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Volume 889

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Lattice QCD for Nuclear Physics

 Springer

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ISSN 0075-8450

ISSN 1616-6361 (electronic)

Lecture Notes in Physics

ISBN 978-3-319-08021-5

ISBN 978-3-319-08022-2 (eBook)

DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-08022-2

Springer Cham Heidelberg New York Dordrecht London

Library of Congress Control Number: 2014956267

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Printed on acid-free paper

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Foreword

The development of quantum chromodynamics over the past few decades as the accepted theory of the strong interactions has transformed almost every aspect of nuclear physics. Many major experimental nuclear physics programs being conducted today at national laboratories in the USA are directly related to QCD, including determination of the internal structure of hadrons and the nature of confinement at Jefferson Laboratory, the properties of the quark gluon plasma at Brookhaven, and the measurement of the neutron electric dipole moment at Oak Ridge National Laboratory. Even in more traditional nuclear structure studies, such as anticipated at the rare isotope beam facility (FRIB) under construction at Michigan State University, the theoretical framework often used today consists of overlapping techniques, with mean field and energy density functionals being used for the heaviest nuclei, shell models for the intermediate mass, numerical solutions of the Schrödinger equation for light nuclei—and underlying all that, the fundamental inter-nucleon interactions based on an effective field theory for QCD, which itself is increasingly informed by direct computation from lattice QCD.

There are various techniques for making theoretical progress in QCD: perturbation theory for high energy collisions, phenomenological effective field theories for low energy processes, and innovative models such as the color glass condensate for low- x physics. However, much of the physics of interest to nuclear physics must be computed nonperturbatively and so for many applications, lattice QCD is the ideal method.

We are now living in a “golden age” for lattice QCD as applied to nuclear physics. This is due to the confluence of increased hardware speed, as well as enormous progress in the past decade in improving computational algorithms. Just as important, though, is the increased awareness among nuclear physicists that we are on the threshold of finally being able to use lattice QCD to accurately answer many of the outstanding questions in nuclear physics. As lattice QCD becomes one of the most potent tools for theorists to unlock the secrets of the nucleus, it becomes increasingly important to train young scientists in the subject. Thus it is with great

pleasure that the INT has hosted this summer school in lattice QCD, and with great anticipation of what this new generation of scientists will eventually teach us.

Seattle, WA, USA
April 2014

David B. Kaplan

Preface

Perhaps the most fascinating aspect of the strong interaction of particle physics is the wealth of qualitatively different regimes it exhibits. Modern nuclear physics deals with phenomena typically occurring at energy, momentum, temperature, or density scales between a few MeV and a few GeV. A relatively new goal in the field is to connect nuclear phenomena directly to the fundamental theory of the strong interaction, quantum chromodynamics. QCD has only a few free parameters, and it is remarkable that so much can, in principle, be predicted from so little.

In certain regimes, such as low-energy nuclear few-body systems, effective field theories provide a systematic approach. QCD can then be used to determine their low-energy parameters and to test their range of validity. But certain observables, like the spectrum of excited hadrons and the charge distributions of the nucleon, or the transition from the hadronic phase of QCD to a plasma phase at high temperatures, have no obvious simpler description in terms of effective degrees of freedom. A systematic treatment then involves the full complexity of QCD.

Lattice QCD provides a framework to handle the theory of the strong interaction from first principles in a wide range of energies relevant to nuclear physics. It is a discretized formulation of QCD on a spacetime lattice which preserves its $SU(3)$ gauge symmetry. The latter is key to its ability of handling the theory in its non-perturbative regime. Numerical techniques and high-performance computing are an essential part of lattice QCD. The success of lattice QCD calculations depends thus on its practitioners being proficient both in quantum field theory and in programming and numerical methods.

In the summer school held at the Institute for Nuclear Theory in Seattle, 6–24 August 2012 (<http://www.int.washington.edu/PROGRAMS/12-2c/>), a series of courses were delivered, aimed at giving graduate students not only an overall understanding of lattice gauge theory, but also at covering in detail how one applies lattice gauge theory to the calculation of key quantities in nuclear physics. The list of lectures held at the school is given hereafter. State-of-the-art algorithms for generating gauge ensembles and fermion propagators were covered. Students performed numerical exercises on using lattice QCD code, analyzing and fitting

data, and on utilizing new hardware, such as graphics processing units (GPUs) and the CUDA environment. In this book you will find the contents of the lectures on the most central physics topics written up. We hope that they provide an accessible and solid introduction to nuclear physics applications in lattice QCD for graduate students and any interested physicist.

Seattle, WA, USA
Mainz, Germany
April 2014

Huey-Wen Lin
Harvey B. Meyer

Contents

1 Lattice QCD: A Brief Introduction	1
H.B. Meyer	
1.1 Introduction and Scope	1
1.2 The Lattice Formulation of Quantum Field Theory	2
1.2.1 Scalar Field Theory	2
1.2.2 Fermions	5
1.2.3 Gauge Fields	10
1.2.4 Lattice QCD.....	12
1.3 The Approach to the Continuum and Renormalization	14
1.3.1 The Weak-Coupling Expansion	15
1.3.2 The Renormalization Group.....	17
1.3.3 The Continuum Limit and Universality.....	19
1.3.4 Improvement	20
1.4 Observables	21
1.4.1 The Wilson Loop and Its Interpretation	21
1.4.2 Hadron Spectroscopy	24
1.4.3 Spontaneous Chiral Symmetry Breaking and Low-Energy Constants	26
1.5 Theory Topics for the Lattice Practitioner	27
1.5.1 Ward Identities	27
1.5.2 Chiral Symmetry on the Lattice.....	29
1.5.3 Topology of the Gauge Field	31
1.5.4 Recursive Finite-Size Technique: Linking Vastly Different Length Scales	31
1.6 Importance Sampling Monte-Carlo Methods: Basic Ideas.....	32
1.7 Outlook	34

2 Lattice Methods for Hadron Spectroscopy	35
Sinéad M. Ryan	
2.1 Introduction	35
2.1.1 Notation and Basics	36
2.1.2 Current and Future Experiments	38
2.1.3 Lattice Hadron Spectroscopy	39
2.1.4 Correlators in a Euclidean Field Theory	41
2.2 Some New (and Old) Ideas for Making Measurements	43
2.2.1 Smearing	44
2.2.2 All to All Propagators	45
2.2.3 Distillation	47
2.2.4 Interim Summary	51
2.3 Lattice Symmetries and Classifying States	52
2.3.1 Connecting Lattice and Continuum Groups	53
2.4 Building Operators and Extracting Energies	54
2.4.1 Constructing Good Operators	56
2.4.2 Fitting Data to Extract Energies	58
2.4.3 A Lattice Error Budget	63
2.5 Current Challenges	63
2.5.1 Resonances and Scattering States	63
2.6 Summary	67
3 Hadron Structure on the Lattice	69
K.U. Can, A. Kusno, E.V. Mastropas, and J.M. Zanotti	
3.1 Introduction	69
3.2 Experimental Probes	70
3.2.1 Elastic $e-p$ Scattering	70
3.2.2 Deep-Inelastic Scattering	75
3.2.3 Neutron Beta Decay	81
3.3 Determining Matrix Elements on the Lattice	83
3.3.1 Lattice Three-Point Functions	84
3.3.2 Extracting Matrix Elements	88
3.3.3 Moments of Structure Functions	94
3.3.4 Generalised Parton Distributions	99
3.4 Summary	105
4 Chiral Perturbation Theory	107
Brian C. Tiburzi	
4.1 Introductory Remarks	107
4.2 The Chiral Lagrangian	109
4.2.1 Symmetries and Symmetry Breaking	109
4.2.2 Chiral Dynamics	112
4.2.3 Leading Order and Beyond	115
4.2.4 External Fields	118

- 4.3 Applications Tailored to Lattice QCD 121
 - 4.3.1 Partially Quenched QCD 121
 - 4.3.2 Effects of Finite Volume 124
 - 4.3.3 Lattice Discretization Effects 129
- 4.4 Including the Nucleon 131
 - 4.4.1 Heavy Fermions 132
 - 4.4.2 Heavy-Nucleon χ PT 134
 - 4.4.3 Quark-Mass Dependence of the Nucleon 136
 - 4.4.4 Beyond Leading Order 138
- 4.5 Issues of Convergence 141
 - 4.5.1 Including Strange Mesons 142
 - 4.5.2 Including Strange Baryons 144
 - 4.5.3 Excluding Strangeness 147
 - 4.5.4 Not-So-Heavy Baryons 150
- 4.6 Final Remarks 152
- 5 Nuclear Physics from Lattice QCD 153**
 - William Detmold
 - 5.1 Introduction 153
 - 5.2 Approaching Nuclear Physics in Lattice QCD 154
 - 5.3 Two-Hadron Systems 156
 - 5.3.1 Scattering Information from Finite Volume
Energy Eigenvalues 156
 - 5.3.2 Boosted Systems, Asymmetric Systems, and
Systems with Unequal Masses 163
 - 5.3.3 Resonances 164
 - 5.3.4 Bound Systems 166
 - 5.3.5 Lattice Wavefunctions and Potentials 167
 - 5.3.6 Numerical Investigations 171
 - 5.4 Multi-Hadron Systems: Theoretical Framework 175
 - 5.4.1 Three-Body Systems 176
 - 5.4.2 Many-Meson Systems: Threshold Expansion 176
 - 5.4.3 Many Baryon Systems 178
 - 5.5 Multi-Hadron Systems: Contraction Methods 178
 - 5.5.1 Mesonic Systems 179
 - 5.5.2 Baryonic Systems 181
 - 5.6 Many Meson Systems 183
 - 5.7 Nuclei and Hypernuclei 186
 - 5.8 Current Issues and Future Challenges 190
 - 5.8.1 Statistical Precision 190
 - 5.8.2 Beyond Spectroscopy 191
 - 5.8.3 How Large Is a Large Volume? 192
 - 5.8.4 Spectral Gaps, Large Volumes and the Approach
to the Chiral Limit 192
 - 5.8.5 Electroweak Effects 193
- Conclusions 193

6 High Temperature and Density in Lattice QCD	195
Carleton DeTar	
6.1 Introduction	195
6.1.1 Why Study High T and High Density QCD?	195
6.1.2 Phenomenology of the Quark-Gluon Plasma	196
6.2 Lattice QCD at Strong Coupling	198
6.2.1 Partition Function	198
6.2.2 Wilson Action and Noether Current	199
6.2.3 External Point Current	200
6.2.4 Gauge Theory at Strong Coupling, High T	201
6.2.5 Chemical Potential	202
6.2.6 Fermions at Strong Coupling, Large Mass, High T	203
6.2.7 Three-Dimensional Flux-Tube Model of QCD	205
6.3 Signals for Deconfinement	207
6.3.1 Free Energy of a Static Charge	207
6.3.2 Free Energy of a Pair of Static Charges	208
6.3.3 Strange Quark Number Susceptibility	210
6.3.4 Dimensional Reduction	211
6.3.5 Hadrons in the Thermal Medium	213
6.4 Signals for Chiral Symmetry	215
6.4.1 Chiral Effective Theory and Symmetry Restoration	216
6.4.2 Signals of Chiral Symmetry Restoration	218
6.4.3 Universality and Critical Behavior	222
6.5 Equation of State	225
6.5.1 Models at Low and High Temperature	225
6.5.2 Equation of State at Zero Density	226
6.5.3 Equation of State at Nonzero Density	229
6.5.4 Charm Quark Contribution	231
6.6 Fluctuations of Conserved Charges	231
Conclusions	232
References	235

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