Module title	Abbreviation
Conformal Field Theory	11-KFT-161-m01

Module coordinator	Module offered by
Managing Director of the Institute of Theoretical Physics and Astrophysics	Faculty of Physics and Astronomy

ECTS	Method of grading	Only after succ. compl. of module(s)	
6	numerical grade	--	

Duration	Module level	Other prerequisites	
1 semester	graduate	--	

Contents

Conformal field theory (CFT) was developed in the 1980s and found immediate application in string theory and two-dimensional statistical mechanics, where critical exponents and correlation functions for many models (Ising, tricritical Ising, 3-state Potts, etc.) could be exactly calculated. The physical idea is that the principle of scale invariance is elevated from a global to a local invariance, which, for reasons of consistency, amounts to invariance under conformal transformations. This, in turn, yields a rich and fascinating mathematical structure for two dimensional systems (either two space dimensions or one time and one space dimension). CFT has become relevant to many interesting areas of condensed matter physics, including Abelian and non-Abelian bosonisation, quantised Hall states (where the bulk wave function is described in terms of conformal correlators, and the edge in terms of 1+1 dimensional CFTs), the two-channel Kondo effect, fractional topological insulators, and in particular fault-tolerant topological quantum computers involving non-Abelian anyons (Ising and Fibonacci anyons, for example, owe their names to the fusion rules of the associated conformal fields.) A potential syllabus for the first term of the course is:

0. Introduction (scale and conformal invariance, critical exponents, the transverse Ising model at the self-dual point)
1. Conformal theories in D dimensions (conformal group, conformal algebra in 2D, constraints on correlation functions)
2. Conformal theories in D=2 (primary fields and correlation functions, quantum field theory, canonical quantisation and Noether's theorem, radial quantisation and Polyakov's theorem, time ordering and functional integration, the free boson and vertex operators, conformal Ward identities)
3. Central charge and Virasoro algebra (central charge, the Schwarzian derivative, free fermion, (Abelian) bosonisation, mode expansions and Virasoro algebra, cylinder geometry and Casimir effect, in- and out-states, highest weight states, descendant fields and operator product expansions, conformal blocks, duality and bootstrap)
4. Kac determinant and unitarity (Verma modules and null states, Kac determinant formula, non-unitarity proof, conformal grids, minimal models in general).

Intended learning outcomes

The students acquire practical and conceptional familiarity with the methods of conformal field theory. As the completion of "Quantum Mechanics II" (11-QM2) is the only prerequisite to take part in this course, the students also acquire basic knowledge of critical phenomena, quantum field theory and functional integrals. The course is primarily addressed to students of Theoretical Physics and aims to increase their general level of knowledge by becoming acquainted with a sophisticated subdiscipline with applications in many subdisciplines of Condensed Matter Physics.

Courses (type, number of weekly contact hours, language — if other than German)

V (3) + R (1)
Module taught in: German or English

Method of assessment (type, scope, language — if other than German, examination offered — if not every semester, information on whether module is creditable for bonus)

written examination (approx. 90 to 120 minutes) or oral examination of one candidate each (approx. 30 minutes) or oral examination in groups (groups of 2, approx. 30 minutes per candidate) or project report (approx. 8 to 10 pages) or presentation/talk (approx. 30 minutes).

If a written examination was chosen as method of assessment, this may be changed and assessment may instead take the form of an oral examination of one candidate each or an oral examination in groups. If the method of assessment is changed, the lecturer must inform students about this by four weeks prior to the original examination date at the latest.

Assessment offered: In the semester in which the course is offered and in the subsequent semester

Language of assessment: German and/or English

Allocation of places
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Additional information
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Workload
180 h

Teaching cycle
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Referred to in LPO I (examination regulations for teaching-degree programmes)
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Module appears in
Master's degree (1 major) Mathematics (2016)
Master's degree (1 major) Physics (2016)
Master's degree (1 major) Mathematical Physics (2016)
Master's degree (1 major) Computational Mathematics (2016)
Master's teaching degree Gymnasium MINT Teacher Education PLUS, Elite Network Bavaria (ENB) (2016)
Supplementary course MINT Teacher Education PLUS, Elite Network Bavaria (ENB) (2016)
Master's degree (1 major) Computational Mathematics (2019)
Master's degree (1 major) Mathematics (2019)
Master's degree (1 major) Physics (2020)
Master's teaching degree Gymnasium MINT Teacher Education PLUS, Elite Network Bavaria (ENB) (2020)
Supplementary course MINT Teacher Education PLUS, Elite Network Bavaria (ENB) (2020)
Master's degree (1 major) Mathematical Physics (2020)
Master's degree (1 major) Computational Mathematics (2022)
Master's degree (1 major) Mathematics (2022)
Master's degree (1 major) Mathematical Physics (2022)
exchange program Physics (2023)