Today

Dynamic dispatch aka late binding aka virtual method calls

- Call to self.m2() in method m1 defined in class C can resolve to a method m2 defined in a subclass of C
- Important characteristic of OOP

Need to define the semantics of objects and method lookup as carefully as we defined variable lookup for functional programming

Then consider advantages, disadvantages of dynamic dispatch

Recall earlier encoding OOP / dynamic dispatch with functions in Racket (bank account example)

Resolving identifiers

The rules for "looking up" various symbols in a programming language is a key part of the language's definition

- So discuss in general before considering dynamic dispatch

- Haskell: Look up variables in the appropriate environment
  - Key point of closures' lexical scope is defining "appropriate"

- Racket: Like Haskell plus hygienic macros

- Ruby:
  - Local variables and blocks mostly like Haskell and Racket
  - But also have instance variables, class variables, and methods (all more like record fields)

Ruby instance variables and methods

- self maps to some "current" object
- Look up local variables in environment of method
- Look up instance variables using object bound to self
- Look up class variables using object bound to self.class

A syntactic distinction between local/instance/class means there is no ambiguity or shadowing rules

- Contrast: Java locals shadow fields unless use this.f

But there is ambiguity/shadowing with local variables and zero-argument no-parenthesis calls

- What does m+2 mean?
  - Local shadows method if exists unless use m()+2
  - Contrast: Java forces parentheses for syntactic distinctions
Method names are different

- self, locals, instance variables, class variables all map to objects
- Have said "everything is an object" but that's not quite true:
  - Method names
  - Blocks
  - Argument lists
- First-class values are things you can store, pass, return, etc.
  - In Ruby, only objects (almost everything) are first-class
  - Example: cannot do e.(if b then m1 else m2 end)
    - Have to do if b then e.m1 else e.m2 end
  - Example: can do (if b then x else y).m1

Ruby message lookup

The semantics for method calls aka message sends

```
e0.m(e1, ..., en)
```

1. Evaluate e0, e1, ..., en to objects obj0, obj1, ..., objn
   - As usual, may involve looking up self, variables, fields, etc.
2. Let C = the class of obj0 (every object has a class)
3. If m is defined in C, pick that method, else recur with the superclass of C unless C is already Object
   - If no m is found, call method_missing instead
     - Definition of method_missing in Object raises an error
4. Evaluate body of method picked:
   - With formal arguments bound to obj1, ..., objn
   - With self bound to obj0 -- this implements dynamic dispatch!

Note: Step (3) complicated by mixins: will revise definition later

Java method lookup (very similar)

The semantics for method calls aka message sends

```
e0.m(e1, ..., en)
```

1. Evaluate e0, e1, ..., en to objects obj0, obj1, ..., objn
   - As usual, may involve looking up this, variables, fields, etc.
2. Let C = the class of obj0 (every object has a class)
3. [Complicated rules to pick "the best m" using the static types of e0, e1, ..., en]
   - Static checking ensures an m, and in fact a best m, will always be found
   - Rules similar to Ruby except for this static overloading
   - No mixins to worry about (interfaces irrelevant here)
4. Evaluate body of method picked:
   - With formal arguments bound to obj1, ..., objn
   - With this bound to obj0 -- this implements dynamic dispatch!

The punch-line again

To implement dynamic dispatch, evaluate the method body with self mapping to the receiver

- That way, any self calls in the body use the receiver's class,
  - Not necessarily the class that defined the method
- This much is the same in Ruby, Java, C#, Smalltalk, etc.
Comments on dynamic dispatch

• This is why last lecture’s distFromOrigin2 worked in PolarPoint
  – distFromOrigin2 implemented with self.x, self.y
  – If receiver’s class is PolarPoint, then will use PolarPoint’s x and y methods because self is bound to the receiver

• More complicated than the rules for closures
  – Have to treat self specially
  – May seem simpler only because you learned it first
  – Complicated doesn’t imply superior or inferior
    • Depends on how you use it...
    • Overriding does tend to be overused

A simple example

In Ruby (and other object-oriented languages), subclasses can change the behavior of methods they don’t override

```ruby
class A
  def even x
    if x==0 then true else odd (x-1) end
  end
  def odd x
    if x==0 then false else even (x-1) end
  end
end

class B < A # improves odd in B objects
  def even x ; x % 2 == 0 end
end
class C < A # breaks odd in C objects
  def even x ; false end
end
```

The OOP trade-off

Any method that makes calls to overridable methods can have its behavior changed in subclasses even if it is not overridden
  – Maybe on purpose, maybe by mistake

• Makes it harder to reason about "the code you’re looking at"
  – Can avoid by disallowing overriding (Java final) of helper methods you call

• Makes it easier for subclasses to specialize behavior without copying code
  – Provided method in superclass isn’t modified later

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++)

• Java-style interfaces: allow > 1 types
  – Mostly irrelevant in a dynamically typed language, but fewer problems

• Ruby-style mixins: 1 superclass; > 1 method providers
  – Often a fine substitute for multiple inheritance and has fewer problems
Multiple Inheritance

- If inheritance and overriding are so useful, why limit ourselves to one superclass?
  - Because the semantics is often awkward (next couple of slides)
  - 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

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

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 ($z$) or two ($V::z$ and $Z::z$)?
  - Turns out each behavior is sometimes desirable (next slides)
  - So C++ has (at least) two forms of inheritance

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 methods like distance?
end
class ColorPt3D < Pt3D, ColorPt # not Ruby!
```
This code has `Person` define a pocket for subclasses to use, but an `ArtistCowboy` wants two pockets, one for each `draw` method:

```ruby
attr_accessor :pocket

class Artist
  def draw
    access pocket
  end
end

class Cowboy
  def draw
    access pocket
  end
end

class ArtistCowboy < Artist, Cowboy
end
```

Java interfaces

Recall (?), Java lets us define interfaces that classes explicitly implement:

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

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) {...
}
```

What is an interface?

- An interface is a type!
  - Any implementer (including subclasses) is a subtype of it
  - Can use an interface name wherever a type appears
  - (In Java, classes are also types in addition to being classes)
- An implementer type-checks if it defines the methods as required
  - Parameter names irrelevant to type-checking; it's a bit strange that Java requires them in interface definitions
- A user of type `Example` can objects with that type have the methods promised
  - I.e., sending messages with appropriate arguments type-checks

Multiple interfaces

- Java classes can implement any number of interfaces
- Because interfaces provide no methods or fields, no questions of method/field duplication arise
  - No problem if two interfaces both require of implementers and promise to clients the same method
- Such interfaces aren’t much use in a dynamically typed language
  - We don’t type-check implementers
  - We already allow clients to send any message
  - Presumably these types would change the meaning of `is_a?`, but we can just use `instance_methods` to find out what methods an object has
**Why no interfaces in C++?**

If you have multiple inheritance and abstract methods (called pure virtual methods in C++), there is no need for interfaces

- **Abstract method:** A method declared but not defined in a class. All instances of the (sub)class must have a definition
- **Abstract class:** Has one or more abstract methods; so disallow creating instances of this exact class
  - Have to subclass and implement all the abstract methods to create instances
- Little point to abstract methods in a dynamically typed language
- In C++, instead of an interface, make a class with all abstract methods and inherit from it — same effect on type-checking

**Mixins**

- A mixin is (just) a collection of methods
  - Less than a class: no fields, constructors, instances, etc.
  - More than an interface: methods have bodies

- Languages with mixins (e.g., Ruby modules) typically allow a class to have one superclass but 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

**Example**

```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
```