

CSE 503: Software Engineering

Spring 2017

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503 Software Engineering *Research*

- Not: how to write good software
 - and get a good job at Amazon/Google/Microsoft
- Research methods and ideas in SE
 - this may make you a more thoughtful developer

What does my program do?

Program analysis techniques:

- **Abstract interpretation** (dataflow, symbolic exec.)
- **Type systems** (checking, inference, non-standard types)
- **Model checking** (explicit vs. symbolic, abstraction)
- **Analysis back-ends** & decision procedures (BDDs, SAT, SMT)
- **Testing** (generation, selection, prioritization)
- **Dynamic analysis** (profiling)
- **Refactoring**
- **Slicing**
- **Verification**
- **More**

Abstract interpretation (or “dataflow analysis”)

- Statically (over-)estimate what the program may do at run time
- “Run” your program statically
 - Choose an abstract domain; e.g., { +, 0, - }
 - Assign semantics to operators
 - Start at beginning of program
 - Examine possible values of variables
- Similar to unfolding the computation
- Used daily on aeronautics software

Type systems

- A type is a set of (possible) values
- Checking
- Inference
- Polymorphism
- Non-standard type systems
 - view type system as a set of constraints to compute legal refactorings
 - use type inference to recover abstractions from optimized code

Model checking

- In simplest terms, exhaustive testing
 - Verify that every possible execution satisfies a given property
 - Very effective for hardware (inherently finite-state)
 - Popular for concurrent software
- How to make this scale?
 - Choose abstractions that lose just the right amount of precision
 - Counterexample-guided refinement
 - Efficient encodings

Analysis back-ends

- Reduce one problem to another
 - Often, produce a logical formula
- Reduction to SAT
 - 1979: “Problem X reduces to SAT, so it is **hard**.”
 - 2009: “Problem X reduces to SAT, so it is **easy**.”
- SMT (satisfiability modulo theories)
 - add non-logical constructs (e.g., arithmetic) to the logical formula
- Datalog (prolog-like; used in database community)
- Binary Decision Diagrams (BDDs)
- Boolean programs
- Theorem provers

Test generation

- Random
 - Scalable, and more effective than you think
- Symbolic
 - What **if** statements guard a line of code?
 - Compute an input that satisfies them
- Concolic (**concrete + symbolic**)
 - Run tests, then try to slightly modify them to achieve more coverage
- Evaluation of testing approaches
 - Coverage, mutation, ...

Dynamic analysis

- Testing
- Model creation
 - Observe executions, generalize from them
- Type inference
- Fault localization

Refactoring

- Refactoring changes program code without changing its meaning
- What constraints need to be generated to preserve the meaning?
- How to explore the space of solutions?

More

- Pointer and alias analysis
- Modeling and model-based development
- Configuration management
- Code generation and code completion
- Historical analysis
 - Prediction of bug-prone code

Applications

- Security
- Correctness
- Performance
- Rapid development
- System analysis
- Maintenance and evolution

Broader themes

- Precision vs. performance
- Power vs. transparency
- Static vs. dynamic
- Tuning analysis to the real problem

A limited perspective on SE

- Too many ideas in software engineering for 10 weeks
- People, process, development methodology
- Mining source code repositories (see CSE 504, winter 2016)
- User studies (see CSE 599E1, autumn 2016)
- ... much more

Format

- Lectures:
 - 50%: classic background
 - 50%: current research
 - Lectures are interactive (and, few slides)
- Homework:
 - Read research papers
 - 1 in-class presentation
- Group project to put the ideas into practice
 - Makes you a better researcher, in any field
 - You choose a topic (suggestions are provided)
 - Most projects lead to a publication or other research use
 - Not a requirement, just a common outcome

Who cares?

- Intellectually exciting and deep
- Spans both “hard” and “soft” areas of computing
- Connections to programming languages, security, systems, architecture, databases, and many more!
- Quals credit