Module Description, available in: EN

Bayesian Machine Learning

General Information

Number of ECTS Credits

3

Module code

TSM_BayMachLe

Valid for academic year

2026-27

Last modification

2023-10-11

Coordinator of the module

Cedric Huwyler (FHNW, cedric.huwyler@fhnw.ch)

Explanations regarding the language definitions for each location:

- Instruction is given in the language specified for each location and module execution.
- Documentation is available in the language(s) listed for each location and module execution. If the documentation is in multiple languages, the percentage distributed is indicated (100% = all documentation provided).
- The examination, including both questions and answers, is provided entirely (100%) in the language(s) specified for each location and module execution. The exams are on-site.

	Lausanne			Lugano	Zurich		
Instruction					**X** E 100%		
Documentation					**X** E 100%		
Examination					**X** E 100%		

Module Category

TSM Technical scientific module

Profile Recommendations

This module is recommended for the following profiles:

	Zurich
Profile	DS

Lessons

2 lecture periods and 1 tutorial period per week

Entry level competences

Prerequisites, previous knowledge

Basic probability and statistics, basic programming skills (R and/or Python), linear algebra and multivariate calculus, basic concepts of machine learning.

Brief course description of module objectives and content

Bayesian statistics provides an alternative viewpoint to the classical ‘frequentist’ statistics by using a different, more subjective interpretation of probability. This brings various advantages in solving typical industry problems, such as the inclusion of prior knowledge, more intuitive hypothesis tests or modeling uncertainty given small amounts of data. With increasing computational power, the popularity of Bayesian statistics and machine learning has grown significantly over the past decade. This course provides students with a solid understanding of the fundamental concepts of Bayesian statistics, introduces various computational methods required in Bayesian statistics and Bayesian machine learning, and discusses numerous examples and applications of Bayesian machine learning. Bayesian as well as Gaussian process regression models are introduced and explored, with a particular focus on graphical models and Bayesian networks to model relationships and to infer causality. In addition, advanced topics and their applications are covered, such as Bayesian optimisation, non-parametric mixture models for clustering, and Bayesian neural networks.

Aims, content, methods

Learning objectives and competencies to be acquired

Students are able to formulate their problem setting on the basis of Bayesian models and to include their prior understanding. They are able to explain how Bayesian models balance between prior understanding and data towards a posterior understanding of a problem. They are aware of the advantages and disadvantages of the Bayesian approach and know in which situation it is better suited than standard frequency statistics. Since Bayesian models can rarely be computed in closed form, they are experienced in approximating posterior distributions by means of sampling-based approaches

Module content with weighting of different components

Fundamental concepts of Bayesian statistics: Reasoning under uncertainty, probability theory, Bayes theorem, prior, likelihood, posterior, conjugate families (beta-binomial, gamma-poisson, normal-normal), sequential learning, inference, prediction

Sampling methods: Markov chains, Metropolis algorithm, Gibbs sampling, Hamiltonian MC, sequential MC

Bayesian and Gaussian Process regression: kernels, model selection, state-space models, variational inference

Bayesian networks: graphical models, causality

Selection of advanced topics: Bayesian optimisation, Bayesian non-parametric mixture modeling, Bayesian neural networks, physics-informed ML models

Teaching and learning methods

Lecture and practical work on computer.

Literature

Lecture notes and notebooks will be available in addition to recommended book chapters.

Assessment

Additional performance assessment during the semester

The module does not contain an additional performance assessment during the semester

Basic principle for exams

As a rule, all standard final exams are conducted in written form. For resit exams, lecturers will communicate the exam format (written/oral) together with the exam schedule.

Standard final exam for a module and written resit exam

Kind of exam

Written exam

Duration of exam

120 minutes

Permissible aids

Aids permitted as specified below:

Permissible electronic aids

personal computer (open book, no communication, no AI-based chatbot assistance)

Other permissible aids
written summary of 8 pages (4 sheets)

Exception: In case of an electronic Moodle exam, adjustments to the permissible aids may occur. Lecturers will announce the final permissible aids prior to the exam session.

Special case: Resit exam as oral exam

Kind of exam
Oral exam

Duration of exam
30 minutes

Permissible aids
Aids permitted as specified below:

Permissible electronic aids
None

Other permissible aids
None