INHERITANCE & OBJECT-ORIENTED PROGRAMMING

Today

- Today we will look at object-oriented programming in more detail.
- In particular we will look at:
  - Composition versus inheritance
  - Access to base classes
  - `public`, `private` and `protected`.
  - Multiple inheritance and virtual classes
  - UML and object-oriented design.
- Much of this lecture refers to the program `rabbit4.cpp` which we developed in the previous lecture, and which can be downloaded from the course web-page.
- This material is taken from Pohl, Chapters 8 and 11.

Composition and inheritance

- We use *composition* when one class contains a data member that is an object of another class.
- Thus in `rabbit4.cpp`, the class `living` contains a data member `location` which is an object of the class `point`.
- Thus `living` and `point` are related by composition.
- Any object of type `living` thus includes an object, called `location`, of type `point`.
- To access the `private` data members of `location` from within an object that contains it, we have to use the `public` function members of `point`.

- We use *inheritance* when one class extends another class, as in:

```
class animal : public living
```

  from `rabbit4.cpp`.
- Here `living` is called the *base class* or *super-class* and `animal` is called the *sub-class*.
- We can think of this as meaning that an object of class `animal` contains all the data and function members of class `living`.
- If we had an object `a` of class `animal`, we would refer to its member `location` by:

```
a.location
```

- And the data member `x` of `location` as:

```
a.location.x
```

- However, it is not quite as simple as that.
- The way that C++ implements inheritance is such that an object of class `animal` contains an object of class `living` (rather than the members of that object).
- Access to the members of this sub-object follow the usual access rules.
- Thus the `private` data members of `living` are not accessible from within `animal`.
- This is typically not what we want.

"public", "private" and "protected"

- One way to handle the fact that a sub-class can't access the `private` members of a base class is to write `public` methods that access them.
- Methods like `set`, `getX` and `getY` for `point`.
- Another approach is to redefine the `private` members as `protected`.
- Thus:

```
class living {

protected:

  point location;
  bool  eaten;

};
```


- Using `protected` here means that the members are treated as `public` in classes derived from `living` (like `animal`).
- However, for classes that are not derived from `living`, the `protected` data members are treated like they are `private`.
- This is exactly what we want in `rabbit4.cpp`.
- The general question of how sub-classes can access members of base classes is more complex than this, however.

Access to base class members

- Each member of a base class can be:
  - `public`
  - `protected`
  - `private`
- Classes can also be derived as:
  - `class A : public B`
  - `class A : protected B`
  - `class A : private B`
- These access levels interact.

- If we have `class A : public B`
  - `public` and `protected` members of `B` remain `public` and `protected` in `A`.
- If we have `class A : protected B`
  - `public` and `protected` members of `B` are `protected` in `A`.
- If we have `class A : private B`
  - `public` and `protected` members of `B` become `private` in `A`.
- Of course, even if base class members are `private` they can be accessed by `friend` classes.
- (Now would be a good time to go back and recap `friend` classes).

Multiple inheritance

- In statements of class derivation like

```
class A : public B
```

  we are not limited to deriving from a single base class.
- We can have, for example:

```
class A : public B, private C
```

- This is called *multiple inheritance*.
- In the latter case `A` has all of the members of `B` and `C`.

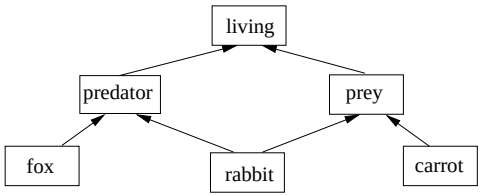
- As an example of multiple inheritance, consider a variation on the classes in `rabbit4.cpp`.
- We could have:

```
class predator: public living{

public:
void eat();
};

class prey: public living{

public:
void beEaten();
};
```


- `carrot` is then a sub-class of `prey`, and `fox` is a sub-class of `predator`.
- `rabbit` is both predator and prey (it eats carrots but is eaten by foxes), so we would define:

```
class rabbit: public predator, public prey
```

- This illustrates a common problem with multiple inheritance.
- We have the class hierarchy:



- `rabbit` now inherits from `living` twice, once through `predator` and once through `prey`.
- This means it has two copies of all the members that it inherits from `living`.
- If we have:

```
rabbit peter;

peter.location.set(1, 2);
```

  it is ambiguous which `location` this refers to.
- It is possible to get around this problem using `virtual` base classes.

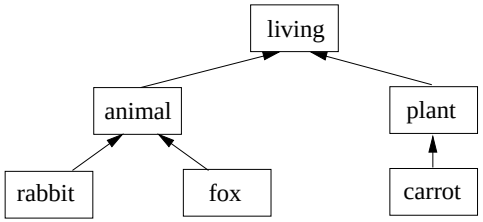
- If we define:

```
class predator: virtual public living{

public:
void eat();
};

class prey: virtual public living{

public:
void beEaten();
};

class rabbit: public predator, public prey{
};
```

  then `rabbit` will only contain one copy of `living`.
- For more on `virtual` base classes, see the textbook.

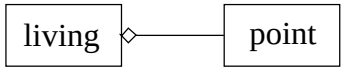
Unified Modelling Language

- The *unified modelling language* or UML is a method of designing and documenting object-oriented designs.
- We are already familiar with the idea of drawing the relationship between classes:

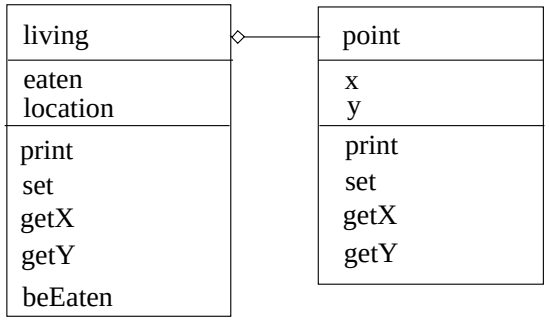


UML expands on this.

- UML uses the same notation as we have been using already to show inheritance between classes.
- UML adds a graphical representation of composition:



  indicates that `living` includes an object of type `point`
- UML also shows the data and function members that a class contains.
- The full UML representation of `living` and `point` from `rabbit4.cpp` is shown on the next slide.



- Clearly we could expand the rest of the class heirarchy with this additional information.
- The idea behind UML is to use this graphical notation to develop the class design before coding.
- The diagrams also serve as a form of documentation.
- Tools for drawing UML diagrams, tutorials and much more can be found at `http://www.uml.org/`.

Summary

- This class has looked at some of the finer points of object-oriented programming.
- We recapped the difference between inheritance and composition and covered:
  - Access to base class members.
  - `public`, `private` and `protected`.
  - Multiple inheritance
  - UML
- Next lecture we will go on to look at pointers.