

Contents

1. Stability and approximation	1
1.1 Lower estimates derived from the Riesz-Dunford functional calculus	2
1.2 Lower estimates for the distance to $\mathcal{N}_k(\mathcal{X})$	7
1.3 Lower semicontinuity of the rank	8
1.4 Stability properties of semi-Fredholm operators	9
1.5 On invariance and closure of subsets of $\mathcal{L}(\mathcal{X})$	11
1.6 Notes and remarks	11
2. An apéritif: Approximation problems in finite dimensional spaces	13
2.1 Closures of similarity orbits in finite dimensional spaces	14
2.1.1 The nilpotent case	16
2.1.2 Proof of Theorem 2.1	17
2.1.3 The lattice $(\mathcal{N}(\mathbb{C}^k)/\#, <)$	18
2.1.4 Closures of similarity orbits of finite rank operators	20
2.2 The distance from the set of all non-zero orthogonal projections to $\mathcal{N}(\mathcal{X})$	21
2.2.1 The limit case	21
2.2.2 On the exact values of δ_k and η_k	25
2.2.3 A companion problem: the distance from the set of all non-zero idempotents to $\mathcal{N}(\mathcal{X})$	26
2.3 On the distance to $\mathcal{N}_k(\mathcal{X})$	30
2.3.1 A general upper bound	30
2.3.2 Two illustrative examples	32
2.3.3 An example on approximation of normal operators by nilpotents	35
2.3.4 On the distance to a similarity orbit	38
2.4 On the distance from a compact operator to $\mathcal{N}(\mathcal{X})$	40
2.5 Notes and remarks	41
3. The main tools of approximation	48
3.1 The Rosenblum operator: $X \rightarrow AX - XB$	48
3.1.1 Linear operator equations	48
3.1.2 Approximate point spectrum of a sum of commuting operators	49
3.1.3 Local one-side resolvents in $\mathcal{L}(\mathcal{X})$	52
3.1.4 The left and the right spectra of τ_{AB}	58
3.1.5 Rosenblum-Davis-Rosenthal corollary	61
3.1.6 The maximal numerical range of an operator	62
3.1.7 The norm of τ_{AB}	65

3.2	Generalized Rota's universal model	67
3.3	Apostol's triangular representation	70
3.4	Correction by compact perturbations of the singular behavior of operators	82
3.5	Apostol-Foiaş-Voiculescu's theorem on normal restrictions of compact perturbations of operators	88
3.5.1	Schatten p -classes	88
3.5.2	Normal restrictions	89
3.5.3	Density of sets of operators with bad properties	91
3.6	Notes and remarks	92
4.	Two results borrowed from the theory of C^* -algebras	99
4.1	Essentially normal operators	99
4.1.1	Brown-Douglas-Fillmore theorem	99
4.1.2	Berger-Shaw trace inequality	100
4.1.3	Examples of essentially normal operators	104
4.1.4	An application to approximation problems	106
4.2	Matrix models for operators	107
4.3	Spectra of compact perturbations of operators	110
4.4	Voiculescu's theorem	112
4.5	Closures of unitary orbits	114
4.5.1	Operator-valued spectrum and unitary orbits	114
4.5.2	Concrete examples of closures of unitary orbits	116
4.5.3	On normal and quasinilpotent restrictions	117
4.6	Irreducible operators	119
4.7	Notes and remarks	121
5.	Limits of nilpotent and algebraic operators	130
5.1	Limits of nilpotent operators	130
5.1.1	Normal limits of nilpotents	130
5.1.2	Spectral characterization of $\mathcal{N}(\mathcal{X})^-$	133
5.2	Closures of similarity orbits of normal operators with perfect spectra	135
5.3	Limits of algebraic operators	136
5.4	Normal operators in closures of similarity orbits	137
5.5	Sums of two nilpotents	139
5.6	The Apostol-Salinas approach: an estimate for the distance to $\mathcal{N}_k(\mathcal{X})$	142
5.7	Salinas's pseudonilpotents	147
5.8	Limits of nilpotent and algebraic elements of the Calkin algebra	151
5.9	On the spectra of infinite direct sums of operators	153

5.10	Notes and remarks	155
6.	Quasitriangularity	158
6.1	Apostol-Morrel simple models	158
6.2	Quasitriangular operators	163
6.2.1	Equivalence between the formal and the relaxed definitions of quasitriangularity	164
6.2.2	Two lower estimates for the distance to (QT)	165
6.2.3	Spectral characterization of quasitriangularity	169
6.3	Biquasitriangular operators	169
6.3.1	Block-diagonal and quasidiagonal operators	170
6.3.2	Characterizations of biquasitriangularity	171
6.4	On the relative size of the sets (QT) , $(QT)^*$, (BQT) , $[\mathcal{N}(\mathcal{X}) + \mathcal{K}(\mathcal{X})]$ and $\mathcal{N}(\mathcal{X})^-$	177
6.5	A Riesz decomposition theorem for operators with disconnected essential spectrum	178
6.6	Notes and remarks	181
7.	The structure of a polynomially compact operator	193
7.1	Reduction to the (essentially) nilpotent case	193
7.2	The structure of a polynomially compact operator	195
7.3	Restrictions of nilpotent operators	199
7.4	Operators similar to Jordan operators	202
7.5	A similarity invariant for polynomially compact operators	205
7.6	Nice Jordan operators	209
7.7	Notes and remarks	220
8.	Closures of similarity orbits of nilpotent operators	221
8.1	Universal operators	221
8.1.1	Universal quasinilpotent operators	221
8.1.2	Universal compact quasinilpotent operators	226
8.2	Compact perturbations of not nice operators	226
8.3	Quasinilpotents in the Calkin algebra	230
8.3.1	General quasinilpotents	230
8.3.2	Nice elements of the Calkin algebra	237
8.4	Compact perturbations of nice Jordan operators	238
8.4.1	Nice Jordan nilpotents	239
8.4.2	Nilpotents of order 2	243
8.4.3	Quasinilpotent perturbations	244

8.4.4 Universal operators in $\mathcal{N}_{k,h}^+(\mathcal{X})$	248
8.4.5 A general criterion for universality	254
8.5 Separation of isolated points of the essential spectrum affiliated with nilpotents	263
8.6 Notes and remarks	270
Appendix. Recent developments and applications	273
A.1 The metatheorem on similarity and approximation of operators	273
A.1.1 The closure theorem	274
A.1.2 The distance formulas	274
A.2 The approximate inverse of the Riesz decomposition theorem, and the “completion” of the functional calculus	276
A.2.1 Limits of operators with p -th roots, or logarithms	276
A.2.2 The approximate inverse of the Riesz decomposition theorem	278
A.2.3 Miscellaneous results	279
A.3 Nest algebras, compact perturbations, and models for operators	280
A.3.1 Nests and nest algebras	280
A.3.2 Compact perturbations of nest algebras, and models	282
A.3.3 Jacobson radical and Larson’s ideal	287
A.4 Classes of operators related to inner derivations	289
A.4.1 Derivation ranges and the identity	289
A.4.2 Finite operators	291
REFERENCES	295
INDEX	325
SYMBOLS AND NOTATION	329