

1 Propositional Logic

The study of logic was initiated by the ancient Greeks, who were concerned with analyzing the laws of reasoning. They wanted to fully understand what *conclusions* could be derived from a given set of *premises*. Logic was considered to be a part of philosophy for thousands of years. In fact, until the late 1800's, no significant progress was made in the field since the time of the ancient Greeks. But then, the field of modern mathematical logic was born and a stream of powerful, important, and surprising results were obtained. For example, to answer foundational questions about mathematics, logicians had to essentially create what later became the foundations of computer science. In this class, we'll explore some of the many connections between logic and computer science.

We'll start with propositional logic, a simple, but surprisingly powerful fragment of logic. Expressions in propositional logic can only have one of two values. We'll use T and F to denote the two values, but other choices are possible, *e.g.*, 1 and 0 are sometimes used.

The expressions of propositional logic include:

1. The *constant expressions true* and *false*: they always evaluate to T and F , respectively.
2. The *propositional atoms*, or more succinctly, *atoms*. We will use p, q , and r to denote propositional atoms. Atoms range over the values T and F .

Propositional expressions can be combined together with the propositional connectives, which we include the following.

The simplest connective is negation. Negation, \neg , is a *unary* connective, meaning that it is applied to a single expression. For example $\neg p$ is the negation of atom p . Since p (or any propositional expression) can only have one of two values, we can fully define the meaning of negation by specifying what it does to the value of p in these two cases. We do that with the aid of the following truth table.

p	$\neg p$
T	F
F	T

What the truth table tells us is that if we negate T we get F and if we negate F we get T .

Negation is the only unary propositional connective we are going to consider. Next we consider *binary* (2-argument) propositional connectives, starting with *conjunction*, \wedge . The conjunction (and) of p and q is denoted $p \wedge q$ and its meaning is given by the following truth table.

p	q	$p \wedge q$
T	T	T
T	F	F
F	T	F
F	F	F

Each row in a truth table corresponds to an *assignment*, one possible way of assigning values (T or F) to the atoms of a formula. The truth table allows us to explore all relevant assignments. If we have two atoms, there are 4 possibilities, but in general, if we have n atoms, there are 2^n possible assignments we have to consider.

In one sense, that's all there is to propositional logic, because every other connective we are going to consider can be expressed in terms of \neg and \wedge , and almost every question we are going to consider can be answered by the construction of a truth table.

Next, we consider *disjunction*. The disjunction (or) of p and q is denoted $p \vee q$ and its meaning is given by the following truth table.

p	q	$p \vee q$
T	T	T
T	F	T
F	T	T
F	F	F

In English usage, “p or q” often means p or q , but not both. Consider the mother who tells her child:

You can have ice cream or a cookie.

The child is correct in assuming this means that she can have ice cream or a cookie, but not both.

As you can see from the truth table for disjunction, in logic "or" always means at least one.

We can write more complex formulas by using several connectives. For example, $\neg p \vee \neg q$ and we can construct truth tables for such expressions quite easily. First, determine how many distinct atoms there are. In this case there are two; that means we have four rows in our truth table. Next we create a column for each atom and for each connective. Finally, we fill in the truth table, using the truth tables that specify the meaning of the connectives.

p	q	$\neg p$	$\neg q$	$\neg p \vee \neg q$
T	T	F	F	F
T	F	F	T	T
F	T	T	F	T
F	F	T	T	T

Next, we consider implication, \Rightarrow . This is called logical (or material) implication. In $p \Rightarrow q$, p is the antecedent and q is the consequent. Implication is often confusing to students because the way it is used in English is quite complicated and subtle. For example, consider the following sentences.

If Obama is 75 years old, then the inhabitants of this city are all dragons.

Is it true?

What about the following?

If Obama is president, then the inhabitants of this city are all dragons.

Logically, only the first is true, but most English speakers will say that if there is no connection between the antecedent and consequent, then the implication is false.

Why is the first logically true? Because here is the truth table for implication.

p	q	$p \Rightarrow q$
T	T	T
T	F	F
F	T	T
F	F	T

Here are two ways of remembering this truth table. First, $p \Rightarrow q$ is equivalent to $\neg p \vee q$. Second, $p \Rightarrow q$ is false only when p is T , but q is F . This is because you should think of $p \Rightarrow q$ as claiming that if p holds, so does q . That claim is true when p is F . The claim can only be invalidated if p holds, but q does not.

As a final example of the difference between logical implication (whose meaning is given by the above truth table) and implication as commonly used, consider the mother telling her child:

If you behave, I'll get you ice cream.

The child rightly expects to get ice cream if she behaves, but also expects to *not* get ice cream if she doesn't: there is an implied threat here.

The point is that while the English language is subtle and open for interpretation. In order to avoid misunderstanding mathematical fields, like Computer Science tend to use what is often called "mathematical English," a very constrained version of English, where the meaning of all connectives is clear.

Above we said that $p \Rightarrow q$ is equivalent to $\neg p \vee q$. This is the first indication that we can often reduce propositional expressions to simpler forms. In your homework, simpler means less connectives, so which of the above is simpler?

Can we express the equivalence in propositional logic? Yes, using equality of Booleans, \equiv , as follows $(p \Rightarrow q) \equiv (\neg p \vee q)$.

Here is the truth table for \equiv .

p	q	$p \equiv q$
T	T	T
T	F	F
F	T	F
F	F	T

How would you simplify the following?

1. $p \wedge \neg p$
2. $p \vee \neg p$
3. $p \equiv p$

Here is one way.

1. $(p \wedge \neg p) \equiv \text{false}$
2. $(p \vee \neg p) \equiv \text{true}$
3. $(p \equiv p) \equiv \text{true}$

The final binary connective we will consider is \oplus , xor. There are two ways to think about xor. First, note that xor is *exclusive or*, meaning that exactly one of its arguments is true. Second, note that xor is just the Boolean version of not equal. Here is the truth table for \oplus .

p	q	$p \equiv q$
T	T	F
T	F	T
F	T	T
F	F	F

We will also consider a *ternary* connective, *i.e.*, a connective with three arguments. The connective is *ite*, which stands for “if-then-else,” and means just that: if the first argument holds, return the second (the then branch), else return the third (the else branch). Since there are three arguments, there are eight rows in the truth table.

p	q	r	$ite(p, q, r)$
T	T	T	T
T	T	F	T
T	F	T	F
T	F	F	F
F	T	T	T
F	T	F	F
F	F	T	T
F	F	F	F

Here are some very useful ways of characterizing propositional formulas. Start by constructing a truth table for the formula and look at the column of values obtained. We say that the formula is:

- *satisfiable* if there is at least one T

- *unsatisfiable* if it is not satisfiable, *i.e.*, all entries are F
- *falsifiable* if there is at least one F
- *valid* if it is not falsifiable, *i.e.*, all entries are T

We have seen examples of all of the above. For example, $p \wedge q$ is satisfiable, since the assignment that makes p and q T makes $p \wedge q$ T . This example is also falsifiable, as evidenced by the assignment that makes p F and q T . An example of an unsatisfiable formula is $p \wedge \neg p$. If you construct the truth table for it, you will notice that every assignment makes it F (so it is falsifiable too). Finally, an example of a valid formula is $p \vee \neg p$.

Notice that if a formula is valid, then it is also satisfiable. In addition, if a formula is unsatisfiable, then it is also falsifiable.

Validity turns out to be really important. A valid formula, often also called a *theorem*, corresponds to a correct logical argument, an argument that is true regardless of the values of its atoms. For example $p \Rightarrow p$ is valid. No matter what p is, $p \Rightarrow p$ always holds.

2 P = NP

A natural question that arises at this point: Is there an algorithm that given a propositional logic formula returns “yes” if it is satisfiable and “no” otherwise?

Here is an algorithm: construct the truth table. If we have the truth table, we can easily decide satisfiability, validity, unsatisfiability, and falsifiability.

The problem is that the algorithm is inefficient. The number of rows in the truth table is 2^n , where n is the number of atoms in our formula.

Can we do better? For example, recall that we had an inefficient recursive algorithm for **sum-n** (the function that given a natural number n , returns $\sum_{i=0}^n i$). The function required n additions, which is exponential in the number of bits needed to represent n ($\log n$ bits are needed). However, with a little math, we found an algorithm that was efficient because it only needed 3 arithmetic operations.

Is there an efficient algorithm for determining Boolean satisfiability? By efficient, we mean an algorithm that in the worst case runs in polynomial time.

No one knows the answer, although this is one of the most studied questions in computer science. In fact, most of the people who have thought about this problem believe that no polynomial time algorithm for Boolean satisfiability exists.

3 The Power of Xor

Let us take a short detour, I'll call "the power of xor."

Suppose that you work for a secret government agency and you want to communicate with your counterparts in Europe. You want the ability to send messages to each other using the Internet, but you know that other spy agencies are going to be able to read the messages as they travel from here to Europe.

How do you solve the problem?

Well, one way is to have a shared secret: a long sequence of F 's and T 's (0's and 1's if you prefer), in say a code book that only you and your counterparts have. Now, all messages are really just sequences of bits, which we can think of as sequences of F 's and T 's, so you take your original message m and xor it, bit by bit, with your secret s . That gives rise to coded message c , where $c \equiv m \oplus s$. Notice that here we are applying \equiv and \oplus to sequences of Boolean values, often called *bit-vectors*.

Anyone can read c , but they will have no idea what the original message was, since s effectively scrambled it. In fact, with no knowledge of s , an eavesdropper can extract no information about the contents of m from c .

But, how will your counterparts in Europe decode the message? Notice that some propositional reasoning shows that $m = c \oplus s$, so armed with your shared secret, they can determine what the message is.

4 Useful Equalities

Here are some simple equalities involving the constant *true*.

1. $p \vee \text{true} \equiv \text{true}$
2. $p \wedge \text{true} \equiv p$
3. $p \Rightarrow \text{true} \equiv \text{true}$

4. $true \Rightarrow p \equiv p$

5. $p \equiv true \equiv p$

6. $p \oplus true \equiv \neg p$

Here are some simple equalities involving the constant *false*.

1. $p \vee false \equiv p$

2. $p \wedge false \equiv false$

3. $p \Rightarrow false \equiv \neg p$

4. $false \Rightarrow p \equiv true$

5. $p \equiv false \equiv \neg p$

6. $p \oplus false \equiv p$

Why do we have separate entries for $p \Rightarrow false$ and $false \Rightarrow p$, above, but not for both $p \vee false$ and $false \vee p$? Because \vee is commutative. Here are some equalities involving commutativity.

1. $p \vee q \equiv q \vee p$

2. $p \wedge q \equiv q \wedge p$

3. $p \equiv q \equiv q \equiv p$

4. $p \oplus q \equiv q \oplus p$

What about \Rightarrow . Is it commutative? Is $p \Rightarrow q \equiv q \Rightarrow p$ valid? No. By the way, the righthand side of the previous equality is called the *converse*: it is obtained by swapping the antecedent and consequent.

A related notion is the *inverse*. The inverse of $p \Rightarrow q$ is $\neg p \Rightarrow \neg q$. Note that the inverse and converse of an implication are equivalent.

Even though a conditional is not equivalent to its inverse, it is equivalent to its *contrapositive*:

$$(p \Rightarrow q) \equiv (\neg q \Rightarrow \neg p)$$

The contrapositive is obtained by negating the antecedent and consequent and then swapping them.

While we're discussing implication, a very useful equality involving implication is:

$$(p \Rightarrow q) \equiv (\neg p \vee q)$$

Also, we often want to replace \equiv by \Rightarrow , which is possible due to the following equality:

$$(p \equiv q) \equiv [(p \Rightarrow q) \wedge (q \Rightarrow p)]$$

Here are more equalities.

1. $\neg\neg p \equiv p$
2. $\neg true \equiv false$
3. $\neg false \equiv true$
4. $p \wedge p \equiv p$
5. $p \vee p \equiv p$
6. $p \Rightarrow p \equiv true$
7. $p \equiv p \equiv true$
8. $p \oplus p \equiv false$
9. $p \wedge \neg p \equiv false$
10. $p \vee \neg p \equiv true$
11. $p \Rightarrow \neg p \equiv \neg p$
12. $\neg p \Rightarrow p \equiv p$
13. $p \equiv \neg p \equiv false$
14. $p \oplus \neg p \equiv true$

Here's one set of equalities you have probably already seen: DeMorgan's Laws.

1. $\neg(p \wedge q) \equiv \neg p \vee \neg q$
2. $\neg(p \vee q) \equiv \neg p \wedge \neg q$

Here's another property: associativity.

1. $((p \vee q) \vee r) \equiv (p \vee (q \vee r))$
2. $((p \wedge q) \wedge r) \equiv (p \wedge (q \wedge r))$
3. $((p \equiv q) \equiv r) \equiv (p \equiv (q \equiv r))$
4. $((p \oplus q) \oplus r) \equiv (p \oplus (q \oplus r))$

We also have distributivity:

1. $p \wedge (q \vee r) \equiv (p \wedge q) \vee (p \wedge r)$
2. $p \vee (q \wedge r) \equiv (p \vee q) \wedge (p \vee r)$

We also have transitivity:

1. $[(p \Rightarrow q) \wedge (q \Rightarrow r)] \Rightarrow (p \Rightarrow r)$
2. $[(p \equiv q) \wedge (q \equiv r)] \Rightarrow (p \equiv r)$

Last, but not least, we have absorption:

1. $p \wedge (p \vee q) \equiv p$
2. $p \vee (p \wedge q) \equiv p$

Let's consider absorption more carefully. Here is a simple calculation:

Proof

$$\begin{aligned}
 & p \wedge (p \vee q) \\
 \equiv & \{ \text{Distribute } \wedge \text{ over } \vee \} \\
 & (p \wedge p) \vee (p \wedge q) \\
 \equiv & \{ (p \wedge p) \equiv p \} \\
 & p \vee (p \wedge q) \quad \square
 \end{aligned}$$

The above proof shows that $p \wedge (p \vee q) \equiv p \vee (p \wedge q)$, so if we show that $p \wedge (p \vee q) \equiv p$, we will have also shown that $p \vee (p \wedge q) \equiv p$.

5 Proof Techniques

Let's try to show that $p \wedge (p \vee q) \equiv p$. We will do this using a proof technique called case analysis.

Case analysis: If f is a formula and p is an atom, then f is valid iff both $f|_{\langle p, true \rangle}$ and $f|_{\langle p, false \rangle}$ are valid. By $f|_{\langle p, x \rangle}$ we mean, substitute x for p in f .

Proof

$$\begin{aligned}
 & p \wedge (p \vee q) \equiv p \\
 \equiv & \{ \text{Case analysis} \} \\
 & true \wedge (true \vee q) \equiv true \text{ and } false \wedge (false \vee q) \equiv false \\
 \equiv & \{ \text{Basic Boolean equalities} \} \\
 & true \equiv true \text{ and } false \equiv false \\
 \equiv & \{ \text{Basic Boolean equalities} \} \\
 & true \quad \square
 \end{aligned}$$

Another useful proof technique is *instantiation*: If f is a valid formula, then so is $f|_{\sigma}$, where σ is a *substitution*, a list of the form:

$$((atom_1 \text{ formula}_1) \dots (atom_n \text{ formula}_n)),$$

where the atoms are “target atoms” and the formulas are their images. The application of this substitution to a formula uniformly replaces every free occurrence of a target atom by its image.

Here is an example of applying a substitution. $(a \vee \neg(a \wedge b))|_{((a \ (p \vee q))(b \ a))} = ((p \vee q) \vee \neg((p \vee q) \wedge a))$.

Here is an application of instantiation. $a \vee \neg a$ is valid, so therefore, so is $(a \vee \neg a)|_{((a \ (p \vee (q \wedge r))))} = (p \vee (q \wedge r)) \vee \neg(p \vee (q \wedge r))$.

6 Normal Forms and Complete Boolean Bases

We have seen several propositional connectives, but do we have any assurance that the connectives are complete? By complete we mean that the propositional connectives we have can be used to represent any Boolean function.

How do we prove completeness?

Consider some arbitrary Boolean function f over the atoms x_1, \dots, x_n . The domain of f has 2^n elements, so we can represent the function using a

truth table with 2^n rows. Now the question becomes: can we represent this truth table using the connectives we already introduced?

Here is the idea of how we can do that. Take the disjunction of all the assignments that make f true. The assignments that make f true are just the rows in the truth table for which f is T . Each such assignment can be represented by a *conjunctive clause*, a conjunction of *literals*, atoms or their negations. So, we can represent each of these assignments. Now to represent the function, we just take the disjunction of all the conjunctive clauses.

Consider what happens if we try to represent $a \oplus b$ in this way. There are two assignments that make $a \oplus b$ true and they can be represented by the conjunctive clauses $a \wedge \neg b$ and $\neg a \wedge b$, so $a \oplus b$ can be represented as the disjunction of these two conjunctive clauses: $(a \wedge \neg b) \vee (\neg a \wedge b)$.

Notice that we only need \neg , \vee , and \wedge to represent any Boolean function!

The formula we created above was a disjunction of *conjunctive clauses*. Formulas of this type are said to be in *disjunctive normal form* (DNF). If each conjunctive clause includes all the atoms in the formula, then we say that the formula is in *full disjunctive normal form*. Another type of normal form is *conjunctive normal form* (CNF): each formula is a conjunction of *disjunctive clauses*, where a disjunctive clause is a disjunction of literals. Disjunctive clauses are also just called *clauses*. If each clause includes all the atoms in the formula, then we say that the formula is in *full conjunctive normal form*.

Can you come up with a way of representing an arbitrary truth table in full CNF? (Hint: Consider what we did for DNF.)

Any formula can be put in DNF or CNF. In fact, the input format for modern SAT solvers is CNF, so if you want to check the satisfiability of a Boolean formula using a SAT solver, you have to transform the formula so that it is in CNF.

Question: You are given a Boolean formula and your job is to put it in CNF and DNF. How efficiently can this be done?

Hint: Consider formulas of the form

$$(x_1 \wedge y_1) \vee (x_2 \wedge y_2) \vee \cdots \vee (x_n \wedge y_n)$$

$$(x_1 \vee y_1) \wedge (x_2 \vee y_2) \wedge \cdots \wedge (x_n \vee y_n)$$

Back to completeness. We saw that these three connective are already complete: \neg , \vee , \wedge . Can we do better? Can we get rid of some of them?

We can do better because \vee can be represented using only \wedge , \neg . Similarly \wedge can be represented using only \vee , \neg . How?

Can we do better yet? No. \neg is not complete; neither is \wedge ; neither is \vee .

Next, think about this claim: you can represent all the Boolean connectives using just *ite* (and the constants *false*, *true*). If we can represent \neg and \vee , then as the previous discussion shows, we're done.

$$\neg p \equiv \text{ite}(p, \text{false}, \text{true})$$

$$p \vee q \equiv \text{ite}(p, \text{true}, q)$$

Here is how we can represent other connectives.

$$p \wedge q \equiv \text{ite}(p, q, \text{false})$$

$$p \Rightarrow q \equiv \text{ite}(p, q, \text{true})$$

$$p \equiv q \equiv \text{ite}(p, q, \neg q)$$

$$p \oplus q \equiv \text{ite}(p, \neg q, q)$$

There are 16 binary Boolean connectives? Are any of them complete? (Yes; find one.)

7 Decision Procedures

When a formula is not valid, it is falsifiable, so there exists an assignment that makes it false. Such an assignment is often called a *counterexample* and can be very useful for debugging purposes. Since ACL2s is a programming language, we can use it to write our own decision procedure that provides counterexamples to validity. Try writing your own.

While we are on the topic of decision procedures, it is worth pointing that we characterized formulas as satisfiable, unsatisfiable, valid, or falsifiable. Let's say we have a decision procedure for one of these four characterizations. Then, we can, rather trivially, get a decision procedure for any of the other characterizations.

Why?

Well, consider the following.

Proof

$\text{Unsat } f$
 $\equiv \{ \text{By the definition of sat, unsat } \}$
 $\text{not (Sat } f)$
 $\equiv \{ \text{By definition of Sat, Valid } \}$
 $\text{Valid } \neg f$
 $\equiv \{ \text{By definition of valid, falsifiable } \}$
 $\text{not (Falsifiable } \neg f) \quad \square$

How do we use these equalities to obtain a decision procedure for either of *unsat*, *sat*, *valid*, *falsifiable*, given a decision procedure for the other?

Well, let's consider an example. Say we want a decision procedure for validity given a decision procedure for satisfiability.

$\text{Valid } f$
 $\equiv \{ \text{not (Sat } f) \equiv \text{Valid } \neg f, \text{ by above } \}$
 $\text{not (Sat } \neg f)$

What justifies this step? Propositional reasoning and instantiation.

Let p denote “(Sat f)” and q denote “(Valid $\neg f$).” The above equations tell us $\neg p \equiv q$, so $p \equiv \neg q$.

If more explanation is required, note that $(\neg p \equiv q) \equiv (p \equiv \neg q)$ is valid. That is, you can transfer the negation of one argument of an equality to the other.

Make sure you can do this for all 12 combinations of starting with a decision procedure for *sat*, *unsat*, *valid*, *falsifiable*, and finding decision procedures for the other three characterizations.

There are two interesting things to notice here.

First, we took advantage of the following equality:

$$(\neg p \equiv q) \equiv (p \equiv \neg q)$$

There are lots of equalities like this that you should know about, so study the provided list.

Second, we saw that it was useful to extract the propositional skeleton from an argument. We'll look at examples of doing that. Initially this will involve word problems, but later it will involve reasoning about programs.

8 Propositional Logic in ACL2s

This class is about logic from a computational point of view and our vehicle for exploring computation is ACL2s. ACL2s has *ite*: it is just *if*!

Remember that ACL2s is in the business of proving theorems. Since propositional logic is used everywhere, it would be great if we could use ACL2s to reason about propositional logic. In fact, we can.

Consider trying to prove that a propositional formula is valid. We would do that now, by constructing a truth table. We can also just ask ACL2s. For example, to check whether the following is valid

$$(p \Rightarrow q) \equiv (\neg p \vee q)$$

We can ask ACL2s the following query

```
(thm (implies (and (booleanp p) (booleanp q))
              (iff (implies p q) (or (not p) q))))
```

Try it.

In fact, if a propositional formula is valid (that is, it is a theorem) then ACL2s will definitely prove it. We say that ACL2s is a decision procedure for propositional validity. A *decision procedure* for propositional validity is program that given a formula can decide whether or not it is valid. We saw that ACL2s indicates that it has determined that a formula is valid with “Q.E.D.”¹

What if you give ACL2s a formula that is not valid? Try it with an example, say:

$$(p \oplus q) \equiv (p \vee q)$$

We can ask ACL2s the following query

```
(thm (implies (and (booleanp p) (booleanp q))
              (iff (and p q) (or p q))))
```

As you can see, ACL2s also can provide counterexamples to false conjectures.

¹Q.E.D. is abbreviation for “quod erat demonstrandum,” Latin for “that which was to be demonstrated.”

9 Word Problems

Next, we consider how to formalize word problems using propositional logic. Consider formalizing and analyzing the following.

Tom likes Jane if and only if Jane likes Tom. Jane likes Bill. Therefore, Tom does not like Jane.

Here's the kind of answer I expect you to give.

Let p denote "Tom likes Jane"; let q denote "Jane likes Tom"; let r denote "Jane likes Bill."

The first sentence can then be formalized as $p \equiv q$.

We denote the second sentence by r .

The third sentence contains the claim we are to analyze, which can be formalized as $((p \equiv q) \wedge r) \Rightarrow \neg p$.

This is not a valid claim. A truth table shows that the claim is violated by the assignment that makes p, q , and r *true*. This makes sense because r (that Jane likes Bill) does not rule out q (that "Jane likes Tom"), but q requires p (that "Tom likes Jane").

Consider another example.

A grade will be given if and only if the test is taken. The test has been taken. Was a grade given?

Anything of the form " a iff b " is formalized as $a \equiv b$. The problem now become easy to analyze.

John is going to the party if Mary goes. Mary is not going. Therefore, John isn't going either.

How do we formalize " a if b "? Simple: $b \Rightarrow a$. Finish the analysis.

John is going to the party only if Mary goes. Mary is not going. Therefore, John isn't going either.

How do we formalize “only if”? A simple way to remember is that “if” is one direction of and “if and only if” and “only if” is the other direction. Thus, “ a only if b ” is formalized as $a \Rightarrow b$.

Try this one.

John is going to the party only if Mary goes. Mary is going.
Therefore, John is going too.

One more.

Paul is not going to sleep unless he finishes the carrot hunt on Final Fantasy XII. Paul went to sleep. Therefore, he finished the carrot hunt on Final Fantasy XII.

How do we formalize “ a unless b ”? It is $\neg b \Rightarrow a$. Why? Because “ a unless b ” says that a has to be *true*, except when (unless) b is *true*, so when b is *true*, a can be anything. The only assignment that violates “ a unless b ” is when a is *false* and b is *false*. So, notice that “ a unless b ” is equivalent to “ a or b ”.

One more example of unless.

You will not get into NEU unless you apply.

is the same as

You will not get into NEU if you do not apply.

which is the same as

You will not get into NEU or you will apply.

So, the hard part here is formalizing the problem. After that, even ACL2s can figure out if the argument is valid.