

Chemical Process Control

*An Introduction to Theory
and Practice*

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*An Introduction to Theory
and Practice*

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Preface

As its title suggests, this is an introductory text to the theory and practice of chemical process control. It is intended to cover the needs, as these pertain to the scope of basic chemical engineering education, (1) of a first undergraduate course in process dynamics and control, and (2) of the first part of an advanced undergraduate or graduate course in process control.

During the last ten years, academic research and industrial practice in chemical process control have been shaped by the following important realizations:

1. The structure of chemical processes has become increasingly complex, due to better management of energy and raw materials. As a consequence, the design of control systems for complete plants now constitutes the focal point of engineering interest, rather than controller designs for single processing units. Furthermore, the design of a control system has become intimately related to the design of the process itself.
2. Designing a control system implies identification of control objectives; selection of appropriate measurements and manipulations, as well as the determination of loops connecting these; and identification of the proper control laws. In other words, it is a much more involved question than the traditional one of controller tuning.

3. The advent and rapid growth of digital computers has revolutionized the practice of chemical process control and has allowed the industrial implementation of advanced control concepts.

Today, it is widely believed that education in chemical process control has not been adapted to follow modern directions, as these are depicted above. The present text represents an attempt to bridge the classical approach to process control problems with the current and future trends and needs. It is primarily an educational vehicle rather than a practical guide to the solution of specific industrial problems. Here, the emphasis is on understanding the nature of process control problems and their attributes, as well as on systematizing the approach to their solution. Needless to say, several design tools and methodologies have also been included, but with reduced emphasis. Thus it is hoped that the following aspects will emerge after studying this book:

1. Chemical process control is a subject of study with its own intricacies and challenges. It is intimately related to chemical engineering science and practice, and as such it is not the degenerate child of any other branch of engineering.
2. The design of a control system is not a mathematical problem, but should be perceived as an engineering task, with all its attractive challenges and practical shortcomings.
3. A good understanding of physical and chemical phenomena taking place in a chemical process is of paramount importance for the design of simple and effective control schemes.
4. Several alternative control configurations are usually possible for a given processing unit or a complete plant. The selection of the "best" among them is the central question to be resolved.
5. There exist a plethora of analytical tools and design methodologies that one should be familiar with before attempting to tackle process control problems.

The text is divided into seven parts. Each part includes a number of chapters with a common general orientation.

Part I (Chapters 1 through 3) represents a general introduction to the control aspects of a chemical process. An attempt is made to define what we mean by process control, to identify the needs and incentives for process control, to analyze the design questions and formulate the problems that must be solved, and to provide the rationale for studying the material that follows in the subsequent chapters.

Part II (Chapters 4 and 5) introduces the reader to the modeling requirements for process control. It demonstrates how we can construct useful models, starting from basic principles, and determines the scope and difficulties of mathematical modeling for process control purposes.

Part III (Chapters 6 through 12) is devoted to the analysis of static and dynamic behavior of processing systems. The emphasis here is on identifying those process characteristics which shape the dynamic response for a variety of processing units. The results of such analysis are used later to design effective controllers. Input-output models have been employed through the use of Laplace transforms.

Part IV (Chapters 13 through 18) covers the analysis and design of feedback control systems, which represent the control schemes encountered most often in a chemical plant. Emphasis has been placed on understanding the effects which various feedback controllers have on the response of controlled processes, and on the selection of the most appropriate among them. The subject of controller tuning has been deemphasized, and as a consequence, the traditional root-locus techniques and frequency response tuning methods have been scaled down.

Part V (Chapters 19 through 22) deals with the description, analysis, and design of more complex control systems, with one controlled output. In particular, Chapter 19 introduces the concept of feedback compensation with Smith's predictor, to cope with systems possessing large dead times or inverse response. Chapter 20 describes and analyzes a variety of multiloop control systems (with one controlled output) often encountered in chemical processes, such as cascade, selective, and split-range. Chapter 21 is devoted exclusively to the analysis and design of feedforward and ratio control systems, while Chapter 22 makes a rather descriptive presentation of adaptive and inferential control schemes: why they are needed and how they can be used.

Chapters 23 through 25 constitute Part VI and are devoted to multivariable control problems. The emphasis here is on generating alternative control configurations in a systematic manner and screening them for the best. It is not meant to cover all aspects of multivariable control, and only one design technique (relative-gain array) is presented for the selection of the least interacting loops. Simple, noninteracting control loops are also designed for low-order systems. Chapters 23 and 25 offer an introduction to the control design problems for complete chemical plants. Also, they outline systematic procedures which can be used to synthesize control schemes for such complex systems.

Part VII (Chapters 26 through 31) is an introduction to process control using digital computers. Initially (Chapter 26), the characteristics of a digital computer control loop are analyzed in terms of the new hardware elements as well as the new control design questions. Chapters 27 through 29 provide the analytical tools for analyzing the response of open-loop and closed-loop discrete-time dynamic systems. Chapter 30 outlines the most popular procedures for designing digital feedback controllers, while Chapter 31 discusses computer-aided, on-

line identification of chemical processes and its use for the development of adaptive control systems.

The present book is the culmination of seven years of teaching process control at the University of Minnesota and the National Technical University of Athens. It was designed in such a way as to provide a simple, smooth, and readable account of process control aspects, while providing the interested reader with material, problems, and directions for further study.

With few exceptions, every chapter contains the proper amount of material for just one lecture. In order to maintain continuity and flow of the main text, two mechanisms have been used. First: specific details are usually grouped at the end of each section under the heading Remarks. Second: additional, useful, but not necessary material has been put into appendices at the end of the corresponding chapters. Many examples have been used throughout the text either to explain some concepts or to demonstrate the use of various techniques. Not all of the examples need to be covered during a lecture hour, and some of them can be left for individual study.

To enhance the educational value of the book, a series of Things to Think About at the end of each chapter, as well as a large number of homework problems at the end of each part, have been included. Occasionally, the Things to Think About will direct the reader to find the answers in other books, papers, or handbooks, which he or she can find listed in the sections of annotated bibliography at the end of each part.

I am vastly indebted to many people who have helped and inspired me, in various ways, to start, continue, and complete this book. First and foremost, my gratitude goes to the "Chief," Neal R. Amundson, for supporting me at the conception of this book and strengthening my resolve in so many direct and indirect ways. Rutherford Aris, Arnie Fredrickson, and Skip Scriven may not have realized what an influence their generous presence, "teachings," and friendship have had in shaping this book. Thanks are due to J. Wei for his encouraging words to continue with this project, and to M. M. Denn for being so gracious and helpful when this book was in its embryonic stage. The constructive criticism of J. M. Douglas has been immensely helpful. His generous permission to use passages from his work on the control system design for complete plants is gratefully acknowledged.

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Shirley Tabis typed the original manuscript with great care, artistic taste, skill, and dedication, unparalleled in my own experience.

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George Stephanopoulos
Athens, Greece

Contents

Preface xvii

*Part 1 The Control of a Chemical Process: Its
Characteristics and Associated Problems 1*

1. Incentives for Chemical Process Control 2
 - 1.1 Suppress the Influence of External Disturbances 4
 - 1.2 Ensure the Stability of a Process 7
 - 1.3 Optimize the Performance of a Chemical Process 10
2. Design Aspects of a Process Control System 12
 - 2.1 Classification of the Variables in a Chemical Process 12
 - 2.2 Design Elements of a Control System 14
 - 2.3 Control Aspects of a Complete Chemical Plant 25
3. Hardware for a Process Control System 28
 - 3.1 Hardware Elements of a Control System 28
 - 3.2 Use of Digital Computers in Process Control 30

<i>Concluding Remarks on Part I</i>	33
<i>Things to Think About for Part I</i>	33
<i>References for Part I</i>	35
<i>Problems for Part I</i>	36

Part II Modeling the Dynamic and Static Behavior of Chemical Processes 43

4. Development of a Mathematical Model 45

4.1 Why Do We Need Mathematical Modeling for Process Control?	46
4.2 State Variables and State Equations for a Chemical Process	48
4.3 Additional Elements of the Mathematical Models	55
4.4 Dead Time	58
4.5 Additional Examples of Mathematical Modeling	59
4.6 Modeling Difficulties	74
Things to Think About	78

5. Modeling Considerations for Control Purposes 80

5.1 The Input-Output Model	81
5.2 Degrees of Freedom	86
5.3 Degrees of Freedom and Process Controllers	89
5.4 Formulating the Scope of Modeling for Process Control	93
Things to Think About	97

<i>References for Part II</i>	98
<i>Problems for Part II</i>	100

Part III Analysis of the Dynamic Behavior of Chemical Processes 111

6. Computer Simulation and the Linearization of Nonlinear Systems 113

6.1 Computer Simulation of Process Dynamics	114
6.2 Linearization of Systems with One Variable	116

6.3	Deviation Variables	119
6.4	Linearization of Systems with Many Variables	121
	Things to Think About	126
7.	Laplace Transforms	128
7.1	Definition of the Laplace Transform	128
7.2	Laplace Transforms of Some Basic Functions	130
7.3	Laplace Transforms of Derivatives	139
7.4	Laplace Transforms of Integrals	139
7.5	Final-Value Theorem	140
7.6	Initial-Value Theorem	141
	Things to Think About	141
8.	Solution of Linear Differential Equations Using Laplace Transforms	143
8.1	A Characteristic Example and the Solution Procedure	143
8.2	Inversion of Laplace Transforms. Heaviside Expansion	145
8.3	Examples on the Solution of Linear Differential Equations Using Laplace Transforms	152
	Things to Think About	157
9.	Transfer Functions and the Input-Output Models	159
9.1	Transfer Function of a Process with a Single Output	159
9.2	Transfer Function Matrix of a Process with Multiple Outputs	163
9.3	Poles and Zeros of a Transfer Function	167
9.4	Qualitative Analysis of the Response of a System	168
	Things to Think About	172
10.	Dynamic Behavior of First-Order Systems	173
10.1	What Is a First-Order System?	173
10.2	Processes Modeled as First-Order Systems	174
10.3	Dynamic Response of a Pure Capacitive Process	178
10.4	Dynamic Response of a First-Order Lag System	179
10.5	First-Order Systems with Variable Time Constant and Gain	183
	Things to Think About	184

- 11. Dynamic Behavior of Second-Order Systems 186**
 - 11.1 What Is a Second-Order System? 186
 - 11.2 Dynamic Response of a Second-Order System 187
 - 11.3 Multicapacity Processes as Second-Order Systems 193
 - 11.4 Inherently Second-Order Processes 201
 - 11.5 Second-Order Systems Caused by the Presence of Controllers 201
 - Things to Think About 204
 - Appendix 11A Examples of Physical Systems with Inherent Second-Order Dynamics 205

- 12. Dynamic Behavior of Higher-Order Systems 212**

- 12.1 N Capacities in Series 212
 - 12.2 Dynamic Systems with Dead Time 214
 - 12.3 Dynamic Systems with Inverse Response 216
 - Things to Think About 220

References for Part III 220

Problems for Part III 223

Part IV Analysis and Design of Feedback Control Systems 239

- 13. Introduction to Feedback Control 241**

- 13.1 Concept of Feedback Control 241
 - 13.2 Types of Feedback Controllers 245
 - 13.3 Measuring Devices (Sensors) 248
 - 13.4 Transmission Lines 253
 - 13.5 Final Control Elements 253
 - Things to Think About 256

- 14. Dynamic Behavior of Feedback-Controlled Processes 258**

- 14.1 Block Diagram and the Closed-Loop Response 258
 - 14.2 Effect of Proportional Control on the Response of a Controlled Process 265

- 14.3 Effect of Integral Control Action 273
- 14.4 Effect of Derivative Control Action 276
- 14.5 Effect of Composite Control Actions 277
 - Things to Think About 279

15. Stability Analysis of Feedback Systems 281

- 15.1 Notion of Stability 281
- 15.2 The Characteristic Equation 285
- 15.3 Routh-Hurwitz Criterion for Stability 287
- 15.4 Root-Locus Analysis 290
 - Things to Think About 295

16. Design of Feedback Controllers 297

- 16.1 Outline of the Design Problems 297
- 16.2 Simple Performance Criteria 299
- 16.3 Time-Integral Performance Criteria 302
- 16.4 Select the Type of Feedback Controller 306
- 16.5 Controller Tuning 310
 - Things to Think About 316

17. Frequency Response Analysis of Linear Processes 317

- 17.1 Response of a First-Order System to a Sinusoidal Input 317
- 17.2 Frequency Response Characteristics of a General Linear System 321
- 17.3 Bode Diagrams 326
- 17.4 Nyquist Plots 338
 - Things to Think About 341

18. Design of Feedback Control Systems Using Frequency Response Techniques 344

- 18.1 Bode Stability Criterion 344
- 18.2 Gain and Phase Margins 349
- 18.3 Ziegler-Nichols Tuning Technique 352

- 18.4 Nyquist Stability Criterion 355
Things to Think About 358

References for Part IV 360
Problems for Part IV 363

Part V Analysis and Design of Advanced Control Systems 381

19. Feedback Control of Systems with Large Dead Time or Inverse Response 383

- 19.1 Processes with Large Dead Time 383
19.2 Dead Time Compensation 385
19.3 Control of Systems with Inverse Response 390
Things to Think About 393

20. Control Systems with Multiple Loops 394

- 20.1 Cascade Control 395
20.2 Selective Control Systems 402
20.3 Split-Range Control 407
Things to Think About 409

21. Feedforward and Ratio Control 411

- 21.1 Logic of Feedforward Control 411
21.2 Problem of Designing Feedforward Controllers 414
21.3 Practical Aspects on the Design of Feedforward Controllers 420
21.4 Feedforward-Feedback Control 423
21.5 Ratio Control 427
Things to Think About 429

22. Adaptive and Inferential Control Systems 431

- 22.1 Adaptive Control 431
22.2 Inferential Control 438
Things to Think About 443

References for Part V 444
Problems for Part V 447

**Part VI *Design of Control Systems for Multivariable
Processes: Introduction to Plant
Control* 459**

**23. Synthesis of Alternative Control Configurations
for Multiple-Input, Multiple-Output
Processes 461**

- 23.1 Design Questions for MIMO Control Systems 461
- 23.2 Degrees of Freedom and the Number of Controlled and
Manipulated Variables 462
- 23.3 Generation of Alternative Loop Configurations 467
- 23.4 Extensions to Systems with Interacting Units 469
 - Things to Think About 484

**24. Interaction and Decoupling of Control
Loops 486**

- 24.1 Interaction of Control Loops 487
- 24.2 Relative-Gain Array and the Selection of Loops 494
- 24.3 Design of Noninteracting Control Loops 504
 - Things to Think About 508

**25. Design of Control Systems for Complete
Plants 510**

- 25.1 Process Design and Process Control 510
- 25.2 Hydrodealkylation of Toluene Plant to Produce Benzene:
A Case Study 516
- 25.3 Material Balance Control for the Hydrodealkylation
Plant 519
- 25.4 Product Quality Control for the Hydrodealkylation
Plant 524
- 25.5 Some Comments on the Control Design for Complete
Plants 529
 - Things to Think About 534

References for Part VI 537

Problems for Part VI 540