CSE 413
Programming Languages & Implementation

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Ruby: Duck Typing, Inheritance, and Modules
The plan...

Several related topics:
• “Duck typing” – dynamic typing in Ruby
• Inheritance and classes
• Modularity and mixins

Later:
• Multiple inheritance, interfaces, and mixins

And then:
• Start on grammars, scanners, parsers
Types in Ruby

• Ruby is dynamically typed – everything is an object
• Only notion of an object’s “type” is what messages it can respond to
  – i.e., whether it has methods for a particular message
  – This can change dynamically for either all objects of a class or for individual objects
Duck Typing

• “If it walks like a duck and talks like a duck, it must be a duck”
  – Even if it isn’t
  – All that matters is how an object behaves
    • (i.e, what messages it understands)

  – Maybe more accurate: it might as well be a duck if you can’t tell the difference
Thought Experiment (1)

• What must be true about \( x \) for this method to work?

```ruby
def foo x
  x.m + x.n
end
```
Thought Experiment (2)

• What is true about x?
  x.m + x.n

• Less than you might think
  – x must have 0-argument methods m and n
  – The object returned by x.m must have a + method that takes one argument
  – The object returned by x.n must have whatever methods are needed by x.m.+ (!)
Duck Typing Tradeoffs

• Plus
  – Convenient, promotes code reuse
  – All that matters is what messages an object can receive

• Minus
  – “Obvious” equivalences don’t hold: x+x, 2*x, x*2
  – May expose more about an object than might be desirable (more coupling in code)
  – May allow objects to “work” in unintended / inappropriate contexts
Classes & Inheritance

• Ruby vs Java:
  – Subclassing in Ruby is not about type checking – it is not subtyping (because of dynamic typing)
  – Subclassing in Ruby is about inheriting methods
  – Java subclassing is about both (subtyping and code inheritance)
• Can use super to refer to inherited code
• See examples in Points.rb
  – ThreeDPoint inherits methods x and y
  – ColorPoint inherits distance methods
Overriding

• With dynamic typing, inheritance alone is just avoiding cut/paste
• Overriding is the key difference
  – When a method in a superclass makes a `self` call, it resolves to a method defined in the subclass if there is one
  – Example: `distFromOrigin2` in `PolarPoint`
Ruby – Why Subclasses?

• Since we can add/change methods on the fly, why use a subclass?
• Instead of class ColorPoint, why not just add a color field to Point?
  – Can’t do this in Java
  – Can do it in Ruby, but it changes all Point instances (including subclasses), even existing ones
  – Pro: now all Point classes have a color
  – Con: Maybe that breaks something else or is the wrong abstraction for some Point clients
Organizing Large(r) Programs

- Issues
  - Idea: divide code into manageable components
  - Also: want to take advantage of reusable chunks of code (libraries, classes, etc.)

- Strategy: Split code into separate files
  - Typically, one or more classes per file
  - Use “require” (or sometimes “load”) to access in Ruby
  - What about components that aren’t classes?
Namespaces & Modules

• Idea: Want to break larger programs into pieces where names can be reused independently
  – Avoids clashes when combining libraries written by different organizations or at different times

• Ruby solution: modules
  – Separate source files that define namespaces, but not necessarily classes
module Trig
  PI = 3.14
  def Trig.sin(x)
    # …
  end
  def Trig.cos(x)
    # …
  end
end

module Moral
  VERY_BAD = 0
  BAD = 1
  def Moral.sin(badness)
    # …
  end
end
Using Modules

# …
require 'trig'
require 'moral'
y = Trig.sin(Trig::PI/4)
penance = Moral.sin(
    Moral::VERY_BAD)
# …

• Key point: Each module defines a namespace
  – No clashes with same names in other modules

• Module methods are a lot like class methods
Mixins

• Modules can be used to add behavior to classes – *mixins*
  – Define instance methods and data in module

  – “include” the module in a class – incorporates the module definitions into the class

    • Now the class has its original behavior plus whatever was added in the mixin

  – Provides most of the capabilities of multiple inheritance and/or Java interfaces
Example

module Debug
  def trace
    # ...
  end
end

class Something
  include debug
  # ...
end

class SomethingElse
  include debug
  # ...
end

- Both classes have the trace method defined, and it can interact with other methods and data in the host class as if it was defined there
  - (trace is not “shared” by the classes and can’t pass information back and forth)
Exploiting Mixins – Comparable

- The real power of this is when mixins build on or interact with code in the classes that use them

- Example: library mixin Comparable
  - Class must define operator <=>
    - (a <= b returns -1, 0, +1 if a<b, a==b, a>b)
  - Comparable mixin uses “client” <= to define <, <=, ==, >=, >, and between? for that class
Another example – Enumerable

• Container/collection class provides an `each` method to call a block for each item in the collection

• Enumerable module builds many mapping-like operations on top of this
  – `map`, `include?`, `find_all`, ...
  – If items in the collection implement `<>` you also get `sort`, `min`, `max`, ...
Iterator Example

- Suppose we want to define a class of `Sequence` objects that have a `from`, `to`, and `step`, and contain numbers `x` such that
  - `from <= x <= to`, and
  - `x = from + n*step` for integer value `n`

(Credit: *Ruby Programming Language*, Flanagan & Matsumoto)
class Sequence
    # mixin all of the methods in Enumerable
    include Enumerable

    def initialize(from, to, step)
        @from, @to, @step = from, to, step
    end

    ...

Sequence each method

• To add an iterator to Sequence and make it also work with Enumerable, all we need is this:

```ruby
def each
  x = @from
  while x <= @to
    yield x
    x += @step
  end
end
```