Announcements

- **Project Milestone 2 due tonight at 8pm**
- Homework 6 due November 29
	- You have 3 weeks!

Lecture 22: Reinforcement Learning

CIS 4190/5190 Fall 2023

Optimal Action-Value Function

• **Optimal Action-Value Function (or Q function):** Expected reward if we start in s , take action a , and then act optimally thereafter:

$$
Q^*(s, a) = \mathbb{E}\left(\sum_{t=0}^{\infty} \gamma^t \cdot r_t \mid s_0 = s, a_0 = a\right)
$$

• **Bellman equation:**

$$
Q^*(s,a) = \sum_{s' \in S} P(s' \mid s,a) \cdot \left(R(s,a,s') + \gamma \cdot \max_{a' \in A} Q^*(s',a') \right)
$$

Q Iteration

• We have

$$
\pi^*(s) = \max_{a \in A} Q^*(s, a)
$$

• **Strategy:** Compute Q^* and then use it to compute π^*

Q Iteration

- Initialize $Q_1(s, a) \leftarrow 0$ for all s, a
- For $i \in \{1,2,...\}$ until convergence:

$$
Q_{i+1}(s,a) \leftarrow \sum_{s' \in S} P(s' \mid s,a) \cdot \left(R(s,a,s') + \gamma \cdot \max_{a' \in A} Q_i(s',a') \right)
$$

 $\mathbf 2$

0.8x[0+0.9x1] $+ 0.1x[0 + 0]$ +0.1x[0+0] =0.72

0.8x[0+0] + 0.1x[0+0.9x1] +0.1x[0+0] =0.09

0.8x[0+0] + 0.1x[0+0.9x1] +0.1x[0+0] =0.09

0.8x[0+0] + 0.1x[0+0] +0.1x[0+0] $=0$

0.8x[0+0.9x-1] + 0.1x[0+0] +0.1x[0+0] $=-0.72$

З

0.8x[0+0] + 0.1x[0+0] +0.1x[0+0.9x -1] $=-0.09$

0.8x[0+0] + 0.1x[0+0.9x -1] +0.1x[0+0] =-0.09

З

0.8x[0+0] + 0.1x[0+0] +0.1x[0+0] $=0$

0.8x[0+0.9x1] + 0.1x[0+0.9x0.72] +0.1x[0+0] =0.7848

0.8x[0+0] + 0.1x[0+0.9x1] +0.1x[0+0] =0.09

2

3

Reinforcement Learning

- Q iteration can be used to compute the optimal Q function when P and R are **known**
- How can we adapt it to the setting where these are unknown?
	- **Observation:** Every time you take action a from state s , you obtain one sample $s' \sim P(\cdot | s, a)$ and observe $R(s, a, s')$
	- Use single sample instead of full P

• Can we learn π^* without explicitly learning P and R?

$$
Q_{i+1}(s,a) \leftarrow \sum_{s' \in S} P(s' \mid s,a) \cdot \left(R(s,a,s') + \gamma \cdot \max_{a' \in A} Q_i(s',a') \right)
$$

• Can we learn π^* without explicitly learning P and R?

$$
Q_{i+1}(s,a) \leftarrow \mathbb{E}_{s' \sim P(\cdot | S, a)} \left[R(s, a, s') + \gamma \cdot \max_{a' \in A} Q_i(s', a') \right]
$$

• **Q Learning update:**

$$
Q_{i+1}(s,a) \leftarrow R(s,a,s') + \gamma \cdot \max_{a' \in A} Q_i(s',a')
$$

- **Q Iteration:** Update for all (s, a, s') at each step
- **Q Learning:** Update just for current (s, a) , and approximate with the state s' we actually reached (i.e., a single sample $s' \sim P(\cdot | s, a)$)

- **Problem:** Forget everything we learned before (i.e., $Q_i(s, a)$)
- **Solution:** Incremental update:

$$
Q_{i+1}(s,a) \leftarrow (1-\alpha) \cdot Q_i(s,a) + \alpha \cdot \left(R(s,a,s') + \gamma \cdot \max_{a' \in A} Q_i(s',a') \right)
$$

 $Q(s, a) \leftarrow Q(s, a) + \alpha \left(R(s, a, s') + \gamma \right)$ max $a_'$ $Q(s', a') - Q(s, a)$ 0.1 0.9

Sample $R + \gamma$ max $Q =$ $\mathbf{2}$ $0+0.9x0.78 = 0.702$

New $Q =$ 0.09+0.1X(0.702-0.09) $= 0.1512$

After 100,000 actions: $Q(s, a) \leftarrow Q(s, a) + \alpha \left(R(s, a, s') + \gamma \max_{a'}$

 $Q(s', a') - Q(s, a)$

Policy for Gathering Data

- **Strategy 1:** Randomly explore all (s, a) pairs
	- Not obvious how to do so!
	- E.g., if we act randomly, it may take a very long time to explore states that are difficult to reach
- **Strategy 2:** Use current best policy
	- Can get stuck in local minima
	- E.g., we may never discover a shortcut if it sticks to a known route to the goal

Policy for Gathering Data

• ϵ -greedy:

- Play current best with probability 1ϵ and randomly with probability ϵ
- Can reduce ϵ over time
- Works okay, but exploration is undirected

• **Visitation counts:**

- Maintain a count $N(s, a)$ of number of times we tried action a in state s
- Choose $a^* = \arg \max_{a \in A} \left\{ Q(s, a) + \frac{1}{N(s, a)} \right\}$, i.e., inflate less visited states

Summary

- **Q iteration:** Compute optimal Q function when the transitions and rewards are known
- **Q learning:** Compute optimal Q function when the transitions and rewards are unknown

• **Extensions**

- Various strategies for exploring the state space during learning
- Handling large or continuous state spaces

Curse of Dimensionality

- How large is the state space?
	- Gridworld: One for each of the *n* cells
	- **Pacman:** State is (player, ghost₁, ..., ghost_k), so there are n^k states!
- **Problem:** Learning in one state does not tell us anything about the other states!
- Many states \rightarrow learn very slowly

State-Action Features

- Can we learn **across** state-action pairs?
- Yes, use features!
	- $\phi(s, a) \in \mathbb{R}^d$
	- Then, learn to predict $Q^*(s, a) \approx Q_\theta(s, a) = f_\theta(\phi(s, a))$
	- Enables generalization to similar states

Neural Network Q Function

- **Examples:** Distance to closest ghost, distance to closest dot, etc.
	- Can also use neural networks to **learn** features (e.g., represent Pacman game state as an image and feed to CNN)!

Deep Q Learning

• **Learning:** Gradient descent with the squared Bellman error loss:

$$
\left(\left(R(s, a, s') + \gamma \cdot \max_{a'} Q_{\theta}(s', a') \right) - Q_{\theta}(s, a) \right)^{2}
$$

"Label" y

Deep Q Learning

• **Iteratively perform the following:**

• Take an action a_i and observe (s_i, a_i, s_{i+1}, r_i)

•
$$
y_i \leftarrow r_i + \gamma \cdot \max_{a' \in A} Q_\theta(s_{i+1}, a')
$$

\n• $\phi \leftarrow \phi - \alpha \cdot \frac{d}{d\theta} (Q_\theta(s_i, a_i) - y_i)^2$

- **Note:** Pretend like y_i is constant when taking the gradient
- For finite state setting, recover incremental update if the "parameters" are the Q values for each state-action pair

Experience Replay Buffer

• **Problem**

- Sequences of states are highly correlated
- Tend to overfit to current states and forget older states

• **Solution**

- Keep a **replay buffer** of observations (as a priority queue)
- Gradient updates on samples from replay buffer instead of current state

Priority Queue

• **Advantages**

- Breaks correlations between consecutive samples
- Can take multiple gradient steps on each observation **Based on slide by Sergey Levine**

Deep Q Learning with Replay Buffer

• **Iteratively perform the following:**

- Take an action a_i and add observation (s_i, a_i, s_{i+1}, r_i) to replay buffer D
- For $k \in \{1, ..., K\}$:
	- Sample $(s_{i,k}, a_{i,k}, s_{i+1,k}, r_{i,k})$ from D
	- $y_{i,k} \leftarrow r_{i,k} + \gamma \cdot \max_{a' \in A} Q_{\theta}(s_{i+1,k}, a')$

•
$$
\theta \leftarrow \theta - \alpha \cdot \frac{d}{d\theta} (Q_{\theta}(s_{i,k}, a_{i,k}) - y_{i,k})^2
$$

Target Q Network

• **Problem**

• Q network occurs in the label $y_i!$

•
$$
\theta \leftarrow \theta - \alpha \cdot \frac{d}{d\theta} \Big(Q_{\theta}(s_i, a_i) - r_i + \gamma \cdot \max_{a' \in A} Q_{\theta}(s_{i+1}, a') \Big)^2
$$

• Thus, labels change as Q network changes (distribution shift)

• **Solution**

- Use a separate **target Q network** for the occurrence in y_i
- Only update target network occasionally

•
$$
\theta \leftarrow \theta - \alpha \cdot \frac{d}{d\theta} \Big(Q_{\theta}(s_i, a_i) - r_i + \gamma \cdot \max_{a' \in A} Q_{\theta'}(s_{i+1}, a') \Big)^2
$$

Original Q Network
Original Q Network
Target Q Network
Based on slide by Sergey Levine

Deep Q Learning with Target Q Network

• **Iteratively perform the following:**

- Take an action a_i and add observation (s_i, a_i, s_{i+1}, r_i) to replay buffer D
- For $k \in \{1, ..., K\}$:
	- Sample $(s_{i,k}, a_{i,k}, s_{i+1,k}, r_{i,k})$ from D
	- $y_{i,k} \leftarrow r_{i,k} + \gamma \cdot \max_{a' \in A} Q_{\theta'}(s_{i+1,k}, a')$

•
$$
\theta \leftarrow \theta - \alpha \cdot \frac{d}{d\theta} \left(Q_{\theta}(s_{i,k}, a_{i,k}) - y_{i,k} \right)^2
$$

• Every N steps, $\theta' \leftarrow \theta$

Deep Q Learning for Atari Gar

Image Sources: https://towardsdatascience.com/tutorial-double-deep-d https://deepmind.com/blog/going-beyond-average-rein https://jaromiru.com/2016/11/07/lets-make-a-dqn-do

Aside: Policy Gradient Algorithm

- Directly train policy π_{θ} (a | s) mapping states to action distributions
- Policy gradient theorem gives the gradient update:

$$
\theta \leftarrow \theta + \eta \cdot \frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^{N} \left(\sum_{t=1}^{T} \nabla_{\theta} \log \pi_{\theta}(a_{i,t} | s_{i,t}) \sum_{t'=t}^{T} \gamma^{t'-t} r_{t'} \right)
$$

• Can be combined with Q learning to form "actor-critic algorithms"

Multi-Armed Bandits

- **State:** None! (To be precise, a single state $S = \{s_0\}$)
- **Action:** Item to recommend (often called **arms**)
- **Transitions:** Just stay in the same state
- **Rewards:** Random payoff for each arm
	- Denote $R(a) = R(s_0, a)$, where a is the chosen action

Example: Ad Targeting

• **Setting**

- Google wants to show the most popular ad for a search term (e.g., "lawyer")
- There are a fixed number of ads to choose from

Multi-Armed Bandits

• **Many applications**

- Cold-start for news/ad/movie recommendations
- A/B testing
- Flagging potentially harmful content on a social media platform
- Prioritizing medical tests
- Learning dynamically
- Many practical RL problems are multi-armed bandits

Exploration-Exploitation Tradeoff

- For $t \in \{1, 2, ..., T\}$
	- Compute reward estimates $r_{t,a} =$ $\sum_{i=1}^{t-1} r_i \cdot 1(a_i = a)$ $\sum_{i=1}^{t-1} 1(a_i = a)$
	- Choose action a_t based on reward estimates
	- Add (a_t, r_t) to replay buffer
- **Question:** How to choose actions?
	- **Exploration:** Try actions to better estimate their rewards
	- **Exploitation:** Use action with the best estimated reward to maximize payoff

Multi-Armed Bandit Algorithms

- **Naïve strategy:** ϵ -Greedy
	- Choose action $a_t \sim \text{Uniform}(A)$ with probability ϵ
	- Choose action $a_t = \arg \max r_{t,a}$ with probability 1ϵ $a \in A$
- Can we do better?

Multi-Armed Bandit Algorithms

- **Upper confidence bound (UCB)**
	- Choose action $a_t = \arg \max$ $a \in A$ $r_{t,a} + \frac{\text{const}}{\sqrt{N_a/a}}$ N_t (a
	- $N_t(a) = \sum_{i=1}^{t-1} 1(a_i = a)$ is the number of times action a has been played
- **Thompson sampling**

• Choose action
$$
a_t = \arg \max_{a \in A} \{r_{t,a} + \epsilon_{t,a}\}\)
$$
, where $\epsilon_{t,a} \sim N\left(0, \frac{\text{const}}{\sqrt{N_t(a)}}\right)$

• Both come with theoretical guarantees

Application: Targeted COVID-19 Testing

Negative

Positive

Negative

Negative

H. Bastani, K. Drakopoulos, V. Gupta, et al. Efficient and Targeted COVID-19 Border Testing via Reinforcement Learning.

Why Bandits?

• **Bandit feedback**

- Only observe positive/negative if the traveler is tested
- Technically "semi-bandit feedback"

• **Nonstationarity**

- Infection rate for different passenger types changes over time
- Need to continue to explore and collect data over time

Cases Caught

- 1.85 \times improvement compared to random testing
- 1.25-1.45× improvement vs. targeting based on public data

• **Problem**

- Millions of pieces of content are posted on Meta platforms each day
- Too much to manually review all content
- How to moderate to make sure no harmful?

• **Solution**

- ML to prioritize potentially harmful content for manual review
- Featurize content and predict likelihood that it is harmful

- What about new "types" of content?
	- E.g., new kind of racial slur
	- Cold start problem!
- Use multi-armed bandits!

- Multi-armed bandit
	- Each "step" corresponds to one piece of content
- **Action:** Whether to manually review content
- **Reward:** 1 if content is harmful, 0 otherwise
	- **Intuition:** Goal is to maximize amount of harmful content caught
	- Include an α penalty for flagging content to avoid flagging everything

• **Problem**

- Language models are trained using **unsupervised learning**
- Generating from these models mimics training data rather than human preferences

• **Solution**

- **Step 1:** Predict human preferences over possible generations (the reward)
- **Step 2:** Finetune GPT using reinforcement learning, where it is rewarded for generating content preferred by humans

Step 1

Collect demonstration data, and train a supervised policy.

Step1

Collect demonstration data,

and train a supervised policy.

Step 2

Collect comparison data, and train a reward model.

Step1

Step 2

Collect demonstration data, and train a supervised policy.

A prompt is sampled from our prompt dataset.

A labeler demonstrates the desired output behavior.

This data is used to fine-tune GPT-3 with supervised learning.

 $\binom{6}{2}$ Explain the moon landing to a 6 year old \mathbb{Z} Some people went to the moon..

自自自

A prompt and several model outputs are sampled.

to train our

Collect comparison data,

and train a reward model.

Explain the moon landing to a 6 year old \overline{A} Explain gravity. Explain war. \bullet Moon is natural People went to satellite of... A labeler ranks the outputs from best to worst. $\mathbf{D} \cdot \mathbf{O} \cdot \mathbf{O} = \mathbf{B}$ This data is used reward model. $\mathbf{D} \cdot \mathbf{O} \cdot \mathbf{A} = \mathbf{B}$

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 \bullet

the moon.

Step 3

Optimize a policy against the reward model using reinforcement learning.

A new prompt is sampled from the dataset.

The policy generates an output.

The reward model calculates a reward for the output.

The reward is used to update the policy using PPO.

Exploration in Reinforcement Learning

- ϵ -greedy suffers additional issues due to state space
- Policy learning is an effective practical solution
	- No theoretical guarantees due to local minima

Exploration in Finite MDPs

- **Upper confidence bound (UCB)**
	- Choose action $a_t = \arg \max$ $a \in A$ $Q_t (s, a) + \frac{\text{const}}{\sqrt{N_s (s,a)}}$ N_t (s,a
	- $N_t(s, a) = \sum_{i=1}^{t-1} 1(s_i = s, a_i = a)$ is the number of times action a has been played in state
- **Thompson sampling**
	- Choose action $a_t = \arg \max$ a∈A $Q_t(s, a) + \epsilon_{t,s,a}$, where $\epsilon_{t,s,a} \sim N(0, a)$ const N_t (s,a
- Both come with theoretical guarantees

Exploration in Continuous MDPs

- Can we adapt these ideas to continuous MDPs?
	- Thompson sampling is more suitable

• **Bootstrap DQN**

- Train ensemble of k different Q-function estimates $Q_{\theta_1}, ..., Q_{\theta_k}$ in parallel
- Original idea was to use online bootstrap, but training from different random initial θ 's worked as well
- In each episode, act optimally according to Q_{θ_i} for $i \sim \text{Uniform}(\{1, ..., k\})$

Exploration in Continuous MDPs

- Can we adapt these ideas to continuous MDPs?
	- Thompson sampling is more suitable
- **Soft Q-learning**
	- Sample actions according to $a \thicksim \text{Softmax}\left(\left[\beta \cdot \widehat{Q}_{\boldsymbol{\theta}}(s, a) \right]_{a \in A} \right)$

- **Intuition:** Rather than focus on optimism with respect to reward, focus on exploring where we are uncertain
- **How to determine uncertainty?**
- **Candidate strategy**
	- Train a **dynamics model** to predict $s' = f(s, a)$
	- Take actions where $f(s, a)$ has high variance (e.g., use bootstrap)

• **Problems?**

• What if s' includes spurious components, like a TV screen playing a movie?

- Learn a feature map $\phi(s) \in \mathbb{R}^d$
- **Model 1:** Train a model to predict state transitions:

$$
\widehat{\phi}(s') = f_{\theta}(\phi(s), a)
$$

- Feature map lets the model "ignore" spurious components of s such as a TV
- **Problem:** We could just learn $\phi(s) = \vec{0}$?

- Learn a feature map $\phi(s) \in \mathbb{R}^d$
- **Model 1:** Train a model to predict state transitions:

$$
\hat{\phi}(s') = f_{\theta}(\phi(s), a)
$$

• **Model 2:** Train a model to predict action to achieve a transition:

$$
\hat{a} = g_{\theta}(\phi(s), \phi(s'))
$$

• "Inverse dynamics model" that avoids collapsing ϕ

• Curiosity reward is

$$
R(s, a, s') = ||\hat{\phi}(s') - \phi(s')||_2^2
$$

• In other words, reward agent for exercising transitions that f cannot yet predict accurately

Offline Reinforcement Learning

- **Offline reinforcement learning:** How can we learn **without** actively gathering new data?
	- E.g., learn how to perform a task from videos of humans performing the task
	- Also known as **off-policy** or **batch** reinforcement learning
- **Recall:** Drawback of Q learning was we need an exploration strategy
- However, this also enables us to use Q learning with offline data!

Offline Reinforcement Learning

• **Iteratively perform the following:**

- Take an action a_i and add observation (s_i, a_i, s_{i+1}, r_i) to replay buffer D
- For $k \in \{1, ..., K\}$:
	- Sample $(s_{i,k}, a_{i,k}, s_{i+1,k}, r_{i,k})$ from D
	- $y_{i,k} \leftarrow r_{i,k} + \gamma \cdot \max_{a' \in A} Q_{\theta}(s_{i+1,k}, a')$

•
$$
\phi \leftarrow \phi - \alpha \cdot \frac{d}{d\theta} (Q_{\theta}(s_{i,k}, a_{i,k}) - y_{i,k})^2
$$

Offline Reinforcement Learning

• **Iteratively perform the following:**

- Take an action a_i and add observation (s_i, a_i, s_{i+1}, r_i) to replay buffer D
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•
$$
\phi \leftarrow \phi - \alpha \cdot \frac{d}{d\theta} (Q_{\theta}(s_{i,k}, a_{i,k}) - y_{i,k})^2
$$

