

18.01.2007

**581287**

**Three concepts: Probability  
Spring 2007**

**Petri Myllymäki**

**Complex Systems Computation Group**

**Department of Computer Science**

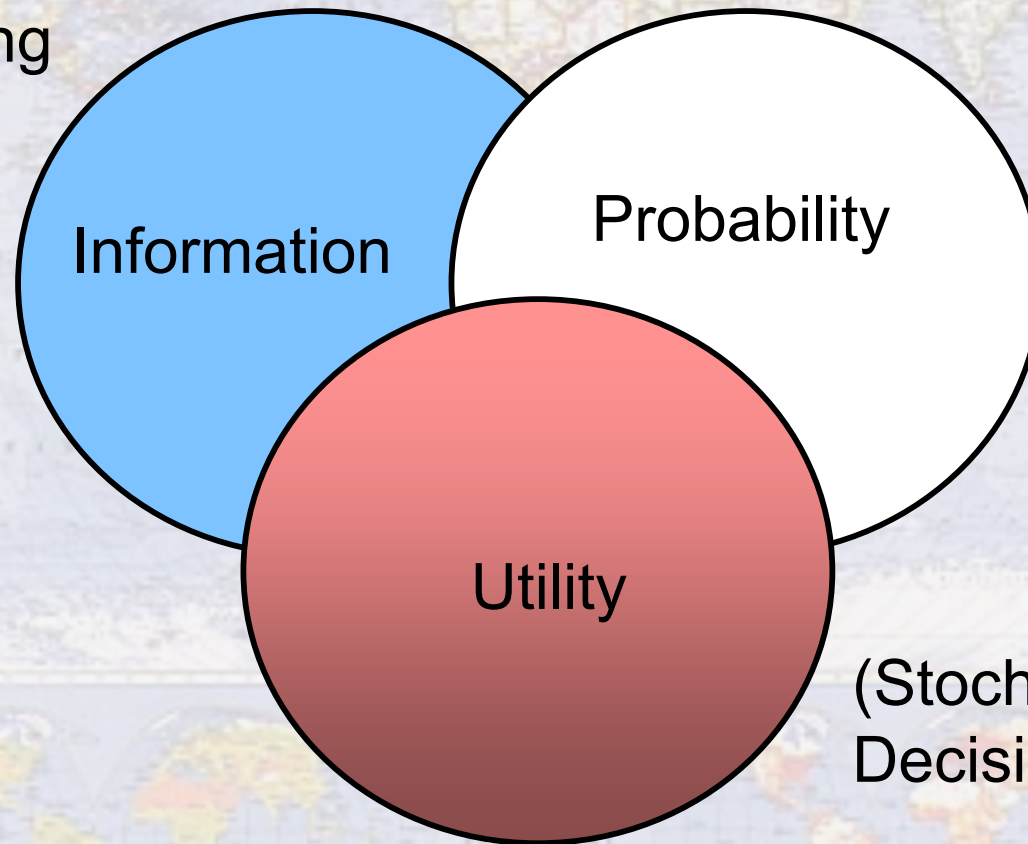
**University of Helsinki, Finland**

**<http://www.cs.helsinki.fi/group/cosco/Teaching/Probability/>**



# Three concepts

Compression,  
coding, modeling



Uncertain  
reasoning

(Stochastic) search  
Decision making

# On modeling

In building intelligent systems, statistics and  
in the rest of the world ...



# Our motivation: Uncertain reasoning

Information Theory

Mathematical Statistics

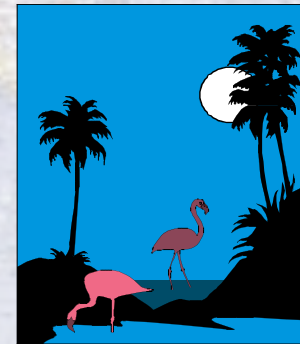
UR

Computer Science



# Do I really need this stuff?

- "Machine learning"
- "Data mining"
- "Intelligent Systems"
- "Neural networks"
- "Pattern recognition"
- "Computational Intelligence"



or



# ...and more?

- "Statistics"
- "Robotics"
- "Expert system design"
- "Medical informatics"
- "User interface design"
- "Artificial life" (Evolutionary computation)
- ....



# Modeling framework



Decision making



Prediction



Modeling



Problem

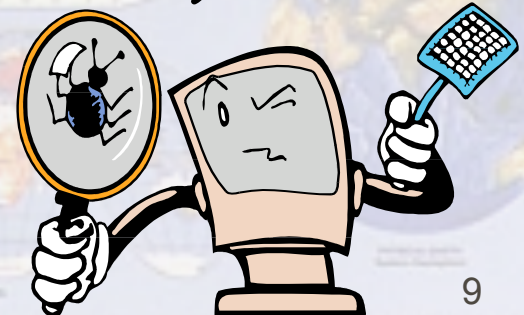
# What does this mean?

- **Problem:** there is a need to model some part of the universe and make decisions based on the model
- **Modeling:** build the best model possible from a priori knowledge and data available
- **Prediction:** use the model to predict properties of interest
- **Decision making:** decide actions based on the predictions



# For example

- **Problem:** online troubleshooting of software/hardware
- **Modeling:** build a latent variable (Bayes) model of the problems user encounters based on knowledge about the software and symptom data
- **Prediction:** use the model to predict the underlying problem given symptoms
- **Decision making:** propose actions to remove the problem (or to find more symptoms)



# Microsoft Technical support

The screenshot shows a Netscape browser window displaying the Microsoft Technical Support Troubleshooting Wizards page. The browser's address bar shows the URL `http://www.microsoft.com/support/tshooters.asp`. The page features a navigation menu with links for MICROSOFT, PRODUCTS, SEARCH, SUPPORT (highlighted), SHOP, and WRITE US. The main heading reads "Microsoft Technical Support" with the tagline "The answers you need to help you succeed". A search box is present with the instruction "Enter your search, then click Find." and a "Find" button. Below the search box is a checkbox labeled "Search entire Support Site". A purple arrow points to the "You Are Here" text. The left sidebar contains a "Start Here" section with links: "Select a Product", "Support Site Map", "Support Site Tour", and "Support Home Page". Below that is a "How to Find Answers" section with links: "Knowledge Base", "Troubleshooting Wizards", "Frequently Asked Questions", and "Help Files, Service Packs, & More". The main content area features the heading "Microsoft Technical Support Troubleshooting Wizards" and a paragraph: "Need help troubleshooting a problem? Microsoft now offers advanced inference engine technology to help you easily troubleshoot problems with Microsoft products. The Troubleshooting Wizards are the electronic version of our best engineers. Try one and see!". Below this is the instruction "Choose a Troubleshooting Wizard from the list below, then click Next." followed by a dropdown menu labeled "Select a Troubleshooter" and a "Next >>" button. The browser's status bar at the bottom shows the URL `http://www.microsoft.com/regwiz/regwiz.asp`.

# Bayesian email spam filters



- SpamBayes, OPFile, Outclass, bayespam, bogofilter, ifile, PASP, spamoracle, Spam Assassin Annoyance Filter, BSpam, Spam Bully, Death2Spam, InBoxer, ...
- Software:
  - <http://spambayes.sourceforge.net/related.html>
- Background:
  - <http://spambayes.sourceforge.net/background.html>

# Real questions are ...

- Infinite number of models - what models do we consider?
  - Model is always chosen from a set of possible models!
- How do we compare models (i.e., measure that one model is better than another one) given some data?
- How do we find good models?

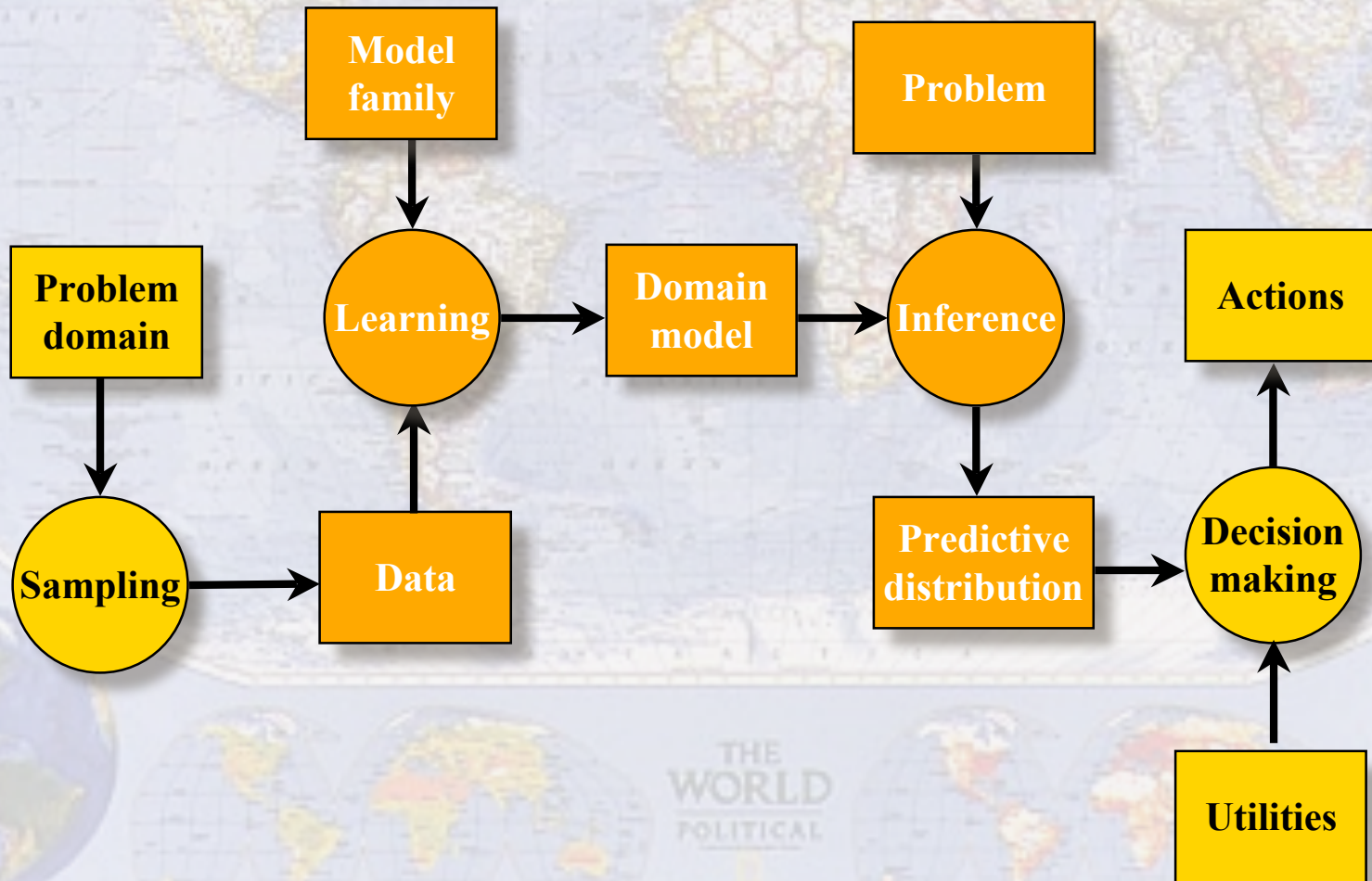


# ...and more

- How do we use the models to predict unobserved quantities of interest?
- What actions do we choose given the predictions?



# General "rational agent" framework



# Choice of models



- Simple models vs. complex models
- Linear models vs. non-linear models
- Parametric models vs. non-parametric models
- Flat models vs. structural models

# Paradise lost



- What is simple and what is complex?\*
- The **Catastrophic**
  - ✓ Intuition: small, gradual changes in causes give rise to small, gradual changes in effects
- The **Chaotic**
  - ✓ Intuition: Deterministic rules of behavior give rise to completely predictable events
- The **Lawless**
  - ✓ Intuition: All real-world truths are logical outcome of following a set of rules
- The **Irreducible**
  - ✓ Intuition: Complicated systems can always be understood by breaking them down into simpler parts
- The **Emergent**
  - ✓ Intuition: Surprising behavior results only from complicated, hard-to-understand interactions among a system's component parts

\* John. L. Casti, Complexification



# What is complex?

- what is complex is a totally nontrivial question
- one intuition: a complex model has more effective parameters
  - example: 100 factor model of IQ is more complex than 10 factor model!

$$P(D|M) = \frac{(l-1)!}{(N+l-1)!} \prod_{k=1}^l |c_k|! \prod_{j=1}^m \prod_{k=1}^l \left( \frac{n_j - 1!}{(|c_k| + n_j - 1)!} \prod_{i=1}^{n_i} F_k(a_{ji})! \right)$$



# The Occam's razor principle

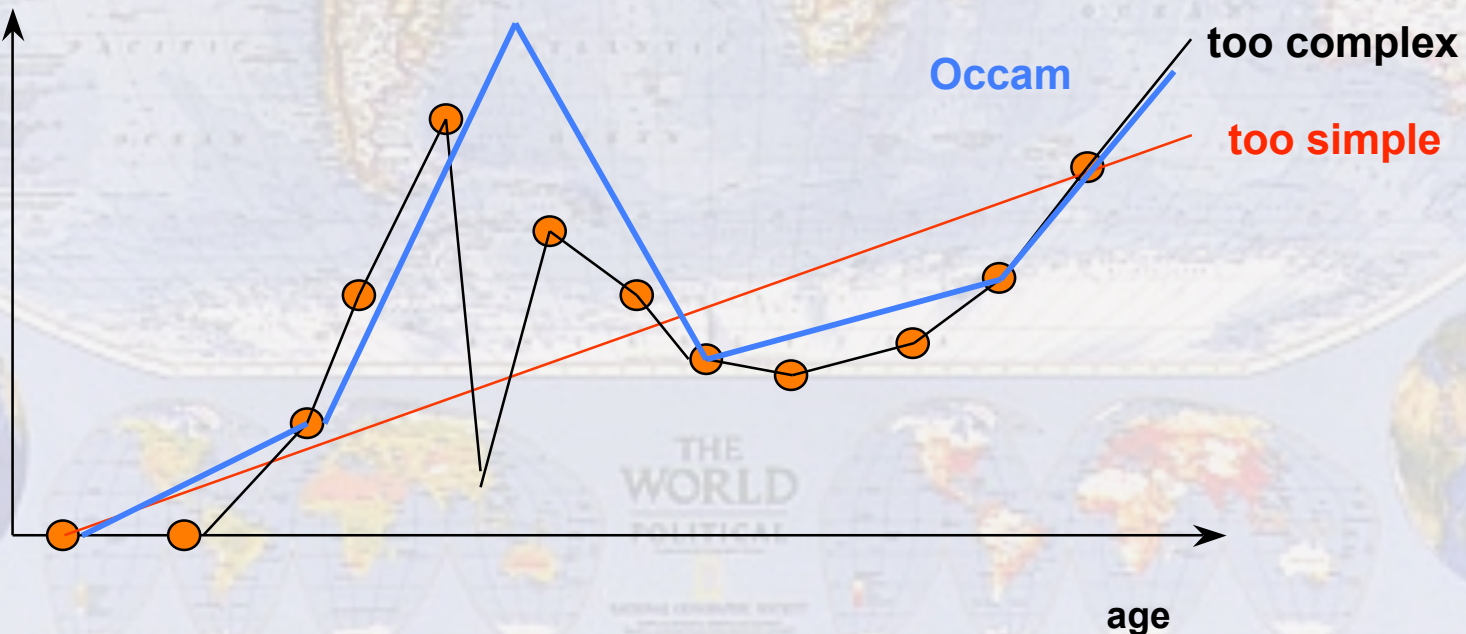
- The problem:
  - You are given the following sequence: -1, 3, 7, 11
  - Question: What are the two next numbers?
- Solution 1:
  - Answer: 15 and 19
  - Explanation: add 4 to the previous number
- Solution 2:
  - Answer: -19.9 and 1043.8
  - Explanation: if the previous number is  $x$ , the next one is  $-x^3/11 + 9/11x^2 + 23/11$
- "Of two competing hypotheses both conforming to our observations, choose the simpler one."



# Occam's Razor in Modeling

- there is a trade-off between the model complexity and fit to the data

# of car accidents



# Simpler models are better than complex models

- interpretation: they are easier to understand
- computation: predictions are typically easier to compute (not necessarily!)
- universality: they can be applied in more domains (more accurate predictions)
- "models should be only as complex as the data justifies"
- Bayesian model selection: automatic Occam's razor for model complexity regularization



# The source of great confusion

- **Descriptive models** ("Statistical modeling")
  - describe objects (e.g., data) as they are
  - typically exploratory structures
- **Predictive models** ("Predictive inference")
  - models that are able to predict unknown objects (e.g., future data)
  - models of the underlying process

# Some viewpoints

- “prediction is our business”
- why the best fit to data is not the best predictor
  - data can be erroneous - perfect fit is too “specialized” and models the errors also!
  - a sample can only “identify” up to a certain level of complexity
- intuitive goal: minimize model complexity + prediction error - it keeps you honest!

# Alternatives

- Probabilistic inference
  - Statistical inference
  - Bayesian inference
- Fuzzy inference
- Dempster-Shafer inference
- Non-monotonic logic



# All models have probabilistic counterparts

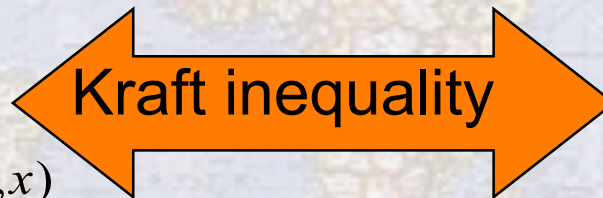
Probability distributions

$$P(x) = K 2^{-L(x)}$$

$$P(y | H, x) = \frac{1}{z} e^{-\beta ER(y|H,x)}$$

(Shannon-Fano) codes

$$-\log P(x)$$



Non-probabilistic models with error function  $ER(y|H,x)$