Today

• Efficient Solution of CSPs
• Local Search

Reminder: CSPs

- CSPs:
  - Variables
  - Domains
  - Constraints
    - Implicit (provide code to compute)
    - Explicit (provide a list of the legal tuples)
    - Unary / Binary / N-ary

- Goals:
  - Here: find any solution
  - Also: find all, find best, etc.

Backtracking Search

```
function Backtracking-Search(cp) returns solution/failure
  return Recursive-Backtracking({}, cp)

function Recursive-Backtracking(assignment, cp) returns solution/failure
  if assignment is complete then return assignment
car — select-unchosen-variable(VARIABLES - cp - assignment)
  for each value in ORDER-Domain-Value(car, assignment, cp) do
    if value is consistent with assignment then
      assign {car = value} to assignment
      result — Recursive-Backtracking(assignment, cp)
      if result is failure then return result
      else return {car = value} from assignment
  return failure
```

Improving Backtracking

- General-purpose ideas give huge gains in speed
  - … but it’s all still NP-hard

- Filtering: Can we detect inevitable failure early?

- Ordering:
  - Which variable should be assigned next? (MRV)
  - In what order should its values be tried? (LCV)

- Structure: Can we exploit the problem structure?

Arc Consistency and Beyond
Arc Consistency of an Entire CSP

- A simple form of propagation makes sure all arcs are simultaneously consistent:

- Arc consistency detects failure earlier than forward checking
- Important: If X loses a value, neighbors of X need to be rechecked!
- Must rerun after each assignment!

<table>
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<tr>
<th>WA</th>
<th>NT</th>
<th>Q</th>
<th>NSW</th>
<th>V</th>
<th>SA</th>
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Limitations of Arc Consistency

- After enforcing arc consistency:
  - Can have one solution left
  - Can have multiple solutions left
  - Can have no solutions left (and not know it)

- Arc consistency still runs inside a backtracking search!

K-Consistency

- Increasing degrees of consistency
  - 1-Consistency (Node Consistency): Each single node’s domain has a value which meets that node’s unary constraints
  - 2-Consistency (Arc Consistency): For each pair of nodes, any consistent assignment to one can be extended to the other
  - K-Consistency: For each k nodes, any consistent assignment to k-1 can be extended to the k^th node.

- Higher k more expensive to compute
- (You need to know the k=2 case: arc consistency)

Strong K-Consistency

- Strong k-consistency: also k-1, k-2, ... 1 consistent
- Claim: strong n-consistency means we can solve without backtracking!

- Why?
  - Choose any assignment to any variable
  - Choose a new variable
  - By 2-consistency, there is a choice consistent with the first
  - Choose a new variable
  - By 3-consistency, there is a choice consistent with the first 2
  - ...

-Lots of middle ground between arc consistency and n-consistency! (e.g. k=3, called path consistency)

Structure
**Problem Structure**

- Extreme case: independent subproblems
  - Example: Tasmania and mainland do not interact
- Independent subproblems are identifiable as connected components of constraint graph
- Suppose a graph of n variables can be broken into subproblems of only c variables:
  - Worst-case solution cost is \( O(n/c)(d^c) \), linear in n
  - E.g., \( n = 80, d = 2, c = 20 \)
  - \( 2^{80} = 4 \text{ billion years at 10 million nodes/sec} \)
  - \( (4)(2^{20}) = 0.4 \text{ seconds at 10 million nodes/sec} \)

**Tree-Structured CSPs**

- Theorem: if the constraint graph has no loops, the CSP can be solved in \( O(n d^2) \) time
  - Compare to general CSPs, where worst-case time is \( O(d^n) \)
  - This property also applies to probabilistic reasoning (later): an example of the relation between syntactic restrictions and the complexity of reasoning

**Algorithm for tree-structured CSPs:**
- Order: Choose a root variable, order variables so that parents precede children
- Remove backward: For \( i = n : 2 \), apply \( \text{RemoveInconsistent}(\text{Parent}(X_i), X_i) \)
- Assign forward: For \( i = 1 : n \), assign \( X_i \) consistently with \( \text{Parent}(X_i) \)
- Runtime: \( O(n d^2) \) (why?)

**Claim 1:** After backward pass, all root-to-leaf arcs are consistent
- Proof: Each \( X \rightarrow Y \) was made consistent at one point and Y's domain could not have been reduced thereafter (because Y's children were processed before Y)

**Claim 2:** If root-to-leaf arcs are consistent, forward assignment will not backtrack
- Proof: Induction on position
- Why doesn’t this algorithm work with cycles in the constraint graph?
- Note: we’ll see this basic idea again with Bayes’ nets

**Improving Structure**

- Conditioning: instantiate a variable, prune its neighbors’ domains
- Cutset conditioning: instantiate (in all ways) a set of variables such that the remaining constraint graph is a tree
- Cutset size \( c \) gives runtime \( O( (d^c)(n-c) d^2 ) \), very fast for small \( c \)

**Nearly Tree-Structured CSPs**

- Conditioning: instantiate a variable, prune its neighbors’ domains
- Cutset conditioning: instantiate (in all ways) a set of variables such that the remaining constraint graph is a tree
- Cutset size \( c \) gives runtime \( O( (d^c)(n-c) d^2 ) \), very fast for small \( c \)
### Cutset Conditioning

1. Instantiate the cutset (all possible ways)
2. Compute residual CSP for each assignment
3. Solve the residual CSPs (tree structured)

### Cutset Quiz

- Find the smallest cutset for the graph below.

### Tree Decomposition*

- Idea: create a tree-structured graph of mega-variables
- Each mega-variable encodes part of the original CSP
- Subproblems overlap to ensure consistent solutions

### Iterative Improvement

- Local search methods typically work with “complete” states, i.e., all variables assigned

- To apply to CSPs:
  - Take an assignment with unsatisfied constraints
  - Operators reassign variable values
  - No fringe! Live on the edge.

- Algorithm: While not solved,
  - Variable selection: randomly select any conflicted variable
  - Value selection: min-conflicts heuristic:
    - Choose a value that violates the fewest constraints
    - i.e., hill climb with \( h(n) = \text{total number of violated constraints} \)

### Example: 4-Queens

- States: 4 queens in 4 columns (\( 4^4 = 256 \) states)
- Operators: move queen in column
- Goal test: no attacks
- Evaluation: \( c(h) = \text{number of attacks} \)
Performance of Min-Conflicts

- Given random initial state, can solve n-queens in almost constant time for arbitrary n with high probability (e.g., n = 10,000,000)!
- The same appears to be true for any randomly generated CSP except in a narrow range of the ratio

\[ R = \frac{\text{number of constraints}}{\text{number of variables}} \]

Summary: CSPs

- CSPs are a special kind of search problem:
  - States are partial assignments
  - Goal test defined by constraints
- Basic solution: backtracking search
- Speed-ups:
  - Ordering
  - Filtering
  - Structure
- Iterative min-conflicts is often effective in practice

Local Search

- Tree search keeps unexplored alternatives on the fringe (ensures completeness)
- Local search: improve a single option until you can’t make it better (no fringe!)
- New successor function: local changes
- Generally much faster and more memory efficient (but incomplete and suboptimal)
Hill Climbing

- Simple, general idea:
  - Start wherever
  - Repeat: move to the best neighboring state
  - If no neighbors better than current, quit

- What’s bad about this approach?
  - Complete?
  - Optimal?

- What’s good about it?

Hill Climbing Quiz

Starting from X, where do you end up?
Starting from Y, where do you end up?
Starting from Z, where do you end up?

Hill Climbing Diagram

Simulated Annealing

- Idea: Escape local maxima by allowing downhill moves
  - But make them rarer as time goes on

```python
def simulated_annealing(problem, schedule):
    current = initial_state
    for t in schedule:
        if random.random() < exp(-delta_E / T):
            current = next
    return current
```

- Theoretical guarantee:
  - Stationary distribution: $p(x) \propto e^{\frac{E(x)}{T}}$
  - If T decreased slowly enough, will converge to optimal state!

- Is this an interesting guarantee?
- Sounds like magic, but reality is reality:
  - The more downhill steps you need to escape a local optimum, the less likely you are to ever make them all in a row
  - People think hard about ridge operators which let you jump around the space in better ways

Genetic Algorithms

- Genetic algorithms use a natural selection metaphor
  - Keep best N hypotheses at each step (selection) based on a fitness function
  - Also have pairwise crossover operators, with optional mutation to give variety

- Possibly the most misunderstood, misapplied (and even maligned) technique around
Example: N-Queens

- Why does crossover make sense here?
- When wouldn’t it make sense?
- What would mutation be?
- What would a good fitness function be?

Next Time: Adversarial Search!