

Chapter 11: Fourier Series

王奕翔

Department of Electrical Engineering
National Taiwan University

ihwang@ntu.edu.tw

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Fourier Series is invented by Joseph Fourier, which basically asserts that most periodic functions can be represented by infinite sums of sine and cosine functions.



Jean Baptiste Joseph Fourier, (1768 - 1830).

Fourier's Motivation: Solving the Heat Equation

$$\text{Solve } u(x, t) : \quad k \frac{\partial^2 u}{\partial x^2} = \frac{\partial u}{\partial t}, \quad 0 < x < L, \quad t > 0$$

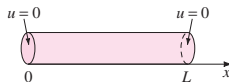
$$\text{subject to : } \quad u(0, t) = 0, \quad u(L, t) = 0, \quad t > 0$$

$$u(x, 0) = f(x), \quad 0 < x < L$$

Boundary
conditionInitial
condition

The above is called the **Heat Equation**, which can be derived from heat transfer theory.

Prior to Fourier, there is no known solution to the BVP if $f(x)$ (initial temperature distribution over the space) is general.



Below, let's try to follow Fourier's steps in solving this problem and see how Fourier Series is motivated.

Fourier's Motivation: Solving the Heat Equation

$$\text{Solve } u(x, t) : \quad k \frac{\partial^2 u}{\partial x^2} = \frac{\partial u}{\partial t}, \quad 0 < x < L, \quad t > 0$$

$$\text{subject to : } \quad u(0, t) = 0, \quad u(L, t) = 0, \quad t > 0$$

Boundary
condition

$$u(x, 0) = f(x), \quad 0 < x < L$$

Initial
condition

Step 1: Assume that the solution takes the form $u(x, t) = X(x)T(t)$.

(This approach was also taken by other predecessors like D. Bernoulli.)

Step 2: Convert the original PDE into the following:

$$kX''T = XT' \implies \frac{X''}{X} = \frac{T'}{kT} = -\lambda \implies \begin{cases} X'' + \lambda X = 0 \\ T' + \lambda kT = 0. \end{cases}$$

Boundary condition becomes $X(0)T(t) = X(L)T(t) = 0$.

Since we want non-trivial solutions, $T(t) \neq 0 \implies X(0) = X(L) = 0$.

Fourier's Motivation: Solving the Heat Equation

$$\text{Solve } u(x, t) = X(x)T(t) : \begin{cases} X'' + \lambda X = 0 \\ T' + \lambda kT = 0. \end{cases}$$

$$\text{subject to : } X(0) = X(L) = 0,$$

$$u(x, 0) = f(x), \quad 0 < x < L$$

Boundary
conditionInitial
condition

Step 3: λ remains to be determined. What values should λ take?

1 $\lambda = 0$: $X(x) = c_1 + c_2x$. $X(0) = X(L) = 0 \implies c_1 = c_2 = 0$.

2 $\lambda = -\alpha^2 < 0$: $X(x) = c_1 e^{-\alpha x} + c_2 e^{\alpha x}$.

Plug in $X(0) = X(L) = 0$, we get $c_1 = c_2 = 0$.

3 $\lambda = \alpha^2 > 0$: $X(x) = c_1 \cos(\alpha x) + c_2 \sin(\alpha x)$.

Plug in $X(0) = X(L) = 0$, we get $c_1 = 0$, and $c_2 \sin(\alpha L) = 0$.

Hence, $c_2 \neq 0$ only if $\alpha L = n\pi$.

To obtain a non-trivial solution, pick $\lambda = \frac{n^2 \pi^2}{L^2}, n = 1, 2, \dots$.

Fourier's Motivation: Solving the Heat Equation

$$\text{Solve } u(x, t) = X(x)T(t) : \begin{cases} X'' + \lambda X = 0 \\ T' + \lambda k T = 0. \end{cases}$$

$$\text{subject to : } X(0) = X(L) = 0,$$

$$u(x, 0) = f(x), \quad 0 < x < L$$

Boundary
conditionInitial
condition

Step 4: Once we fix $\lambda = \frac{n^2\pi^2}{L^2}$, $n = 1, 2, \dots$, we obtain

$$X(x) = c_2 \sin\left(\frac{n\pi}{L}x\right), \quad T(t) = c_3 \exp\left(-k\frac{n^2\pi^2}{L^2}t\right)$$

$$\implies u_n(x, t) = A_n \sin\left(\frac{n\pi}{L}x\right) \exp\left(-k\frac{n^2\pi^2}{L^2}t\right), \quad (A_n := c_2 c_3)$$

Step 5: Plug in the initial condition $\implies f(x) = A_n \sin\left(\frac{n\pi}{L}x\right)$

not true for general $f(x)$!

Fourier's Motivation: Solving the Heat Equation

$$\text{Solve } u(x, t) = X(x)T(t) : \begin{cases} X'' + \lambda X = 0 \\ T' + \lambda k T = 0. \end{cases}$$

$$\text{subject to : } X(0) = X(L) = 0,$$

$$u(x, 0) = f(x), \quad 0 < x < L$$

Boundary
conditionInitial
condition

Step 6: By the superposition principle, below satisfies the PDE.

$$\sum_{n=1}^N A_n \sin\left(\frac{n\pi}{L}x\right) \exp\left(-k\frac{n^2\pi^2}{L^2}t\right) \text{ for any } N$$

The question is, can it satisfy $u(x, 0) = \sum_{n=1}^N A_n \sin\left(\frac{n\pi}{L}x\right) = f(x)$?

Not likely

Key Observation: $f(x)$ is arbitrary and hence not necessarily a finite sum of sine functions.

Fourier's Idea: How about an infinite series? If we can represent arbitrary $f(x)$ by the infinite series (for $0 < x < L$)

$$f(x) = \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} A_n \sin\left(\frac{n\pi}{L}x\right),$$

and we can find the values of $\{A_n\}$, the problem is solved.

This motivates the theory of **Fourier Series**.

1 Orthogonal Functions

2 Fourier Series

Functions as Vectors: Inner Product

Definition (Inner Product of Functions)

The inner product of $f_1(x)$ and $f_2(x)$ on an interval $[a, b]$ is defined as

$$\langle f_1, f_2 \rangle := \int_a^b f_1(x)f_2(x) dx$$

Once inner product is defined, we can accordingly define **norm**.

Definition (Norm of a Function)

The norm of a function $f(x)$ on an interval $[a, b]$ is

$$\|f(x)\| := \sqrt{\langle f, f \rangle} = \sqrt{\int_a^b (f(x))^2 dx}$$

Orthogonality of Functions

Definition (Orthogonal Functions)

$f_1(x)$ and $f_2(x)$ are **orthogonal** on an interval $[a, b]$ if $\langle f_1, f_2 \rangle = 0$.

Definition (Orthogonal Set)

$\{\phi_0(x), \phi_1(x), \dots\}$ are **orthogonal** on an interval $[a, b]$ if

$$\langle \phi_m, \phi_n \rangle = \int_a^b \phi_m(x) \phi_n(x) dx = 0, \quad m \neq n.$$

Definition (Orthonormal Set)

$\{\phi_0(x), \phi_1(x), \dots\}$ are **orthonormal** on an interval $[a, b]$ if they are orthogonal and $\|\phi_n(x)\| = 1$ for all n .

Examples

Example (Orthogonal or Not Depends on the Interval)

The functions $f_1(x) = x$ and $f_2(x) = x^2$ are orthogonal on the interval $[a, b]$, $a < b$, only if $a = -b$.

Proof: When $a < b$,

$$\langle x, x^2 \rangle = \int_a^b x^3 dx = \left[\frac{1}{4} x^4 \right]_a^b = \frac{1}{4} (a^4 - b^4) = 0 \iff a + b = 0$$

Examples

Example (Exponential Functions are Not Orthogonal)

For $\lambda_1, \lambda_2 \in \mathbb{R}$, $f_1(x) = e^{\lambda_1 x}$ and $f_2(x) = e^{\lambda_2 x}$ are not orthogonal on any interval $[a, b]$, $a < b$.

Proof: If $\lambda_1 = -\lambda_2$,

$$\langle e^{\lambda_1 x}, e^{\lambda_2 x} \rangle = \int_a^b e^{(\lambda_1 + \lambda_2)x} dx = b - a \neq 0.$$

If $\lambda_1 \neq -\lambda_2$,

$$\langle e^{\lambda_1 x}, e^{\lambda_2 x} \rangle = \int_a^b e^{(\lambda_1 + \lambda_2)x} dx = \frac{e^{(\lambda_1 + \lambda_2)b} - e^{(\lambda_1 + \lambda_2)a}}{\lambda_1 + \lambda_2} \neq 0,$$

since an exponential function is strictly monotone.

Examples

Example

The set of functions $\left\{ \sin\left(\frac{n\pi}{L}x\right) \mid n = 1, 2, \dots \right\}$ are orthogonal on $[0, L]$.

Proof: Let $\phi_n(x) := \sin\left(\frac{n\pi}{L}x\right)$. For $m \neq n$,

$$\begin{aligned}\langle \phi_m, \phi_n \rangle &= \int_0^L \sin\left(\frac{m\pi}{L}x\right) \sin\left(\frac{n\pi}{L}x\right) dx \\ &= \int_0^L \frac{1}{2} \left\{ \cos\left(\frac{(m-n)\pi}{L}x\right) - \cos\left(\frac{(m+n)\pi}{L}x\right) \right\} dx \\ &= \frac{L}{2(m-n)\pi} \left[\sin\left(\frac{(m-n)\pi}{L}x\right) \right]_0^L \\ &\quad - \frac{L}{2(m+n)\pi} \left[\sin\left(\frac{(m+n)\pi}{L}x\right) \right]_0^L \\ &= 0 - 0 = 0.\end{aligned}$$

Orthogonal Series Expansion

Question: For a infinite orthogonal set $\{\phi_n(x) \mid n = 0, 1, \dots\}$ on some interval $[a, b]$, can we expand an arbitrary function $f(x)$ as

$$f(x) = \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} c_n \phi_n(x) ?$$

If so, how to find the coefficients $\{c_n\}$?

We answer the former question later with a particular set of orthogonal functions.

For the latter, simply take the inner product $\langle f, \phi_m \rangle$ to find the coefficient c_m !

$$\langle f, \phi_m \rangle = \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} c_n \langle \phi_n, \phi_m \rangle = c_m \|\phi_m\|^2 \implies c_m = \frac{\langle f, \phi_m \rangle}{\|\phi_m\|^2}.$$

Coefficients in the Solution of the Heat Equation

Recall in solving the Heat equation, the last step is to determine

$$\{A_n \mid n = 1, 2, \dots\} \text{ such that } f(x) = \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} A_n \sin\left(\frac{n\pi}{L}x\right).$$

Based on the principle developed above, we obtain $A_n = \frac{\langle f, \phi_n \rangle}{\|\phi_n\|^2}$, where $\phi_n(x) := \sin\left(\frac{n\pi}{L}x\right)$.

$$\|\phi_n\|^2 = \int_0^L \left(\sin\left(\frac{n\pi}{L}x\right)\right)^2 dx = \frac{1}{2} \int_0^L \left\{1 - \cos\left(\frac{2n\pi}{L}x\right)\right\} dx = \frac{L}{2}.$$

Hence, $A_n = \frac{2}{L} \int_0^L f(x) \sin\left(\frac{n\pi}{L}x\right) dx$, and

$$u(x, t) = \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} A_n \sin\left(\frac{n\pi}{L}x\right) \exp\left(-k \frac{n^2 \pi^2}{L^2} t\right)$$

Remaining question:

$$f(x) = \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} A_n \sin\left(\frac{n\pi}{L}x\right)$$

Will the infinite series converge for $x \in [0, L]$?

Does it converge to the function $f(x)$ for $x \in [0, L]$?

Complete Set

For an arbitrary (infinite) set of orthogonal functions $\{\phi_n(x)\}$, it is **not** true that any function $f(x)$ in a *space* S of functions, can be **truthfully** represented by its orthogonal series expansion.

Only when the set of orthogonal functions is **complete in S** , the orthogonal series expansion will (essentially) converge to any $f(x)$ in S .

Example

$\{\sin(nx) \mid n = 1, 2, \dots\}$ is orthogonal on $[-\pi, \pi]$ but not complete in the set of all continuous functions defined on $[-\pi, \pi]$.

It is quite straightforward to show that $\langle \sin(mx), \sin(nx) \rangle = 0$ for any $n \neq m$ on $[-\pi, \pi]$.

To show that it is not complete, note that any even function (like 1 , x^2 , $\cos x$) cannot be represented by $\sum c_n \sin(nx)$ when $x < 0$, because the series is an odd function.

1 Orthogonal Functions

2 Fourier Series

A Orthogonal Set of Functions

Lemma

The following set of functions are orthogonal on $[-p, p]$ (in fact, $[a, a + 2p]$ for any $a \in \mathbb{R}$).

$$\left\{ 1, \cos\left(\frac{n\pi}{p}x\right), \sin\left(\frac{n\pi}{p}x\right) \mid n = 1, 2, \dots \right\}.$$

If we expand a function using the above orthogonal set of functions, we obtain the **Fourier series** of the function.

Later we will see, this set is complete in the set of all continuous functions with continuous derivatives defined on $[a, a + 2\pi]$.

Definition of Fourier Series

Definition

The **Fourier series** of a function $f(x)$ defined on the interval $(-p, p)$ is

$$\frac{a_0}{2} + \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \left\{ a_n \cos \left(\frac{n\pi}{p} x \right) + b_n \sin \left(\frac{n\pi}{p} x \right) \right\},$$

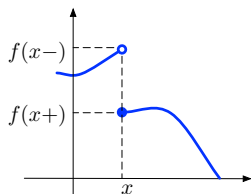
$$a_0 = \frac{1}{p} \int_{-p}^p f(x) dx, \quad a_n = \frac{1}{p} \int_{-p}^p f(x) \cos \left(\frac{n\pi}{p} x \right) dx, \quad b_n = \frac{1}{p} \int_{-p}^p f(x) \sin \left(\frac{n\pi}{p} x \right) dx.$$

These coefficients are called **Fourier coefficients**.

Note: In the textbook, Fourier series is defined over the interval $(-p, p)$. In fact, we can also define it over the interval $(a, a + 2p)$ for any $a \in \mathbb{R}$.

The formulas for the Fourier series and Fourier coefficients are the same except that the integral is taken from a to $a + 2p$.

Convergence of Fourier Series

**Question:**

How about the end points $\pm p$?

Answered later through periodic extension.

Theorem

Let f and f' be **piecewise continuous** on $[-p, p]$.

On $(-p, p)$, its Fourier series converges to

- $f(x)$ at a point where $f(x)$ is continuous
- $\frac{1}{2} (f(x+) + f(x-))$ where $f(x)$ is discontinuous.

Here

$$f(x+) := \lim_{h \downarrow 0} f(x+h), \quad f(x-) := \lim_{h \downarrow 0} f(x-h).$$

Note: Again, the interval of interest can be changed from $[-p, p]$ to $[a, a+2p]$ for any $a \in \mathbb{R}$.

Periodic Extension

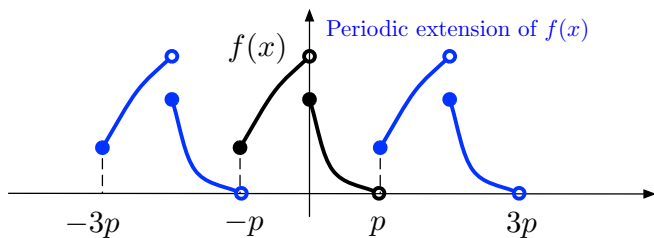
Note that a Fourier series consists of **periodic** functions:

Function	Fundamental Period
$\cos\left(\frac{n\pi}{p}x\right)$	$\frac{2p}{n}$
$\sin\left(\frac{n\pi}{p}x\right)$	$\frac{2p}{n}$

Hence, if a Fourier series converges for $x \in [-p, p]$ (or $[a, a + 2p]$), it also converges for any $x \in \mathbb{R}$.

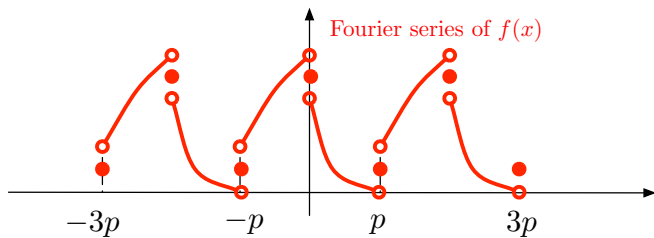
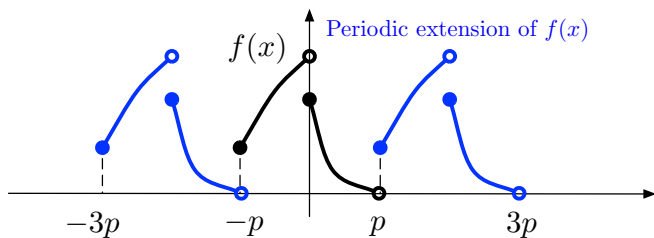
Moreover, it is a periodic function with fundamental period $2p$ (the largest fundamental period of its components).

What does it converge to? It converges to the $2p$ -periodic extension of $f(x)$, except the discontinuities.



At $x = \pm p, \pm 3p, \pm 5p, \dots$, the Fourier series of $f(x)$ converges to

$$\frac{f(-p+) + f(p-)}{2}, \quad \text{where } f(-p+) := \lim_{x \downarrow -p} f(x), \quad f(p-) := \lim_{x \uparrow p} f(x)$$



In other words,

The Fourier series of a piecewise continuous **periodic** function $f(x)$ with fundamental period $2p$ that has piecewise continuous $f'(x)$ is

$$\frac{a_0}{2} + \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \left\{ a_n \cos \left(\frac{n\pi}{p} x \right) + b_n \sin \left(\frac{n\pi}{p} x \right) \right\},$$

where

$$a_n = \frac{1}{p} \int_{-p}^p f(x) \cos \left(\frac{n\pi}{p} x \right) dx, \quad b_n = \frac{1}{p} \int_{-p}^p f(x) \sin \left(\frac{n\pi}{p} x \right) dx,$$

and on \mathbb{R} it converges to

- $f(x)$ at a point where $f(x)$ is continuous
- $\frac{1}{2} (f(x+) + f(x-))$ at a point where $f(x)$ is discontinuous.

Examples

Example

Expand $f(x) = \begin{cases} 0, & -\pi < x < 0 \\ \pi - x, & 0 \leq x < \pi \end{cases}$ into a Fourier series. What does the Fourier series converge to at $x = 0$ and $x = \pi$?

Complex Form

For a Fourier series $\frac{a_0}{2} + \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \left\{ a_n \cos\left(\frac{n\pi}{p}x\right) + b_n \sin\left(\frac{n\pi}{p}x\right) \right\}$, since

$$\cos\left(\frac{n\pi}{p}x\right) = \frac{1}{2} \left(e^{i\frac{n\pi}{p}x} + e^{-i\frac{n\pi}{p}x} \right), \quad \sin\left(\frac{n\pi}{p}x\right) = \frac{1}{2i} \left(e^{i\frac{n\pi}{p}x} - e^{-i\frac{n\pi}{p}x} \right)$$

it can be rewritten as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} & \frac{a_0}{2} + \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \left\{ a_n \frac{1}{2} \left(e^{i\frac{n\pi}{p}x} + e^{-i\frac{n\pi}{p}x} \right) + b_n \frac{1}{2i} \left(e^{i\frac{n\pi}{p}x} - e^{-i\frac{n\pi}{p}x} \right) \right\} \\ &= \frac{a_0}{2} + \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \left\{ \frac{a_n - ib_n}{2} e^{i\frac{n\pi}{p}x} + \frac{a_n + ib_n}{2} e^{-i\frac{n\pi}{p}x} \right\} \\ &= \sum_{n=-\infty}^{\infty} c_n e^{\frac{in\pi}{p}x}, \quad c_0 = \frac{a_0}{2}, \quad c_n = \frac{a_n - ib_n}{2}, \quad c_{-n} = \frac{a_n + ib_n}{2} \end{aligned}$$

Complex Form

From the fact that $c_0 = \frac{a_0}{2}$, $c_n = \frac{a_n - ib_n}{2}$, $c_{-n} = \frac{a_n + ib_n}{2}$, and

$$a_n = \frac{1}{p} \int_a^{a+2p} f(x) \cos\left(\frac{n\pi}{p}x\right) dx, \quad b_n = \frac{1}{p} \int_a^{a+2p} f(x) \sin\left(\frac{n\pi}{p}x\right) dx,$$

one can verify that the Fourier series of a function $f(x)$ can be represented in the complex form

$$\sum_{n=-\infty}^{\infty} c_n e^{\frac{in\pi}{p}x}, \quad \text{where } c_n = \frac{1}{2p} \int_a^{a+2p} f(x) e^{-\frac{in\pi}{p}x} dx.$$

Complex Form

On the other hand, if we extend the definition of inner product to complex-valued functions:

Definition (Inner Product of Complex-Valued Functions)

The inner product of $f_1(x)$ and $f_2(x)$ on an interval $[a, b]$ is defined as

$$\langle f_1, f_2 \rangle := \int_a^b f_1(x) f_2^*(x) dx$$

Then, it is easy to verify that $\left\{ e^{\frac{in\pi}{p}x} \mid n \in \mathbb{Z} \right\}$ is an orthogonal set on any $[a, a + 2p]$, and the coefficients in the expansion are exactly the same as above.

Even and Odd Functions

- $f(x)$ is an **Odd Function** if $f(x) = -f(-x)$.
- $f(x)$ is an **Even Function** if $f(x) = f(-x)$.

Property

- Both $f_1(x)$ and $f_2(x)$ are even (odd) $\implies f_1(x)f_2(x)$ is even.
- $f_1(x)$ is odd but $f_2(x)$ is even $\implies f_1(x)f_2(x)$ is odd.
- Both $f_1(x)$ and $f_2(x)$ are even (odd) $\implies f_1(x) \pm f_2(x)$ is even (odd).
- $f(x)$ is even $\implies \int_{-a}^a f(x) dx = 2 \int_0^a f(x) dx$.
- $f(x)$ is odd $\implies \int_{-a}^a f(x) dx = 0$.

Fourier Series of Even and Odd Functions

Recall: Fourier series of a function $f(x)$ on $(-p, p)$ is

$$\frac{a_0}{2} + \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \left\{ a_n \cos \left(\frac{n\pi}{p} x \right) + b_n \sin \left(\frac{n\pi}{p} x \right) \right\},$$

with Fourier coefficients

$$a_0 = \frac{1}{p} \int_{-p}^p f(x) dx = \begin{cases} 0 & f \text{ is odd} \\ \frac{2}{p} \int_0^p f(x) dx & f \text{ is even} \end{cases}$$

$$a_n = \frac{1}{p} \int_{-p}^p f(x) \cos \left(\frac{n\pi}{p} x \right) dx = \begin{cases} 0 & f \text{ is odd} \\ \frac{2}{p} \int_0^p f(x) \cos \left(\frac{n\pi}{p} x \right) dx & f \text{ is even} \end{cases}$$

$$b_n = \frac{1}{p} \int_{-p}^p f(x) \sin \left(\frac{n\pi}{p} x \right) dx = \begin{cases} \frac{2}{p} \int_0^p f(x) \sin \left(\frac{n\pi}{p} x \right) dx & f \text{ is odd} \\ 0 & f \text{ is even} \end{cases}$$

Fourier Series of Even and Odd Functions

Fourier Series of an Even Function $f(x)$ on $(-p, p)$:

$$\frac{a_0}{2} + \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} a_n \cos\left(\frac{n\pi}{p}x\right), \quad a_n = \frac{2}{p} \int_0^p f(x) \cos\left(\frac{n\pi}{p}x\right) dx$$

Constant + a Series of Cosine Functions

Fourier Series of an Odd Function $f(x)$ on $(-p, p)$:

$$\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} b_n \sin\left(\frac{n\pi}{p}x\right), \quad b_n = \frac{2}{p} \int_0^p f(x) \sin\left(\frac{n\pi}{p}x\right) dx$$

a Series of Sine Functions

Fourier Cosine and Sine Series

Definition

The **Fourier cosine series** of a function $f(x)$ defined on $(0, p)$ is

$$\frac{a_0}{2} + \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} a_n \cos\left(\frac{n\pi}{p}x\right), \quad a_n = \frac{2}{p} \int_0^p f(x) \cos\left(\frac{n\pi}{p}x\right) dx.$$

Definition

The **Fourier sine series** of a function $f(x)$ defined on $(0, p)$ is

$$\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} b_n \sin\left(\frac{n\pi}{p}x\right), \quad b_n = \frac{2}{p} \int_0^p f(x) \sin\left(\frac{n\pi}{p}x\right) dx.$$

Half-Range Expansions

3 options to expand a function $f(x)$ defined on the interval $(0, L)$:

1 Fourier Cosine Series: Take $p := L$, and expand it as

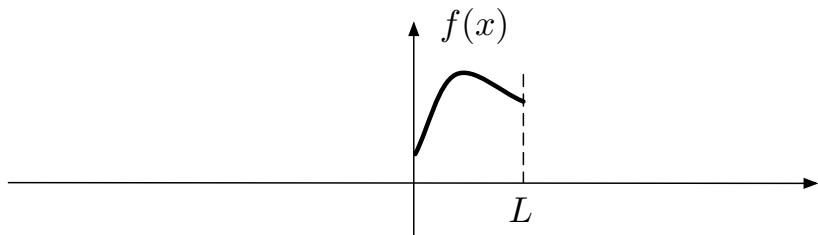
$$\frac{a_0}{2} + \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} a_n \cos\left(\frac{n\pi}{L}x\right), \quad a_n = \frac{2}{L} \int_0^L f(x) \cos\left(\frac{n\pi}{L}x\right) dx.$$

2 Fourier Sine Series: Take $p := L$, and expand it as

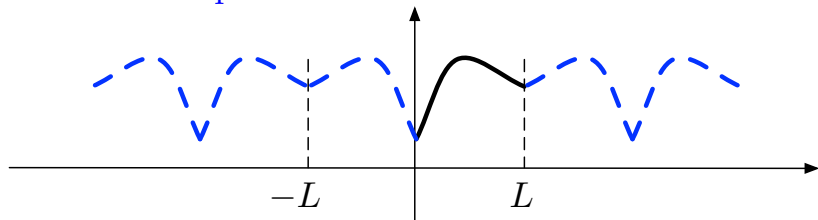
$$\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} b_n \sin\left(\frac{n\pi}{L}x\right), \quad b_n = \frac{2}{L} \int_0^L f(x) \sin\left(\frac{n\pi}{L}x\right) dx.$$

3 Fourier Series: Take $a := 0$, $2p := L$, and expand it as

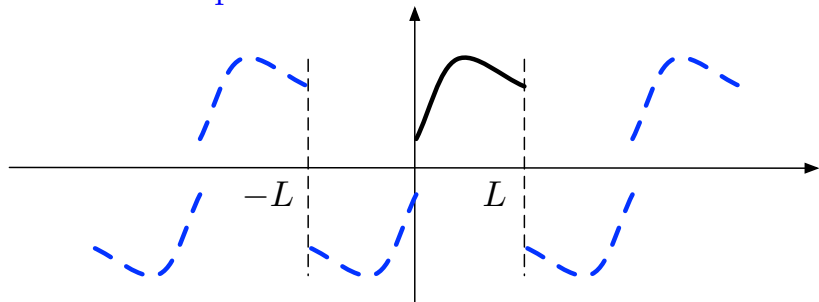
$$\sum_{n=-\infty}^{\infty} c_n e^{i\frac{2n\pi}{L}x}, \quad \text{where } c_n = \frac{1}{L} \int_0^L f(x) e^{-i\frac{2n\pi}{L}x} dx.$$



Expansion in Fourier cosine series



Expansion in Fourier sine series



Expansion in Fourier series

