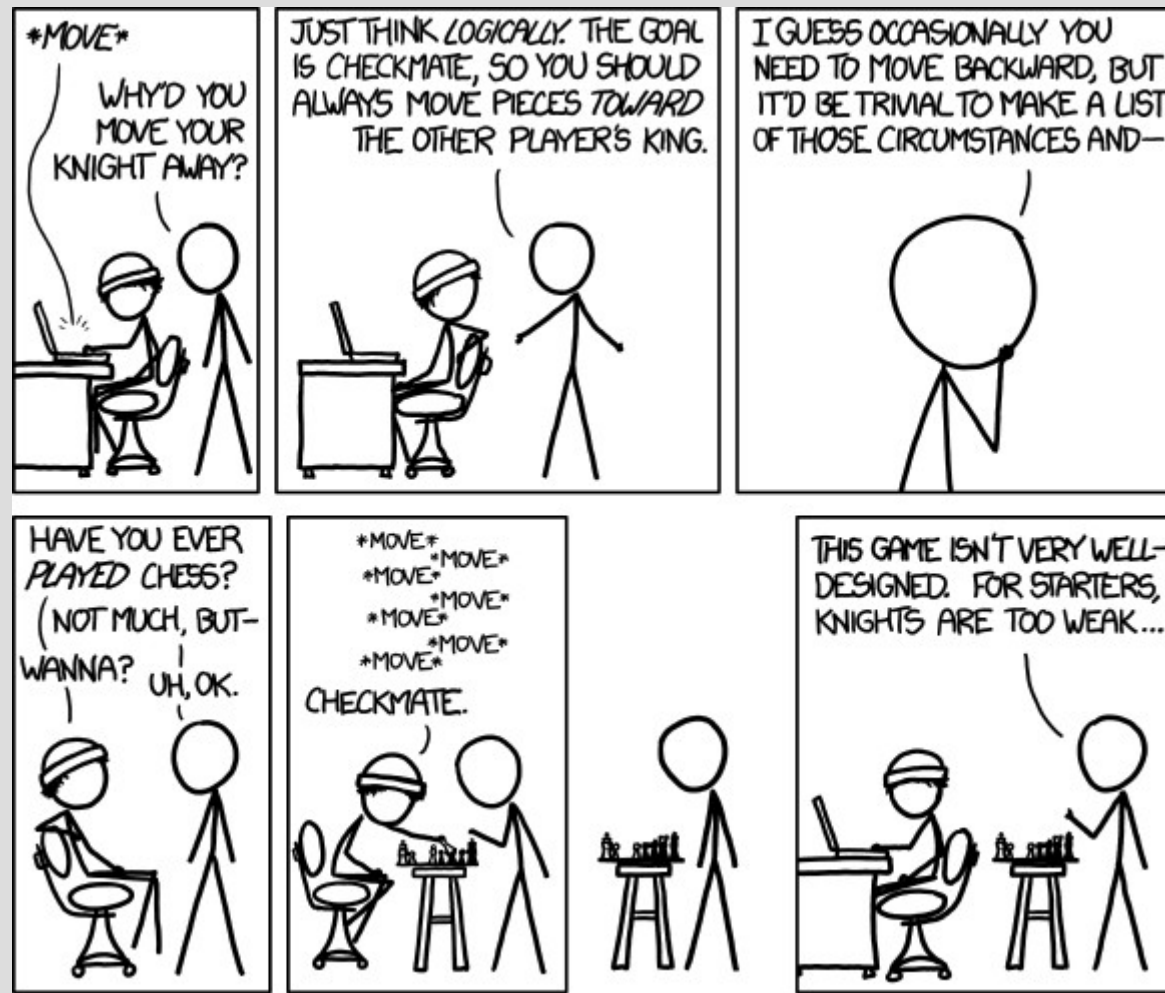


More on games (Ch. 5.4-5.6)



Announcements

Midterm next week: covers weeks 1-4
(Chapters 1-4) (might need to prove)

Take the full class period

Open book/notes (can use ebook)

^^ No programing/code, internet searches or
friends

Exam is in this room

You will write your answers on separate piece
paper (I will provide some scratch paper)

Alpha-beta pruning

Previously on CSci 4511...

We talked about how to modify the minimax algorithm to prune only bad searches (i.e. alpha-beta pruning)

This rule of checking your parent's best/worst with the current value in the child only really works for two player games...

What about 3 player games?

3-player games

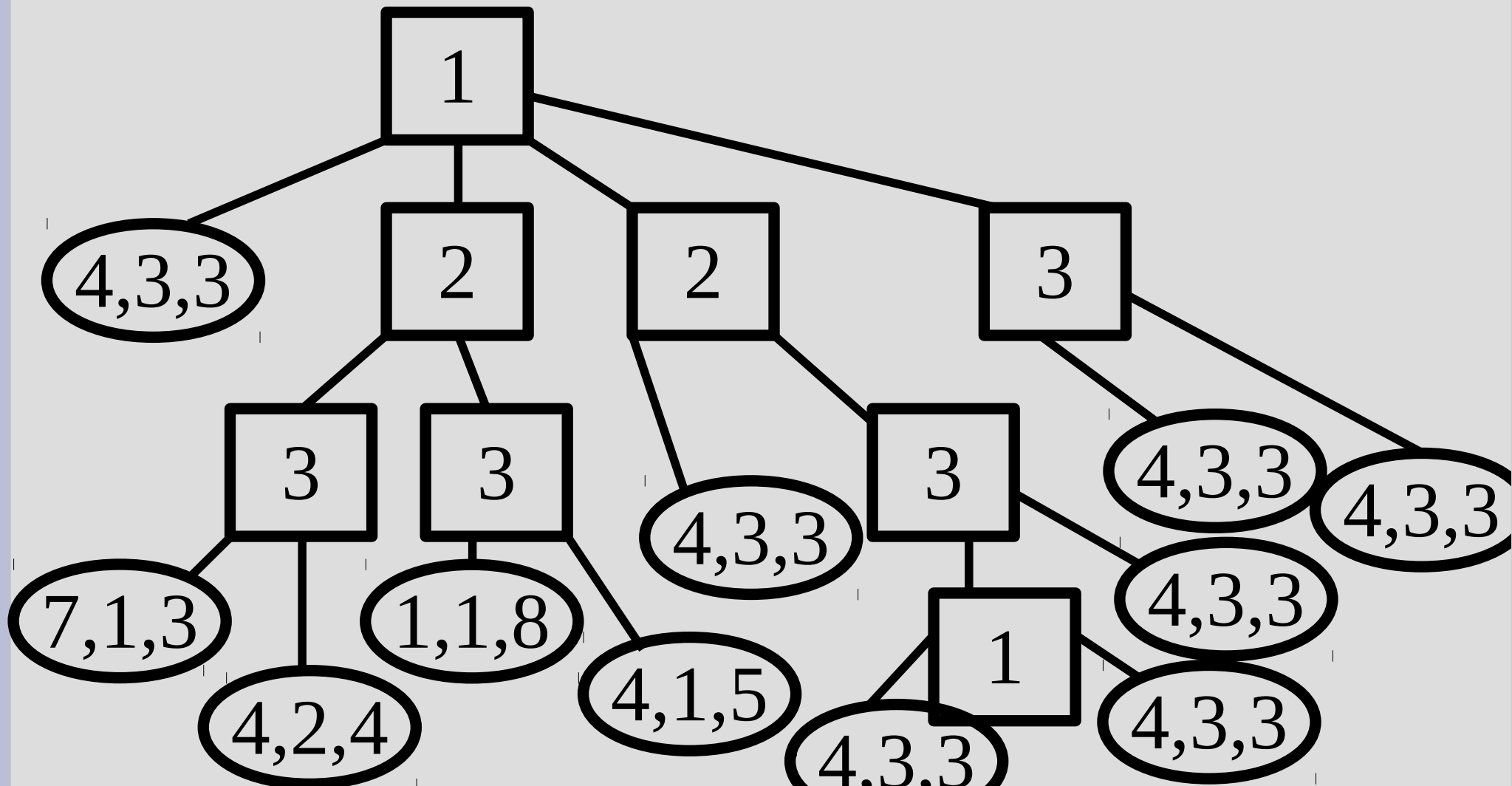
For more than two player games, you need to provide values at every state for all the players

When it is the player's turn, they get to pick the action that maximizes their own value the most

(We will assume each agent is greedy and only wants to increase its own score... more on this next time)

3-player games

(The node number shows who is max-ing)



3-player games

How would you do alpha-beta pruning in a 3-player game?

3-player games

How would you do alpha-beta pruning in a 3-player game?

TL;DR: Not easily

(also you cannot prune at all if there is no range on the values even in a zero sum game)

This is because one player could take a very low score for the benefit of the other two

Mid-state evaluation

So far we assumed that you have to reach a terminal state then propagate backwards (with possibly pruning)

More complex games (Go or Chess) it is hard to reach the terminal states as they are so far down the tree (and large branching factor)

Instead, we will estimate the value minimax would give without going all the way down

Mid-state evaluation

By using mid-state evaluations (not terminal) the “best” action can be found quickly

These mid-state evaluations need to be:

1. Based on current state only
2. Fast (and not just a recursive search)
3. Accurate (represents correct win/loss rate)

The quality of your final solution is highly correlated to the quality of your evaluation

Mid-state evaluation

For searches, the heuristic only helps you find the goal faster (but A^* will find the best solution as long as the heuristic is admissible)

There is no concept of “admissible” mid-state evaluations... and there is almost no guarantee that you will find the best/optimal solution

For this reason we only apply mid-state evals to problems that we cannot solve optimally

Mid-state evaluation

A common mid-state evaluation adds features of the state together

(we did this already for a heuristic...)

$\text{eval}(\text{START})=20$

2	6	1
	7	8
3	5	4

GOAL

1	2	3
4	5	6
7	8	

We summed the distances to the correct spots for all numbers

Mid-state evaluation

We then minimax (and prune) these mid-state evaluations as if they were the correct values

You can also weight features (i.e. getting the top row is more important in 8-puzzle)

A simple method in chess is to assign points for each piece: pawn=1, knight=4, queen=9... then sum over all pieces you have in play

Mid-state evaluation

What assumptions do you make if you use a weighted sum?

Mid-state evaluation

What assumptions do you make if you use a weighted sum?

A: The factors are independent (this is often not the case as the problems are hard)
(non-linear accumulation is common if the relationships have a large effect)

There is also an issue with how deep should we look before making an evaluation?

Mid-state evaluation

Using a fixed depth for evaluation is easy to implement but has shortcomings

A large one is that your evaluation might be in a state which has a child with a much different evaluation than the one evaluated

For this reason, we want to ensure to only evaluate nodes which have similar scores to children

Mid-state evaluation

Mid-state evaluations also favor actions that “put off” bad results (i.e. they like stalling)

In go this would make the computer use up ko threats rather than give up a dead group

By evaluating only at a limited depth, you reward the computer for pushing bad news beyond the depth (but does not stop the bad news from eventually happening)

Mid-state evaluation

It is not easy to get around these limitations:

1. Push off bad news
2. How deep to evaluate?

A better mid-state evaluation can help compensate, but they are hard to find

They are normally found by mimicking what expert human players do, and there is no systematic good way to find one

Forward pruning

You can also use mid-state evaluations for alpha-beta type pruning

However as these evaluations are estimates, you might prune the optimal answer if the heuristic is not perfect (which it won't be)

In practice, this prospective pruning is useful as it allows you to prioritize spending more time exploring hopeful parts of the search tree

Forward pruning

You can also save time searching by using “expert knowledge” about the problem

For example, in both Go and Chess the start of the game has been very heavily analyzed over the years

There is no reason to redo this search every time at the start of the game, instead we can just look up the “best” response

Random games

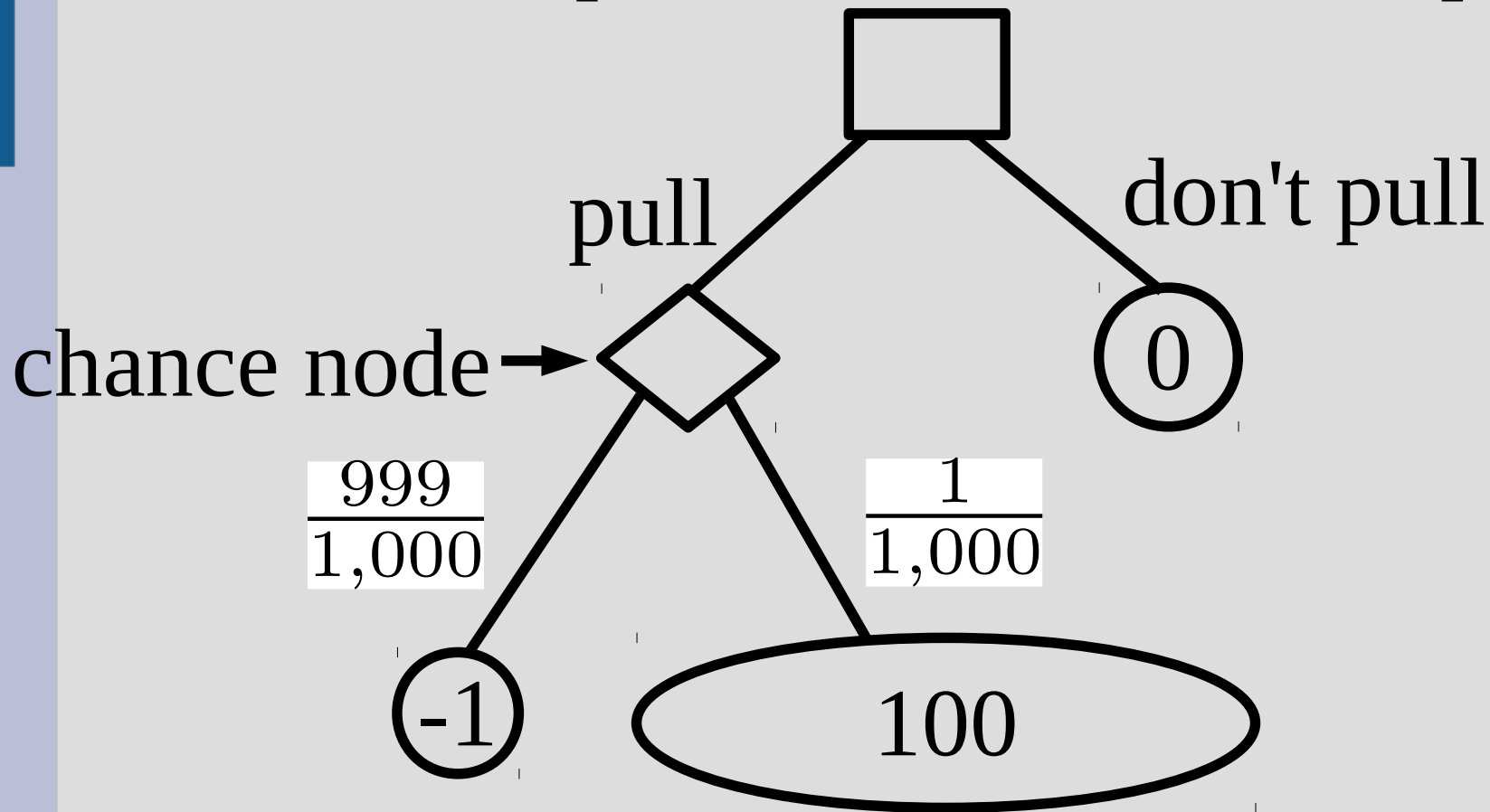
If we are playing a “game of chance”, we can add chance nodes to the search tree

Instead of either player picking max/min, it takes the expected value of its children

This expected value is then passed up to the parent node which can choose to min/max this chance (or not)

Random games

Here is a simple slot machine example:

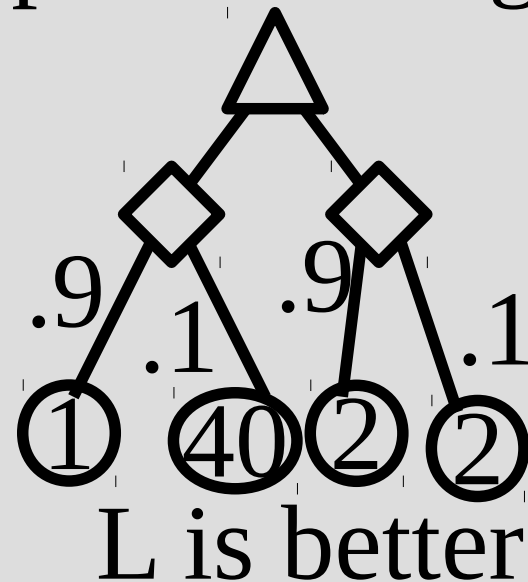
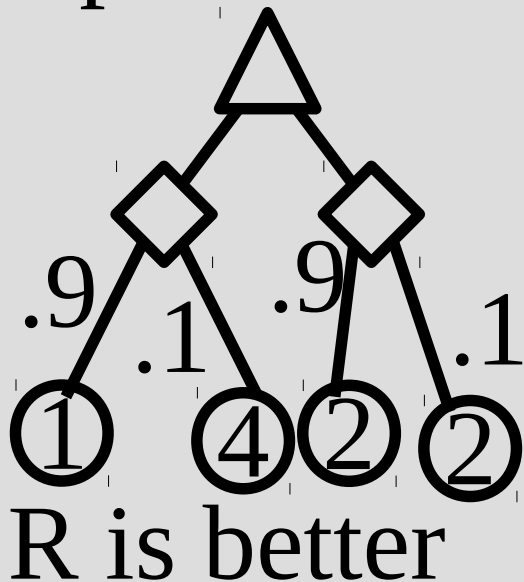


$$V(\text{chance}) = -1 \cdot \frac{999}{1,000} + 100 \cdot \frac{1}{1,000} = -0.899$$

Random games

You might need to modify your mid-state evaluation if you add chance nodes

Minimax just cares about the largest/smallest, but expected value is an implicit average:



Random games

Some partially observable games (i.e. card games) can be searched with card nodes

As there is a high degree of chance, often it is better to just assume full observability (i.e. you know the order of cards in the deck)

Then find which actions perform best over all possible chance outcomes (i.e. all possible deck orderings)

Random games

For example in blackjack, you can see what cards have been played and a few of the current cards in play

You then compute all possible decks that could lead to the cards in play (and used cards)

Then find the value of all actions (hit or stand) averaged over all decks (assumed equal chance of possible decks happening)

Random games

If there are too many possibilities for all the chance outcomes to “average them all”, you can sample

This means you can search the chance-tree and just randomly select outcomes (based on probabilities) for each chance node

If you have a large number of samples, this should converge to the average

MCTS

This idea of sampling a limited part of the tree to estimate values is common and powerful

In fact, in monte-carlo tree search there are no mid-state evaluations, just samples of terminal states

This means you do not need to create a good mid-state evaluation function, but instead you assume sampling is effective (might not be so)

MCTS

Another benefit of sampling over mid-state evaluation is that more samples correspond to better value accuracy (parallel processing)

While the mid-state evaluation is limited by the quality of your function, which is not easy to optimize or improve (trial and error)

Note: however, there is diminishing returns for very large sampling in many problems

DIFFICULTY OF VARIOUS GAMES FOR COMPUTERS

EASY

SOLVED COMPUTERS CAN PLAY PERFECTLY	SOLVED FOR ALL POSSIBLE POSITIONS	TIC-TAC-TOE NIM GHOST (1989) CONNECT FOUR (1995)
	SOLVED FOR STARTING POSITIONS	GOMOKU CHECKERS (2007)
COMPUTERS CAN BEAT TOP HUMANS		SCRABBLE COUNTERSTRIKE REVERSI BEER PONG (UUC ROBOT) CHESS (FEBRUARY 10, 1996: FIRST WIN BY COMPUTER AGAINST TOP HUMAN NOVEMBER 21, 2005 LAST WIN BY HUMAN AGAINST TOP COMPUTER)
	COMPUTERS STILL LOSE TO TOP HUMANS (BUT FOCUSED R&D COULD CHANGE THIS)	JEOPARDY! POKER STARCRAFT ARIMAA GO
COMPUTERS MAY NEVER OUTPLAY HUMANS		MAO SEVEN MINUTES IN HEAVEN SNAKES AND LADDERS CALVINBALL

HARD