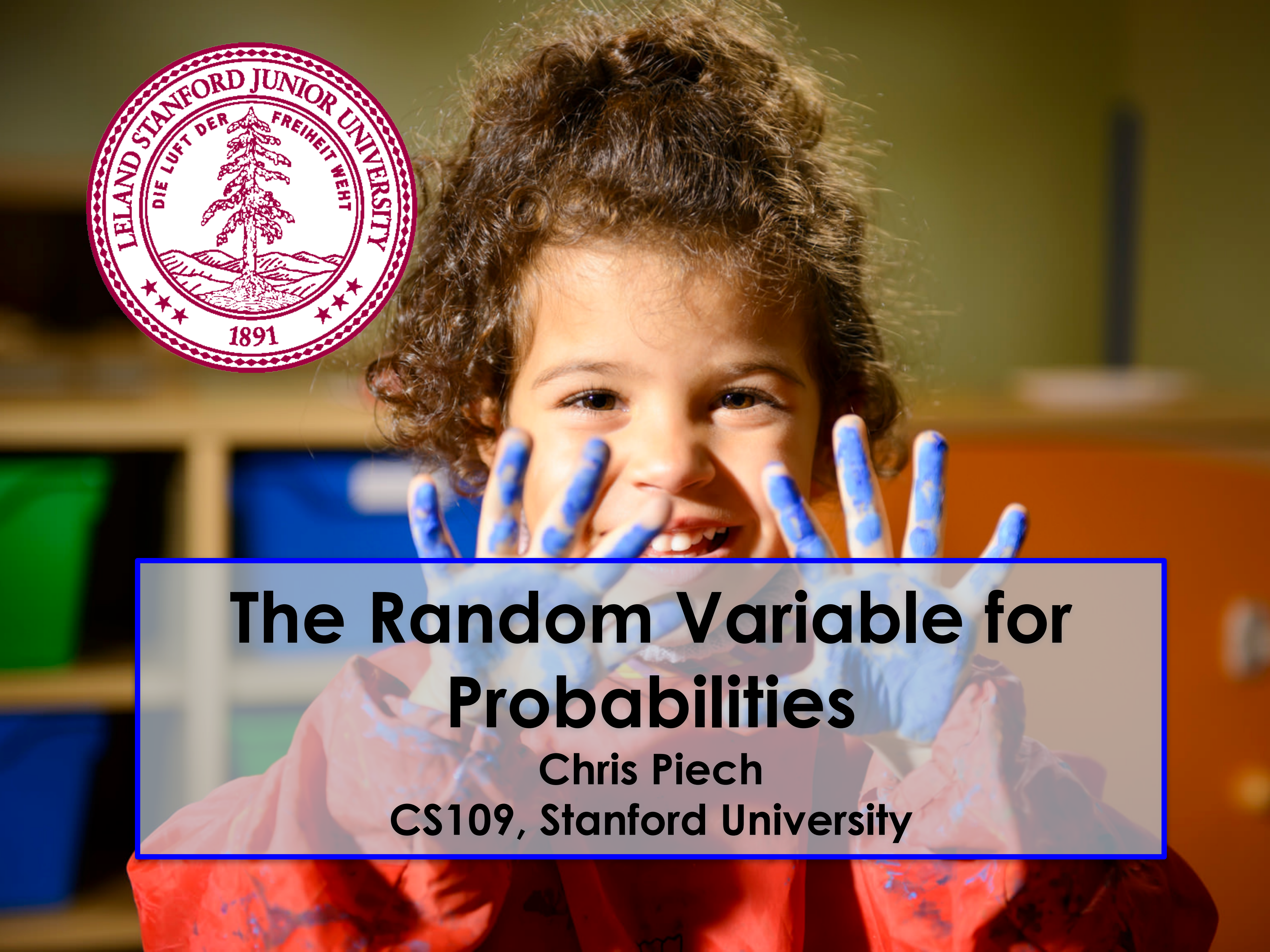
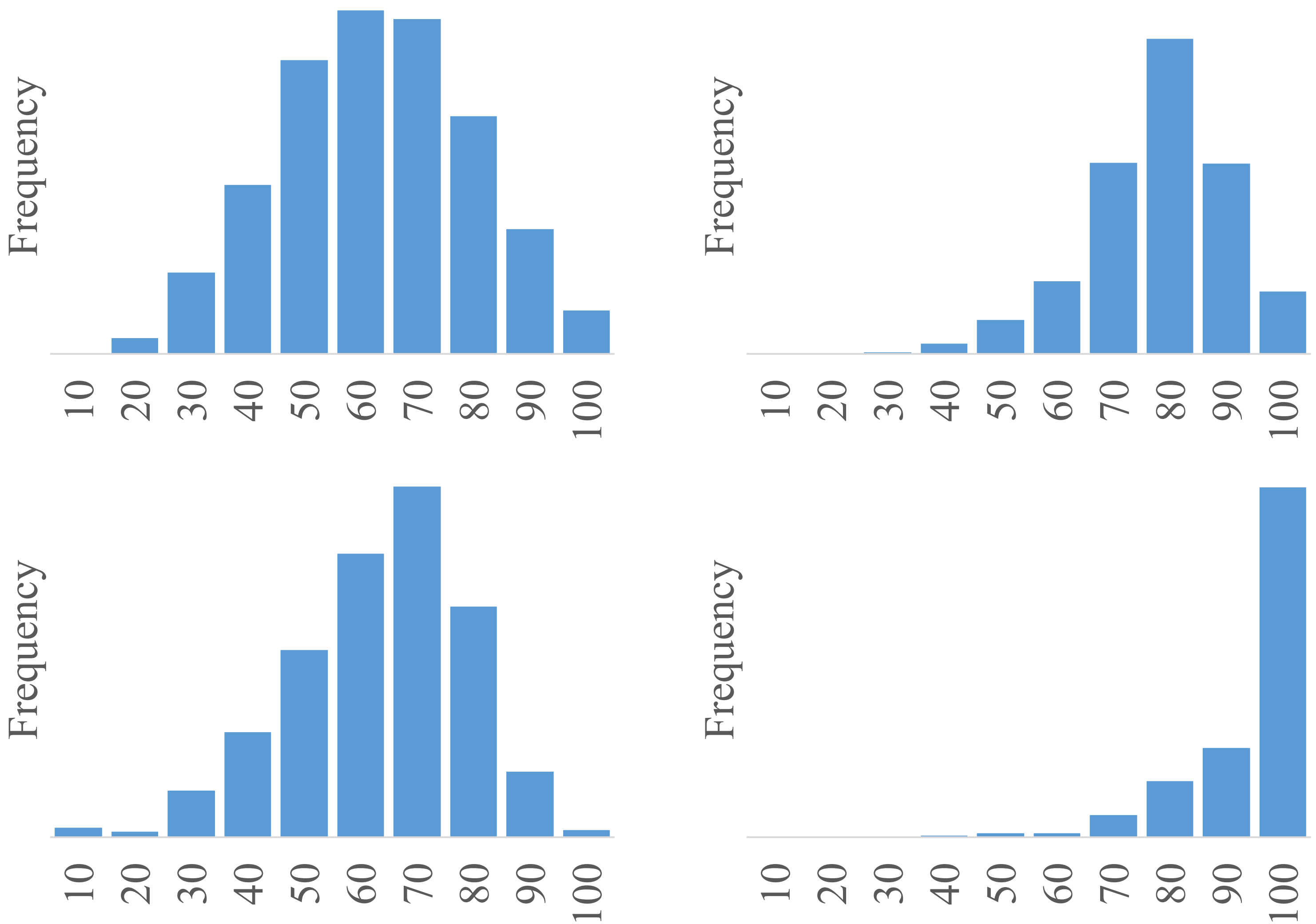


The Random Variable for Probabilities

Chris Piech
CS109, Stanford University

Assignment Grades



We have 2055 assignment distributions from grade scope

Today we are going to learn something unintuitive, beautiful and useful

Review

Conditioning with a continuous random variable feels weird at first. But then it gets good.

Its like biking with a helmet…

Continuous Conditional Distributions

- Let X be continuous random variable
- Let E be an event:

$$
\begin{aligned}
P(E|X=x) &= \frac{P(X=x,E)}{P(X=x)} \\
&= \frac{P(X=x|E)P(E)}{P(X=x)} \\
&= \frac{f(X=x|E)P(E)\epsilon_x}{f(X=x)\epsilon_x} \\
&= \frac{f(X=x|E)P(E)}{f(X=x)}
\end{aligned}
$$

Continuous Conditional Distributions

- Let X be a measure of time to answer a question
- Let E be the event that the user is a human:

$$
\begin{aligned}
P(E|X = x) &= \frac{P(X = x, E)}{P(X = x)} \\
&= \frac{P(X = x|E)P(E)}{P(X = x)} \\
&= \frac{f(X = x|E)P(E)\epsilon_x}{f(X = x)\epsilon_x} \\
&= \frac{f(X = x|E)P(E)}{f(X = x)}
\end{aligned}
$$

Anomaly Detection

- Let X be a measure of time to answer a question
- Let E be the event that the user is a human
- What if you don't know normalization term?:

Normal pdf

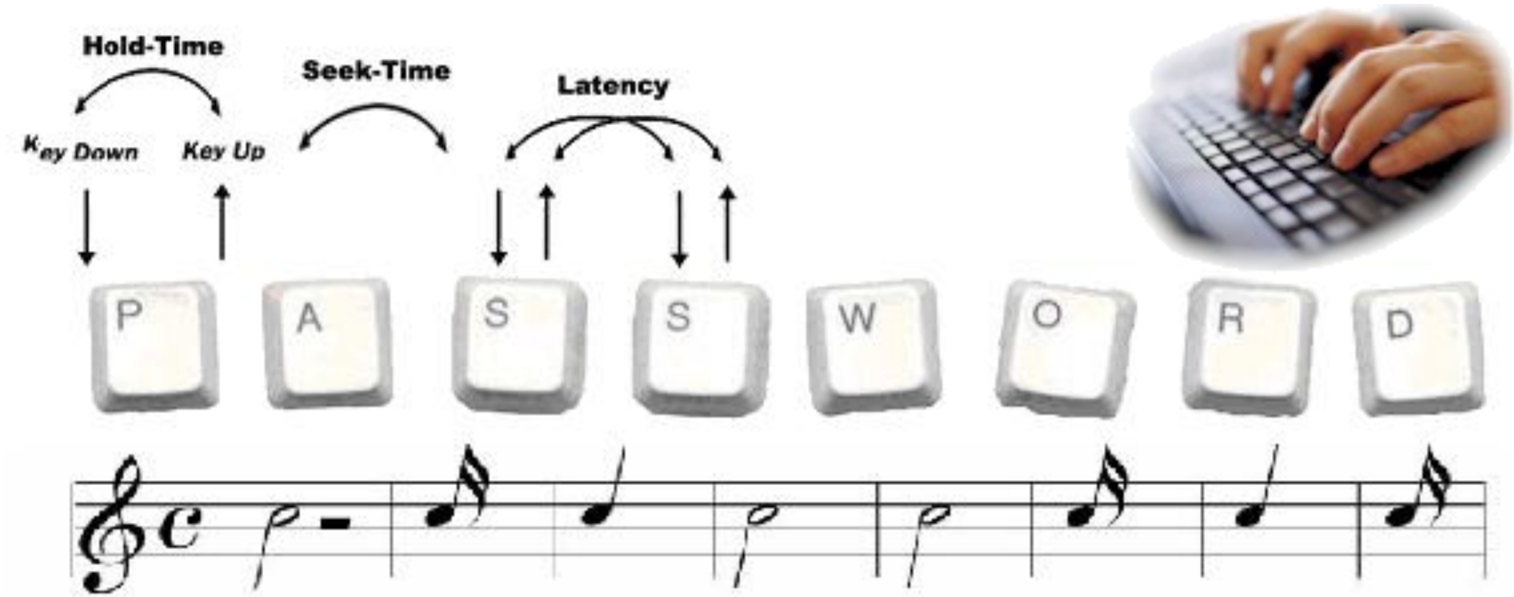
Prior

$$P(E|X = x) = \frac{f(X = x|E)P(E)}{f(X = x)}$$

???

$$\frac{P(E|X = x)}{P(E^C|X = x)}$$

Biometric Keystroke



End Review

Let's Play a Game!

Demo


CITY

Calculate a coins probability of heads?

We are going to think of probabilities as random variables!!!

Flip a Coin With Unknown Probability

- Flip a coin (n + m) times, comes up with n heads
  - We don't know probability X that coin comes up heads

Frequentist

$$X = \lim_{n+m \to \infty} \frac{n}{n+m}$$

$$\approx \frac{n}{n+m}$$

X is a single value

Bayesian

$$f(X = x | N = n) =$$

$$\frac{P(N = n | X = x) f(X = x)}{P(N = n)}$$

X is a random variable

Flip a Coin With Unknown Probability

- Flip a coin (n + m) times, comes up with n heads
  - We don't know probability X that coin comes up heads
  - Our belief before flipping coins is that: X ~ Uni(0, 1)
  - Let N = number of heads
  - Given X = x, coin flips independent: (N | X) ~ Bin(n + m, x)

$$f_{X|N}(x|n) = \frac{P(N = n|X = x) f_X(x)}{P(N = n)}$$

Bayesian "posterior" probability distribution

Bayesian "prior" probability distribution

Flip a Coin With Unknown Probability

- Flip a coin (n + m) times, comes up with n heads
  - We don't know probability X that coin comes up heads
  - Our belief before flipping coins is that: X ~ Uni(0, 1)
  - Let N = number of heads
  - Given X = x, coin flips independent: (N | X) ~ Bin(n + m, x)

$$f(X = x|N = n) = \frac{\boxed{P(N = n|X = x)}\boxed{f(X = x)}}{P(N = n)}$$

1

Binomial

$$= \frac{\binom{n+m}{n} x^n (1-x)^m}{P(N = n)}$$

Move terms around

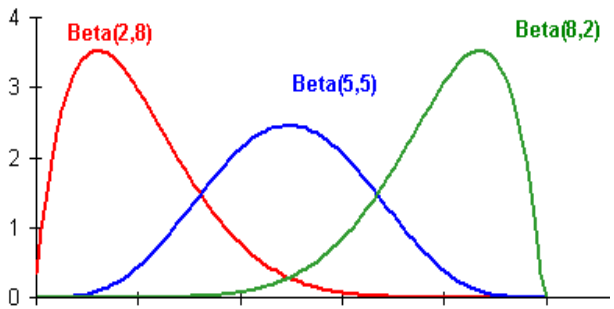
$$= \frac{\binom{n+m}{n}}{P(N = n)} x^n (1-x)^m$$

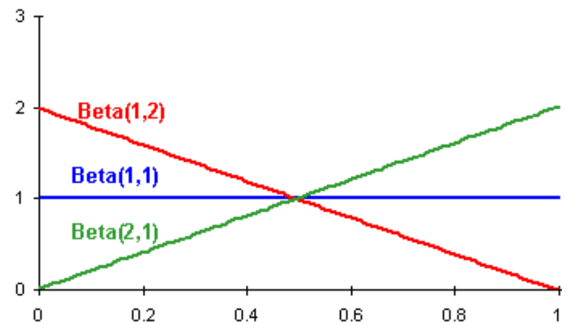
$$= \frac{1}{c} \cdot x^n (1-x)^m \qquad \text{where } c = \int_0^1 x^n (1-x)^m dx$$

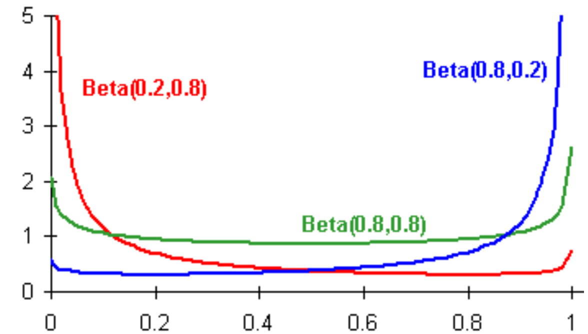
Beta Random Variable

- X is a **Beta Random Variable**: X ~ Beta(*a*, *b*)
  - Probability Density Function (PDF): (where *a*, *b* > 0)

$$f(x) = \begin{cases} \dfrac{1}{B(a,b)} x^{a-1}(1-x)^{b-1} & 0 < x < 1 \\ 0 & \text{otherwise} \end{cases} \quad \text{where} \quad B(a,b) = \int_0^1 x^{a-1}(1-x)^{b-1}\,dx$$

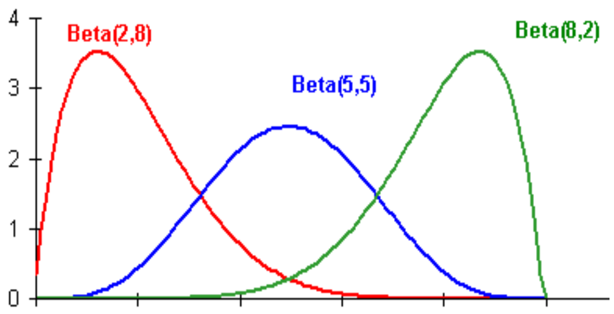


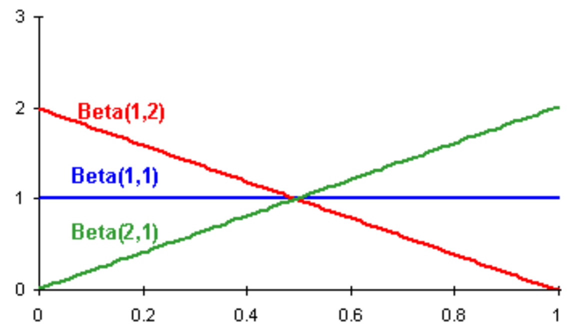


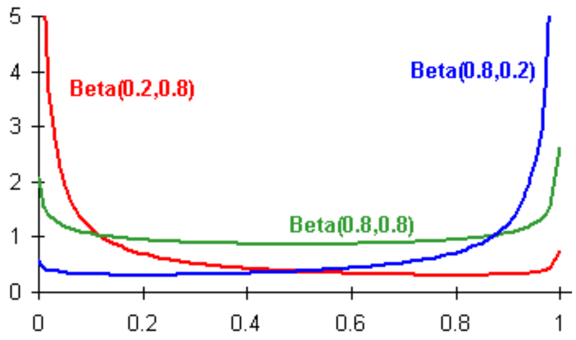


  - Symmetric when *a* = *b*
  - $E[X] = \dfrac{a}{a+b}$ $\qquad Var(X) = \dfrac{ab}{(a+b)^2(a+b+1)}$

Meta Beta







Used to represent a
distributed belief of a probability

Beta is a distribution for probabilities

Back to flipping coins

- Flip a coin (n + m) times, comes up with n heads
  - We don't know probability X that coin comes up heads
  - Our belief before flipping coins is that: X ~ Uni(0, 1)
  - Let N = number of heads
  - Given X = x, coin flips independent: $(N \mid X) \sim \mathrm{Bin}(n+m, x)$

$$f(X = x|N = n) = \frac{P(N = n|X = x)f(X = x)}{P(N = n)}$$

$$= \frac{\binom{n+m}{n} x^n (1-x)^m}{P(N = n)}$$

$$= \frac{\binom{n+m}{n}}{P(N = n)} x^n (1-x)^m$$

$$= \frac{1}{c} \cdot x^n (1-x)^m \qquad \text{where } c = \int_0^1 x^n (1-x)^m dx$$

Move terms around

Dude, Where's My Beta?

- Flip a coin (n + m) times, comes up with n heads
  - Conditional density of X given N = n

$$f(X = x | N = n) = \frac{1}{c} x^n (1 - x)^m$$

  - Note: $0 < x < 1$
  - Recall Beta distribution:

$$f(x) = \begin{cases} \frac{1}{B(a,b)} x^{a-1}(1-x)^{b-1} & 0 < x < 1 \\ 0 & \text{otherwise} \end{cases} \qquad B(a,b) = \int_0^1 x^{a-1}(1-x)^{b-1}\,dx$$

  - Hey, that looks more familiar now...
  - X | (N = n, n + m trials) ~ Beta(n + 1, m + 1)

Understanding Beta

Beta(1, 1) = ?

$$f(X = x) = \frac{1}{B(a,b)} x^{a-1}(1-x)^{b-1} = \frac{1}{B(a,b)} x^0 (1-x)^0$$

$$= \frac{1}{\int_0^1 1 \text{ dx}} = 1$$

Where $0 < x < 1$

Beta(1, 1) is the same as Uni(0, 1)

If the Prior was a Beta...

If our belief about X (that random variable for probability) was beta

$$f(X = x) = \frac{1}{B(a, b)} x^{a-1}(1-x)^{b-1}$$

What is our belief about X after observing N heads?

$$f(X = x | N = n) = ???$$

If the Prior was a Beta...

$$
\begin{aligned}
f(X = x|N = n) &= \frac{P(N = n|X = x)f(X = x)}{P(N = n)} \\
&= \frac{\binom{n+m}{n} x^n (1-x)^m f(X = x)}{P(N = n)} \\
&= \frac{\binom{n+m}{n} x^n (1-x)^m \frac{1}{B(a,b)} x^{a-1}(1-x)^{b-1}}{P(N = n)} \\
&= K_1 \cdot \binom{n+m}{n} x^n (1-x)^m \frac{1}{B(a,b)} x^{a-1}(1-x)^{b-1} \\
&= K_2 \cdot x^n (1-x)^m \frac{1}{B(a,b)} x^{a-1}(1-x)^{b-1} \\
&= K_3 \cdot x^n (1-x)^m x^{a-1}(1-x)^{b-1} \\
&= K_3 \cdot x^{n+a-1}(1-x)^{m+b-1}
\end{aligned}
$$

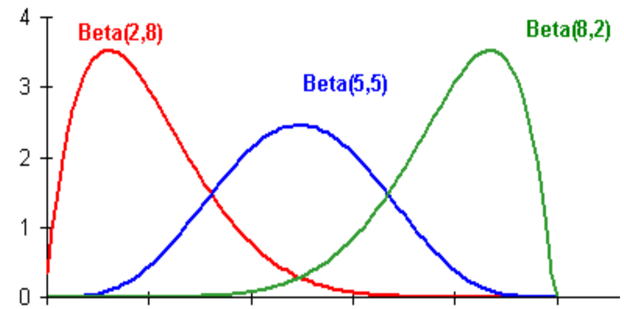
$$X|N \sim \mathrm{Beta}(n+a, m+b)$$

Understanding Beta

- If "Prior" distribution of X (before seeing flips) is Beta
- Then "Posterior" distribution of X (after flips) is Beta
- Beta is a **conjugate** distribution for Beta
  - Prior and posterior parametric forms are the same!
  - Practically, conjugate means easy update:
    - Add number of "heads" and "tails" seen to Beta parameters

Further Understanding Beta

- Can set X ~ Beta(*a*, *b*) as prior to reflect how biased you think coin is apriori
  - This is a subjective probability!
  - Then observe n + m trials, where n of trials are heads



- Update to get posterior probability
  - X | (n heads in n + m trials) ~ Beta(a + n, b + m)
  - Sometimes call *a* and *b* the "equivalent sample size"
  - Prior probability for X based on seeing (*a* + *b* – 2) "imaginary" trials, where (*a* – 1) of them were heads.
  - Beta(1, 1) ~ Uni(0, 1) → we haven't seen any "imaginary trials", so apriori know nothing about coin

Enchanted Die

Let X be the probability of rolling a "1" on Chris' die.

Prior: Imagine 10 die rolls where only showed up as a "1"

Observation: Roll it a few times…

What is the updated probability density function of X after our observations?

Check out Demo!

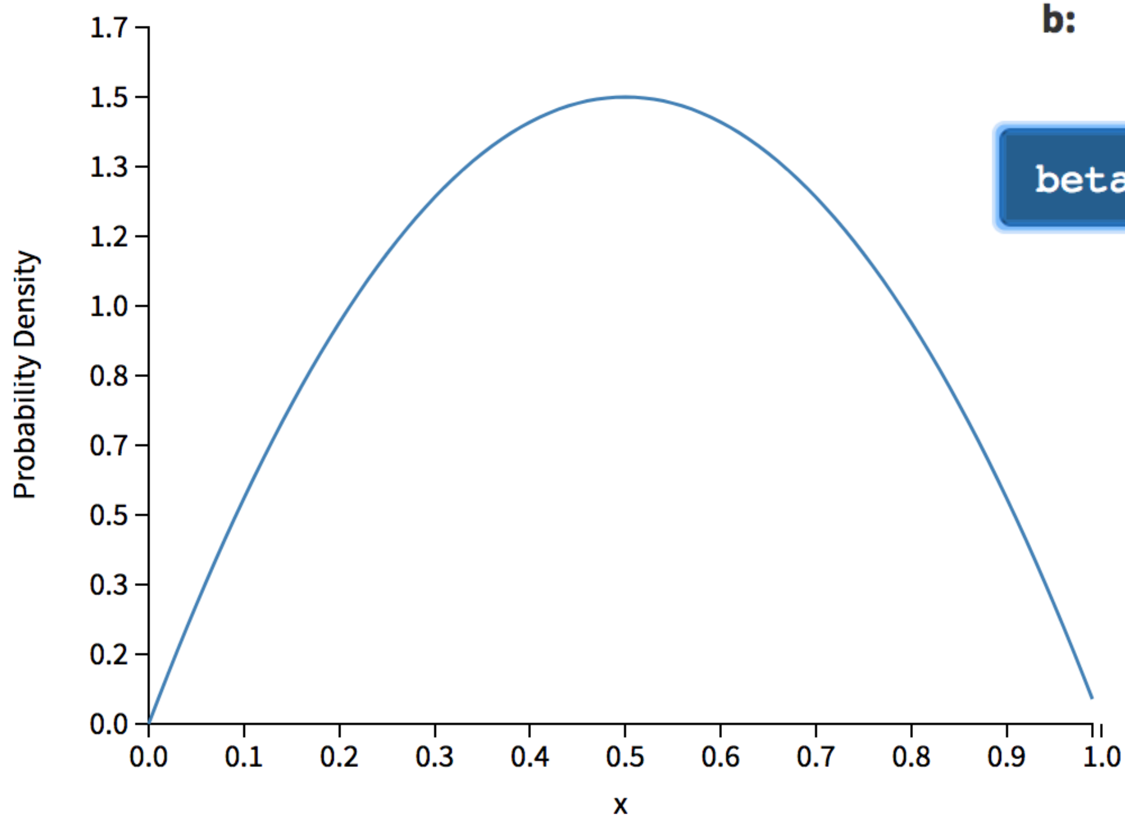
Parameters

a: 2

b: 2

beta pdf

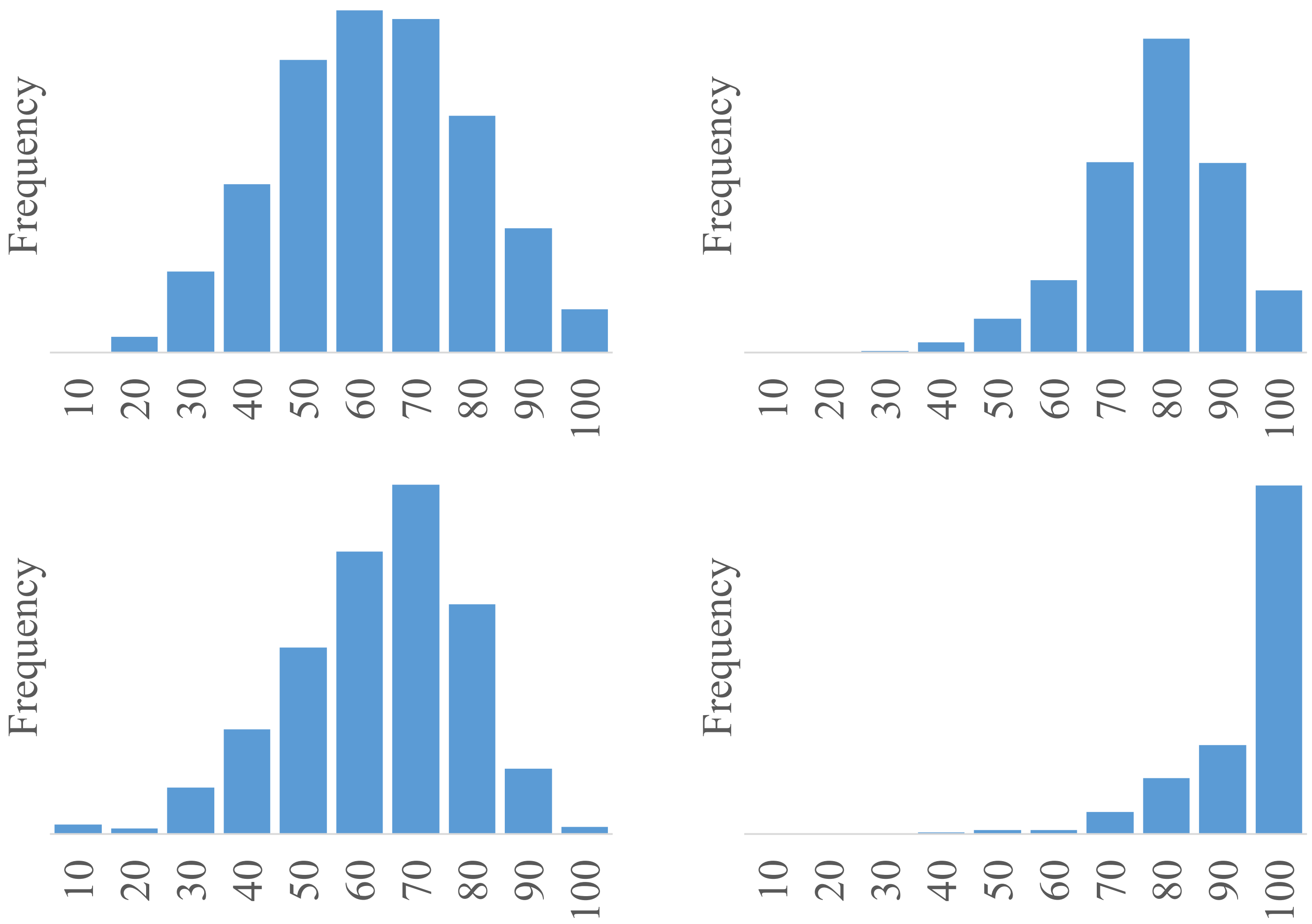
Beta PDF



Damn

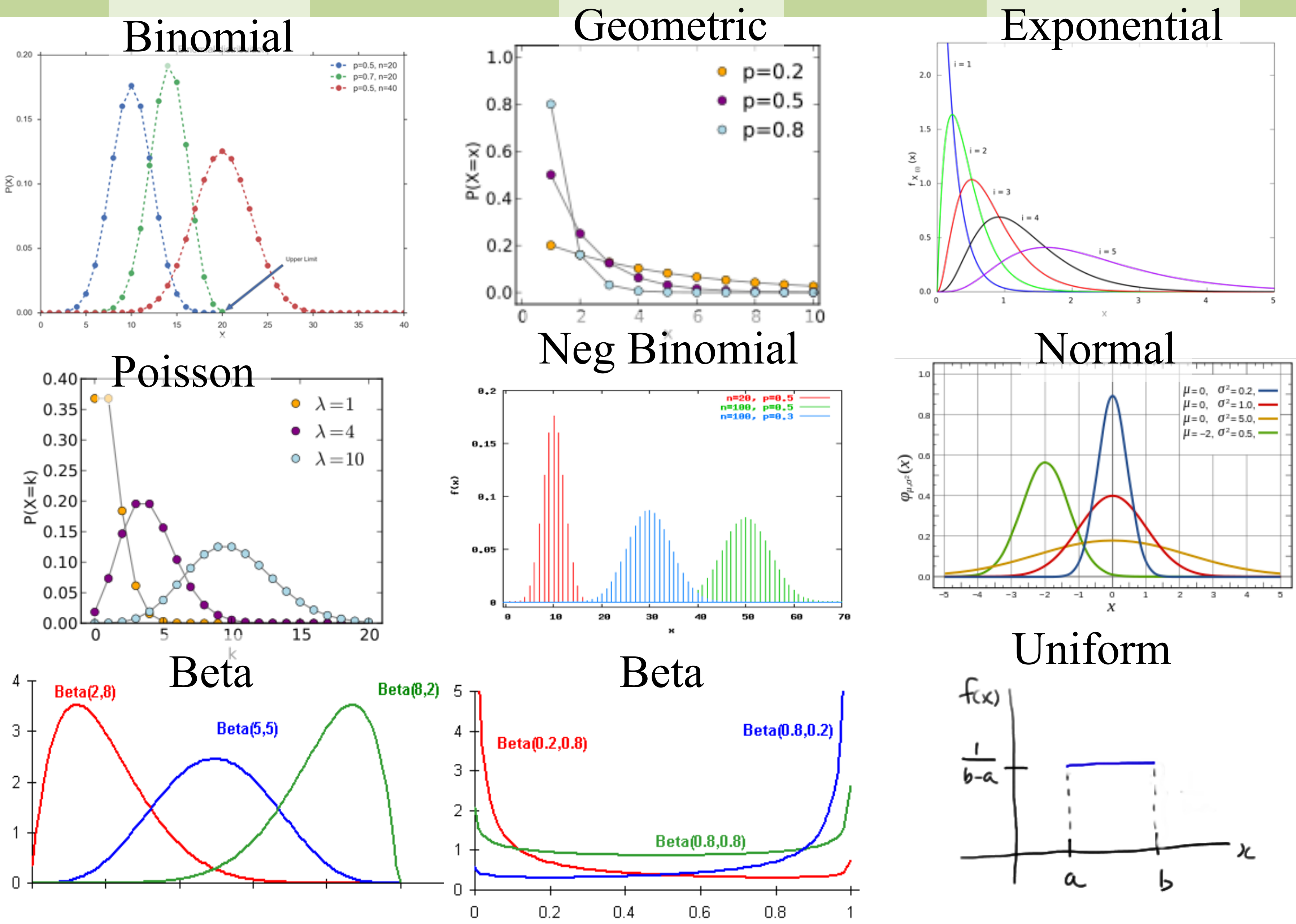
Next level?

Assignment Grades



We have 2055 assignment distributions from gradescope

Distributions



Grades must be bounded

Normal: No

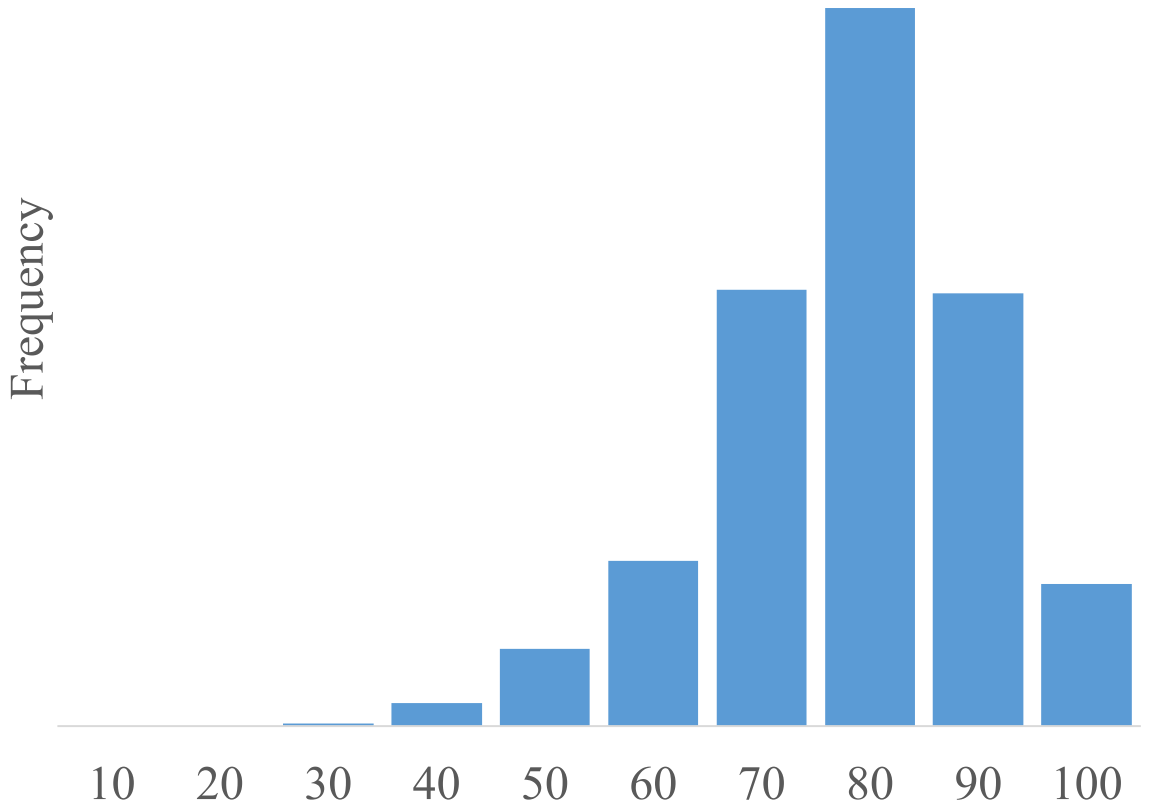
Poisson: No

Exponential: No

Beta: Yes

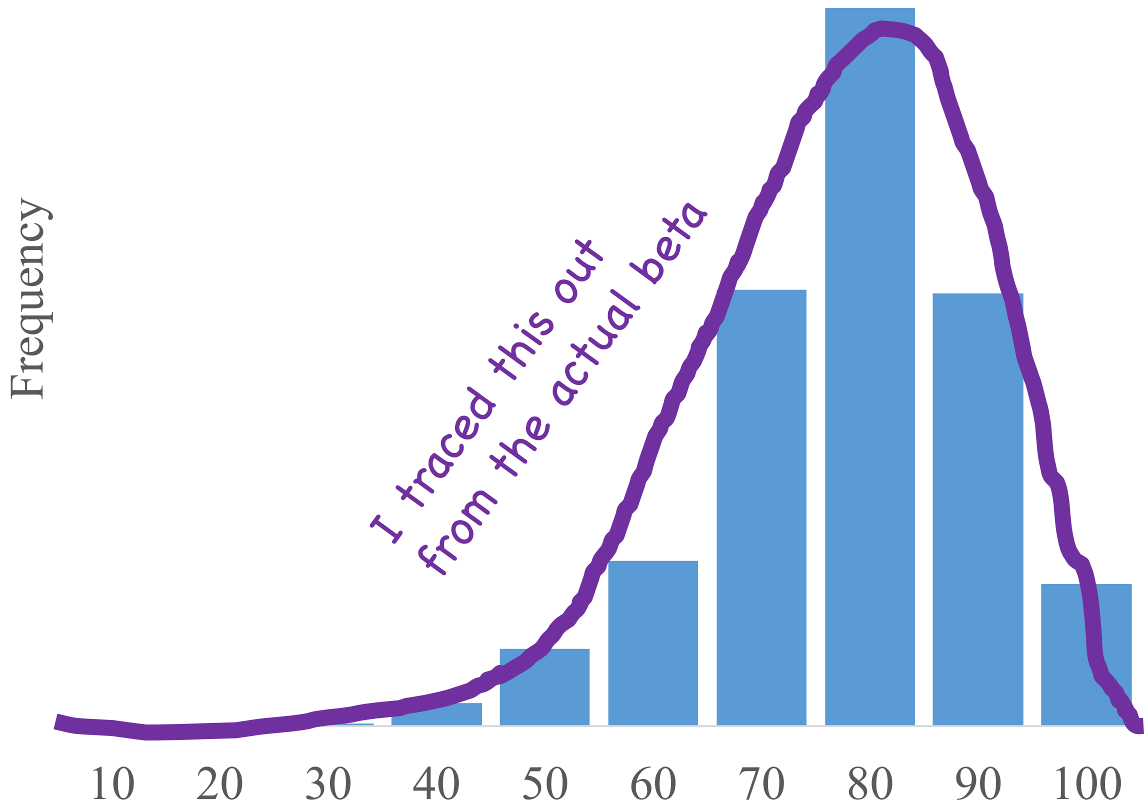
Assignment Grades Demo

`Assignment id = '1613'`



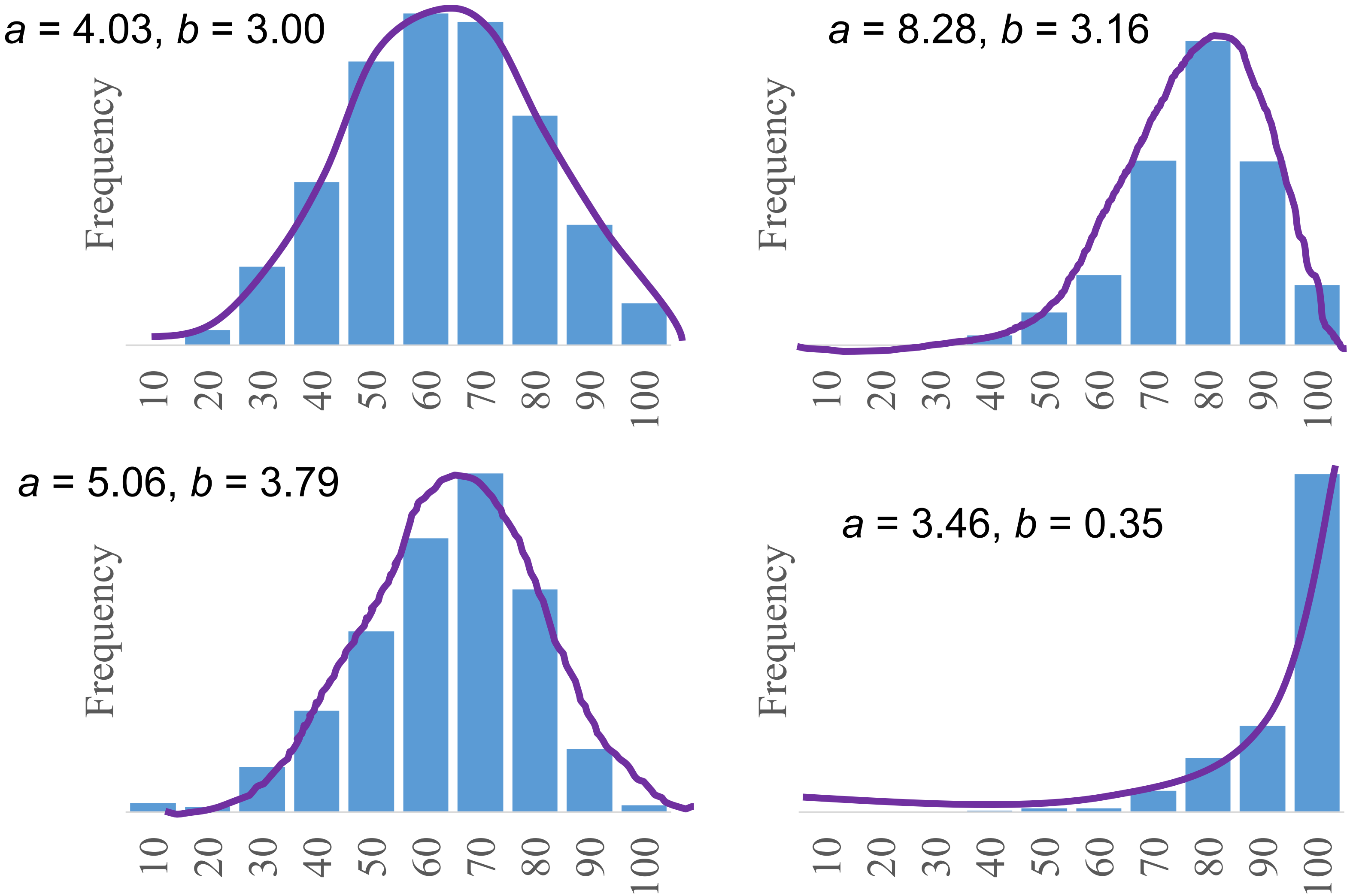
Assignment Grades Demo

`Assignment id = '1613'`



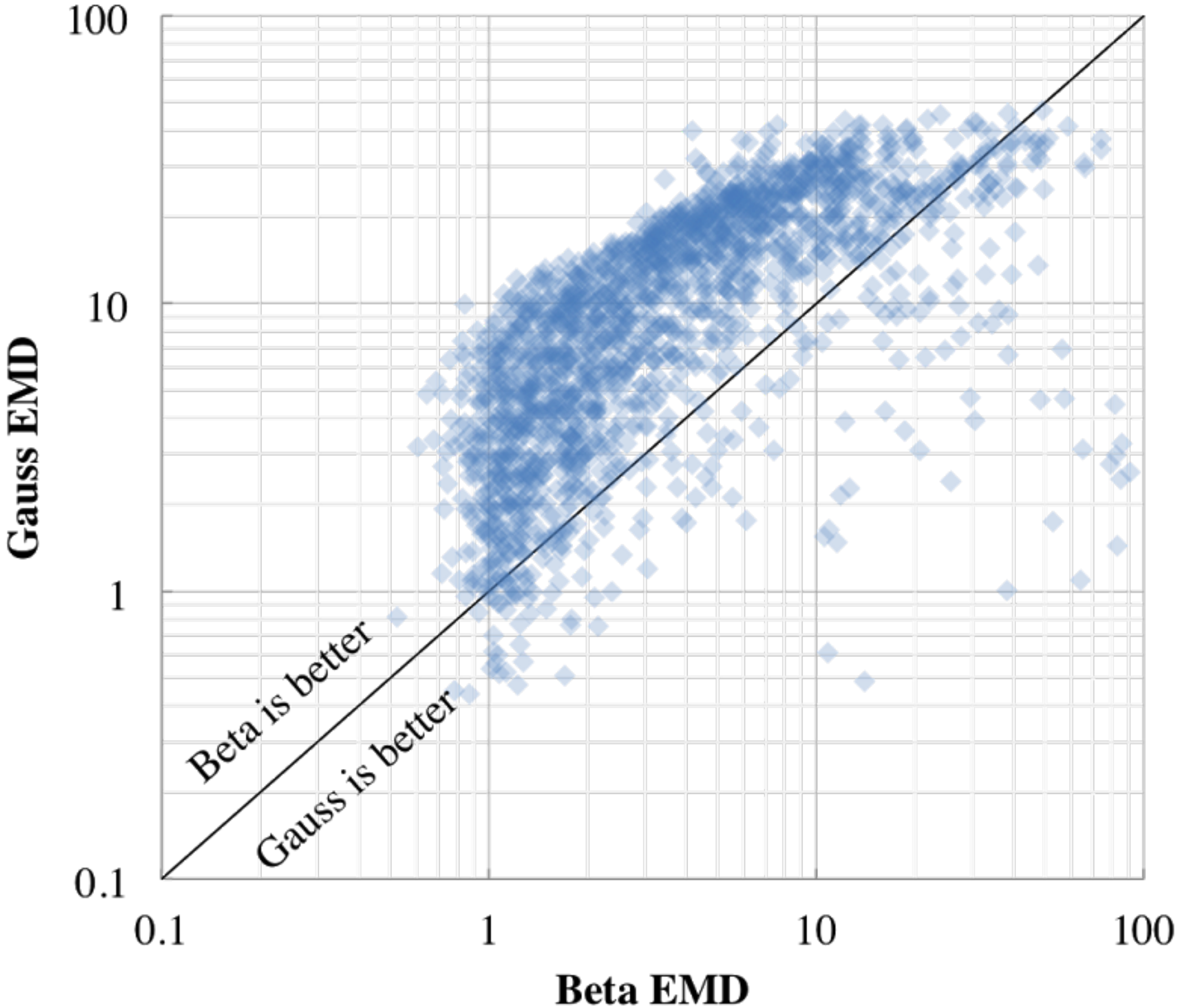
$$X \sim Beta(a = 8.28, b = 3.16)$$

Assignment Grades



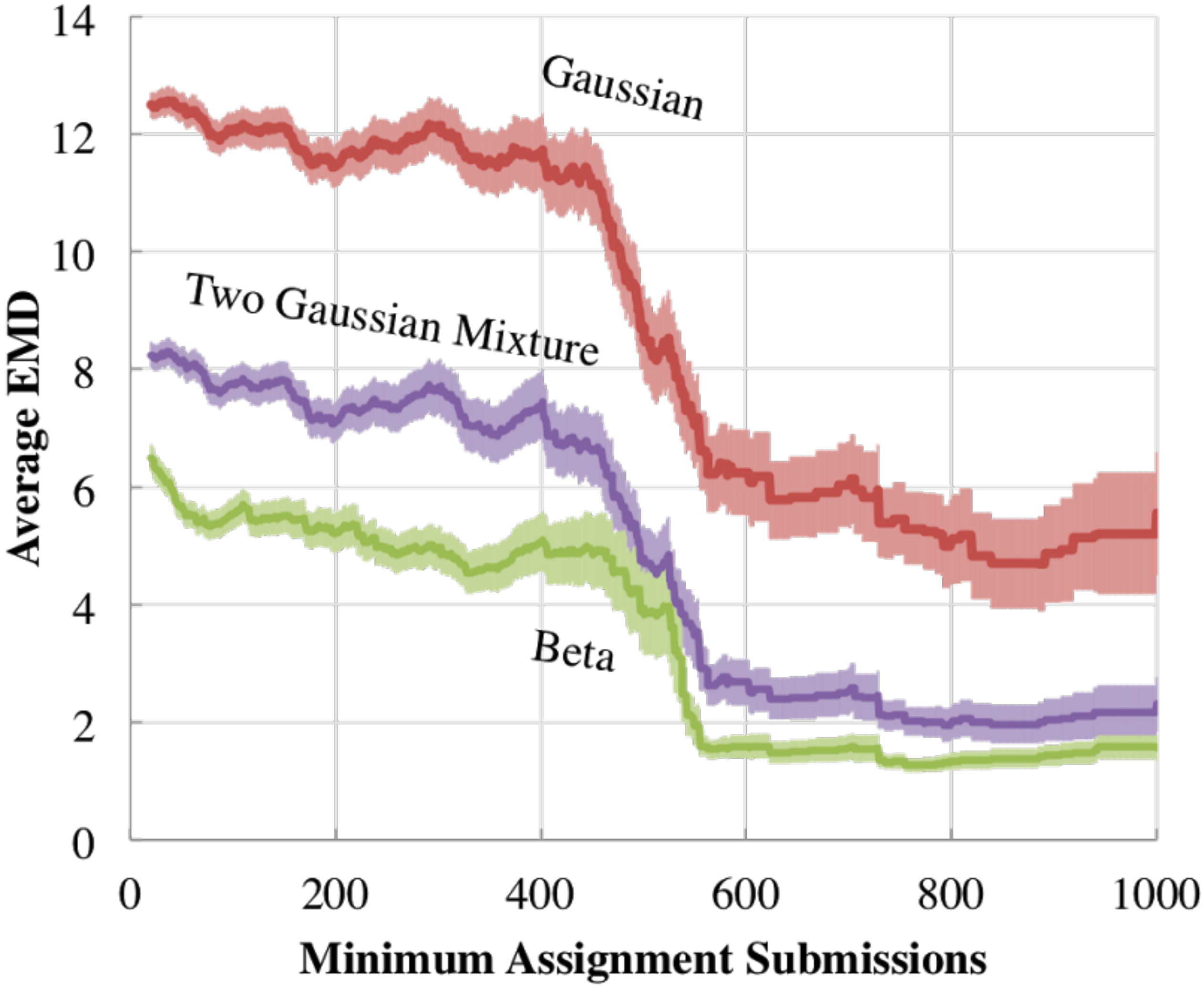
We have 2055 assignment distributions from grade scope

Beta is a Better Fit



Unpublished results. Based on Gradescope data

Beta is a Better Fit For All Class Sizes



Unpublished results. Based on Gradescope data

Binomial Interpretation

> Each student has **the same** probability of getting each point. Generate grades by flipping a coin 100 times for each student. The resulting distribution is binomial.

- Binomial

Normal Interpretation

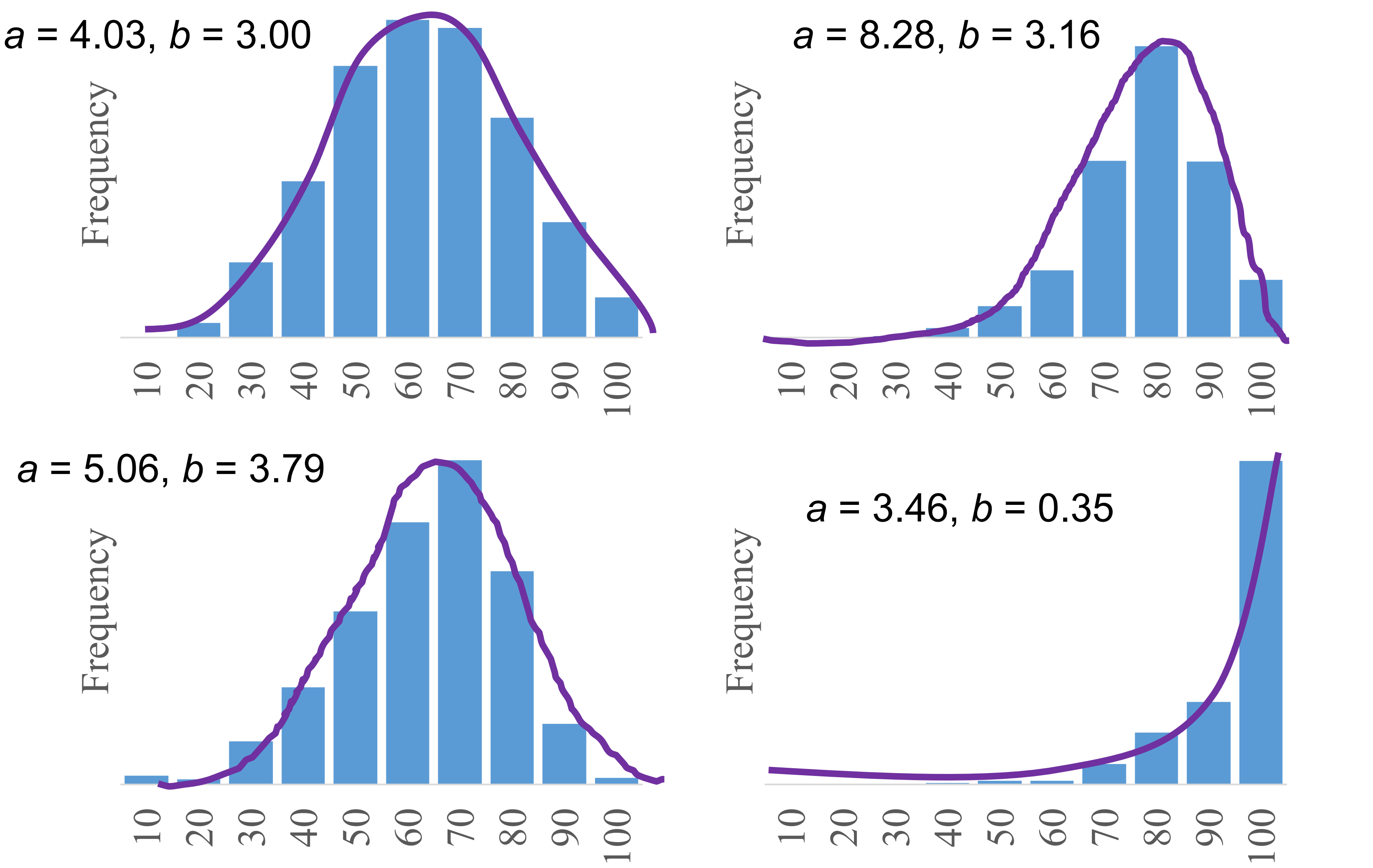
> What the Binomial said, but approximated.
>
> \- Normal

Beta Interpretation

> Each student's ability is represented as a probability – perhaps their probability of getting a generic point. Each student has a **different** probability, however, the distribution of probabilities in a class is a Beta distribution.
>
> \- Beta

- This is Chris Piech's opinion. It is open for debate

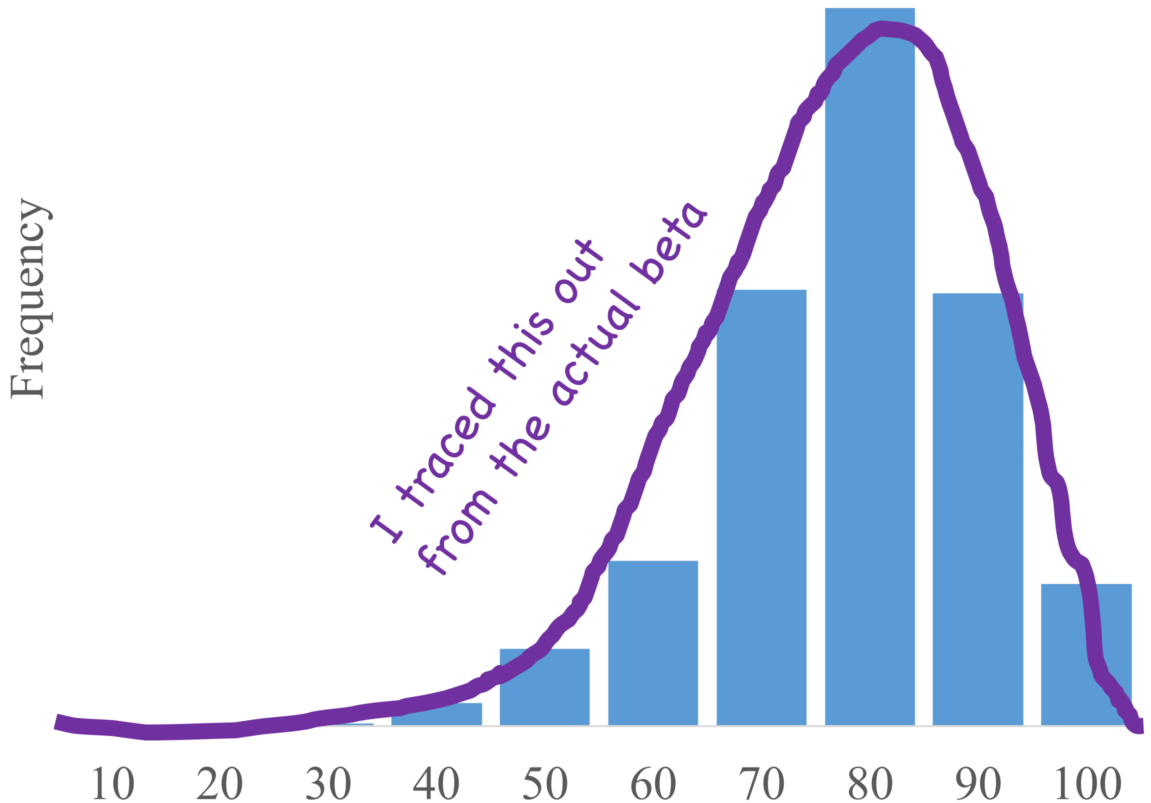
Assignment Grades



These are the distribution of student *point probabilitities*

Assignment Grades Demo

What is the semantics of E[X]?



$$X \sim Beta(a = 8.28, b = 3.16)$$

Assignment Grades

What is the probability that a student is bellow the mean?

$$X \sim Beta(a = 8.28, b = 3.16)$$

$$E[X] = \frac{a}{a+b} = \frac{8.28}{8.28 + 3.16} \approx 0.7238$$

$$P(X < 0.7238) = F_X(0.7238)$$

Wait what? Chris are you holding out on me?

```
stats.beta.cdf(x, a, b)
```

$$P(X < E[X]) = 0.46$$

As far as I know, this is an unpublished result

Implications

- Will be combined with Item Response Theory which models how assignment difficulty and student ability combine to give *point probabilities*.

- Machine learning on education data will be more accurate.

- Analysis of “mixture” distributions can be fixed.

Will you use this on us?

Not yet ☺

Beta:
The probability density for probabilities

Any parameter for a "parameterized" random variable can be thought of as a random variable.

Course Mean

$$E[\text{CS109}]$$

This is actual midpoint of course
(Just wanted you to know)