Physics 610: Quantum Field Theory I

Fall 2003

Instructor: George Sterman
(MT-6109, sterman@insti.physics.sunysb.edu)

Room: Physics P124   TuTh 11:20-12:40

This course will introduce quantum field theory, emphasizing concepts that underlie the standard model of elementary particles, as well as many methods in condensed matter physics. We will attempt both to survey the fundamental ideas and results, and to lay the groundwork for more advanced study. Concepts and methods to be discussed will include:

- Second quantization, classical and quantum symmetries
- Particle interpretation, free fields, the S-matrix and cross sections
- Path integrals, perturbative expansions, finite temperature
- Nonrelativistic fermion fields; quasiparticles
- Representations of the Poincaré group; supersymmetry
- The Dirac equation
- Abelian and nonabelian gauge theories, QED and QCD
- Spontaneous symmetry breaking, the Higgs mechanism
- Concepts of renormalization
- Basic tests of the standard model and searches for new physics

In Phys. 611, the above methods will be further developed, along with:

- The parton model
- Ultraviolet divergences, dimensional and other regularizations
- Renormalization, renormalization group and effective field theories
- Perturbative unitarity and the infrared problem in QED and QCD
- The operator product expansion, factorization and evolution
- Chiral symmetries and the axial anomaly
The discussion of most, but not all, of the above topics will follow my book, *An Introduction to Quantum Field Theory*.

To give a preliminary idea of the relevance of quantum field theory itself, we may ask at what length scales it is likely to be applicable to natural phenomena. In this connection, consider the following quote from the 1966 book *Relativistic Quantum Fields*, by Bjorken and Drell, regarding the status of the wave, i.e. field, concept at short distances, “...it is a gross and profound extrapolation of present experimental knowledge to assume that a wave description successful at ‘large’ distances (that is, atomic length $\sim 10^{-8}$ cm) may be extended to distances an indefinite number of orders of magnitude smaller (for example, to less than nuclear lengths $\sim 10^{-13}$ cm).” In the time since this was written, experiments have justified the use of field theories (the standard model) to length scales a thousand times smaller than nuclear lengths, up through current experiments at the Fermilab Tevatron, which probe the predictions of field theory to a fraction of $10^{-16}$ cm. The predictions of the standard model still hold up. The Large Hadron Collider (LHC), under construction at CERN, will push this even further.

For example, the figure shows the single-jet cross section, which is closely related to quark-antiquark scattering, reported recently (hep-ex/0309003) by the CDF Collaboration, up to momentum transfers (measured by $E_T$; $\eta$ is related to the scattering angle) of over 500 GeV ($5\times10^{11}$eV). This cross section depends directly the behavior of the standard model at length scales $10^{-16}$ cm. The application of field theory to experiment is not a closed book. In fact, many – but not all – theoretical considerations suggest that a field theoretic picture description should be valid nearly to the Plank scale ($\sim 10^{-32}$ cm). The methods of quantum field theory, of course, are intimately related to those of string theory, and serve in many ways as an introduction.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lecture(s)</th>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>New topics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Introduction, classical fields, Noether’s theorem and group symmetries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Lorentz and Poincare groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Quantum symmetries, quantization of free fields; charged scalar fields</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Green functions, causal propagators and the S-matrix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Path integrals in quantum mechanics and for scalar fields</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Perturbation theory (Feynman) rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Momentum space, cross sections and decay rates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Representations of the Lorentz group, spinor Lagrangians and supersymmetry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Vector fields, abelian and nonabelian gauge fields, spontaneous symmetry breaking, the Higgs mechanism relation to superconductivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Spin and the Poincare group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Quantization of fields with spin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Parity in electroweak interactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>Concepts of renormalization and effective field theories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>Tests of the standard model; field theory viewpoint</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Grades

A grade for this course will reflect the results of midterm and final examinations, homework and a short paper. Homework will be assigned each week, and will be due at the lecture one week later, except when otherwise arranged. The timing and procedures of the midterm will be arranged. The final exam is scheduled for Tuesday, Dec. 16, 2-4:30.

4. Office Hours; Recitations

I should be available for discussion after class, and in my office 2-4 PM on the afternoons after class. I'm there most of the time anyway, so you might drop by, but I may not be available at all other times. Recitation sessions may be arranged in response to demand.

5. For Your Consideration:

If you have a physical, psychological, medical or learning disability that may impact your course work, please contact Disability Support Services, ECC (Educational Communications Center) Building, room 128, (631) 632-6748. They will determine with you what accommodations are necessary and appropriate. All information and documentation is confidential.

Students requiring emergency evacuation are encouraged to discuss their needs with their professors and Disability Support Services. For procedures and information, go to the following web site.
http://www.ehs.sunysb.edu/fire/disabilities/asp
6. Recommended Books now on Reserve in Math-Physics Library.
This is the starting list. Others will be put on reserve as appropriate.

- J.D. Bjorken and S.D. Drell, *Relativistic Quantum Mechanics* and *Relativistic Quantum Fields*, 1966. A classic; follows a very different route than ours.


- P. Ramond, *Quantum Field Theory, a Modern Primer*, 1981. Not so modern any more, but succinct and to the point. Good, streamlined treatment of φ⁴ renormalization. One of the few texts to have an introduction to the Poincaré group.


- S. Weinberg, *Quantum Theory of Fields*, 1995. Vols. 1, 2. Emphasizes some of the same issues as in our course, but at a mathematically more rigorous level. What Weinberg has to say is always worth reading.


- K. Huang, 1982, *Quarks, Leptons and Gauge Fields*

- C. Quigg, 1983, *Gauge Theories of Strong, Weak and Electromagnetic Interactions*

- T.P. Cheng and L.F. Li, 1984, *Gauge Theories of Elementary Particle Physics*