

C++ Inheritance II, Casting

CSE 333 Spring 2025

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Administrivia

- ❖ Midterm exam in class Friday!
 - Topic list and old exams on website now
 - Closed book, slides, etc., but you may have one 5x8 notecard with whatever handwritten notes you want on both sides
 - Free blank cards available in class this week
 - Review in sections this week – bring questions!!
- ❖ New exercise 13 out today – create some simple classes related by inheritance
 - Due Monday morning – time to work on it after the exam
- ❖ HW3 due in a two weeks
 - Get going on it right after the exam
 - “How to debug disk files” and related things in sections next week

Lecture Outline

❖ C++ Inheritance

- Static Dispatch
- Abstract Classes
- Constructors and Destructors
- Assignment

❖ C++ Casting

- ❖ Reference: *C++ Primer*, Chapter 15

What happens if we omit “virtual”?

- ❖ By default, without virtual, methods are dispatched *statically*
 - At compile time, the compiler generates a `call` to the address of the class' method in the generated code `.text` segment
 - Based on the compile-time visible type of the called code (callee)
 - This is *different* than Java

```
class Derived : public Base { ... };  
  
int main(int argc, char** argv) {  
    Derived d;  
    Derived* dp = &d;  
    Base* bp = &d;  
    dp->foo();  
    bp->foo();  
    return 0;  
}
```

Derived::foo()
...

Base::foo()
...

Static Dispatch Example

❖ Removed `virtual` on methods:

Stock.h

```
double Stock::GetMarketValue() const;  
double Stock::GetProfit() const;
```

```
DividendStock dividend();  
DividendStock* ds = &dividend;  
Stock* s = &dividend;  
  
// Calls DividendStock::GetMarketValue()  
ds->GetMarketValue();  
  
// Calls Stock::GetMarketValue()  
s->GetMarketValue();  
  
// Calls Stock::GetProfit(), since that method is inherited.  
// Stock::GetProfit() calls Stock::GetMarketValue().  
ds->GetProfit();  
  
// Calls Stock::GetProfit().  
// Stock::GetProfit() calls Stock::GetMarketValue().  
s->GetProfit();
```

virtual is “sticky”

- ❖ If `X::f()` is declared virtual, then a vtable will be created for class `X` and for *all* of its subclasses
 - The vtables will include function pointers for (the correct) `f`
- ❖ `f()` will be called using dynamic dispatch even if overridden in a derived class without the `virtual` keyword
 - Good style to help the reader *and avoid bugs* by using `override`
 - Style guide controversy, if you use `override` should you use `virtual` in derived classes? Recent style guides say just use `override`, but you’ll sometimes see both, particularly in older code

Why Not Always Use `virtual`?

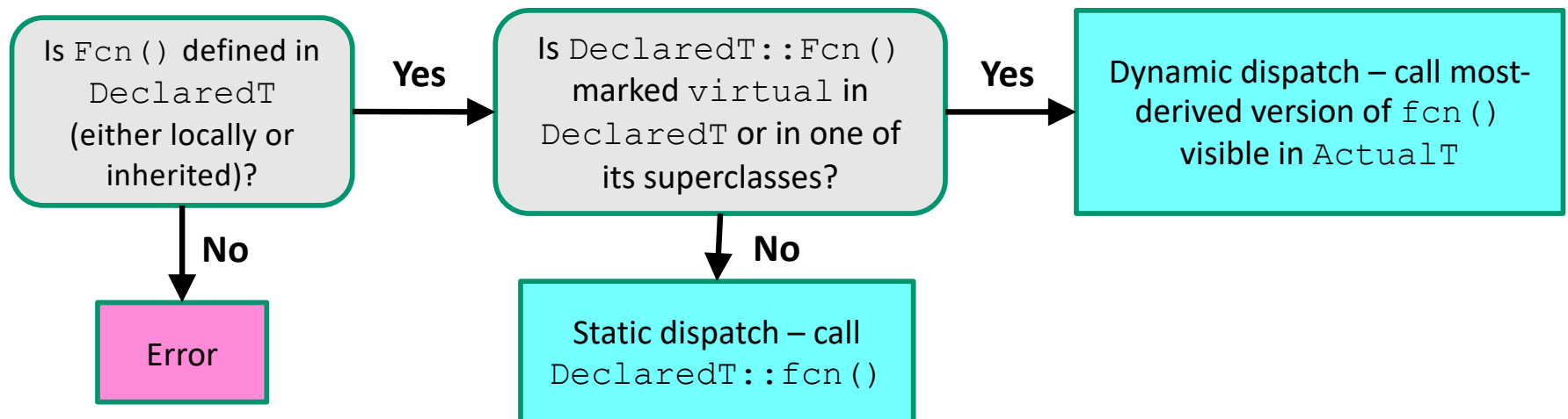
- ❖ Two (fairly uncommon) reasons:
 - Efficiency:
 - Non-virtual function calls are a tiny bit faster (no indirect lookup)
 - A class with no virtual functions has objects without a `vptr` field
 - Control:
 - If `f()` calls `g()` in class `X` and `g` is not virtual, we're guaranteed to call `X::g()` and not `g()` in some subclass
 - Particularly useful for framework design
- ❖ In Java, all methods are virtual, except `static` class methods, which aren't associated with objects
- ❖ In C++ and C#, you can pick what you want
 - Omitting virtual can cause obscure bugs

Mixed Dispatch

- ❖ Which function is called is a mix of both compile time and runtime decisions as well as *how* you call the function

- If called on an object (e.g. `obj.Fcn()`), usually optimized into a hard-coded function call at compile time
- If called via a pointer or reference:

```
DeclaredT *ptr = new ActualT;  
ptr->Fcn();    // which version is called?
```



Mixed Dispatch Example

mixed.cc

```
class A {  
    public:  
        void m1() { cout << "a1"; }  
        virtual void m2() { cout << "a2"; }  
};  
  
class B : public A {  
    public:  
        void m1() { cout << "b1"; }  
        void m2() { cout << "b2"; }  
};
```

```
void main(int argc,  
          char** argv) {  
    A a;  
    B b;  
  
    A* a_ptr_a = &a;  
    A* a_ptr_b = &b;  
B* b_ptr_a = &a;  
    B* b_ptr_b = &b;  
  
    a_ptr_a->m1(); // a1  
    a_ptr_a->m2(); // a2  
  
    a_ptr_b->m1(); // a1  
    a_ptr_b->m2(); // b2  
  
    b_ptr_b->m1(); // b1  
    b_ptr_b->m2(); // b2  
}
```

Mixed Dispatch Example

mixed.cc

```
class A {  
    public:  
        // m1 will use static dispatch  
        void m1() { cout << "a1, "; }  
        // m2 will use dynamic dispatch  
        virtual void m2() { cout << "a2"; }  
};  
  
class B : public A {  
    public:  
        void m1() { cout << "b1, "; }  
        // m2 is still virtual by default  
        void m2() { cout << "b2"; }  
};
```

```
void main(int argc,  
          char** argv) {  
  
    A a;  
    B b;  
  
    A* a_ptr_a = &a;  
    A* a_ptr_b = &b;  
    B* b_ptr_a = &a;  
    B* b_ptr_b = &b;  
  
    a_ptr_a->m1(); // a1  
    a_ptr_a->m2(); // a2  
  
    a_ptr_b->m1(); // a1  
    a_ptr_b->m2(); // b2  
  
    b_ptr_b->m1(); // b1  
    b_ptr_b->m2(); // b2  
}
```

Abstract Classes

- ❖ Sometimes we want to include a function in a class but *only* implement it in derived classes
 - In Java, we would use an abstract method
 - In C++, we use a “pure virtual” function
 - Example: `virtual string noise() = 0;`
- ❖ A class containing *any* pure virtual methods is **abstract**
 - You can't create instances of an abstract class (same as Java)
 - Extend abstract classes and override methods to use (also same)
- ❖ A class containing *only* pure virtual methods is the same as a Java interface
 - Pure type specification without implementations

Lecture Outline

❖ C++ Inheritance

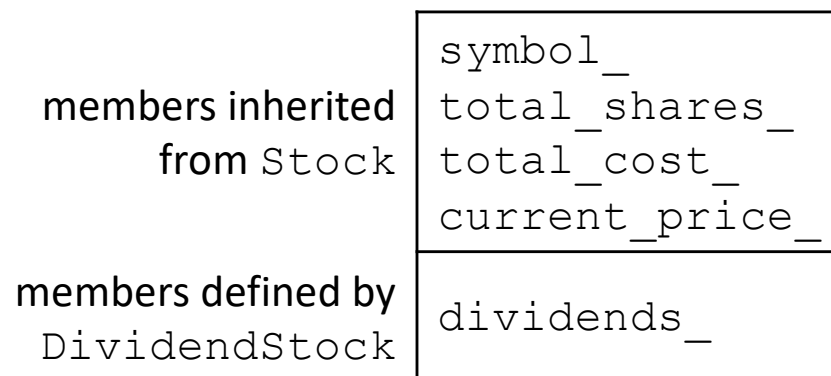
- Static Dispatch
- Abstract Classes
- **Constructors and Destructors**
- **Assignment**

❖ C++ Casting

❖ Reference: *C++ Primer*, Chapter 15

Derived-Class Objects

- ❖ A derived object contains “subobjects” corresponding to the data members inherited from each base class
 - No guarantees about how these are laid out in memory (not even contiguousness between subobjects)
 - Except: inherited part of object will have same layout it did in the superclass
- ❖ Conceptual structure of `DividendStock` object:



Constructors and Inheritance

- ❖ A derived class **does not inherit** the base class' constructor
 - The derived class must have its own constructor
 - A synthesized default constructor for the derived class first invokes the default constructor of the base class and then initializes the derived class' member variables
 - Compiler error if the base class has no default constructor
 - The base class constructor is invoked *before* the constructor of the derived class
 - You can use the initialization list of the derived class to specify which base class constructor to use

Constructor Examples

badctor.cc

```
class Base { // no default ctor
public:
    Base(int y) : y(y) { }
    int y;
};

// Compiler error when you try to
// instantiate a Der1, as the
// synthesized default ctor needs
// to invoke Base's default ctor.
class Der1 : public Base {
public:
    int z;
};

class Der2 : public Base {
public:
    Der2(int y, int z)
        : Base(y), z(z) { }
    int z;
};
```

goodctor.cc

```
// has default ctor
class Base {
public:
    int y;
};

// works now
class Der1 : public Base {
public:
    int z;
};

// still works
class Der2 : public Base {
public:
    Der2(int z) : z(z) { }
    int z;
};
```

Destructors and Inheritance

baddtor.cc

- ❖ Destructor of a derived class:
 - *First* runs body of the dtor
 - *Then* invokes of the dtor of the base class
- ❖ Static dispatch of destructors is almost always a mistake!
 - Good habit to always define a dtor as virtual
 - Empty body if there's no work to do

```
class Base {
public:
    Base() { x = new int; }
    ~Base() { delete x; }
    int* x;
};

class Der1 : public Base {
public:
    Der1() { y = new int; }
    ~Der1() { delete y; }
    int* y;
};

void foo() {
    Base* b0ptr = new Base;
    Base* b1ptr = new Der1;

    delete b0ptr;    // OK
    delete b1ptr;    // leaks Der1::y
}
```


Assignment and Inheritance

❖ C++ allows you to assign the value of a derived class to an instance of a base class

- Known as **object slicing**
 - It's legal since `b=d` passes type checking rules
 - But `b` doesn't have space for any extra fields in `d`

[slicing.cc](#)

```
class Base {
public:
    Base(int x) : x_(x) { }
    int x_;
};

class Der1 : public Base {
public:
    Der1(int y) : Base(16), y_(y) { }
    int y_;
};

void foo() {
    Base b(1);
    Der1 d(2);

    d = b;    // compiler error
    b = d;    // what happens to y_?
}
```

STL and Inheritance

- ❖ Recall: STL containers store **copies of values**
 - What happens when we want to store mixes of object types in a single container? (*e.g.* `Stock` and `DividendStock`)
 - You get sliced 😞

```
#include <list>
#include "Stock.h"
#include "DividendStock.h"

int main(int argc, char** argv) {
    Stock s;
    DividendStock ds;
    list<Stock> li;

    li.push_back(s);    // OK
    li.push_back(ds);   // OUCH!

    return 0;
}
```

STL and Inheritance

- ❖ Instead, store **pointers to heap-allocated objects** in STL containers
 - No slicing! 😊
 - `sort()` does the wrong thing 😞
 - But you can use overloaded versions of sort and supply comparator function to determine element order
 - You have to remember to `delete` your objects before destroying the container 😞
 - Smart pointers!
 - (next time)

Lecture Outline

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❖ C++ Casting

- ❖ Reference: *C++ Primer* §4.11.3, 19.2.1

Explicit Casting in C

- ❖ Simple syntax: `lhs = (new_type) rhs;`
- ❖ Used to:
 - Convert between pointers of arbitrary type
 - Don't change the data, but treat differently
 - Forcibly convert a primitive type to another
 - Actually changes the representation
- ❖ You *can* still use C-style casting in C++, but that means using one notation for different purposes

Casting in C++

- ❖ C++ provides an alternative casting style that is more informative:
 - `static_cast<to_type>(expression)`
 - `dynamic_cast<to_type>(expression)`
 - `const_cast<to_type>(expression)`
 - `reinterpret_cast<to_type>(expression)`
- ❖ Always use these in C++ code
 - Intent is clearer
 - Easier to find particular kinds of casts in code via searching

staticcast.cc

static_cast

❖ static_cast can convert:

■ Pointers to classes **of related type**

- Compiler error if classes are not related
- Dangerous to cast *down* a class hierarchy

■ Non-pointer conversion

- e.g. float to int

❖ static_cast is checked at compile time

```
class A {  
    public:  
        int x;  
};  
  
class B {  
    public:  
        float x;  
};  
  
class C : public B {  
    public:  
        char x;  
};
```

```
void foo() {  
    B b; C c;  
  
    // compiler error  
    A* aptr = static_cast<A*>(&b);  
    // OK  
    B* bptr = static_cast<B*>(&c);  
    // compiles, but dangerous  
    C* cptr = static_cast<C*>(&b);  
}
```

dynamiccast.cc

dynamic_cast

- ❖ `dynamic_cast` can convert:
 - Pointers to classes **of related type**
 - References to classes **of related type**
- ❖ `dynamic_cast` is checked at both compile time and run time

- Casts between unrelated classes fail at compile time
- Casts from base to derived fail at run time if the pointed-to object is not the derived type

```
class Base {
public:
    virtual void foo() { }
    float x;
};

class Der1 : public Base {
public:
    char x;
};
```

```
void bar() {
    Base b; Der1 d;

    // OK (run-time check passes)
    Base* bptr = dynamic_cast<Base*>(&d);
    assert(bptr != nullptr);

    // OK (run-time check passes)
    Der1* dptr = dynamic_cast<Der1*>(bptr);
    assert(dptr != nullptr);

    // Run-time check fails, returns nullptr
    bptr = &b;
    dptr = dynamic_cast<Der1*>(bptr);
    assert(dptr != nullptr);
}
```


const_cast

- ❖ `const_cast` adds or strips const-ness
 - Dangerous (!)

```
void foo(int* x) {  
    *x++;  
}  
  
void bar(const int* x) {  
    foo(x);           // compiler error  
    foo(const_cast<int*>(x)); // succeeds  
}  
  
int main(int argc, char** argv) {  
    int x = 7;  
    bar(&x);  
    return 0;  
}
```

reinterpret_cast

- ❖ `reinterpret_cast` casts between *incompatible* types
 - Low-level reinterpretation of the bit pattern
 - *e.g.* storing a pointer in an `int`, or vice-versa
 - Works as long as the integral type is “wide” enough
 - Converting between incompatible pointers
 - Dangerous (!)
 - This is used (carefully) in hw3

Implicit Conversion

- ❖ The compiler tries to infer some kinds of conversions
 - When types are not equal and you don't specify an explicit cast, the compiler looks for an acceptable implicit conversion

```
void bar(std::string x);  
  
void foo() {  
    int x = 5.7;    // conversion, float -> int  
    bar("hi");      // conversion, (const char*) -> string  
    char c = x;     // conversion, int -> char  
}
```

Sneaky Implicit Conversions

- ❖ `(const char*)` to `string` conversion?
 - If a class has a constructor with a single parameter, the compiler will exploit it to perform implicit conversions
 - At most, one user-defined implicit conversion will happen
 - Can do `int` \rightarrow `Foo`, but not `int` \rightarrow `Foo` \rightarrow `Baz`

```
class Foo {  
    public:  
        Foo(int x) : x(x) { }  
        int x;  
};  
  
int Bar(Foo f) {  
    return f.x;  
}  
  
int main(int argc, char** argv) {  
    return Bar(5); // equivalent to return Bar(Foo(5));  
}
```

Avoiding Sneaky Implicit

- ❖ Declare one-argument constructors as `explicit` if you want to disable them from being used as an implicit conversion path
 - Often a good idea – prevents unexpected implicit conversions

```
class Foo {  
    public:  
        explicit Foo(int x) : x(x) { }  
        int x;  
};  
  
int Bar(Foo f) {  
    return f.x;  
}  
  
int main(int argc, char** argv) {  
    return Bar(5); // compiler error  
}
```

Extra Exercise #1

- ❖ Design a class hierarchy to represent shapes
 - *e.g.* Circle, Triangle, Square
- ❖ Implement methods that:
 - Construct shapes
 - Move a shape (*i.e.* add (x,y) to the shape position)
 - Returns the centroid of the shape
 - Returns the area of the shape
 - **Print** () , which prints out the details of a shape

Extra Exercise #2

- ❖ Implement a program that uses Extra Exercise #1 (shapes class hierarchy):
 - Constructs a vector of shapes
 - Sorts the vector according to the area of the shape
 - Prints out each member of the vector
- ❖ Notes:
 - Avoid slicing!
 - Make sure the sorting works properly!