

Inheritance

Lecture 13
CGS 3416 Spring 2016

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Subclasses and Superclasses

- ▶ **Inheritance** is a technique that allows one class to be derived from another.
- ▶ A derived class inherits all of the data and methods from the original class.

Example: Suppose that class Y is *inherited* from class X.

- ▶ class X is the **superclass**. Also known as *base class* or *parent class*.
- ▶ class Y is the **subclass**. Also known as the *derived class*, or *child class*, or *extended class*.
- ▶ class Y consists of anything created in class Y, *as well as* everything from class X, which it inherits

Declaring a subclass

Use the keyword `extends` to declare the derived class.

Example 1

```
public class AAA      // base class
{ ... }
```

```
public class BBB extends AAA    // derived class
{ ... }
```

Example 2

```
public class Employee {...}      // base class

public class HourlyEmployee extends Employee { ... }
// derived class
```

The keyword `super`

- ▶ When you create a derived object, the derived class constructor needs to invoke the base class constructor.
- ▶ Do this with the keyword **super** – in this context, it acts as the call to the base class constructor.
`super(); // base class default constructor`
`super(parameters); //base class parametrized constructor`
- ▶ The call to `super()` must be the first line of the derived class constructor.
- ▶ If explicit call to parent constructor not made, the subclass' constructor will *automatically* invoke `super()`. (the default constructor of the base class, if there is one).
- ▶ Can also use `super` to invoke a method from the parent class (from inside the derived class). Format:
`super.method(parameters)`

Example

```
//class HourlyEmployee, derived from Employee
public class HourlyEmployee extends Employee
{
    public HourlyEmployee() // default constructor
    {
        super(); // invokes Employee() constructor
    }

    public HourlyEmployee(double h, double r)
    {
        super(h,r); // invokes Employee constructor
                    w/ 2 parameters
    }

    // ... more methods and data

} // end class HourlyEmployee
```

The protected modifier

- ▶ Recall that **public** data and methods can be accessed by anyone, and **private** data and methods can be accessed only by the class they are in.
- ▶ **protected** data and methods of a public class can be accessed by any classes derived from the given class (this is also true in C++).
- ▶ In Java, a protected member can also be accessed by any class in the same package (to be discussed later)

The final modifier

In addition to creating constant variable identifiers, the keyword `final` can be used for a couple of special purposes involving inheritance:

- ▶ When used on a class declaration, it means that the class cannot be extended. (i.e. it cannot become a parent class to a new subclass).
- ▶ When used on a method declaration, it means that the method cannot be overridden in a subclass. (i.e. this is the final version of the method).

Method Overriding

Although the derived class inherits all the methods from the base class, it is still possible to create a method in the derived class with the same signature as one in the base. Example:

- ▶ Suppose a class `Rectangle` is derived from class `Shape`.
- ▶ `Shape` has a method:

```
void Draw() { ... }
```
- ▶ We can define a method in class `Rectangle` with the same signature. The derived class version will *override* the base class version, when called through an object of type `Rectangle`.

```
Rectangle r = new Rectangle(); // create a
    Rectangle object which has all the
    Shape methods available.
r.Draw(); // invokes the Draw method from the
    Rectangle class
```


Method Overriding

Note that the Rectangle class' Draw() method can still invoke the superclass' method, with the keyword `super`

```
public void Draw()  
{  
    super.Draw(); // invoke parent's Draw()  
  
    // continue with any processing specific  
    to Rectangle  
}
```

Abstract Classes

- ▶ Superclasses are more general and subclasses are more specific.
- ▶ Sometimes a base class is so general that it doesn't make sense to actually instantiate it (i.e. create an object from it).
 - ▶ Such a class is primarily a grouping place for common data and behaviors of subclasses – **an abstract class**.
- ▶ To make a class abstract, use the keyword `abstract` (which is a modifier)

```
public abstract class Shape
```
- ▶ Now that `Shape` is abstract, this would be illegal:

```
Shape s = new Shape();
```
- ▶ Specifically, it's `new Shape()`; that is illegal.

Methods can be abstract as well

- ▶ An abstract method is a method signature without a definition.
- ▶ Abstract methods can only be created inside abstract classes.
- ▶ The main purpose of an abstract method is to be overridden in derived classes (with the same signature)
- ▶ Example:

```
public abstract class Shape
    // Shape is an abstract class
{
    public abstract double findArea();
    // findArea is an abstract method

    // other methods and data
}
```

The Object class

In Java, **every** class is derived automatically from a class called `Object`. If no specific inheritance is declared for a class, it automatically has `Object` as a superclass.

While there are several methods in class `Object`, here are three important such methods, inherited by every Java class.

- ▶ `public boolean equals(Object object)`
- ▶ `public String toString()`
- ▶ `public Object clone()`

Let's look at each.

public boolean equals(Object object)

Tests whether two objects are equal. Returns true if equal, false if not. object1 and object2 same class type.

```
object1.equals(object2)
```

Default implementation is:

```
public boolean equals(Object obj)
{
    return (this == obj);
}
```

Note that this default implementation is equivalent to the == operator, since it only tests the reference variables for equality. The intent is that subclasses of Object should override the equals method whenever they want a test of equality of two objects' **contents**.

public String toString()

Returns a string that represents the object. Call format:

```
objectName.toString();
```

The default version of the string might not always be useful, but this can be overridden in any derived class. Example for a class called Fraction:

```
public String toString()
{
    return numerator + "/" + denominator;
}
```

public String toString()

Assuming the above function for a Fraction class, the following illustrates its usage:

```
Fraction f1 = new Fraction(4,5);
    // create the fraction 4/5
System.out.print(f1.toString());
    // will print "4/5"

System.out.print(f1);
    // also prints "4/5" as this always invokes
    a class' toString method
```

public Object clone()

Remember, direct assignment between object names will only copy one reference variable to another. Use the `clone()` method to make copies of objects.

```
newObject = someObject.clone();
```

Not all objects can be cloned. Only objects implementing the `java.lang.Cloneable` interface (which will be discussed later) can use the `clone` method.

The `clone()` method from the `Object` class does a "shallow copy" (i.e. copies reference variables verbatim). If a "deep copy" is needed (a la copy constructors in C++), you should override `clone()` for a class.

Other methods from class Object

- ▶ `finalize` – called by garbage collector to perform cleanup on an object. Can be overridden, but rarely done.
- ▶ `getClass` – returns an object of type `Class`, with information about the calling object's type.
- ▶ `hashCode` – returns hash value that can be used as a key for the object (for use in a hash table, for example).
- ▶ `notify`, `notifyAll`, `wait` – related to multithreading.