

## INTRODUCTION TO QUANTUM EFFECTS IN GRAVITY

This is the first introductory textbook on quantum field theory in gravitational backgrounds intended for undergraduate and beginning graduate students in the fields of theoretical astrophysics, cosmology, particle physics, and string theory. The book covers the basic (but essential) material of quantization of fields in expanding universe and quantum fluctuations in inflationary spacetime. It also contains a detailed explanation of the Casimir, Unruh, and Hawking effects, and introduces the method of effective action used for calculating the backreaction of quantum systems on a classical external gravitational field.

The broad scope of the material covered will provide the reader with a thorough perspective of the subject. Complicated calculations are avoided in favor of simpler ones, which still contain the relevant physical concepts. Every major result is derived from first principles and thoroughly explained. The book is self-contained and assumes only a basic knowledge of general relativity. Exercises with detailed solutions are provided throughout the book.

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# Contents

<i>Preface</i>	<i>page ix</i>
<b>Part I Canonical quantization and particle production</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1 Overview: a taste of quantum fields</b>	<b>3</b>
1.1 Classical field	3
1.2 Quantum field and its vacuum state	4
1.3 The vacuum energy	7
1.4 Quantum vacuum fluctuations	8
1.5 Particle interpretation of quantum fields	9
1.6 Quantum field theory in classical backgrounds	9
1.7 Examples of particle creation	10
<b>2 Reminder: classical and quantum theory</b>	<b>13</b>
2.1 Lagrangian formalism	13
2.1.1 Functional derivatives	15
2.2 Hamiltonian formalism	17
2.3 Quantization of Hamiltonian systems	19
2.4 Hilbert spaces and Dirac notation	20
2.5 Operators, eigenvalue problem and basis in a Hilbert space	22
2.6 Generalized eigenvectors and basic matrix elements	26
2.7 Evolution in quantum theory	29
<b>3 Driven harmonic oscillator</b>	<b>33</b>
3.1 Quantizing an oscillator	33
3.2 The “in” and “out” states	35
3.3 Matrix elements and Green’s functions	38

<b>4</b>	<b>From harmonic oscillators to fields</b>	<b>42</b>
4.1	Quantum harmonic oscillators	42
4.2	From oscillators to fields	43
4.3	Quantizing fields in a flat spacetime	45
4.4	The mode expansion	48
4.5	Vacuum energy and vacuum fluctuations	50
4.6	The Schrödinger equation for a quantum field	51
<b>5</b>	<b>Reminder: classical fields</b>	<b>54</b>
5.1	The action functional	54
5.2	Real scalar field and its coupling to the gravity	56
5.3	Gauge invariance and coupling to the electromagnetic field	58
5.4	Action for the gravitational and gauge fields	59
5.5	Energy-momentum tensor	61
<b>6</b>	<b>Quantum fields in expanding universe</b>	<b>64</b>
6.1	Classical scalar field in expanding background	64
6.1.1	Mode expansion	66
6.2	Quantization	67
6.3	Bogolyubov transformations	68
6.4	Hilbert space; “ $a$ - and $b$ -particles”	69
6.5	Choice of the physical vacuum	71
6.5.1	The instantaneous lowest-energy state	71
6.5.2	Ambiguity of the vacuum state	74
6.6	Amplitude of quantum fluctuations	78
6.6.1	Comparing fluctuations in the vacuum and excited states	80
6.7	An example of particle production	81
<b>7</b>	<b>Quantum fields in the de Sitter universe</b>	<b>85</b>
7.1	De Sitter universe	85
7.2	Quantization	88
7.2.1	Bunch–Davies vacuum	90
7.3	Fluctuations in inflationary universe	92
<b>8</b>	<b>Unruh effect</b>	<b>97</b>
8.1	Accelerated motion	97
8.2	Comoving frame of accelerated observer	100
8.3	Quantum fields in inertial and accelerated frames	103
8.4	Bogolyubov transformations	106
8.5	Occupation numbers and Unruh temperature	107

<b>9 Hawking effect. Thermodynamics of black holes</b>	<b>109</b>
9.1 Hawking radiation	109
9.1.1 Schwarzschild solution	110
9.1.2 Kruskal–Szekeres coordinates	111
9.1.3 Field quantization and Hawking radiation	115
9.1.4 Hawking effect in $3 + 1$ dimensions	118
9.2 Thermodynamics of black holes	120
9.2.1 Laws of black hole thermodynamics	121
<b>10 The Casimir effect</b>	<b>124</b>
10.1 Vacuum energy between plates	124
10.2 Regularization and renormalization	125
<b>Part II Path integrals and vacuum polarization</b>	<b>129</b>
<b>11 Path integrals</b>	<b>131</b>
11.1 Evolution operator. Propagator	131
11.2 Propagator as a path integral	132
11.3 Lagrangian path integrals	137
11.4 Propagators for free particle and harmonic oscillator	138
11.4.1 Free particle	139
11.4.2 Quadratic potential	139
11.4.3 Euclidean path integral	142
11.4.4 Ground state as a path integral	144
<b>12 Effective action</b>	<b>146</b>
12.1 Driven harmonic oscillator (continuation)	146
12.1.1 Green's functions and matrix elements	146
12.1.2 Euclidean Green's function	148
12.1.3 Introducing effective action	150
12.1.4 Calculating effective action for a driven oscillator	152
12.1.5 Matrix elements	154
12.1.6 The effective action "recipe"	157
12.1.7 Backreaction	158
12.2 Effective action in external gravitational field	159
12.2.1 Euclidean action for scalar field	161
12.3 Effective action as a functional determinant	163
12.3.1 Reformulation of the eigenvalue problem	164
12.3.2 Zeta function	166
12.3.3 Heat kernel	167

<b>13</b>	<b>Calculation of heat kernel</b>	<b>170</b>
13.1	Perturbative expansion for the heat kernel	171
13.1.1	Matrix elements	172
13.2	Trace of the heat kernel	176
13.3	The Seeley–DeWitt expansion	178
<b>14</b>	<b>Results from effective action</b>	<b>180</b>
14.1	Renormalization of the effective action	180
14.2	Finite terms in the effective action	183
14.2.1	EMT from the Polyakov action	185
14.3	Conformal anomaly	187
<i>Appendix 1</i>	Mathematical supplement	193
A1.1	Functionals and distributions (generalized functions)	193
A1.2	Green’s functions, boundary conditions, and contours	202
A1.3	Euler’s gamma function and analytic continuations	206
<i>Appendix 2</i>	Backreaction derived from effective action	212
<i>Appendix 3</i>	Mode expansions cheat sheet	216
<i>Appendix 4</i>	Solutions to exercises	218
<i>Index</i>		272

## Preface

This book is an expanded and reorganized version of the lecture notes for a course taught at the Ludwig-Maximilians University, Munich, in the spring semester of 2003. The course is an elementary introduction to the basic concepts of quantum field theory in classical backgrounds. A certain level of familiarity with general relativity and quantum mechanics is required, although many of the necessary concepts are introduced in the text.

The audience consisted of advanced undergraduates and beginning graduate students. There were 11 three-hour lectures. Each lecture was accompanied by exercises that were an integral part of the exposition and encapsulated longer but straightforward calculations or illustrative numerical results. Detailed solutions were given for all the exercises. Exercises marked by an asterisk (\*) are more difficult or cumbersome.

The book covers limited but essential material: quantization of free scalar fields; driven and time-dependent harmonic oscillators; mode expansions and Bogolyubov transformations; particle creation by classical backgrounds; quantum scalar fields in de Sitter spacetime and the growth of fluctuations; the Unruh effect; Hawking radiation; the Casimir effect; quantization by path integrals; the energy-momentum tensor for fields; effective action and backreaction; regularization of functional determinants using zeta functions and heat kernels. Topics such as quantization of higher-spin fields or interacting fields in curved spacetime, direct renormalization of the energy-momentum tensor, and the theory of cosmological perturbations are left out.

The emphasis of this course is primarily on concepts rather than on computational results. Most of the required calculations have been simplified to the barest possible minimum that still contains all relevant physics. For instance, only free scalar fields are considered for quantization; background spacetimes are always chosen to be conformally flat; the Casimir effect, the Unruh effect, and the Hawking radiation are computed for massless scalar fields in suitable



$1 + 1$ -dimensional spacetimes. Thus a fairly modest computational effort suffices to explain important conceptual issues such as the nature of vacuum and particles in curved spacetimes, thermal effects of gravitation, and backreaction. This should prepare students for more advanced and technically demanding treatments suggested below.

The authors are grateful to Josef Gaßner and Matthew Parry for discussions and valuable comments on the manuscript. Special thanks are due to Alex Vikman who worked through the text and prompted important revisions, and to Andrei Barvinsky for his assistance in improving the presentation in the last chapter.

The entire book was typeset with the excellent  $\text{\LaTeX}$  and  $\text{\TeX}$  document preparation system on computers running Debian GNU/Linux. We wish to express our gratitude to the creators and maintainers of this outstanding free software.

### Suggested literature

The following books offer a more extensive coverage of the subject and can be studied as a continuation of this introductory course.

N. D. BIRRELL and P. C. W. DAVIES, *Quantum Fields in Curved Space* (Cambridge University Press, 1982).

S. A. FULLING, *Aspects of Quantum Field Theory in Curved Space-Time* (Cambridge University Press, 1989).

A. A. GRIB, S. G. MAMAEV, and V. M. MOSTEPANENKO, *Vacuum Quantum Effects in Strong Fields* (Friedmann Laboratory Publishing, St. Petersburg, 1994).