CSE341: Programming Languages
Lecture 23
Multiple Inheritance, Mixins, Interfaces, Abstract Methods
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Multiple Inheritance

- If inheritance and overriding are so useful, why limit ourselves to one superclass?
  - Because the semantics is often awkward (this topic)
  - Because it makes static type-checking harder (not discussed)
  - Because it makes efficient implementation harder (not discussed)

- Is it useful? Sure!
  - Example: Make a ColorPt3D by inheriting from Pt3D and ColorPt (or maybe just from Color)
  - Example: Make a StudentAthlete by inheriting from Student and Athlete
  - With single inheritance, end up copying code or using non-OOP-style helper methods

What next?

Have used classes for OOP’s essence: inheritance, overriding, dynamic dispatch
Now, what if we want to have more than just 1 superclass

- **Multiple inheritance:** allow > 1 superclasses
  - Useful but has some problems (see C++)

- **Ruby-style mixins:** 1 superclass; > 1 method providers
  - Often a fine substitute for multiple inheritance and has fewer problems (see also Scala traits)

- **Java/C#-style interfaces:** allow > 1 types
  - Mostly irrelevant in a dynamically typed language, but fewer problems

What could go wrong?

- If V and Z both define a method m, what does Y inherit? What does super mean?
  - Directed resends useful (e.g., Z::super)

- What if X defines a method m that Z but not V overrides?
  - Can handle like previous case, but sometimes undesirable (e.g., ColorPt3D wants Pt3D’s overrides to “win”)

- If X defines fields, should Y have one copy of them (f) or two (V::f and Z::f)?
  - Turns out each behavior can be desirable (next slides)
  - So C++ has (at least) two forms of inheritance

Trees, dags, and diamonds

- Note: The phrases subclass, superclass can be ambiguous
  - There are immediate subclasses, superclasses
  - And there are transitive subclasses, superclasses

- Single inheritance: the class hierarchy is a tree
  - Nodes are classes
  - Parent is immediate superclass
  - Any number of children allowed

- Multiple inheritance: the class hierarchy no longer a tree
  - Cycles still disallowed (a directed-acyclic graph)
  - If multiple paths show that X is a (transitive) superclass of Y, then we have diamonds

3DColorPoints

If Ruby had multiple inheritance, we would want ColorPt3D to inherit methods that share one @x and one @y

```ruby
class Pt
  attr_accessor :x, :y
end
class ColorPt < Pt
  attr_accessor :color
end
class Pt3D < Pt
  attr_accessor :z
  # override some methods
end
class ColorPt3D < Pt3D, ColorPt # not Ruby!
end
```
This code has `Person` define a pocket for subclasses to use, but an `ArtistCowboy` wants two pockets, one for each `draw` method.

```ruby
class Person
  attr_accessor :pocket
end
class Artist < Person # pocket for brush objects
  def draw # access pocket
    ...
  end
end
class Cowboy < Person # pocket for gun objects
  def draw # access pocket
    ...
  end
end
class ArtistCowboy < Artist, Cowboy # not Ruby!
end
```

**Mixins**

- A *mixin* is (just) a collection of methods
  - Less than a class: no instances of it
- Languages with mixins (e.g., Ruby modules) typically let a class have one superclass but *include* any number of mixins
- Semantics: *Including a mixin makes its methods part of the class*
  - Extending or overriding in the order mixins are included in the class definition
  - More powerful than helper methods because mixin methods can access methods (and instance variables) on `self` not defined in the mixin

```ruby
module Doubler
  def double
    self + self # assume included in classes w/ +
  end
end
class String
  include Doubler
end
class AnotherPt
  attr_accessor :x, :y
  include Doubler
  def + other
    ans = AnotherPt.new
    ans.x = self.x + other.x
    ans.y = self.y + other.y
    ans
  end
end
```

**Lookup rules**

Mixins change our lookup rules slightly:

- When looking for receiver `obj`'s method `m`, look in `obj`'s class, then mixins that class includes (later includes shadow), then `obj`'s superclass, then the superclass' mixins, etc.
- As for instance variables, the mixin methods are included in the same object
  - So usually bad style for mixin methods to use instance variables since a name clash would be like our `CowboyArtist` pocket problem (but sometimes unavoidable?)

**The two big ones**

The two most popular/useful mixins in Ruby:

- Comparable: Defines `<`, `>`, `==`, `!=`, `>=` in terms of `<=>`
- Enumerable: Defines many iterators (e.g., `map`, `find`) in terms of `each`

Great examples of using mixins:
- Classes including them get a bunch of methods for just a little work
- Classes do not "spend" their "one superclass" for this
- Do not need the complexity of multiple inheritance
- See the code for some examples

**Replacement for multiple inheritance?**

- A mixin works pretty well for `ColorPt3D`:
  - Color a reasonable mixin except for using an instance variable
    ```ruby
    module Color
      attr_accessor :color
    end
    ```
- A mixin works awkwardly-at-best for `ArtistCowboy`:
  - Natural for `Artist` and `Cowboy` to be `Person` subclasses
  - Could move methods of one to a mixin, but it is odd style and still does not get you two pockets

```ruby
module ArtistM
  class Artist < Person
    include ArtistM
  end
  class ArtistCowboy < Cowboy
    include ArtistM
  end
end
```
**Statically-Typed OOP**

- Now contrast multiple inheritance and mixins with Java/C#-style interfaces
- Important distinction, but interfaces are about static typing, which Ruby does not have
- So will use Java code after quick introduction to static typing for class-based OOP...
  - Sound typing for OOP prevents "method missing" errors

**Classes as Types**

- In Java/C# etc. each class is also a type
- Methods have types for arguments and result
  ```java
class A {
    Object m1(Example e, String s) {...}
    Integer m2(A foo, Boolean b, Integer i) {...}
}
```
- If C is a (transitive) subclass of D, then C is a subtype of D
  - Type-checking allows subtype anywhere supertype allowed
  - So can pass instance of C to a method expecting instance of D

**Interfaces are (or were) JustTypes**

```java
interface Example {
    void m1(int x, int y);
    Object m2(Example x, String y);
}
```

- An interface is not a class; it is only a type
  - Does not contain method definitions, only their signatures (types)
  - Unlike mixins
  - (Changed in Java 8, makes them more like mixins!)
- Cannot use new on an interface
  - Like mixins

**Implementing Interfaces**

- A class can explicitly implement any number of interfaces
  - For class to type-check, it must implement every method in the interface with the right type
    - More on allowing subtypes later!
    - Multiple interfaces no problem; just implement everything
- If class type-checks, it is a subtype of the interface
  ```java
class A implements Example {
    public void m1(int x, int y) {...}
    public Object m2(Example e, String s) {...}
}
class B implements Example {
    public void m1(int pizza, int beer) {...}
    public Object m2(Example e, String s) {...}
}
```

**Multiple interfaces**

- Interfaces provide no methods or fields
  - So no questions of method/field duplication when implementing multiple interfaces, unlike multiple inheritance
- What interfaces are for:
  - "Caller can give any instance of any class implementing I"
    - So callee can call methods in I regardless of class
    - So much more flexible type system
- Interfaces have little use in a dynamically typed language
  - Dynamic typing already much more flexible, with trade-offs we studied

**Connections**

Let’s now answer these questions:

- What does a statically typed OOP language need to support “required overriding”?
- How is this similar to higher-order functions?
- Why does a language with multiple inheritance (e.g., C++) not need Java/C#-style interfaces?
  [Explaining Java’s abstract methods / C++’s pure virtual methods]
**Required overriding**

Often a class expects all subclasses to override some method(s)
- The purpose of the superclass is to abstract common functionality, but some non-common parts have no default

A Ruby approach:
- Do not define must-override methods in superclass
- Subclasses can add it
- Creating instance of superclass can cause method-missing errors

```ruby
# do not use A.new
# all subclasses should define m2
class A
  def m1 v
    ... self.m2 e ...
  end
end
```

**Static typing**

- In Java/C#/C++, prior approach fails type-checking
  - No method `m2` defined in superclass
  - One solution: provide error-causing implementation

```java
class A
  def m1 v
    ... self.m2 e ...
  end
  def m2 v
    raise "must be overridden"
  end
end
```

- Better: Use static checking to prevent this error...

**Abstract methods**

- Java/C#/C++ let superclass give signature (type) of method subclasses should provide
  - Called abstract methods or pure virtual methods
  - Cannot creates instances of classes with such methods
    - Catches error at compile-time
    - Indicates intent to code-reader
    - Does not make language more powerful

```java
abstract class A {
  T1 m1(T2 x) { ... m2(e); ... }
  abstract T3 m2(T4 x);
}
class B extends A {
  T3 m2(T4 x) { ... }
}
```

**Passing code to other code**

- Abstract methods and dynamic dispatch: An OOP way to have subclass "pass code" to other code in superclass

```java
abstract class A {
  T1 m1(T2 x) { ... m2(e); ... }
  abstract T3 m2(T4 x);
}
class B extends A {
  T3 m2(T4 x) { ... }
}
```

- Higher-order functions: An FP way to have caller "pass code" to callee

```java
fun f (g,x) = ... g e ...
fun h x = ... f((fn y => ...),x)
```

**No interfaces in C++**

- If you have multiple inheritance and abstract methods, you do not also need interfaces
- Replace each interface with a class with all abstract methods
- Replace each "implements interface" with another superclass

So: Expect to see interfaces only in statically typed OOP without multiple inheritance
- Not Ruby
- Not C++