

CSE 333

Lecture 11 - constructor insanity

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Today's goals

More details on constructors, destructors, operators

Walk through *complex_example/*

- pretty hairy and complex
- a lesson on why using a **subset of C++** is often better

new / delete / delete[]

Constructors

A constructor initializes a newly instantiated object

- a class can have multiple constructors
 - ▶ they differ in the arguments that they accept
 - ▶ which one is invoked depends on how the object is instantiated

You can write constructors for your object

- but if you don't write any, C++ might automatically synthesize a *default constructor* for you
 - ▶ the default constructor is one that takes no arguments and that initializes all member variables to 0-equivalents (0, NULL, false, ..)
 - ▶ C++ does this iff your class has no const or reference data members

Example of synthesis

see SimplePoint.cc, SimplePoint.h

Constructors, continued

You might choose to define multiple constructors:

```
Point::Point() {
    x_ = 0;
    y_ = 0;
}

Point::Point(const int x, const int y) {
    x_ = x;
    y_ = y;
}

void foo() {
    Point x; // invokes the default (argument-less) constructor
    Point y(1,2); // invokes the two-int-arguments constructor
}
```

Constructors, continued

You might choose to define only one:

```
Point::Point(const int x, const int y) {
    x_ = x;
    y_ = y;
}

void foo() {
    // Compiler error; if you define any constructors, C++ will
    // not automatically synthesize a default constructor for you.
    Point x;

    // Works.
    Point y(1,2); // invokes the two-int-arguments constructor
}
```

Initialization lists

As shorthand, C++ lets you declare an initialization list as part of your constructor declaration

- initializes fields according to parameters in the list
- the following two are (nearly) equivalent:

```
Point::Point(const int x, const int y) : x_(x), y_(y) {  
    std::cout << "Point constructed: (" << x_ << ", ";  
    std::cout << y_ << ")" << std::endl;  
}
```

```
Point::Point(const int x, const int y) {  
    x_ = x;  
    y_ = y;  
    std::cout << "Point constructed: (" << x_ << ", ";  
    std::cout << y_ << ")" << std::endl;  
}
```

Copy constructors

C++ has the notion of a **copy constructor**

- used to **create a new object** as a copy of an existing object

```
Point::Point(const int x, const int y) : x_(x), y_(y) { }

Point::Point(const Point &copyme) { // copy constructor
    x_ = copyme.x_;
    y_ = copyme.y_;
}

void foo() {
    // invokes the two-int-arguments constructor
    Point x(1,2);

    // invokes the copy constructor to construct y as a copy of x
    Point y(x); // could also write as "Point y = x;"
}
```


When do copies happen?

The copy constructor is invoked if:

- you pass an object as an parameter to a call-by-value function
- you return an object from a function
- you initialize an object from another object of the same type

```
void foo(Point x) { ... }  
  
Point y; // default cons.  
foo(y); // copy cons.
```

```
Point foo() {  
    Point y; // default cos.  
    return y; // copy cons.  
}
```

```
Point x; // default cons.  
Point y(x); // copy cons.  
Point z = y; // copy cons.
```

But...the compiler is smart...

It sometimes uses a “return by value optimization” to eliminate unnecessary copies

- sometimes you might not see a constructor get invoked when you expect it

```
Point foo() {  
    Point y; // default constructor.  
    return y; // copy constructor? optimized?  
}  
  
Point x(1,2); // two-ints-argument constructor.  
Point y = x; // copy constructor.  
Point z = foo(); // copy constructor? optimized?
```

Synthesized copy constructor

If you don't define your own copy constructor, C++ will synthesize one for you

- it will do a shallow copy of all of the fields (i.e., member variables) of your class
- sometimes the right thing, sometimes the wrong thing

see SimplePoint.cc, SimplePoint.h

assignment != construction

The “=” operator is the assignment operator

- assigns values to an existing, already constructed object
- you can overload the “=” operator

```
Point w;           // default constructor.  
Point x(1,2);     // two-ints-argument constructor.  
Point y = w;      // copy constructor.  
y = x;           // assignment operator.
```

Overloading the “=” operator

You can choose to overload the “=” operator

- but there are some rules you should follow

```
Point &Point::operator=(const Point& rhs) {  
    if (this != &rhs) { // always check against this  
        x_ = rhs.x_  
        y_ = rhs.y_  
    }  
    return *this; // always return *this from =  
}  
  
Point a; // default constructor  
a = b = c; // works because "=" returns *this  
a = (b = c); // equiv to above, as "=" is right-associative  
(a = b) = c; // works because "=" returns a non-const
```

Synthesized assignment oper.

If you don't overload the assignment operator, C++ will synthesize one for you

- it will do a shallow copy of all of the fields (i.e., member variables) of your class
- sometimes the right thing, sometimes the wrong thing

see SimplePoint.cc, SimplePoint.h

*see complex_example/**

Dealing with the insanity

C++ style guide tip

- if possible, disable the copy const. and assignment operator
 - *not possible if you want to store objects of your class in an STL container, unfortunately*

```
class Point {
public:
    Point(int x, int y) : x_(x), y_(y) { }

private:
    // disable copy cons. and "=" by declaring but not defining
    Point(Point &copyme);
    Point &operator=(Point &rhs);
};

Point w;           // compiler error
Point x(1,2);     // OK
Point y = x;      // compiler error
x = w;            // compiler error
```


Dealing with the insanity

C++ style guide tip

- if you disable them, then you should instead have an explicit “CopyFrom” function

```
class Point { Point.cc, h
public:
    Point::Point(int x, int y) : x_(x), y_(y) { }
    void CopyFrom(const Point &copy_from_me);

private:
    // disable copy cons. and "=" by declaring but not defining
    Point(const Point &copyme);
    Point &operator=(const Point &rhs);
};
```

```
Point x(1,2); // OK
Point y(3,4); // OK
x.CopyFrom(y); // OK
```

sanepoint.cc

new

To allocate on the heap using C++, you use the “new” keyword instead of the “malloc()” `stdlib.h` function

- you can use `new` to allocate an object
- you can use `new` to allocate a primitive type

To deallocate a heap-allocated object or primitive, use the “delete” keyword instead of the “free()” `stdlib.h` function

- if you’re using a legacy C code library or module in C++
 - ▶ if C code returns you a `malloc()`’d pointer, use `free()` to deallocate it
 - ▶ never `free()` something allocated with `new`
 - ▶ never delete something allocated with `malloc()`

new / delete

see heappoint.cc

Dynamically allocated arrays

To dynamically allocate an array

- use `“type *name = new type[size];”`

To dynamically deallocate an array

- use `“delete[] name;”`
- it is an error to use `“delete name;”` on an array
 - ▶ the compiler probably won't catch this, though!!!
 - ▶ it can't tell if it was allocated with `“new type[size];”` or `“new type;”`

see arrays.cc

malloc vs. new

	malloc()	new
what is it	a function	an operator and keyword
how often used in C	often	never
how often used in C++	rarely	often
allocates memory for	anything	arrays, structs, objects, primitives
returns	a (void *) <i>(needs a cast)</i>	appropriate pointer type <i>(doesn't need a cast)</i>
when out of memory	returns NULL	throws an exception
deallocating	free	delete or delete[]

Overloading the “=” operator

Remember the rules we should follow?

- here's why; hugely subtle bug

```
Foo::Foo(int val) { Init(val); }
Foo::~~Foo() { delete my_ptr_; }

void Foo::Init(int val) { my_ptr_ = new int; *my_ptr_ = val; }

Foo &Foo::operator=(const Foo& rhs) {
    // bug...we forgot our "if (self == &rhs) { ... }" guard
    delete my_ptr_;
    Init(*(rhs.my_ptr_)); // might crash here (see below)
    return *this; // always return *this from =
}

void bar() {
    Foo a(10); // default constructor
    a = a; // crash above; dereference delete'd pointer!!
}
```

Overloading the “=” operator

Remember the rules we should follow?

- here's why; hugely subtle bug

This is yet another reason for disabling the assignment operator, when possible!!

Exercise 1

Modify your 3D Point class from lec12 exercise 1

- disable the copy constructor and assignment operator
- attempt to use copy & assign in code, and see what error the compiler generates
- write a CopyFrom() member function, and try using it instead

Exercise 2

Write a C++ class that:

- is given the name of a file as a constructor argument
- has a “GetNextWord()” method that returns the next whitespace or newline-separated word from the file as a copy of a “string” object, or an empty string once you hit EOF.
- has a destructor that cleans up anything that needs cleaning up

Exercise 3

Write a C++ function that:

- uses `new` to dynamically allocate an array of strings
 - ▶ and uses `delete[]` to free it
- uses `new` to dynamically allocate an array of pointers to strings
 - ▶ and then iterates through the array to use `new` to allocate a string for each array entry and to assign to each array element a pointer to the associated allocated string
 - ▶ and then uses `delete` to delete each allocated string
 - ▶ and then uses `delete[]` to delete the string pointer array
 - ▶ (whew!)

See you on Friday!