2 The Poisson summation formula	160
	8.3 The Gauss circle problem	162
	8.4 Integer points in convex bodies	169
9	Integer points and exponential sums	183
	9.1 Preliminary results	183
	9.2 Van der Corput's method and the Dirichlet divisor problem	186
10	Geometric discrepancy and decay of Fourier transforms	193
	10.1 Choosing N points in a cube	193
	10.2 Roth's theorem	195
	10.3 Average decay of Fourier transforms	200
	10.4 Irregularities of distribution for convex bodies	203
11	Discrepancy in high dimension and Bessel functions	214
	11.1 Bessel functions	215
	11.2 Deterministic and probabilistic discrepancies	219
	11.3 The case $d = 5, 9, 13, \dots$	224
	<i>References</i>	229
	<i>Index</i>	238

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-04403-6 - Number Theory, Fourier Analysis and Geometric Discrepancy

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Introduction

Through this book we wish to achieve and connect the following three goals:

- 1) to present some elementary results in number theory;
- 2) to introduce classical and recent topics on the uniform distribution of infinite sequences and on the discrepancy of finite sequences in several variables;
- 3) to present a few results in Fourier analysis and use them to prove some of the theorems discussed in the two previous points.

The first part of this book is dedicated to the first goal. The reader will find some topics typically presented in introductory books on number theory: factorization, arithmetic functions and integer points, congruences and cryptography, quadratic reciprocity, and sums of two and four squares. Starting from the first few pages we introduce some simple and captivating findings, such as Chebyshev's theorem and the elementary results for the Gauss circle problem and for the Dirichlet divisor problem, which may lead the reader to a deeper study of number theory, particularly students who are interested in calculus and analysis.

In the second part we start with the uniformly distributed sequences, introduced in 1916 by Weyl and related to the strong law of large numbers and to Kronecker's approximation theorem. Then we introduce the definition of discrepancy, which is the quantitative counterpart of the uniform distribution and has natural applications in the computation of high-dimensional integrals. For the particular case of integer points we use different techniques to prove some classical but not trivial results for the Gauss circle problem and for the Dirichlet divisor problem. Then we introduce the *geometric discrepancy*, also known as *irregularities of distribution* because some of its main results show the existence of unavoidable errors in the approximation of a continuous object by a discrete sampling. This theory has grown over the last 60 years thanks to

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

the contributions by Roth, Schmidt, Beck and other authors, and it is presently a crossroads between number theory, combinatorics, Fourier analysis, algorithms and complexity, probability and numerical analysis [49]. Its current applications range from traditional science and engineering to modern computer science and financial mathematics [43].

A large number of the results in this book are proved through Fourier analytic arguments: pointwise convergence of Fourier series, completeness of the trigonometric system, trigonometric approximation, Poisson summation formula, exponential sums, decay of Fourier transforms and Bessel functions. The result is a short and self-contained course on Fourier analysis, which we present in parallel with the two previous points.

This book is based on a number theory course of 60–70 hours given by the author at the University of Milano-Bicocca for several years. It was a post-graduate course, but many undergraduate students attended it with success. The prerequisites are limited: no prior knowledge of number theory or Fourier analysis is necessary, we assume a bit of algebra and a solid background in calculus, we need the Lebesgue integral, but we use complex analysis only in the last chapter.

The lecture notes of the above course first appeared in the Italian book *Apunti su teoria dei numeri, analisi di Fourier e distribuzione di punti* [173]. We wish to thank the Unione Matematica Italiana who generously released the rights to this revised and expanded English version.

We are very grateful to the students who attended the course. We also wish to thank Anatoly Podkorytov, Giacomo Gigante, Leonardo Colzani, Luca Brandolini and William Chen, who have read the original draft. We thank William Chen also for permission and encouragement to freely use his notes [46] of the number theory courses he taught at Imperial College London. These notes were modified many times from notes used by various colleagues over many years, both at Imperial College London and University College London. It seems likely that Davenport is the original source of these notes.

We are also happy to thank all the people at Cambridge University Press who were involved in publishing this book, in particular Roger Astley, Roisin Munnelly, Samuel Harrison and Joanna Breeze.

Giancarlo Travaglini

March 2014