

CSCI 400 Course Overview

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Introduction

Who am I?

- David Grisham
 - `dgrisham@mines.edu`
- Master's student under DJ Yang
 - Distributed systems, game theory
- Member of Protocol Labs
 - **IPFS**, Filecoin

Why am I teaching PL?

- Took PL in 2014
- Previous prof. (Cyndi Rader) retired
- Experience/enjoyment

(also, alias PL='Programming Languages')

Why are you taking PL?

Is it worth an entire semester?

Motivation

- Toolbox
 - Partly choose language based on problem
- Crossover knowledge
 - Haskell \rightarrow C++
- Research
 - Type systems, memory management, ...

Motivation

When the only tool you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail." - Abraham Maslow

What are we going to do?

Roughly...

- 1 Discuss programming language concepts
- 2 Explore specific languages/paradigms
- 3 Implement (simple) languages

PL Concepts

- Syntax & features decisions
- Code reuse, polymorphism (DRY)
- Error handling
- **Type system**
- Meta-programming

Exploring Languages (Example Criteria)

	Ruby	Haskell
Paradigm	Multi, Object-oriented	Functional
Typing	Dynamic	Static
Meta-programming?	Yes	With an extension

Exploring Languages

Ruby

- Learn Ruby
 - While keeping in mind higher-level PL concepts
- Discussion on design/etc.
- Exam

Exploring Languages

Haskell

- Similar to Ruby
 - But no exam
- Implement simple (subsets of) programming languages
 - Better understanding of PL implementation
 - Assignments provided by Mattox Beckman @ UIUC

Criteria for Evaluating PLs

Language Evaluation Criteria

What kind of criteria do you use to evaluate/choose a language?

Categories of programming languages

Example Criteria

- 1 **Writeability:** How easy is it to write a program?
- 2 **Readability:** How easy is it to read a program?
- 3 **Reliability:** Does it include features that help produce more reliable software?
- 4 **Cost:** What costs are involved?

Categories proposed by Sebesta

(1,2) Write/Read-ability

- Support for abstraction
- Control statements
- Data types
- Syntax
- **Orthogonality**
- **Expressivity**

Orthogonality

- Small set of primitive constructs + ways of combining them
 - E.g. variable assignment, `if`, `for`, ...
 - Every syntactically correct combination is legal
 - Meaning of a feature is independent of context
- Example of non-orthogonality in C
 - Arrays: Cannot be returned from a function
 - `void`: Cannot be type of array element

Orthogonality

*Orthogonality means that features can be used in any combination, the combinations all make sense, and the meaning of a given feature is **consistent** regardless of other features with which it is combined.*

*- **Michael Scott***

Orthogonality

*Orthogonality means that features can be used in any combination, the combinations all make sense, and the meaning of a given feature is **consistent** regardless of other features with which it is combined.*

*- **Michael Scott***

Sometimes I'll start a sentence and I don't even know where it's going. I just hope I find it along the way.

*- **also Michael Scott***

(3) Reliability

- Type checking
 - Compiler- or run- time
- Exception handling
- Aliasing
 - Multiple references to the same memory
- Read/write-ability
 - Unnatural algorithm implementations are less reliable

(4) Cost

- Learning curve
- Fitting language to problem
- Compiling, executing
- Implementation support (e.g. free compilers)
- Maintaining programs
 - *How does this relate to PL?*

Other Criteria

- Portability
 - Moving between implementations
- Generality
 - Range of applications (tradeoff)
- Well-definedness
 - Completeness/precision of language definition

Language Design

Design Tradeoffs

- **Reliability vs. cost of execution**
 - E.g. memory/type safety
- **Readability vs. writeability**
 - E.g. **APL**
- **Flexibility vs. reliability**
 - Pointers, types (NULL)

Expressivity

Find something to share with the class – turn in for attendance points

- <http://babel.ls.fi.upm.es/~jjmoreno/expre.html>
- <http://redmonk.com/dberkholz/2013/03/25/programming-languages-ranked-by-expressiveness/>
- <http://stackoverflow.com/questions/638881/what-does-expressive-mean-when-referring-to-programming-language>
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Expressive_power
- <http://mt4.radified.com/2009/08/expressive-power-computer-programming-language-literature.html>
- <http://gafter.blogspot.com/2007/03/on-expressive-power-of-programming.html>

Criteria: The Players

- Implementors
 - Difficulty of implementating constructs/features
- Users
 - Care about writeability, eventually readability
- Designers
 - Elegance, accessibility
 - <http://www.paulgraham.com/popular.html>

Influences on Language Design

- Computer Architecture
- Programming Methodologies

Influences: Computer Architecture

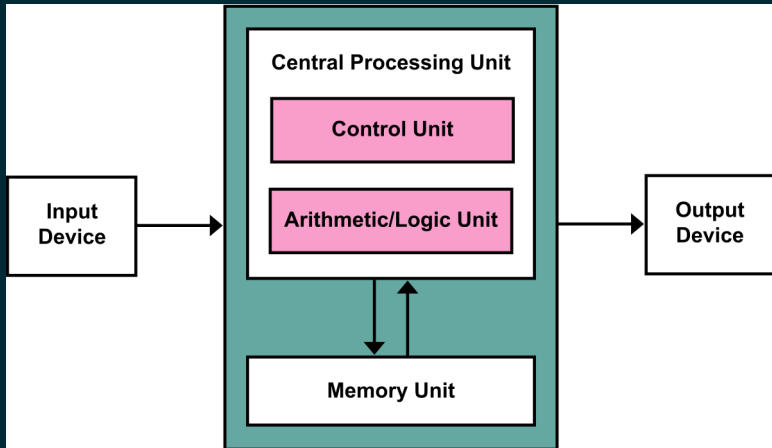


Figure 1: von Neumann Architecture

Influences: Computer Architecture

- Von Neumann architecture
 - Data/programs stored in memory
 - Memory separate from CPU
 - Instructions/data piped from memory to CPU
- Basis for imperative languages
 - **Memory cells** → **variables**
 - **Piping** → **assignment**
 - Binary → assembly → C

Influences: Programming Methodologies

Time	Focus
<i>50s/60s</i>	Simple applications, computational efficiency
<i>60s</i>	People-efficiency: Readability, control structures
<i>70s</i>	Process- to data- oriented
<i>80s</i>	Object oriented
<i>90s-Now</i>	Functional, Concurrent

Language Categories

Category	Characteristics	Examples
<i>Procedural</i>	Variables, iteration	C, Pascal, Perl
<i>Functional</i>	Functions, composition	Scheme, Haskell
<i>Logic</i>	Rule-based, unordered	Prolog, SQL, K
<i>Object-oriented</i>	Inheritance, late-binding	Java, C++, C#
<i>Markup</i>	Text + formatting/etc.	HTML, XML, Markdown

Conclusion

Important things

- Course 'website'
 - <https://github.com/dgrisham/csci400>
- Syllabus: coming soon

Links

- Paul Graham: *Being Popular*
 - <http://www.paulgraham.com/popular.html>
- Brett Victor: *The Future of Programming*
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8pTEmbeENF4>
- John Backus: *Can Programming be Liberated from the von Neumann style?*
 - <https://www.cs.ucf.edu/~dcm/Teaching/COT4810-Fall/%202012/Literature/Backus.pdf>

Credit

Significant credit to Cyndi Rader for slide content