CSE341: Programming Languages
Lecture 23
Multiple Inheritance, Mixins, Interfaces, Abstract Methods
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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++)
• Ruby-style mixins: 1 superclass; > 1 method providers
  – Often a fine substitute for multiple inheritance and has fewer problems (see also Scala traits)
• Java/C#-style interfaces: allow > 1 types
  – Mostly irrelevant in a dynamically typed language, but fewer problems

Multiple Inheritance
• If inheritance and overriding are so useful, why limit ourselves to one superclass?
  – Because the semantics is often awkward (this topic)
  – 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 (f) or two (V::f and Z::f)?
  – Turns out each behavior can be 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
This code has `Person` define a pocket for subclasses to use, but an `ArtistCowboy` wants two pockets, one for each `draw` method.

```ruby
class Person
  attr_accessor :pocket
end

class Artist < Person # pocket for brush objects
def draw # access pocket
  ...
end

class Cowboy < Person # pocket for gun objects
def draw # access pocket
  ...
end

class ArtistCowboy < Artist, Cowboy # not Ruby!
end
```

### Mixins

- A **mixin** is (just) a collection of methods
  - Less than a class: no instances of it
- Languages with mixins (e.g., Ruby modules) typically let a class have one superclass but **include** 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

```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
```

### Lookup rules

Mixins change our lookup rules slightly:

- When looking for receiver `obj`'s method `m`, look in `obj`'s class, then mixins that class includes (later includes shadow), then `obj`'s superclass, then the superclass' mixins, etc.
- As for instance variables, the mixin methods are included in the same object
  - So usually bad style for mixin methods to use instance variables since a name clash would be like our `CowboyArtist` pocket problem (but sometimes unavoidable?)

### The two big ones

The two most popular/useful mixins in Ruby:

- Comparable: Defines `<`, `>`, `==`, `!=`, `>=`, `<=` in terms of `<>`
- Enumerable: Defines many iterators (e.g., `map`, `find`) in terms of `each`

Great examples of using mixins:

- Classes including them get a bunch of methods for just a little work
- Classes do not "spend" their "one superclass" for this
- Do not need the complexity of multiple inheritance
- See the code for some examples

### Replacement for multiple inheritance?

- A mixin works pretty well for `ColorPt3D`:
  - Color a reasonable mixin except for using an instance variable
    ```ruby
    module Color
      attr_accessor :color
    end
    
    module ArtistM ...
    class Artist ...
    class ArtistCowboy ...
    ```
- A mixin works awkwardly-at-best for `ArtistCowboy`:
  - Natural for `Artist` and `Cowboy` to be `Person` subclasses
  - Could move methods of one to a mixin, but it is odd style and still does not get you two pockets
    ```ruby
    module ArtistM ...
    class Artist ...
    include ArtistM
    
    class ArtistCowboy < Cowboy
      include ArtistM
    end
    ```
**Statically-Typed OOP**

- Now contrast multiple inheritance and mixins with Java/C#-style interfaces
- Important distinction, but interfaces are about static typing, which Ruby does not have
- So will use Java code after quick introduction to static typing for class-based OOP...
  - Sound typing for OOP prevents “method missing” errors

**Classes as Types**

- In Java/C# etc. each class is also a type
- Methods have types for arguments and result

```java
class A {
  Object m1(Example e, String s) {...}
  Integer m2(A foo, Boolean b, Integer i) {...}
}
```

- If C is a (transitive) subclass of D, then C is a subtype of D
  - Type-checking allows subtype anywhere supertype allowed
  - So can pass instance of C to a method expecting instance of D

**Interfaces are (or were) JustTypes**

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

- An interface is not a class; it is [er, used to be] only a type
  - Does not contain method definitions, only their signatures (types)
    - Unlike mixins
    - (Changed in Java 8, makes them more like mixins!)
  - Cannot use new on an interface
    - Like mixins

**Implementing Interfaces**

- A class can explicitly implement any number of interfaces
  - For class to type-check, it must implement every method in the interface with the right type
    - More on allowing subtypes later!
    - Multiple interfaces no problem; just implement everything
  - If class type-checks, it is a subtype of the interface

```java
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) {...}
}
```

**Multiple interfaces**

- Interfaces provide no methods or fields
  - So no questions of method/field duplication when implementing multiple interfaces, unlike multiple inheritance
- What interfaces are for:
  - “Caller can give any instance of any class implementing I”
    - So callee can call methods in I regardless of class
    - So much more flexible type system
- Interfaces have little use in a dynamically typed language
  - Dynamic typing already much more flexible, with trade-offs we studied

**Connections**

Let’s now answer these questions:

- What does a statically typed OOP language need to support “required overriding”?
- How is this similar to higher-order functions?
- Why does a language with multiple inheritance (e.g., C++) not need Java/C#-style interfaces?

[Explaining Java’s abstract methods / C++’s pure virtual methods]
Required overriding

Often a class expects all subclasses to override some method(s)
– The purpose of the superclass is to abstract common functionality, but some non-common parts have no default

A Ruby approach:
– Do not define must-override methods in superclass
– Subclasses can add it
– Creating instance of superclass can cause method-missing errors

```ruby
# do not use A.new
# all subclasses should define m2
class A
  def m1 v
    ... self.m2 e ...
  end
end
```

Static typing

• In Java/C#/C++, prior approach fails type-checking
  – No method `m2` defined in superclass
  – One solution: provide error-causing implementation
```java
class A
  def m1 v
    ... self.m2 e ...
  end
  def m2 v
    raise "must be overridden"
  end
end
```
– Better: Use static checking to prevent this error...

Abstract methods

• Java/C#/C++ let superclass give signature (type) of method subclasses should provide
  – Called abstract methods or pure virtual methods
  – Cannot creates instances of classes with such methods
    • Catches error at compile-time
    • Indicates intent to code-reader
    • Does not make language more powerful

```java
abstract class A {
  T1 m1(T2 x) { ... m2(e); ... }
  abstract T3 m2(T4 x);
}
class B extends A {
  T3 m2(T4 x) { ... }
}
```

Passing code to other code

• Abstract methods and dynamic dispatch: An OOP way to have subclass “pass code” to other code in superclass
```java
abstract class A {
  T1 m1(T2 x) { ... m2(e); ... }
  abstract T3 m2(T4 x);
}
class B extends A {
  T3 m2(T4 x) { ... }
}

fun f (g,x) = ... g e ...
fun h x = ... f((fn y => ...),...)
```

No interfaces in C++

• If you have multiple inheritance and abstract methods, you do not also need interfaces
  • Replace each interface with a class with all abstract methods
  • Replace each “implements interface” with another superclass

So: Expect to see interfaces only in statically typed OOP without multiple inheritance
  – Not Ruby
  – Not C++