Planning and Optimization

B1. Planning as Search

Gabriele Röger and Thomas Keller

Universität Basel

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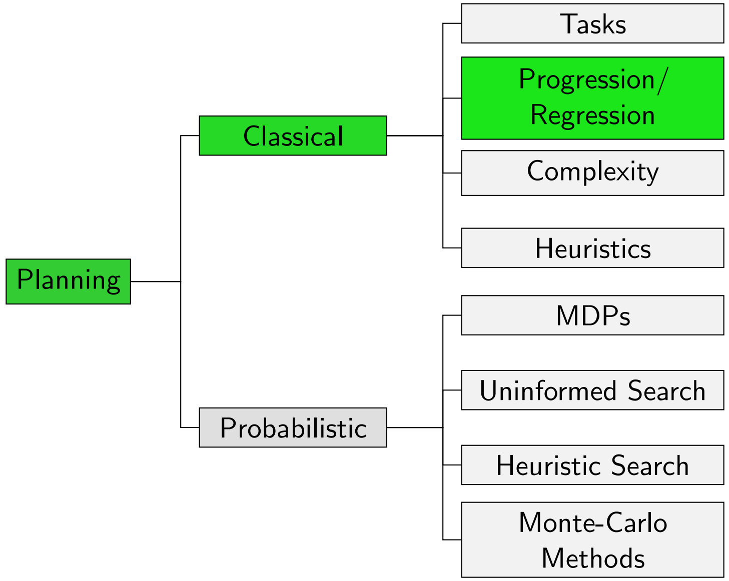
Content of this Course



Planning

Classical

Tasks

Progression/ Regression

Complexity

Heuristics

Probabilistic

MDPs

Uninformed Search

Heuristic Search

Monte-Carlo Methods

B1.1 Introduction

What Do We Mean by Search?

- Search is a very generic term.

⇝ Every algorithm that tries out various alternatives can be said to "search" in some way.

- Here, we mean classical state-space search algorithms.
  - Search nodes are expanded to generate successor nodes.
  - Examples: breadth-first search, greedy best-first search, weighted A*, A*, ...
- To be brief, we just say search in the following (not "classical state-space search").

Planning as Search

- search: one of the big success stories of AI
- most state-of-the-art planning systems are based on classical heuristic search algorithms
- large part of course focuses on heuristics for planning as search

Reminder: State-Space Search

Need to Catch Up?

- We assume prior knowledge of basic search algorithms:
  - uninformed vs. informed
  - satisficing vs. optimal
- If you are not familiar with them, we recommend Chapters 5–19 of the Foundations of Artificial Intelligence course at `https://dmi.unibas.ch/de/studium/computer-science-informatik/fs18/lecture-foundations-of-artificial-intelligence/`

Reminder: Interface for Heuristic Search Algorithms

Abstract Interface Needed for Heuristic Search Algorithms

- init() ⇝ returns initial state
- is_goal(s) ⇝ tests if s is a goal state
- succ(s) ⇝ returns all pairs $\langle a, s' \rangle$ with $s \xrightarrow{a} s'$
- cost(a) ⇝ returns cost of action a
- h(s) ⇝ returns heuristic value for state s

⇝ Foundations of Artificial Intelligence course, Chapters 6 and 13

State Space vs. Search Space

- Planning tasks induce transition systems (a.k.a. state spaces) with an initial state, labeled transitions and goal states.
- State-space search searches state spaces with an initial state, a successor function and goal states.

⇝ looks like an obvious correspondence

- However, in planning as search, the state space being searched can be different from the state space of the planning task.
- When we need to make a distinction, we speak of
  - the state space of the planning task whose states are called world states vs.
  - the search space of the search algorithm whose states are called search states.

B1.2 Search-based Planning Algorithm Classification

Satisficing or Optimal Planning?

Must carefully distinguish two different problems:

- satisficing planning: any solution is OK (but cheaper solutions usually preferred)
- optimal planning: plans must have minimum cost

Both are often solved by search, but:

- details are very different
- almost no overlap between good techniques for satisficing planning and good techniques for optimal planning
- many tasks that are trivial to solve for satisficing planners are impossibly hard for optimal planners

Planning as Search

How to apply search to planning? ⇝ many choices to make!

Choice 1: Search Direction

- progression: forward from initial state to goal
- regression: backward from goal states to initial state
- bidirectional search

Planning as Search

How to apply search to planning? ⇝ many choices to make!

Choice 2: Search Space Representation

- search states are identical to world states ⇝ explicit-state search
- search states correspond to sets of world states ⇝ symbolic search

Planning as Search

How to apply search to planning? ⇝ many choices to make!

Choice 3: Search Algorithm

- uninformed search: depth-first, breadth-first, iterative depth-first, . . .
- heuristic search (systematic): greedy best-first, A^*, weighted A^*, IDA^*, . . .
- heuristic search (local): hill-climbing, simulated annealing, beam search, . . .

Planning as Search

How to apply search to planning? ⇝ many choices to make!

Choice 4: Search Control

- heuristics for informed search algorithms
- pruning techniques: invariants, symmetry elimination, partial-order reduction, helpful actions pruning, . . .

Our Plan for the Following Weeks

- progression search ⇝ Chapter B2
- regression search ⇝ Chapters B3–B5
- heuristics for classical planning ⇝ Parts C–F

B1.3 Summary

Summary

- (Classical) search is a very important planning approach.
- Search-based planning algorithms differ along many dimensions, including
  - search direction (forward, backward)
  - what each search state represents (a world state, a set of world states)