

## Physics 215B QFT Winter 2026 Assignment 4 – Solutions

Due 11:59pm Monday, February 2, 2026

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1. **Meson scattering.** Consider the Yukawa theory with fermions in  $D = 3 + 1$ , with

$$\mathcal{L} = \bar{\psi} (\mathbf{i}\not{\partial} - m) \psi + \frac{1}{2} \partial_\mu \phi \partial^\mu \phi - \frac{1}{2} M^2 \phi^2 + \mathcal{L}_{\text{int}}$$

and  $\mathcal{L}_{\text{int}} = y \bar{\psi} \psi \phi$ .

- (a) Consider the correction to the process  $\phi\phi \rightarrow \phi\phi$  coming from a fermion loop. What counterterm is required to renormalize this interaction? (You don't need to actually do the integral for this problem.)

The one-loop contributions come from a fermion loop with four  $\phi$ s attached by the Yukawa vertex. There are various such diagrams related by exchanging the external momenta. A counterterm which can absorb its cutoff dependence is a  $\phi^4$  term.

- (b) Do you need a cutoff-dependent counterterm of the form  $\delta_3 \phi^3$  in this theory? [Hint: Use symmetries.]

It seems like you might, since you can draw a fermion loop and attach three external legs. Naively this goes like  $\int \frac{d^D p}{p^3}$  which is divergent for  $D \geq 3$ . However, the spinor trace vanishes at zero external momentum. This means the leading contribution must be proportional to powers of the external momenta and therefore (by Taylor expansion) is proportional to  $\int \frac{d^D p}{p^5}$  which is finite for  $D \leq 5$ .

A better answer might be to argue that there is a  $\phi \rightarrow -\phi$  symmetry, which would forbid a  $\phi^3$  interaction. Such a symmetry would have to act on  $\psi$  as well in order to preserve the Yukawa term. It would have to act by a discrete symmetry under which  $\bar{\psi}\psi$  is odd. As you can remind yourself in Peskin §3, there is such an operation, namely  $\psi \rightarrow e^{i\pi\gamma^5} \psi$ . But – the mass term  $m\bar{\psi}\psi$  would be odd under this term. This shows that the answer must be proportional to  $m$ , and then dimensional analysis shows that it is finite.

Note that an on-shell process  $\phi \rightarrow \phi\phi$  is forbidden by kinematics (i.e. energy and momentum conservation) unless  $\phi$  is massless. This doesn't mean that we wouldn't need a counterterm for it if it were cutoff dependent: it can appear as part of a more complicated process, such as  $\phi\phi \rightarrow \phi\phi$ .

## 2. Bosons have worse UV behavior than fermions.

Consider again the Yukawa theory with action

$$S[\phi, \psi] = - \int d^D x \left( \frac{1}{2} \phi (\square + m_\phi) \phi + \bar{\psi} (-\not{\partial} + m_\psi) \psi + y \phi \bar{\psi} \psi + \frac{g}{4!} \phi^4 \right) + \text{counterterms.}$$

- (a) Show that the superficial degree of divergence for a diagram  $\mathcal{A}$  with  $B_E$  external scalars and  $F_E$  external fermions is

$$D_{\mathcal{A}} = D + (D - 4) \left( V_g + \frac{1}{2} V_y \right) + B_E \left( \frac{2 - D}{2} \right) + F_E \left( \frac{1 - D}{2} \right) \quad (1)$$

where  $V_g$  and  $v_y$  are the number of  $\phi^4$  and  $\phi \bar{\psi} \psi$  vertices respectively.

All the discussion below is about one-loop diagrams.

- (b) Draw the diagrams contributing to the self energy of both the scalar and the spinor in the Yukawa theory.
- (c) Find the superficial degree of divergence for the scalar self-energy amplitude and the spinor self-energy amplitude.
- (d) In the case of  $D = 3 + 1$  spacetime dimensions, show that (with a cutoff on the Euclidean momenta) the spinor self-energy is actually only logarithmically divergent. (This type of thing is one reason for the adjective ‘superficial’.)

Hint: the amplitude can be parametrized as follows: if the external momentum is  $p^\mu$ , it is

$$\mathcal{M}(p) = A(p^2) \not{p} + B(p^2).$$

Show that  $B(p^2)$  vanishes when  $m_\psi = 0$ .

See Zee, page 180. In four dimensions, the scalar self-energy has  $\mathcal{D} = 2$  and indeed depends quadratically on the cutoff. The fermion self-energy has  $\mathcal{D} = 1$ , but the would-be leading divergence of the fermion self-energy is an integral with an odd integrand and therefore vanishes, leaving behind a mere log.

A better argument for this conclusion follows from the *chiral transformation*  $\Psi \rightarrow e^{i\gamma^5 \alpha} \Psi$ , which becomes a symmetry when the fermion mass is zero. This means that the correction to the fermion mass  $B(0)$  must be proportional to the mass itself (it must go to zero when the mass goes to zero, and must be analytic in the mass for some reason I am unable to summon at the moment). Combining this statement with the dimensional analysis above, we conclude that there cannot be linear dependence on the cutoff.

### 3. Dimension-dependence of dimensions of couplings.

- (a) In what number of space dimensions does a four-fermion interaction such as  $G\bar{\psi}\psi\bar{\psi}\psi$  have a chance to be renormalizable? Assume Lorentz invariance. [optional] Generalize the formula (1) for  $D_{\mathcal{A}}$  to include a number  $V_G$  of four-fermion vertices.

I find

$$D_{\mathcal{A}} = D + (D - 4) \left( V_g + \frac{1}{2} V_y \right) + (D - 2) V_G + B_E \left( \frac{2 - D}{2} \right) + F_E \left( \frac{1 - D}{2} \right)$$

Therefore the four-fermion interaction is scale invariant in  $D = 2$  spacetime dimensions.

- (b) If we violate Lorentz invariance the story changes. Consider a non-relativistic theory with kinetic terms of the form  $\int dt d^d x (\psi^\dagger (\mathbf{i}\partial_t - D\nabla^2) \psi)$ . (Here  $D$  is a dimensionful constant. In a relativistic theory we relate dimensions of time and space by setting the speed of light to one; here, there is no such thing, and we can choose units to set  $D$  to one.) For what number of space dimensions might the four-fermion coupling be renormalizable?

You actually already know the answer to this from our study in the first lecture of the delta function potential. The  $\bar{\psi}\psi\bar{\psi}\psi$  is exactly such a contact interaction between two particles. So it is marginal when  $d = 2$ . Alternatively, you can count inverse-length dimensions of the time-derivative term to learn that  $[\psi] = d/2$ , and of the  $\vec{\nabla}^2$  term to learn that  $[t] = -2$ , i.e. we must scale  $t$  twice as fast as space to make the free theory scale invariant. Then  $0 = [G \int dt d^d x \bar{\psi}\psi\bar{\psi}\psi] = [G] - 2 - d + 2d$  gives  $[G] = 2 - d$ . If  $d > 2$  it is an irrelevant perturbation of the free theory.

- (c) In the previous example, the scale transformation preserving the kinetic terms acted by  $t \rightarrow \lambda^2 t, x \rightarrow \lambda x$ . More generally, the relative scaling of space and time is called the *dynamical exponent*  $z$  ( $z = 2$  in the previous example). Suppose that the kinetic terms are first order in time and quadratic in the fields. Ignoring difficulties of writing local quadratic spatial kinetic terms, what is the relationship between  $d$  and  $z$  that gives scale-invariant quartic interactions? What if the kinetic terms are instead second order in time (as for scalar fields)?

To get dynamical exponent  $z$  with first-order-in-time derivatives, we'd need a kinetic term like

$$S_0 = \int dt d^d x \bar{\psi} (\mathbf{i}\partial_t - \nabla^z) \psi.$$

So  $[\psi] = -d/2$  still, but  $[t] = -z$ . Therefore  $0 = [G \int dt d^d x \bar{\psi} \psi \bar{\psi} \psi] = [G] - z - d + 2d$  gives  $[G] = z - d$  and it is scale invariant if  $d = z$ .

With second-order-in-time derivatives, we have

$$S_0 = \int dt d^d x \phi (\partial_t^2 - \nabla^{2z}) \phi$$

so  $0 = -z - d + 2z + 2[\phi]$  says  $[\phi] = (d - z)/2$ , and so  $0 = [g \int dt d^d x \phi^4] = -z - d + 4(d - z) + [g]$  says  $[g] = 3z - d$ . It is classically scale invariant if  $d = 3z$ .

4. **Scale invariance in QFT in  $D = 0 + 0$ , part 2.** [I got this problem from Frederik Denef.]

The story of  $D = 0 + 0$  QFT is more interesting if there is more than one field, *i.e.* if we consider the statistical mechanics of a particle moving in more than one dimension. Consider the example of two degrees of freedom with Hamiltonian

$$H = \frac{1}{2} P_X^2 + \frac{1}{2} P_Y^2 + V(X, Y), \quad V(X, Y) = aX^4 + bY^8 \quad (2)$$

for some nonzero constants  $a, b$ .

- (a) This potential again has a scaling symmetry  $V(\lambda^{1/4} X, \lambda^{1/8} Y) = \lambda V(X, Y)$ . As a result, the model describes a fixed point, with constant heat capacity. Find the heat capacity.

$$Z = \int d^2 P e^{-P^2/T} \int dX dY e^{-V(X,Y)/T} \sim T T^{1/4+1/8} \int dx dy e^{-V(x,y)} \sim T^{11/8}$$

where  $x \equiv T^{-1/4} X, y = T^{-1/8} Y$ . We found on the previous problem set that if  $Z \sim T^\alpha$  then  $C_V = \alpha$ , so here  $C_V = 11/8$ .

- (b) Restricting to deformations with independent symmetries under  $X \rightarrow -X$  and  $Y \rightarrow -Y$ , and using the basic scaling properties of the deformations under the above scaling symmetry, what are the relevant, marginal and irrelevant deformations? (Note that in this case there are true marginal deformations that cannot be absorbed into the normalization of  $X$  and  $Y$ .) The question of whether  $\delta V$  is relevant is whether it changes the low-temperature physics compared to the fixed point behavior. In the position integral, we have

$$\int dX dY e^{-V_0(X,Y)/T + \delta V(X,Y)/T} = T^{3/8} \int dx dy e^{-V_0(x,y) + \delta V(T^{1/4} x, T^{1/8} y)/T}.$$

For  $\delta V = X^{2m}Y^{2n}$ , the extra term in the exponent is

$$\delta V(T^{1/4}x, T^{1/8}y)/T = T^{-1}T^{2m/4}x^{2m}T^{2n/8}y^{2n} = T^{\frac{2m+n-4}{4}}x^{2m}y^{2n}.$$

So the condition for this to be relevant is that the power of  $T$  is negative

$$2m + n < 4.$$

There are now relevant interactions with  $2m + n = 4$ ; these cannot be absorbed into field redefinitions if  $m$  and  $n$  are both nonzero. (As a check note that the terms in the fixed-point potential are counted as marginal; changes in these can be absorbed by field redefinitions.)

- (c) How does  $\langle X^k Y^l \rangle$  depend on  $T$  at a fixed point satisfying  $V(\lambda^{\Delta_X} X, \lambda^{\Delta_Y} Y) = \lambda V(X, Y)$ ?

$$\langle X^k Y^l \rangle = \frac{\int dX dY X^k Y^l e^{-V(X,Y)/T}}{Z_V} = \frac{T^{\Delta_X(1+k)+\Delta_Y(1+l)} \int dx dy x^k y^l e^{-V(x,y)}}{T^{\Delta_X+\Delta_Y}} \propto T^{\Delta_X k + \Delta_Y l}.$$

A generic relevant deformation of (2) will flow to a Gaussian fixed point  $V(X, Y) \sim X^2 + Y^2$  in the IR. Some other, more fine-tuned deformations will flow to other fixed points. For example,  $\delta V(X, Y) = \epsilon Y^4$  will flow to  $V(X, Y) = X^4 + Y^4$ . But something more interesting happens for  $\delta V(X, Y) = \epsilon X^2 Y^2$ . We'll study this more on the next homework.