Module title			Abbreviation
Conformal Field Theory			11-KFT-Int-201-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), as developed in the 1980s, finds immediate applications in string theory and two-dimensional statistical mechanics, where critical exponents and correlation functions for many models (Ising, tricritical Ising, 3-state Potts, etc.) can be calculated exactly. 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 or one time and one space dimension). CFT has become relevant to many interesting areas of condensed matter physics, including Abelian and non-Abelian bosonization, quantized Hall states (where the bulk wave function is described in terms of conformal correlators, and the edge in terms 1+1 dimensional CFTs), the two-channel Kondo effect, fractional topological insulators, and in particular fault-tolerant topological quantum computing 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 quantization and Noether's theorem, radial quantization and Polyakov's theorem, time ordering and functional integration, the free boson and vertex operators, conformal Ward identities)
3 The central charge and the Virasoro algebra (central charge, the Schwarzian derivative, the free fermion, (Abelian) bosonization, mode expansions and the Virasoro algebra, the cylinder geometry and the Casimir effect, in- and out-states, highest weight states, descendant fields and operator product expansions, conformal blocks, duality and the 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

Acquisition of both practical and conceptional familiarity with the methods of conformal field theory. Basic understanding of critical phenomena, quantum field theory, and functional integration. Enhanced level of understanding in particular for students of theoretical physics by exposure to an ambitious method with significant applications in contemporary condensed matter physics.

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

V (3) + R (1)
Module taught in: 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)

a) written examination (approx. 90 to 120 minutes) or
b) oral examination of one candidate each (approx. 30 minutes) or
c) oral examination in groups (groups of 2, approx. 30 minutes per candidate) or
d) project report (approx. 8 to 10 pages) or
e) 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.
Language of assessment: English
Assessment offered: In the semester in which the course is offered and in the subsequent semester

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) Physics International (2020)
exchange program Physics (2023)
Master's degree (1 major) Physics International (2024)