

## Machine Grading

7. (15 points) Prof. Regu LaRisashun has just joined the 6.036 team, and they are excited to help teach students about machine learning. In particular, Prof. Regu (as they are fondly called) wants to try reducing stress by eliminating the final exam. They believe that nanoquizzes and homeworks should be sufficient to predict exam performance.

Specifically, Prof. Regu takes the homework and nanoquiz grades ( $x$ ), and runs a linear regression with hypothesis  $\hat{y} = \theta^T x + \theta_0$  to make predictions ( $\hat{y}$ ) for students' midterm grades. They minimize an objective function with just mean square error between the predicted and actual midterm grades ( $y$ ). Data from 70% of the students are used for training, and the remaining 30% for evaluating the model.

The initial results do not look so good, but Prof. Regu understands that this often happens with a simple linear model, and it can help a great deal to model and encode features more thoughtfully. Prof. Regu thus writes a problem for the midterm exam, asking students to help make the final exam unnecessary, by exploring five specific ideas.

(a) Majors

Prof. Regu notices that some students find the homework questions harder than other students, and believes this could be due to what students have studied in their other classes. Specifically, Prof. Regu notices that EECS majors seem to do better on homeworks than Physics majors. Fortunately, at MIT students' majors are conveniently coded up as a number (e.g. 1 = Civil engineering, 2 = Mech. Eng., 6 = EECS, 8 = Physics, 15 = Management, etc.) so Prof. Regu enters this number for each student as a new feature for the model.

Is this a good idea? Explain why or why not. If not, what better way might you encode students' majors for the model?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

(b) Programming experience

Looking more deeply, Prof. Regu notices that the coding questions seem to be very strong predictors of exam grades, but only if students' prior experience with python programming is taken into consideration. Prof. Regu obtains data from an initial survey students filled out at the start of the semester, where they were asked to check one box on this question:

What is your level of python programming experience?

☐ None      ☐ Beginner      ☐ Experienced      ☐ Expert

How should data from this question best be encoded for Prof. Regu's model?

(c) Name of students

In a fit of exhaustion, after too many days filled with administrative Zoom meetings, Prof. Regu notices that students' exam grades are highly correlated with their names. They decide to one-hot encode each of the names of the  $\sim 500$  students, and use these new features in their model.

How good would you expect the model to perform with this approach? Discuss both the test error and the training error.

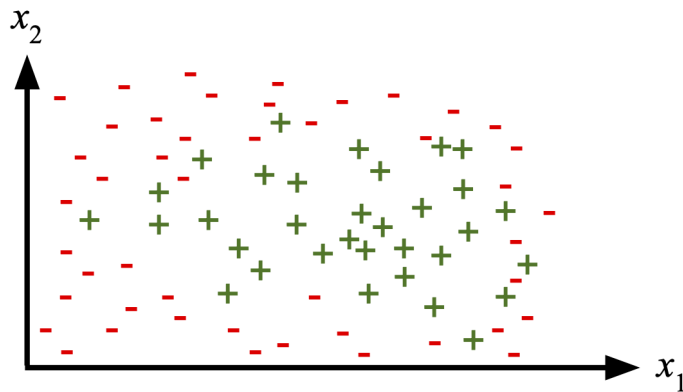
Name: \_\_\_\_\_

(d) Time on task

A kind colleague at the Harvard Graduate School of Education tells Prof. Regu about an interesting experiment: apparently, the Educational Testing Service (which administers major tests like the GRE) is looking at the amount of time students take to answer questions, as a measure for students' understanding of the material. The idea is that a more skilled student should be able to answer questions faster than a less skilled one.

Inspired by this idea, Prof. Regu mines data about how long students are taking to complete 6.036 nanoquizzes ( $x_1$ ) and homeworks ( $x_2$ ). Prof. Regu also changes approach: instead of predicting exam grades, Prof. Regu just tries to predict whether the student passes ( $y = 1$ ) or fails ( $y = 0$ ) the midterm exam based on just these  $x_1$  and  $x_2$  data. They employ linear logistic regression, with hypothesis  $\hat{y} = \sigma(\theta^T x + \theta_0)$ .

However, this model performs poorly! Prof. Regu plots the data to try and understand why, and sees this (+ indicates  $y = 1$ , and  $-$  indicates  $y = 0$ ):



Apparently, while it is the case that students who take a long time on nanoquizzes and homeworks indeed tend not to pass the exam, students who take a very short amount of time also tend not to pass! (How are some students able to finish entire homework assignments in just a few minutes?) Prof. Regu decides to try to fix the model to accommodate this peculiar behavior, by employing a feature transform  $\phi(x)$ , and using the hypothesis  $\hat{y} = \sigma(\theta^T \phi(x) + \theta_0)$ .

Specify a mathematical function  $\phi(x)$  which substantially improves the training error for these data:

$$\phi\left(\begin{bmatrix} x_1 \\ x_2 \end{bmatrix}\right) = \begin{bmatrix} \phantom{\phi\left(\begin{bmatrix} x_1 \\ x_2 \end{bmatrix}\right)} \end{bmatrix}$$