Exam 3 (Prepared Question)

Exam 3 is an oral examination over time complexity and NP-completeness. Below is a series of questions that you should prepare answers to in preparation for your examination. I will ask you to present your answers using a whiteboard in my office as an aide. You may bring one page of notes to help you in this presentation.

Unsurprising

Recall that a \(k\)-vertex cover of a graph \(G = (V, E)\) is a subset \(U\) of \(V\) of size \(k\) where every edge in \(E\) contains a vertex drawn from \(U\). We defined the vertex cover decision problem as:

\[
\text{VERTEX-COVER} = \{\langle G, k \rangle \mid G \text{ is a graph that has a } k\text{-vertex cover}\}
\]

and showed that \text{VERTEX-COVER} is NP-complete.

Now, consider the set cover problem. If \(U\) is a universe of elements and \(S \subseteq P(U)\) is a collection of subsets of \(U\), then a \(k\)-set cover is a subcollection of \(S\) (i.e., set of sets) of size \(k\) such that the union of all the contained sets is \(U\). In other words, the subcollection covers all the elements of \(U\). As an example, suppose that \(U = \{1, 2, 3, 4, 5\}\) and \(S = \{\{1, 2\}, \{2, 4, 5\}, \{3, 5\}, \{4, 5\}\}\). Then:

- \(T_1 = \{\{1, 2\}, \{3, 5\}, \{4, 5\}\}\) is a 3-set cover for \(U\) with \(S\).
- \(T_2 = \{\{1, 2\}, \{2, 4, 5\}, \{3, 5\}\}\) is also a 3-set cover for \(U\) with \(S\).
- \(T_3 = \{\{2, 4, 5\}, \{3, 5\}\}\) is not a 2-cover for \(U\) with \(S\) because 1 is not in one of the subsets.

Formally define the set cover decision problem as:

\[
\text{SET-COVER} = \{\langle U, S, k \rangle \mid \text{There exists a } k\text{-set cover of } U \text{ with } S\}
\]

In this problem, we show that \text{SET-COVER} is NP-complete by reduction from \text{VERTEX-COVER}.

1. First, state the definition of NP-completeness. What are the two conditions we must show to prove that \text{SET-COVER} is NP-complete?
2. Prove the easier of the two conditions. (Hint: it’s the first one.)
3. Why is it sufficient to prove the second condition by reduction from \text{VERTEX-COVER} rather than proving the condition directly?
4. What are the inputs and outputs to your reduction function?
5. Describe how your reduction works on the following example graph that possesses a 2-vertex cover:
6. Describe how your reduction works on the following example graph that does not possess a 2-vertex cover:

7. State the two conditions that you must prove about your reduction function to show that it is correct.

8. Prove each of those conditions to conclude the overall proof that SET-COVER is NP-complete.