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Beyond the determinantal formula of Schubert calculus

In 1974, Kempf and Laksov proved a generalization of Giambelli's formula: they expressed the cohomology class of a degeneracy locus as a determinant in Chern classes of the vector bundles involved. In modern terms, this is a formula for the *equivariant* class of a Schubert variety in the Grassmannian. I will discuss some recent results that explain why the occurrence of such determinants is natural. This perspective leads to extensions to other homogeneous spaces, as well as to applications to quantum cohomology.