

Homework Set 2

Problem 1

In this problem you will make use of the S&P 500 index data, found here:

<http://finance.yahoo.com/q/hp?s=GSPC+Historical+Prices>.

You can also search for “s&p 500 yahoo finance” on Google, click the top link and then click “Historical Prices” on the left of the page. Click “Download to Spreadsheet” to download the data.

Load the column “Close” of the data into your favorite software. Note that the data is formatted so that the most recent price is at the top; you may need to reverse the prices to put them in chronological order.

Finally, for the following problems it may be useful to write a function to compute the autocorrelation of any time series at some lag l . To do this, you might write two functions: one to lag a series, and another that will compute the correlation between any two series. Then you can just feed a “*lag0*” version and a “*lagl*” version of your time series to the correlation function. Be careful in handling the lengths of the time series. Most software for scientific or statistical computing has an autocorrelation function readily available, however, and you’re free to use any method you like. Please ask if you need help with this step.

1. Make a scatter plot, where the vertical axis gives the S&P 500 Close price on day t , and the horizontal axis gives the S&P 500 Close price on day $t - 1$. Does this mean that you can predict the Close price of the S&P 500 tomorrow?

2. Convert the close prices P_t into logarithmic returns: $r_t = \log\left(\frac{P_t}{P_{t-1}}\right)$

Using the returns, make the same scatter plot as you did for the Close prices. Next, plot the autocorrelation function of the returns r_t , out to some sensible number of lags (perhaps 10). What do you see?

3. Compute the time series of volatility: $v_t = r_t^2$. Plot the autocorrelation function of v_t . Compare with the autocorrelation for the returns.

4. Finally, we will explore how modeling a time series can allow one to “remove” its autocorrelation. Fit the following linear model:

$$v_t = \beta_0 + \beta_1 v_{t-1} + \beta_2 v_{t-2} + \dots + \beta_q v_{t-q} + \epsilon_t$$

out to some lag q . Feel free to start with $q = 1$. Obtain a time series of the residuals ϵ_t , and plot the autocorrelation function of these residuals. Compare with the autocorrelation function of the volatility v_t , and examine the effect of increasing q . How might this model be used when quantifying the “risk” of investing in the S&P 500? What advantages does it have over simply quoting the historical variance of the returns r_t ?

Problem 2

Using your favorite software write a function that generates a random walk for the stock price as described in class. Use a reasonable number of time steps (maybe 300-500). Repeat the experiment a number of times and plot your random walks. Also, create a histogram of the stock prices at maturity. Do you recognize this distribution?

Guidelines

You are free to submit an electronic or a handwritten copy of your homework. Write your name in the first page of your homework. Please don't forget to attach your graphs and your code in whatever software you used. In case you want to submit an electronic copy, you have to provide a PDF file named as "name_lastName_HW#.pdf". If you have ANY question please do not hesitate to ask me. I will be happy to help you.

Have fun!

Contact: Alexandros Kyrtos, akyrtos@bu.edu, PHO 539