



Topics in Statistical Mechanics (Imperial College Press Advanced Physics Texts)

Brian Cowan

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“This is an excellent graduate-level textbook that grew out of a largely online intercollegiate course given by the author to fourth-year students in the United Kingdom. The text is concise but provides an accurate and well-balanced introduction to a remarkable breadth of topics, with an emphasis even on modern aspects such as the statistical mechanics of phase transitions and non-equilibrium dynamics . . . Cowan has managed to capture the rich field of statistical mechanics in a concise and truly excellent exposition. His text should be accessible to good advanced undergraduates, and certainly to first- or second-year graduate students in physics, mathematics, or engineering.” Mathematical Reviews “The text is rather clearly, motivating and understandably written . . . it covers a great deal of material and makes acquaintance with many models, objects and concepts that are useful for a deeper study of Statistical Mechanics.” Zentralblatt Math Building on the material learned by students in their first few years of study, this book presents an advanced level course on statistical and thermal physics. It begins with a review of the formal structure of statistical mechanics and thermodynamics considered from a unified viewpoint. After a brief revision of non-interacting systems, emphasis is laid on interacting systems. First, weakly interacting systems are considered, where the interest is in seeing how such interactions cause small deviations from the non-interacting case. Second, systems are examined where interactions lead to drastic changes, namely phase transitions. A number of specific examples are given, and these are unified within the Landau theory of phase transitions. The final chapter of the book looks at non-equilibrium systems and the way these evolve towards equilibrium. Here, fluctuations play a vital role, as is formalized in the Fluctuation–Dissipation theorem.

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