CSE341: Programming Languages

Lecture 26

Subtyping for OOP;
Generics vs. Subtyping;
Generics + Subtyping

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Now…

Use what we learned about subtyping for records and functions to understand subtyping for class-based OOP

– Like in Java/C#

Recall:

– Class names are also types
– Subclasses are also subtypes
– Substitution principle: Instance of subclass should usable in place of instance of superclass
An object is...

• Objects: mostly records holding fields and methods
  – Fields are mutable
  – Methods are immutable functions that also have access to `self`

• So *could* design a type system using types very much like record types
  – Subtypes could have extra fields and methods
  – Overriding methods could have contravariant arguments and covariant results compared to method overridden
    • Sound only because method “slots” are immutable!
Actual Java/C#…

Compare/contrast to what our “theory” allows:

1. Types are class names and subtyping are explicit subclasses
2. A subclass can add fields and methods
3. A subclass can override a method with a covariant return type
   – (No contravariant arguments; instead makes it a non-overriding method of the same name)

(1) Is a subset of what is sound (so also sound)
(3) Is a subset of what is sound and a different choice (adding method instead of overriding)
Classes vs. Types

• A class defines an object's behavior
  – Subclassing inherits behavior and changes it via extension and overriding

• A type describes an object's methods’ argument/result types
  – A subtype is substitutable in terms of its field/method types

• These are separate concepts: try to use the terms correctly
  – Java/C# confuse them by requiring subclasses to be subtypes
  – A class name is both a class and a type
  – Confusion is convenient in practice
More details

Java and C# are sound: They do not allow subtypes to do things that would lead to “method missing” or accessing a field at the wrong type

Confusing (?) Java example:
- Subclass can declare field name already declared by superclass
- Two classes can use any two types for the field name
- Instance of subclass have two fields with same name
- “Which field is in scope” depends on which class defined the method
self/this is special

• Recall our Racket encoding of OOP-style
  – “Objects” have a list of fields and a list of functions that take self as an explicit extra argument

• So if self/this is a function argument, is it contravariant?
  – No, it is covariant: a method in a subclass can use fields and methods only available in the subclass: essential for OOP

```java
class A {
    int m() { return 0; }
}
class B extends A {
    int x;
    int m() { return x; }
}
```

– Sound because calls always use the “whole object” for self
– This is why coding up your own objects manually works much less well in a statically typed languages
What are generics good for?

Some good uses for parametric polymorphism:

• Types for functions that combine other functions:

```haskell
fun compose (g, h) = fn x => g (h x)
(* compose : ('b -> 'c) * ('a -> 'b) -> ('a -> 'c) *)
```

• Types for functions that operate over generic collections

```haskell
val length : 'a list -> int
val map : ('a -> 'b) -> 'a list -> 'b list
val swap : ('a * 'b) -> ('b * 'a)
```

• Many other idioms

• General point: When types can “be anything” but multiple things need to be “the same type”
Generics in Java

• Java generics a bit clumsier syntactically and semantically, but can express the same ideas
  – Without closures, often need to use (one-method) objects
  – See also earlier optional lecture on closures in Java/C
• Simple example without higher-order functions:

```java
class Pair<T1,T2> {
    T1 x;
    T2 y;
    Pair(T1 _x, T2 _y){ x = _x; y = _y; }
    Pair<T2,T1> swap() {
        return new Pair<T2,T1>(y,x);
    }
    ...
}
```
Subtyping is not good for this

- Using subtyping for containers is much more painful for clients
  - Have to `downcast` items retrieved from containers
  - Downcasting has run-time cost
  - Downcasting can fail: no static check that container holds the type of data you expect
  - (Only gets more painful with higher-order functions like `map`)

```java
class LamePair {
    Object x;
    Object y;
    LamePair(Object _x, Object _y) { x=_x; y=_y; }
    LamePair swap() { return new LamePair(y,x); }
}

// error caught only at run-time:
String s = (String)(new LamePair("hi",4).y);
```
What is subtyping good for?

Some good uses for subtype polymorphism:

• Code that “needs a Foo” but fine to have “more than a Foo”

• Geometry on points works fine for colored points

• GUI widgets specialize the basic idea of “being on the screen” and “responding to user actions”
ML does not have subtyping, so this simply does not type-check:

(* {x:real, y:real} -> real *)
fun distToOrigin ({x=x, y=y}) =
    Math.sqrt(x*x + y*y)

val five = distToOrigin {x=3.0, y=4.0, color="red"}

Cumbersome workaround: have caller pass in getter functions:

(* ('a -> real) * ('a -> real) * 'a -> real *)
fun distToOrigin (getx, gety, v) =
    Math.sqrt((getx v)*(getx v)
               + (gety v)*(gety v))

- And clients still need different getters for points, color-points
Wanting both

• Could a language have generics and subtyping?
  – Sure!

• More interestingly, want to combine them
  – “Any type \( T_1 \) that is a subtype of \( T_2 \)”
  – Called \textit{bounded polymorphism}
  – Lets you do things naturally you cannot do with generics or subtyping separately
**Example**

Method that takes a list of points and a circle (center point, radius)
- Return new list of points in argument list that lie within circle

Basic method signature:

```
List<Point> inCircle(List<Point> pts,
                     Point center,
                     double r) { ... }
```

Java implementation straightforward assuming `Point` has a `distance` method:

```
List<Point> result = new ArrayList<Point>();
for (Point pt : pts)
    if (pt.distance(center) < r)
        result.add(pt);
return result;
```
Subtyping?

List<Point> inCircle(List<Point> pts, Point center, double r) { ... }

• Would like to use inCircle by passing a List<ColorPoint> and getting back a List<ColorPoint>

• Java rightly disallows this: While inCircle would “do nothing wrong” its type does not prevent:
  – Returning a list that has a non-color-point in it
  – Modifying pts by adding non-color-points to it
Generics?

- We could change the method to be:

  ```
  <T> List<T> inCircle(List<T> pts, Point center, double r) { … }
  ```

  - Now the type system allows passing in a `List<Point>` to get a `List<Point>` returned or a `List<ColorPoint>` to get a `List<ColorPoint>` returned.
  - But cannot implement `inCircle` properly: method body should have _no_ knowledge of type `T`
Bounds

• What we want:

```csharp
<T> List<T> inCircle(List<T> pts,
                     Point center,
                     double r) where T <: Point
{
    ...
}
```

• Caller uses it generically, but must instantiate T with some subtype of Point (including Point)
• Callee can assume T <: Point so it can do its job
• Callee must return a List<T> so output will contain only elements from pts
Real Java

• The actual Java syntax:

```java
<T extends Pt> List<T> inCircle(List<T> pts,
                             Pt center,
                             double r) {
    List<T> result = new ArrayList<T>();
    for(T pt : pts)
        if(pt.distance(center) < r)
            result.add(pt);
    return result;
}
```

• Note: For backward-compatibility and implementation reasons, in Java there is actually always a way to use casts to get around the static checking with generics 😞
  – With or without bounded polymorphism