MATH 8
HANDOUT 22: CONGRUENCES

Reminder: Euclid's algorithm

Recall that as a corollary of Euclid's algorithm we have the following result:

Theorem. *An integer m can be written in the form*

$$m = ax + by$$

if and only if m is a multiple of $\gcd(a, b)$.

For example, if $a = 18$ and $b = 33$, then the numbers that can be written in the form $18x+33y$ are exactly the multiples of 3.

To find the values of x, y, one can use Euclid's algorithm; for small a, b, one can just use guess-and-check.

Congruences

An important way to deduce properties about numbers, and discover fascinating facts in their own right, is the concept of what happens to the pieces leftover after division by a specific integer. The first key fact to notice is that, given some integer m and some remainder $r < m$, all integers n which have remainder r upon division by m have something in common - they can all be expressed as r plus a multiple of m.

Notice next the following facts, given an integer m:

- If $n_1 = q_1 m + r_1$ and $n_2 = q_2 m + r_2$, then $n_1 + n_2 = (q_1 + q_2)m + (r_1 + r_2)$;
- Similarly, $n_1 n_2 = (q_1 q_2 m + q_1 r_2 + q_2 r_1)m + (r_1 r_2)$.

This motivates the following definition: we will write

$$a \equiv b \mod m$$

(reads: a is *congruent* to b modulo m) if a, b have the same reminder upon division by m (or, equivalently, if $a - b$ is a multiple of m), and then notice that these congruences can be added and multiplied in the same way as equalities: if

$$a \equiv a' \mod m$$
$$b \equiv b' \mod m$$

then

$$a + b \equiv a' + b' \mod m$$
$$ab \equiv a'b' \mod m$$

Here are some examples:

$$2 \equiv 9 \equiv 23 \equiv -5 \equiv -12 \mod 7$$

$$10 \equiv 100 \equiv 28 \equiv -8 \equiv 1 \mod 9$$

Note: we will occasionally write $a \mod m$ for remainder of a upon division by m.

Since $23 \equiv 2 \mod 7$, we have

$$23^3 \equiv 2^3 \equiv 8 \equiv 1 \mod 7$$

And because $10 \equiv 1 \mod 9$, we have

$$10^4 \equiv 1^4 \equiv 1 \mod 9$$

One important difference is that in general, one can not divide both sides of an equivalence by a number: for example, $5a \equiv 0 \mod m$ does not necessarily mean that $a \equiv 0 \mod m$ (see problem 7 below).

Problems

When doing this homework, be careful that you only used the material we had proved or discussed so far — in particular, please do not use the prime factorization. And I ask that you only use integer numbers — no fractions or real numbers.

1. (a) Find $\gcd(58, 38)$
(b) Solve $58x + 38y = 4$

2. (a) Prove that for any a, m, the following sequence of remainders mod m:
$a \mod m$, $a^2 \mod m$, $\ldots\ldots$
starts repeating periodically (we will find the period later). [Hint: have you heard of pigeonhole principle?]
(b) Compute $5^{1000} \mod 12$

3. Find the remainder when 5^{2022} is divided by 7.

4. Find the remainder when each of the following is divided by 5: 2^4, 2^8, 2^{10}, 3^4, 3^{18}

5. Find the last digit of 7^{2012}; of 7^{7^7}

6. For of the following equations, find at least one solution (if exists; if not, explain why)

$$9x \equiv 6 \mod 12$$
$$9x \equiv 4 \mod 12$$
$$2x \equiv 3 \mod 4$$

7. Give an example of a, m such that $5a \equiv 0 \mod m$ but $a \not\equiv 0 \mod m$