

CMSC 330: Organization of Programming Languages

Ownership, References, and Lifetimes in Rust

Rust: GC-less Memory Management, Safely

- Rust's heap memory **managed without GC**
- Type checking ensures **no dangling pointers** or **buffer overflows**
 - **unsafe** idioms are **disallowed**
- Key features that ensure safety: **ownership** and **lifetimes**
 - Data has a single **owner**. **Immutable** aliases OK, but mutation only via owner or **single mutable reference**
 - How long data is alive is determined by a **lifetime**

Rules of Ownership

1. Each value in Rust has a variable that's its **owner**
2. There can only be **one owner at a time**
3. When the **owner goes out of scope**, the value will be **dropped** (freed)

```
{ let mut s = String::from("hello"); //s is the owner
  s.push_str(", world!");
  println!("{}", s);
} //s's data is freed by calling s.drop()
```

string: Dynamically sized, mutable data

Assignment Transfers Ownership

- By default, an assignment *moves* data

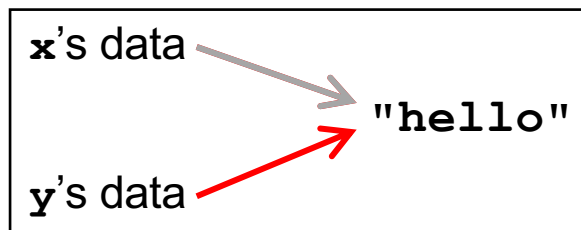
```
let x = String::from("hello");  
let y = x; //x moved to y
```

- A move leaves only **one owner**: **y**

```
println!("{}", world!", y); //ok  
println!("{}", world!", x); //fails
```

- Why? Both **x** and **y** may point to the same underlying data

*Move prevents double
free, or use-after-free*



Copy Trait

- Primitives do not transfer ownership on assignment
 - `i32`, `char`, `bool`, `f32`, tuples of these types, etc.

```
let x = 5;  
let y = x;  
println!("{}", y); //ok  
println!("{}", x); //ok
```

- Why? These derive the `Copy` trait
 - Doing so says that an assignment copies the entire object



Traits

- A **Trait** is a way of saying that a type has a particular property
 - **Copy**: objects with this trait do *not* transfer ownership on assignment
 - instead, assignment copies all of the object data
 - **Move**: objects with this trait *do* transfer ownership on assignment
 - usually, so that not all of the data need be copied
- Another way of using traits: to indicate functions that a type is must implement (more later)
 - Like Java interfaces
 - Example: **Deref** built-in trait indicates that an object can be dereferenced via `*` op; compiler calls object's **deref()** method

Use clone() to make explicit copies

- Objects with the **Move** trait may be explicitly cloned
 - Avoids loss of ownership, but at the cost of a copy

```
let x = String::from("hello");  
let y = x.clone(); //x ownership not moved  
println!("{}", world!", y); //ok  
println!("{}", world!", x); //ok
```


Ownership Transfer in Function Calls

```
fn main() {
  let s1 = String::from("hello");
  let s2 = id(s1);    //s1 moved to arg
  println!("{}",s2); //id's result moved to s2
  println!("{}",s1); //fails
}

fn id(s:String) -> String {
  s // s moved to caller, on return
}
```

- On a call, ownership passes from:
 - argument to called function's parameter
 - returned value to caller's receiver

References and Borrowing

- Create an alias by making a **reference**
 - An explicit, non-owning pointer to the original value
 - Called **borrowing**. Done with **&** operator
- References are immutable by default (can override)

```
fn main() {
    let s1 = String::from("hello");
    let len = calc_len(&s1); //lends reference
    println!("the length of '{}' is {}",s1,len);
}

fn calc_len(s: &String) -> usize {
    s.push_str("hi"); //fails! refs are immutable
    s.len()          // s dropped; but not its referent
}
```

Quiz 1: Owner of str's data at *HERE* ?

```
fn foo(str:String) -> usize {  
    let x = str;  
    let y = &x;  
    let w = &y;  
    // HERE  
}
```

A. x

B. y

C. z

D. w

let w = &y vs. let w = y;

There are a few other types I'd consider "primitive":

- Immutable references (&T)
- Mutable references (&mut T)
- Raw pointers (*const T / *mut T)

Immutable references always implement Copy, mutable references never implement Copy, and raw pointers always implement Copy:

Quiz 1: Owner of str's data at *HERE* ?

```
fn foo(str:String) -> usize {  
    let x = str;  
    let y = &x;  
    let w = &y;  
    // HERE  
}
```

A. x

B. y

C. z

D. w

Rules of References

1. At any given time, you can have *either but not both* of
 - One mutable reference
 - Any number of immutable references
2. References must always be valid (pointed-to value not dropped)

Borrowing and Mutation

- Make **immutable references** to **mutable** values
 - Shares **read-only access** through owner and borrowed references
 - Same for immutable values
 - **Mutation disallowed** on original value until **borrowed reference(s)** dropped

```
{ let mut s1 = String::from("hello");
  { let s2 = &s1;
    println!("String is {} and {}",s1,s2); //ok
    s1.push_str(" world!"); //disallowed
  } //drops s2
  s1.push_str(" world!"); //ok
  println!("String is {}",s1);} //prints updated s1
```

Mutable references

- To permit mutation via a reference, use `&mut`
 - Instead of just `&`
 - But **only OK for mutable variables**

```
let mut s1 = String::from("hello");
{ let s2 = &s1;
  s2.push_str(" there"); //disallowed; s2 immut
} //s2 dropped
let s3 = &mut s1; //ok since s1 mutable
s3.push_str(" there"); //ok since s3 mutable
println!("String is {}",s3); //ok
```

Quiz 2: What does this evaluate to?

```
{ let mut s1 = String::from("Hello!");  
  {  
    let s2 = &s1;  
    s2.push_str("World!");  
    println!("{}", s2)  
  }  
}
```

- A. "Hello!"
- B. "Hello! World!"
- C. Error
- D. "Hello!World!"

Quiz 2: What does this evaluate to?

```
{ let mut s1 = String::from("Hello!");  
  {  
    let s2 = &s1;  
    s2.push_str("World!");  
    println!("{}", s2)  
  }  
}
```

- A. "Hello!"
- B. "Hello! World!"
- C. Error; s2 is not mut**
- D. "Hello!World!"

Quiz 3: What is printed?

```
fn foo(s: &mut String) -> usize{
    s.push_str("Bob");
    s.len()
}
fn main() {
    let mut s1 = String::from("Alice");
    println!("{}",foo(&mut s1))
}
```

- A. 0
- B. 8
- C. Error
- D. 5

Quiz 3: What is printed?

```
fn foo(s: &mut String) -> usize{
    s.push_str("Bob");
    s.len()
}
fn main() {
    let mut s1 = String::from("Alice");
    println!("{}",foo(&mut s1))
}
```

- A. 0
- B. 8**
- C. Error
- D. 5

Ownership and Mutable References

- Can make **only one** mutable reference
- Doing so **blocks use** of the original
 - Restored when reference is dropped

```
let mut s1 = String::from("hello");
{ let s2 = &mut s1; //ok
  let s3 = &mut s1; //fails: second borrow
  s1.push_str(" there"); //fails: second borrow
} //s2 dropped; s1 is first-class owner again
s1.push_str(" there"); //ok
println!("String is {}",s1); //ok
```

implicit borrow
(self is a reference)

But: see
next slide

Update: Non Lexical Lifetimes (NLL)

- Rust has been updated to support lifetimes that end before the surrounding scope:
 - <http://blog.pnkfx.org/blog/2019/06/26/breaking-news-non-lexical-lifetimes-arrives-for-everyone/>

```
let mut s1 = String::from("hello");
{ let s2 = &mut s1; //ignored - never used
  let s3 = &mut s1; //ignored - never used
  s1.push_str(" there"); //OK!
  s2.push_str(" there"); //fails - 2 mutable refs
} //s2 dropped; s1 is first-class owner again
s1.push_str(" there"); //ok
println!("String is {}",s1); //ok
```

The * Operator

- Given a value of type *T&* (or *T&mut*) use the * operator to read or write its underlying contents

```
let mut x = 2;  
let mut y = 3;  
let mut r = &mut x;  
*r = 4;  
r = &mut y;  
*r = 5;
```

- Note two uses of `mut` for `r`, with different meanings!

Immutable and Mutable References

- **Cannot make a mutable reference** if immutable references exist
 - Holders of an immutable reference assume the object will not change!

```
let mut s1 = String::from("hello");
{ let s2 = &s1; //ok: s2 is immutable
  let s3 = &s1; //ok: multiple imm. refs allowed
  let s4 = &mut s1; //fails: imm ref already
} //s2-s4 dropped; s1 is owner again
s1.push_str(" there"); //ok
println!("String is {}",s1); //ok
```

Aside: Generics and Polymorphism

- Rust has support like that of Java and OCaml
 - Example: The `std` library defines `Vec<T>` where `T` can be **instantiated** with a variety of types
 - `Vec<char>` is a vector of characters
 - `Vec<&str>` is a vector of string slices
- You can define polymorphic functions, too
 - Rust:

```
fn id<T>(x:T) -> T { x }
```
 - Java:

```
static <T> T id(T x) { return x; }
```
 - OCaml:

```
let id x = x
```
- More later...

Lifetimes: Avoiding Dangling References

- References must always be to **valid memory**
 - Not to memory that **has been dropped**

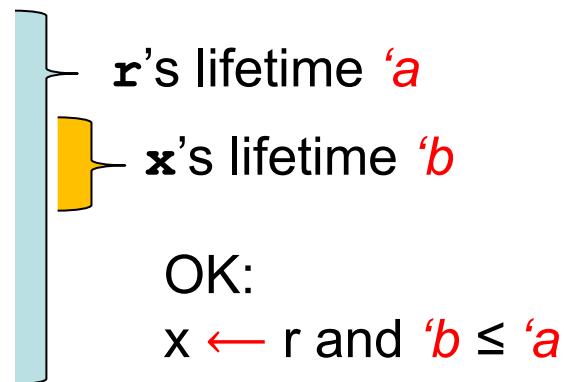
```
fn main() {
    let ref_invalid = dangle();
    println!("what will happen ... {}", ref_invalid);
}
fn dangle() -> &String {
    let s1 = String::from("hello");
    &s1
} // bad! s1's value has been dropped
```

- Rust will disallow this using a concept called **lifetimes**
 - A **lifetime** is a type-level parameter that **names the scope in which the data is valid**

Lifetimes: OK Usage

- Lifetime corresponds with scope

```
{
  let r = 5;
  {
    let x = &r;
    println!("r: {}", r); //ok
  }
}
```



- Variable **x** in scope while **r** is
 - A **lifetime** is a *type variable* that identifies a scope
 - **r's lifetime 'a exceeds x's lifetime 'b**

Lifetimes: Preventing Dangling Refs

- Slightly changing the example

```
{
  let r; // deferred init
  {
    let x = 5;
    r = &x;
  }
  println!("r: {}", r); //fails
}
```



r's lifetime 'a

x's lifetime 'b

Not OK:

r ← x but 'a' ≠ 'b'

- Variable **x** goes out of scope while **r** still exists
 - **r's lifetime 'a' exceeds x's lifetime 'b'** so not safe to assign **x** to **r**

Quiz 4: What is printed?

```
{ let mut s = &String::from("dog");
  {
    let y = String::from("hi");
    s = &y;
  }
  println!("s: {}",s);
}
```

- A. dog
- B. hi
- C. Error – y is immutable
- D. Error – y dropped while still borrowed

Quiz 4: What is printed?

```
{ let mut s = &String::from("dog");
  {
    let y = String::from("hi");
    s = &y;
  }
  println!("s: {}",s);
}
```

A. dog

B. hi

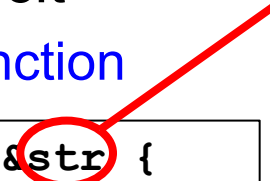
C. Error – y is immutable

D. Error – y dropped while still borrowed

Lifetimes and Functions

- Lifetime of a reference not always explicit
 - E.g., when passed as an **argument to a function**

String slice
(more later)



```
fn longest(x:&str, y:&str) -> &str {  
    if x.len() > y.len() { x } else { y }  
}
```

- What could **go wrong** here?

```
{ let x = String::from("hi");  
  let z;  
  { let y = String::from("there");  
    z = longest(&x, &y); //will be &y  
  } //drop y, and thereby z  
  println!("z = {}", z); //yikes!  
}
```

Lifetime Parameters

- Each reference to a value of type t has a **lifetime parameter**
 - $\&t$ (and $\&\text{mut } t$) – lifetime is implicit
 - $\&'a t$ (and $\&'a \text{mut } t$) – lifetime $'a$ is explicit
- Where do the lifetime names come from?
 - When left implicit, they are generated by the compiler
 - Global variables have lifetime **`'static`**
- Lifetimes can also be **generic**

```
fn longest<'a>(x:&'a str, y:&'a str) -> &'a str {  
    if x.len() > y.len() { x } else { y }  
}
```

- Thus: x and y must have the same lifetime, and the returned reference shares it

Lifetimes FAQ

- When do we use **explicit lifetimes**?
 - When more than one var/type needs the same lifetime (like the `longest` function)
- How do I tell the compiler exactly **which lines of code lifetime 'a covers**?
 - You can't. The compiler will (always) figure it out

Lifetimes FAQ

- How does **lifetime subsumption** work?
 - If lifetime 'a is longer than 'b, we can use 'a where 'b is expected; can require this with 'b: 'a.
 - Permits us to call `longest (&x, &y)` when `x` and `y` have different lifetimes, but one outlives the other
 - Just like subtyping/subsumption in OO programming
- Can we use **lifetimes in data definitions**?
 - Yes; we will see this later when we define `structs`, `enums`, etc.

Recap: Rules of References

1. At any given time, you can have *either* but not both of
 - One mutable reference
 - Any number of immutable references
2. References must always be valid
 - A reference must never outlive its referent