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# DIGITAL CONTROL SYSTEMS & COMPUTER AIDED DESIGN

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Digital Control Course Introduction

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## General Course Introduction

# Motivation for Control Engineering

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Feedback control has a long history which began with the early desire of humans to harness the materials and forces of nature to their advantage. Early examples of control devices include clock regulating systems and mechanisms for keeping wind-mills pointed into the wind.

Modern industrial plants have sophisticated control systems which are crucial to their successful operation.

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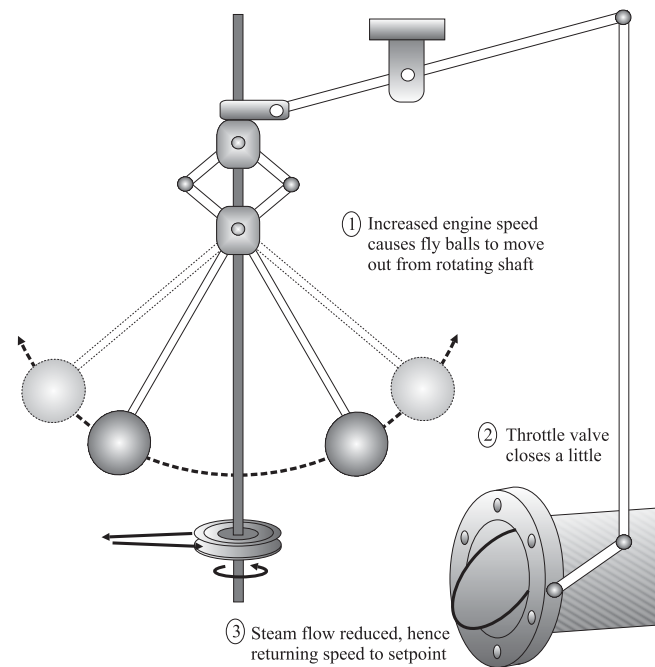
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Control Engineering has had a major impact on society. For example, Watt's Fly Ball Governor had a major impact on the industrial revolution. Indeed, most modern systems (aircraft, high speed trains, CD players, ... ) could not operate without the aid of sophisticated control systems.

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Figure 1.1: *Watt's fly ball governor*



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## Improved control is a key enabling technology that allows:

- y enhanced product quality
- y waste minimization
- y environmental protection
- y greater throughput for a given installed capacity
- y greater yield
- y deferring costly plant upgrades, and
- y higher safety margins

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# System Integration

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Success in control engineering depends on taking a holistic viewpoint. Some of the issues are:

- γ plant, *i.e.* the process to be controlled
- γ objectives
- γ sensors
- γ actuators
- γ communications
- γ computing
- γ architectures and interfacing
- γ algorithms
- γ accounting for disturbances and uncertainty

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# Plant

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The physical layout of a plant is an intrinsic part of control problems. Thus a control engineer needs to be familiar with the "physics" of the process under study. This includes a rudimentary knowledge of the basic energy balance, mass balance and material flows in the system.

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# Objectives

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Before designing sensors, actuators or control architectures, it is important to know the goal, that is, to formulate the control objectives. This includes

- y what does one want to achieve (energy reduction, yield increase,...)
- y what variables need to be controlled to achieve these objectives
- y what level of performance is necessary (accuracy, speed,...)

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# Sensors

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Sensors are the *eyes* of control enabling one to *see* what is going on. Indeed, one statement that is sometimes made about control is:

*If you can measure it, you can control it.*

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# Actuators

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Once sensors are in place to report on the *state* of a process, then the next issue is the ability to affect, or actuate, the system in order to move the process from the current state to a desired state

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# Communications

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Interconnecting sensors to actuators, involves the use of communication systems. A typical plant can have many thousands of separate signals to be sent over long distances. Thus the design of communication systems and their associated protocols is an increasingly important aspect of modern control engineering.

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# Computing

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In modern control systems, the connection between sensors and actuators is invariably made via a computer of some sort. Thus, computer issues are necessarily part of the overall design. Current control systems use a variety of computational devices including DCS's (Distributed Control Systems), PLC's (Programmable Logic Controllers), PC's (Personal Computers), etc.

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# Architectures and interfacing

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The issue of what to connect to what is a non-trivial one in control system design. One may feel that the best solution would always be to bring all signals to a central point so that each control action would be based on complete information (leading to so called, **centralized control**). However, this is rarely (if ever) the best solution in practice. Indeed, there are very good reasons why one may not wish to bring all signals to a common point. Obvious objections to this include complexity, cost, time constraints in computation, maintainability, reliability, etc.

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# Algorithms

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Finally, we come to the real *heart* of control engineering i.e. the algorithms that connect the sensors to the actuators. It is all too easy to underestimate this final aspect of the problem.

As a simple example from our everyday experience, consider the problem of playing tennis at top international level. One can readily accept that one needs good eye sight (sensors) and strong muscles (actuators) to play tennis at this level, but these attributes are not sufficient. Indeed eye-hand coordination (i.e. control) is also crucial to success.

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In summary:

*Sensors provide the eyes and actuators the muscle  
but control science provides the finesse.*



# Disturbances and Uncertainty

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One of the things that makes control science interesting is that all real life systems are acted on by noise and external disturbances. These factors can have a significant impact on the performance of the system. As a simple example, aircraft are subject to disturbances in the form of wind-gusts, and cruise controllers in cars have to cope with different road gradients and different car loadings.

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# Homogeneity

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A final point is that all interconnected systems, including control systems, are only as good as their weakest element. The implications of this in control system design are that one should aim to have all components (plant, sensors, actuators, communications, computing, interfaces, algorithms, etc) of roughly comparable accuracy and performance.

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# Cost benefit analysis

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Typical steps include:

- y Assessment of a range of control opportunities;
- y Deciding on a project with high economic or environmental impact;
- y Consulting appropriate personnel (management, operators, production staff, maintenance staff etc.);
- y Identifying the key action points;
- y Collecting base case data for later comparison;
- y Deciding on revised performance specifications;

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# Cost benefit analysis (*Cont'd.*)

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- y Development of algorithms;
- y Testing the algorithms via simulation;
- y Testing the algorithms on the plant using a rapid prototyping system;
- y Collecting preliminary performance data for comparison with the base case;
- y Final implementation;
- y Collection of final performance data;
- y Final reporting on project.

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# Signals and systems terminology

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	<i>Tangible examples</i>	<i>Examples of mathematical approximation</i>	<i>Examples of properties</i>
Signals	set point, control input, disturbances, measurements, ...	continuous function, sample-sequence, random process,...	analytic, stochastic, sinusoidal, standard deviations
Systems	process, controller, sensors, actuators, ...	differential equations, difference equations, transfer functions, state space models, ...	continuous time, sampled, linear, nonlinear, ...