Everything (else) you always wanted to know about OCaml (but were afraid to ask)
OCaml

- You know it well from CMSC 330
- All programming projects will be in OCaml
  - OCaml is well-designed for building language tools

- In 330, we covered all the basics
  - Tuples, lists, recursion, pattern matching, higher-order functions, currying, data types, modules, module types, updatable references

- For larger projects, there’s more to know
Records

• Labeled tuples of values

```ocaml
# type course = {title:string; num:int};;

type course = { title : string; num : int; }

# let x = {title="Intro to Compilers"; num=430};;

val x : course = {title = "Intro to Compilers"; num = 430}
```

• Fields are referenced with the dot notation

```ocaml
# x.title;;
- : string = "Introduction to Compilers"

# x.number;;
- : int = 430
```

• All record types are named, and must be complete in any instance

```ocaml
# let y = {title="Intro to Compilers"};;
Error: Some record field labels are undefined: num
```
Records (cont’d)

- Record patterns can include partial matches

```ocaml
# let nextNum {num=x} = x;;
val nextNum : course -> int = <fun>
```

- The `with` construct can be used to modify just part of a record

```ocaml
# {x with num=431};;
- : course = {title = "Intro to compilers"; num = 431}
```
Records (cont’d)

• Record fields may be **mutable**

```ocaml
# type course = {title:string; mutable num:int};;
type course = { title : string; mutable num : int; };
# let x = {num=430; title="Intro to compilers"};;
val x : course = {title = "Intro to compilers"; num = 430}
# x.num <- 431;;
- : unit = ()
# x;;
- : course = {title = "Intro to compilers"; num = 431}
```

• In fact, this is what updatable refs translate to

```ocaml
# let y = ref 42;;
val y : int ref = {contents = 42}
```
Arrays and strings

- OCaml arrays are mutable and bounds-checked

```ocaml
# let x = [|1;2;3|];;
val x : int array = [|1; 2; 3|]
# x.(0) <- 4;;
- : unit = ()
# x;;
- : int array = [|4; 2; 3|]
# x.(4);;
Exception: Invalid_argument "index out of bounds".
# x.(-1);;
Exception: Invalid_argument "index out of bounds".
```

- OCaml strings are also mutable (this will change!)

```ocaml
# let x = "Hello";;
val x : string = "Hello"
# x.[0] <- 'J';;
- : unit = ()
# x;;
- : string = "Jello"
```
Design discussion

• OCaml has several similar constructs
  ▪ Tuples
  ▪ Lists
  ▪ Records
  ▪ Arrays
  ▪ Data types

• Why have all these choices? Do other languages (e.g., Ruby) have all these different constructs?
Labeled arguments

- OCaml allows arguments to be labeled

```ocaml
# let f ~x ~y = x-y;;
val f : x:int -> y:int -> int = <fun>
# f 4 3;;
- : int = 1
# f ~y:4 ~x:3;;
- : int = -1
```

- Functions with labeled args can be partially applied

```ocaml
# let g = f ~y:4;;
val g : x:int -> int = <fun>
# g 3;;
- : int = -1
# g ~x:3;;
- : int = -1
```
Optional arguments

• Labeled arguments may be optional

```ocaml
# let bump ?(step = 1) x = x + step;;
val bump : ?step:int -> int -> int = <fun>
# bump 2;;
- : int = 3
# bump ~step:3 2;;
- : int = 5
```

• One nit: type inference with partial applications of functions with labeled arguments may not always work
While and for

```haskell
# while true do Printf.printf "Hello\n";;
Hello
Hello
Hello
...
# for i = 1 to 10 do Printf.printf "%d\n" i done;;
1
2
...
10
```

• Can you encode **while** and **for** only using functions and recursion?
module type SHAPES =
  sig
    type shape
    val area : shape -> float
    val unit_circle : shape
    val make_circle : float -> shape
    val make_rect : float -> float -> shape
  end;;

module Shapes : SHAPES =
  struct
    ...
    let make_circle r = Circle r
    let make_rect x y = Rect (x, y)
  end
Functors

• Modules can take other modules as arguments
  ▪ Such a module is called a *functor*

```ocaml
module type OrderedType = sig
  type t
  val compare : t -> t -> int
end

module Make(Ord: OrderedType) =
  struct ... end

module StringSet = Set.Make(String);;
(* works because String has type t, implements compare *)
```

• Other examples: Hashtbl, Map, Queue, Stack
Variants

• Recall OCaml data types (also called variants)

```ocaml
type shape =
| Circle of float
| Rect of float * float
```

• Each constructor name refers to a unique type
  ▪ E.g., `Circle` always makes a shape

• Some downsides
  ▪ Have to define all such types in advance of uses
  ▪ Can’t accept data coming from two different variants
Polymorphic variants

- Like variants, but permit an unbounded number of constructors, created anywhere
  - Type inference takes care of matching up various uses

```ocaml
# ['On; 'Off];;
- : [> 'Off | 'On ] list = ['On; 'Off]
# 'Number 1;;
- : [> 'Number of int ] = 'Number 1
# let f = function 'On -> 1 | 'Off -> 0 | 'Number n -> n;;
val f : [< 'Number of int | 'Off | 'On ] -> int = <fun>
# List.map f ['On; 'Off];;
- : int list = [1; 0]
```

- "<"—allow fewer tags
- ">"—allow more tags
- Can remove this ability by creating a named type

```ocaml
# type 'a vlist = ['Nil | 'Cons of 'a * 'a vlist];;
```

```
type 'a vlist = [ 'Cons of 'a * 'a vlist | 'Nil ]
```
Regular vs. polymorphic variants

- Benefits of polymorphic variants:
  - More flexible
  - If used well, can improve modularity, maintainability

- Benefits of regular variants:
  - More type checking permitted
    - Only declared constructors used
    - Check for complete pattern matching
    - Enforce type constraints on parameters
  - Better error messages
    - Sometimes type inference with polymorphic variants subtle
  - Compiler can create slightly more optimized code
    - More is known at compile time
A note on OCaml versions

- Linuxlab is running 4.01.0
- Submit is running 4.00.1
- The OCaml developers just released 4.02.0
  - The differences between all these are all fairly minor as far as the programming you will be doing
  - If you happen to use one of these features and tickle some difference between Linuxlab and Submit, don’t worry about it; we’ll just ask you to fix it when we do the grading
- If you are installing OCaml yourself, we recommend using opam
Running OCaml on linuxlab

• Add OCaml to your environment with

$ module add opam

  • You might add this (excluding $) to your .bash_profile

• To add packages for later projects, do

$ opam init
...
Do you want OPAM to modify ~/.bash_profile and
~/.ocamlinit?...[N/y/f] Y
$ eval `opam config env`

  • The last line is only needed for this session, and should be
taken care of for future logins by the changes made to
your .bash_profile

• Then you can install packages

$ opam install ounit