CSE341: Programming Languages

Lecture 26
Subtyping for OOP

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This lecture

How does subtyping for Java/C# relate to the subtyping in the last lecture?

Many of the same principles but Java/C#:

- Use class and interface *names* for types
- Support *static overloading* instead of contravariant arguments

What we have learned

- A record subtype can have more fields than its supertype
- A mutable record field cannot have its type change via subtyping
- An immutable record field can be covariant for subtyping (depth)
- Function subytping uses contravariant argument types and covariant result types

Now can use this to understand how we could type-check OOP…

An object is…

- Objects are basically records holding fields and methods
  - Fields are mutable
  - Methods are immutable functions that also have access to **`this`** / **`self`**

- So we *could* design a type system using types very much like our record types from last lecture
  - Subtypes can have extra fields
  - Subtypes can have extra methods
  - Subtypes can have methods with contravariant arguments and covariant result compared to same method in supertype
    - Sound only because method "slots" are immutable!

Java is more restrictive

Java's object types don't look like:

```
{fields: x:real, y:real, …
 methods: distToOrigin : () -> real, … }
```

Instead:

- Reuse class names as types
  - Type has everything implied by the class definition
- Add more types with interface definitions
- Have only the subtyping explicitly stated via **`extends`** and **`implements`**

Cannot get "field missing" or "method missing" errors because this approach allows a subset of the subtyping that would be sound

In Java…

- A subclass can add fields but not remove them (width)
- A subclass can add methods but not remove them (width)
- A subclass can override a method with a covariant return type
  - (Java didn't used to allow this)
  - Depth on immutable slot + function subtyping
  - But doesn't allow contravariant arguments (see later slides)
- A class can implement more methods than an interface requires (width)
  - Also allow covariant return types

Example (constructors and **`public`** *omitted)*

```
class Pt {
  double x, y;
  double distance(Pt z) { … }
  Pt shift(double dx, double dy) { … }
}
interface Colorable {
  Color getColor();
  void setColor(Color c);
}
class ColorPt extends Pt implements Colorable {
  Color color;
  Color getColor () { return this.color; }
  void setColor(Color c) { this.color = c; }
  ColorPt shift(double dx, double dy) {
     Pt p = super.shift();
     return new ColorPt(p.x,p.y,this.color);
  }
}
```

Example so far

- An instance of **`ColorPt`** is substitutable for any value of type **`Pt`** or type **`Colorable`**
  - Adds field **`color`**
  - Gives **`shift`** a more specific return type
  - Adds methods w.r.t. **`ColorPt`** and w.r.t. **`Colorable`**

- What about *changing* the types of fields or method arguments?
  - Not possible in Java
  - For fields: to stay sound
  - For methods: because Java has static overloading instead
  - In both cases, "it type-checks" but "it" actually adds new fields/methods with the same name (kind of confusing)

More example *(again omitting constructors)*

```
class ColorPt extends Pt implements Colorable {
  Color color;
  Color getColor () { return this.color; }
  void setColor(Color c) { this.color = c; }
  ColorPt shift(double dx, double dy) { … }
}
class Color extends Object { String s; }
class FancyColor extends Color { double shade; }

class MyColorPt extends ColorPt {
  T1 color;
  T2 getColor () { … }
  void setColor(T3 c) { … }
}
```

- What does redeclaring a field or method mean?
- For each of **`T1`**, **`T2`**, and **`T3`**, which of **`Object`**, **`Color`**, **`FancyColor`** can they be?

Field shadowing

```
class MyColorPt extends ColorPt {
  T1 color;
  …
}
```

- What we have learned: Mutable fields must have the same type in subclass and superclass, so no "overriding" possible
  - Changing to **`Object`** or **`FancyColor`** would be unsound
- Java: A field declared in the subclass can have the same name as an inherited field, but it is a new, different field
  - Field in subclass shadows
  - Can access other field with **`super.color`**
  - No dynamic dispatch: inherited methods use old field
- So: **`T1`** can be any type, **`Object`**, **`Color`**, **`FancyColor`**, **`Pizza`**
  - A different field with shadowing rules, not a subtyping issue

Method overriding / overloading

```
class MyColorPt extends ColorPt {
  T2 getColor () { … }
  void setColor(T3 c) { … }
}
```

- What we have learned: If we replace a method with one of a different type, need contravariant arguments, covariant result
  - So **`T2`** could be **`Color`** or **`FancyColor`** (true in Java too)
  - So **`T3`** could be **`Color`** or **`Object`** (not **`FancyColor`**!)
- Java: A method declared with different argument types is a different method with the same name
  - So **`T3`** can be any type
  - If **`T3`** is **`Color`**, then we are overriding, for any other type, we are adding a new method
    - Simply no syntax for overriding with contravariant args ☹

Static overloading

- So a Java class can have multiple methods with the same name
  - Called *overloading*

- Must revisit the key question in OOP:

  What does **`e0.m(e1,…,en)`** mean?

- As before:
  - Evaluate **`e0`**, …, **`en`** to **`v0`**, …, **`vn`**
  - Look up *class* of **`v0`** (dynamic dispatch)

- But now the class may have more than one **`m`**
  - Java: Pick the "best" one using the *static types* of **`e1`**, …, **`en`**
    - The (run-time) class of **`v1`**, …, **`vn`** is irrelevant
    - "Best" is complicated, roughly "least amount of subtyping"

Static overloading examples

```
class Color extends Object { String s; }
class FancyColor extends Color { double shade; }
class MyClass {
  void m(Object x)     { … } // A
  void m(Color x)      { … } // B
  void m(FancyColor x) { … } // C
  void m(Color x, FancyColor y) { … } // D
  void m(FancyColor x, Color y) { … } // E
}
MyClass   obj = new MyClass(…);
Color      c1 = new Color(…);
FancyColor c2 = new FancyColor(…);
Color      c3 = new FancyColor(…); // subtyping!
obj.m(c1);    // B
obj.m(c2);    // C
obj.m(c3);    // B static overloading!
obj.m(c1,c2); // D
obj.m(c1,c3); // type error: no method matches
obj.m(c2,c2); // type error: no best match (tie)
```

So…

- Java's rules for subclassing and overriding are sound because they allow less than they could based on record and function subtyping

- Static overloading saves you the trouble of making up different method names
  - Often convenient, but the exact rules are complicated
  - This is not multimethods
    - So still have to code up double dispatch manually
    - Multimethods look up method using class of all args

- Biggest unnecessary restriction in Java is having subtyping only via subclasses and interfaces…

Names vs. structure

- From a "method not understood" perspective, no reason we couldn't make **`ThreeActPlay <: StringPair`**

```
class StringPair {
 String first;
 String second;
 void setFirst(String x){ … }
 …
}
class ThreeActPlay {
 String first;
 String second;
 String third;
 void setFirst(String x){ … }
 …
}
```

- Silly example, but key idea behind duck-typing: Is the type of an object "what it can do" or "its place in the class hierarchy"
  - Interfaces the former, but require explicit **`implements`** clause

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 field and method 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
  - This confusion is convenient in practice

What if?

- If subclasses did not have to be subtypes, then a **`ThreeDPoint`** could override **`distance`** to take a **`ThreeDPoint`** argument
  - Not allowed via subtyping (arguments are contravariant)
  - But only works if other methods in superclass do not assume the type
  - (Such a method allowed in Java via overloading)

- If subtypes did not have to be subclasses, then could have a **`Launchable`** type for any class with a method **`void launch()`**
  - This is what interfaces are for
  - Classes still have to explicitly "opt-in" to implementing **`Launchable`**
  - Allows more subtyping, which allows more code reuse, but means you have to keep track of when you are launching a **`Missile`** versus a **`MarketingCampaign`**

Abstract methods again

- Abstract methods are about the type of the class name
  - All values of the type have the method
  - So subclasses with instances must implement the method

- Abstract methods have nothing to do with defining behavior
  - This is why Ruby doesn't have them

`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's *covariant*: a method in a subclass can use fields and methods only available in the subclass: essential for OOP

```
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