CSE341: Programming Languages

Lecture 19
Introduction to Ruby and OOP

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Ruby logistics

- Next two sections use the Ruby language
  - http://www.ruby-lang.org/
  - Installation / basic usage instructions on course website
    - Version 2.X.Y required, but differences not so relevant

- Excellent documentation available, much of it free
  - So may not cover every language detail in course materials
  - http://ruby-doc.org/
  - http://www.ruby-lang.org/en/documentation/
  - Particularly recommend “Programming Ruby 1.9 & 2.0, The Pragmatic Programmers’ Guide”
    - Not free

Ruby: Our focus

- *Pure object-oriented*: *all* values are *objects* (even numbers)
- *Class-based*: Every object has a class that determines behavior
  - Like Java, unlike Javascript
  - *Mixins* (neither Java interfaces nor C++ multiple inheritance)
- *Dynamically typed*
- Convenient *reflection*: Run-time inspection of objects
- Very *dynamic*: Can change classes during execution
- *Blocks* and libraries encourage lots of closure idioms
- Syntax, scoping rules, semantics of a "*scripting language*"
  - Variables "spring to life" on use
  - Very flexible arrays

Ruby: Not our focus

- Lots of support for string manipulation and regular expressions
- Popular for server-side web applications
  - Ruby on Rails
- Often many ways to do the same thing
  - More of a “why not add that too?” approach

Where Ruby fits

	dynamically typed	statically typed
functional	Racket	SML
object-oriented (OOP)	Ruby	Java

Note: Racket also has classes and objects when you want them

- In Ruby everything uses them (at least implicitly)

Historical note: *Smalltalk* also a dynamically typed, class-based, pure OOP language with blocks and convenient reflection

- Smaller just-as-powerful language
- Ruby less simple, more “modern and useful”

Dynamically typed OOP helps identify OOP's essence by not having to discuss types

A note on the homework

Next homework is about understanding and extending an *existing* program in an *unfamiliar* language

- Good practice
- Quite different feel than previous homeworks
- *Read* code: determine what you do and do not (!) need to understand

Homework requires the Tk graphics library to be installed such that the provided Ruby code can use it

Getting started

- See **`lec19_silly.rb`** file for our getting-started program
- Can run file **`foo.rb`** at the command-line with **`ruby foo.rb`**
- Or can use **`irb`**, which is a REPL
  - Run file **`foo.rb`** with **`load "foo.rb"`**

The rules of class-based OOP

In Ruby:

1. All values are references to *objects*
2. Objects communicate via *method calls*, also known as *messages*
3. Each object has its own (private) *state*
4. Every object is an instance of a *class*
5. An object's class determines the object's *behavior*
   - How it handles method calls
   - Class contains method definitions

Java/C#/etc. similar but do not follow (1) (e.g., numbers, **`null`**) and allow objects to have non-private state

Defining classes and methods

```
class Name
  def method_name1 method_args1
    expression1
  end
  def method_name2 method_args2
    expression2
  end
  …
end
```

- Define a class with methods as defined
- Method returns its last expression
  - Ruby also has explicit **`return`** statement
- Syntax note: Line breaks often required (else need more syntax), but indentation always only style

Creating and using an object

- **`ClassName.new`** creates a new object whose class is **`ClassName`**

- **`e.m`** evaluates **`e`** to an object and then calls its **`m`** method
  - Also known as "sends the **`m`** message"
  - Can also write **`e.m()`**

- Methods can take arguments, called like **`e.m(e1,…,en)`**
  - Parentheses optional in some places, but recommended

Variables

- Methods can use local variables
  - Syntax: starts with letter
  - Scope is method body
- No declaring them, just assign to them anywhere in method body (!)
- Variables are mutable, **`x=e`**
- Variables also allowed at “top-level” or in REPL
- Contents of variables are always references to objects because all values are objects

Self

- **`self`** is a special keyword/variable in Ruby
  - (Same as **`this`** in Java/C#/C++)

- Refers to "the current object"
  - The object whose method is executing

- So call another method on "same object" with **`self.m(…)`**
  - Syntactic sugar: can just write **`m(…)`**

- Also can pass/return/store "the whole object" with just **`self`**

Objects have state

- An object's state persists
  - Can grow and change from time object is created

- State only directly accessible from object's methods
  - Can read, write, extend the state
  - Effects persist for next method call

- State consists of *instance variables* (also known as fields)
  - Syntax: starts with an `@`, e.g., `@foo`
  - "Spring into being" with assignment
    - So mis-spellings silently add new state (!)
  - Using one not in state not an error; produces `nil` object

Aliasing

- Creating an object returns a reference to a new object
  - Different state from every other object

- Variable assignment (e.g., **`x=y`**) creates an alias
  - Aliasing means same object means same state

Initialization

- A method named **`initialize`** is special
  - Is called on a new object before **`new`** returns
  - Arguments to **`new`** are passed on to **`initialize`**
  - Excellent for creating object invariants
  - (Like constructors in Java/C#/etc.)

- Usually good *style* to create instance variables in **`initialize`**
  - Just a convention
  - Unlike OOP languages that make "what fields an object has" a (fixed) part of the class definition
    - In Ruby, different instances of same class can have different instance variables

Class variables

- There is also state shared by the entire class
- Shared by (and only accessible to) all instances of the class
  - (Like Java static fields)
- Called *class variables*
  - Syntax: starts with an `@@`, e.g., `@@foo`
- Less common, but sometimes useful
  - And helps explain via contrast that each object has its own instance variables

Class constants and methods

- *Class constants*
  - Syntax: start with capital letter, e.g., **`Foo`**
  - Should not be mutated
  - Visible outside class **`C`** as **`C::Foo`** (unlike class variables)

- *Class methods* (cf. Java/C# static methods)
  - Syntax (in some class **`C`**):

```
def self.method_name (args)
  …
end
```

  - Use (of class method in class **`C`**):

```
C.method_name(args)
```

  - Part of the class, not a particular instance of it

Who can access what

- We know “hiding things” is essential for modularity and abstraction

- OOP languages generally have various ways to hide (or not) instance variables, methods, classes, etc.
  - Ruby is no exception

- Some basic Ruby rules here as an example…

Object state is private

- In Ruby, object state is always private
  - Only an object's methods can access its instance variables
  - Not even another instance of the same class
  - So can write **`@foo`**, but not **`e.@foo`**

- To make object-state publicly visible, define "getters" / "setters"
  - Better/shorter style coming next

```
def get_foo
  @foo
end
def set_foo x
  @foo = x
end
```

Conventions and sugar

- Actually, for field `@foo` the convention is to name the methods

```
def foo
  @foo
end
```

```
def foo= x
  @foo = x
end
```

- Cute sugar: When *using* a method ending in `=`, can have space before the `=`

```
e.foo = 42
```

- Because defining getters/setters is so common, there is shorthand for it in class definitions
  - Define just getters: `attr_reader :foo, :bar, …`
  - Define getters and setters: `attr_accessor :foo, :bar, …`

- Despite sugar: getters/setters are just methods

Why private object state

- This is “more OOP” than public instance variables
- Can later change class implementation without changing clients
  - Like we did with ML modules that hid representation
  - And like we will soon do with subclasses
- Can have methods that “seem like” setters even if they are not

```
def celsius_temp= x
  @kelvin_temp = x + 273.15
end
```

- Can have an unrelated class that implements the same methods and use it with same clients
  - See later discussion of “duck typing”

Method visibility

- Three *visibilities* for methods in Ruby:
  - **`private`**: only available to object itself
  - **`protected`**: available only to code in the class or subclasses
  - **`public`**: available to all code

- Methods are **`public`** by default
  - Multiple ways to change a method's visibility
  - Here is one way…

Method visibilities

```
class Foo =
# by default methods public
   …
 protected
# now methods will be protected until
# next visibility keyword
   …
 public
   …

 private
   …
end
```

One detail

If **`m`** is private, then you can only call it via **`m`** or **`m(args)`**

- As usual, this is shorthand for **`self.m`** …
- But for private methods, only the shorthand is allowed

Now (see the code)

- Put together much of what we have learned to define and use a small class for rational numbers
  - Called **`MyRational`** because Ruby 1.9 has great built-in support for fractions using a class **`Rational`**

- Will also use several new and useful expression forms
  - Ruby is too big to show everything; see the documentation

- Way our class works: Keeps fractions in reduced form with a positive denominator
  - Like an ML-module example earlier in course

Pure OOP

- Ruby is fully committed to OOP:

  Every value is a reference to an object

- Simpler, smaller semantics

- Can call methods on anything
  - May just get a dynamic “undefined method” error

- Almost everything is a method call
  - Example: `3 + 4`

Some examples

- Numbers have methods like **`+`**, **`abs`**, **`nonzero?`**, etc.

- **`nil`** is an object used as a “nothing” object
  - Like **`null`** in Java/C#/C++ except it is an object
  - Every object has a **`nil?`** method, where **`nil`** returns **`true`** for it
  - Note: **`nil`** and **`false`** are “false”, everything else is “true”

- Strings also have a **`+`** method
  - String concatenation
  - Example: **`"hello" + 3.to_s`**

All code is methods

- All methods you define are part of a class
- Top-level methods (in file or REPL) just added to **`Object`** class
- Subclassing discussion coming later, but:
  - Since all classes you define are *subclasses* of **`Object`**, all *inherit* the top-level methods
  - So you can call these methods anywhere in the program
  - Unless a class overrides (*roughly-not-exactly*, shadows) it by defining a method with the same name

Reflection and exploratory programming

- All objects also have methods like:
  - **`methods`**
  - **`class`**

- Can use at run-time to query "what an object can do" and respond accordingly
  - Called *reflection*

- Also useful in the REPL to explore what methods are available
  - May be quicker than consulting full documentation

- Another example of "just objects and method calls"

Changing classes

- Ruby programs (or the REPL) can add/change/replace methods while a program is running

- Breaks abstractions and makes programs very difficult to analyze, but it does have plausible uses
  - Simple example: Add a useful helper method to a class you did not define
    - Controversial in large programs, but may be useful

- For us: Helps re-enforce “the rules of OOP”
  - Every object has a class
  - A class determines its instances’ behavior

Examples

- Add a **`double`** method to our **`MyRational`** class
- Add a **`double`** method to the built-in **`FixNum`** class
- Defining top-level methods adds to the built-in **`Object`** class
  - Or replaces methods
- Replace the **`+`** method in the built-in **`FixNum`** class
  - Oops: watch **`irb`** crash

The moral

- Dynamic features cause interesting semantic questions

- Example:
  - First create an instance of class `C`, e.g., `x = C.new`
  - Now replace method method `m` in `C`
  - Now call `x.m`

  Old method or new method? In Ruby, new method

  The point is Java/C#/C++ do not have to ask the question
  - May allow more optimized method-call implementations as a result

Duck Typing

"If it walks like a duck and quacks like a duck, it's a duck"

- Or don't worry that it may not be a duck

When writing a method you might think, "I need a `Foo` argument" but really you need an object with enough methods similar to `Foo`'s methods that your method works

- Embracing duck typing is always making method calls rather than assuming/testing the class of arguments

Plus: More code reuse; very OOP approach

- What messages an object receive is "all that matters"

Minus: Almost nothing is equivalent

- `x+x` versus `x*2` versus `2*x`
- Callers may assume a lot about how callees are implemented

Duck Typing Example

```
def mirror_update pt
  pt.x = pt.x * (-1)
end
```

- Natural thought: "Takes a **`Point`** object (definition not shown here), negates the **`x`** value"
  - Makes sense, though a **`Point`** instance method more OOP
- Closer: "Takes anything with getter and setter methods for **`@x`** instance variable and multiplies the **`x`** field by **`-1`**"
- Closer: "Takes anything with methods **`x=`** and **`x`** and calls **`x=`** with the result of multiplying result of **`x`** and **`-1`**"
- Duck typing: "Takes anything with method **`x=`** and **`x`** where result of **`x`** has a **`*`** method that can take **`-1`**. Sends result of calling **`x`** the **`*`** message with **`-1`** and sends that result to **`x=`**"

With our example

```
def mirror_update pt
  pt.x = pt.x * (-1)
end
```

- Plus: Maybe **`mirror_update`** is useful for classes we did not anticipate
- Minus: If someone does use (abuse?) duck typing here, then we cannot change the implementation of **`mirror_update`**
  - For example, to **`- pt.x`**
- Better (?) example: Can pass this method a number, a string, or a **`MyRational`**

```
def double x
  x + x
end
```