Engineering Tripos Part IIB, 4G1: Mathematical biology of the cell, 2019-20

Module Leader

Dr Thierry Savin [1]

Lecturers

Dr T Savin, Dr T O'Leary [2]

Timing and Structure

Michaelmas term. 16 lectures (including 2 examples classes). Assessment: Coursework 100%

Aims

The aims of the course are to:

- introduce to sub cellular processes and the role of thermal fluctuations
- shift from the classical biology approach to a more physical description
- illustrate mathematical/computing approaches to study regulatory networks and biomolecular dynamics
- provide background knowledge on stochastic processes

Content

The course covers topics in stochastic processes and statistical mechanics with application to examples from biology. No background in biology is assumed.

Introduction (Savin)

- Cells are a very well organized machinery
- But molecular processes are subject to fluctuations, i.e. stochasticity
- How is it possible?

Mathematical formalism (Savin)

- Probabilities & Random Variables
- Stochastic Processes
- Master Equation, Fokker-Plank Equation

Regulation of gene expression (O'Leary)

- Gene expression analysis
- Stochastic gene expression
- Stochastic simulations

Cell structural organization (Savin)

- Biomolecules (DNA, cytoskeleton)
- Statistical physics for biology
- Polymer mechanics
Coursework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coursework activity #1: Analysis of noise in prokaryotic gene expression</th>
<th>Format</th>
<th>Due date &amp; marks</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual report</td>
<td>Anonymously marked</td>
<td>Posted Fri week 5 Due Fri week 7 30/60</td>
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**Learning objective:**

- understand how to estimate fluctuation size in a stochastic system and limitations of analytic estimates;
- be able to implement stochastic simulations;
- interpret biological data and predictions that simulations yield.

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<tr>
<th>Coursework activity #2: Modelling DNA’s mechanical response</th>
<th>Format</th>
<th>Due date &amp; marks</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual report</td>
<td>Anonymously marked</td>
<td>Posted Fri week 8 Due two weeks later 30/60</td>
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**Learning objective:**

- understand models and Brownian dynamics of biological polymer;
- code and carry out the simulations; statistically analyse the data;
- interpret the simulations output in comparison with theory and experimental data.

**Booklists**

Please see the [Booklist for Group G Courses](#) [3] for references for this module.

**Examination Guidelines**

Please refer to [Form & conduct of the examinations](#) [4].

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