CSE341: Programming Languages

Lecture 20
Arrays and Such,
Blocks and Procs,
Inheritance and Overriding

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Spring 2013
This lecture

Three mostly separate topics

• Flexible arrays, ranges, and hashes [actually covered in section]

• Ruby’s approach to almost-closures (blocks) and closures (Procs)
  – [partially discussed in section as well]
  – Convenient to use; unusual approach
  – Used throughout large standard library
    • Explicit loops rare
    • Instead of a loop, go find a useful iterator

• Subclasses, inheritance, and overriding
  – The essence of OOP, now in a more dynamic language
Ruby Arrays

- Lots of special syntax and many provided methods for the `Array` class

- Can hold any number of other objects, *indexed* by number
  - Get via `a[i]`
  - Set via `a[i] = e`

- Compared to arrays in many other languages
  - More flexible and dynamic
  - Fewer operations are errors
  - Less efficient

- “The standard collection” (like lists were in ML and Racket)
Using Arrays

- See many examples, some demonstrated here

- Consult the documentation/tutorials
  - If seems sensible and general, probably a method for it

- Arrays make good tuples, lists, stacks, queues, sets, …

- Iterating over arrays typically done with methods taking blocks
  - Next topic…
Blocks

Blocks are probably Ruby's strangest feature compared to other PLs

But almost just closures

- Normal: easy way to pass anonymous functions to methods for all the usual reasons

- Normal: Blocks can take 0 or more arguments

- Normal: Blocks use lexical scope: block body uses environment where block was defined

Examples:

```
3.times { puts "hi" }
[4,6,8].each { puts "hi" }
i = 7
[4,6,8].each { |x| if i > x then puts (x+1) end }
```
Some strange things

• Can pass 0 or 1 block with *any* message
  – Callee might ignore it
  – Callee might give an error if you do not send one
  – Callee might do different things if you do/don’t send one
    • Also number-of-block-arguments can matter

• Just put the block “next to” the “other” arguments (if any)
  – Syntax: \{ e \}, \{ |x| e \}, \{ |x,y| e \}, etc. (plus variations)
    • Can also replace \{ and \} with **do** and **end**
      – Often preferred for blocks > 1 line
Blocks everywhere

- Rampant use of great block-taking methods in standard library
- Ruby has loops but very rarely used
  - Can write `(0..i).each { |j| e}`, but often better options
- Examples (consult documentation for many more)

```ruby
a = Array.new(5) { |i| 4*(i+1) }
a.each { puts "hi" }
a.each { |x| puts (x * 2) }
a.map { |x| x * 2 } #synonym: collect
a.any? { |x| x > 7 }
a.all? { |x| x > 7 }
a.inject(0) { |acc,elt| acc+elt }
a.select { |x| x > 7 } #non-synonym: filter
```
More strangeness

• Callee does not give a name to the (potential) block argument

• Instead, just calls it with `yield` or `yield(args)`
  – Silly example:

```ruby
def silly a
  (yield a) + (yield 42)
end
```

  – See code for slightly less silly example

• Can ask `block_given?` but often just assume a block is given or that a block's presence is implied by other arguments
Blocks are “second-class”

All a method can do with a block is yield to it

– Cannot return it, store it in an object (e.g., for a callback), …
– But can also turn blocks into real closures
– Closures are instances of class Proc
  • Called with method call

This is Ruby, so there are several ways to make Proc objects 😊

– One way: method lambda of Object takes a block and returns the corresponding Proc
Example

a = [3, 5, 7, 9]

• Blocks are fine for applying to array elements

b = a.map { |x| x+1 }
i = b.count { |x| x>=6 }

• But for an array of closures, need Proc objects
  – More common use is callbacks

c = a.map { |x| lambda { |y| x>=y} }
c[2].call 17
j = c.count { |x| x.call(5) }
Moral

• First-class (“can be passed/stored anywhere”) makes closures more powerful than blocks

• But blocks are (a little) more convenient and cover most uses

• This helps us understand what first-class means

• Language design question: When is convenience worth making something less general and powerful?
More collections

• *Hashes* like arrays but:
  – *Keys* can be *anything*; strings and symbols common
  – No natural ordering like numeric indices
  – Different syntax to make them
    Like a dynamic record with anything for field names
  – Often pass a hash rather than many arguments

• *Ranges* like arrays of contiguous numbers but:
  – More efficiently represented, so large ranges fine

Good style to:
  – Use ranges when you can
  – Use hashes when non-numeric keys better represent data
Similar methods

- Arrays, hashes, and ranges all have some methods other don’t
  - E.g., keys and values

- But also have many of the same methods, particularly iterators
  - Great for duck typing
  - Example

```ruby
def foo a
  a.count { |x| x**2 < 50 }
end

foo [3,5,7,9]
foo (3..9)
```

Once again separating “how to iterate” from “what to do”
Next major topic

- Subclasses, inheritance, and overriding
  - The essence of OOP
  - Not unlike you have seen in Java, but worth studying from PL perspective and in a more dynamic language
Subclassing

- A class definition has a **superclass** (Object if not specified)

```java
class ColorPoint < Point ...
```

- The superclass affects the class definition:
  - Class *inherits* all method definitions from superclass
  - But class can *override* method definitions as desired

- Unlike Java/C#/C++:
  - No such thing as “inheriting fields” since all objects create instance variables by assigning to them
  - Subclassing has nothing to do with a (non-existent) type system: can still (try to) call any method on any object
Example (to be continued)

```ruby
class Point
  attr_accessor :x, :y
  def initialize(x, y)
    @x = x
    @y = y
  end
  def distFromOrigin
    # direct field access
    Math.sqrt(@x*@x + @y*@y)
  end
  def distFromOrigin2
    # use getters
    Math.sqrt(x*x + y*y)
  end
end
```

```ruby
class ColorPoint < Point
  attr_accessor :color
  def initialize(x, y, c)
    super(x, y)
    @color = c
  end
end
```
An object has a class

p  = Point.new(0,0)
cp = ColorPoint.new(0,0,"red")
p.class                        # Point
p.class.superclass            # Object
cp.class                       # ColorPoint
cp.class.superclass           # Point
cp.class.superclass.superclass # Object
cp.is_a? Point                # true
cp.instance_of? Point         # false
cp.is_a? ColorPoint           # true
cp.instance_of? ColorPoint    # true

- Using these methods is usually non-OOP style
  - Disallows other things that "act like a duck"
  - Nonetheless semantics is that an instance of ColorPoint "is a" Point but is not an “instance of” Point
  - [ Java note: instanceof is like Ruby's is_a? ]
Example continued

- Consider alternatives to:

```ruby
class ColorPoint < Point
  attr_accessor :color
  def initialize(x, y, c)
    super(x, y)
    @color = c
  end
end
```

- Here subclassing is a good choice, but programmers often overuse subclassing in OOP languages
Why subclass

• Instead of creating `ColorPoint`, could add methods to `Point`
  – That could mess up other users and subclassers of `Point`

```ruby
class Point
  attr_accessor :color
  def initialize(x, y, c="clear")
    @x = x
    @y = y
    @color = c
  end
end
```
Why subclass

• Instead of subclassing `Point`, could copy/paste the methods
  – Means the same thing *if* you don't use methods like `is_a?` and `superclass`, but of course code reuse is nice

```ruby
class ColorPoint
  attr_accessor :x, :y, :color
  def initialize(x, y, c="clear")
    ...
  end
  def distFromOrigin
    Math.sqrt(@x*@x + @y*@y)
  end
  def distFromOrigin2
    Math.sqrt(x*x + y*y)
  end
end
```
Why subclass

- Instead of subclassing `Point`, could use a `Point` instance variable
  - Define methods to send same message to the `Point`
  - Often OOP programmers overuse subclassing
  - But for `ColorPoint`, subclassing makes sense: less work and can use a `ColorPoint` wherever code expects a `Point`

```ruby
class ColorPoint
  attr_accessor :color
  def initialize(x, y, c="clear")
    @pt = Point.new(x, y)
    @color = c
  end
  def x
    @pt.x
  end
  ... # similar "forwarding" methods
  # for y, x=, y=
end
```
Overriding

- **ThreeDPoint** is more interesting than **ColorPoint** because it overrides `distFromOrigin` and `distFromOrigin2`
  - Gets code reuse, but *highly disputable* if it is appropriate to say a ThreeDPoint “is a” Point
  - Still just avoiding copy/paste

```ruby
class ThreeDPoint < Point
  ...
  def initialize(x, y, z)
    super(x, y)
    @z = z
  end
  def distFromOrigin # distFromOrigin2 similar
    d = super
    Math.sqrt(d*d + @z*@z)
  end
  ...
end
```
So far…

• With examples so far, objects are not so different from closures
  – Multiple methods rather than just “call me”
  – Explicit instance variables rather than environment where function is defined
  – Inheritance avoids helper functions or code copying
  – “Simple” overriding just replaces methods

• But there is one big difference:

  Overriding can make a method defined in the superclass call a method in the subclass

  – The essential difference of OOP, studied carefully next lecture
Example: Equivalent except constructor

```ruby
class PolarPoint < Point
  def initialize(r, theta)
    @r = r
    @theta = theta
  end
  def x
    @r * Math.cos(@theta)
  end
  def y
    @r * Math.sin(@theta)
  end
  def distFromOrigin
    @r
  end
  ...
end
```

• Also need to define `x=` and `y=` (see code file)

• Key punchline: `distFromOrigin2`, defined in `Point`, “already works”

```ruby
def distFromOrigin2
  Math.sqrt(x*x+y*y)
end
```

  – Why: calls to `self` are resolved in terms of the object's class