APL: The Big Picture
Course Summary

• Programming Language Semantics
  – **Operational** – for defining program behavior
  – **Denotational** – for converting program to math
  – **Static** – for avoiding “stuck states” (bugs)
  – **Axiomatic** – for verifying program correctness

• Three styles of programming:
  – **Imperative** (programs are sequences of instructions)
  – **Functional** (programs are functions from inputs to outputs)
  – **Logic** (programs are declarative input-output relations)
Language Popularity

• Which languages are most popularly used in “real life” (i.e., industry)?
  – Unquestionably imperative ones (C/C++/Java)

• Why?
  – easy to compile (no longer a compelling reason)
  – momentum (well-developed tools, large labor pool)
  – easy to write code that almost works

• The “Software Crisis”
  – Microsoft spends >50% of its budget on testing (2008)
  – Their code still doesn’t work
  – “Find better programmers” is not the answer
Better Programming Languages
(What makes a language “advanced”?)

• Correctness over efficiency! (within reason)
  – “If I want it to run faster, I’ll buy more processors.”
  – Compilers as proof-assistants
• Elegant translation from mathematical spec to code
• Separation of concerns (the “what” vs. the “how”)
• Succinctness
  – Less code = fewer bugs
  – Code-reuse (parametric polymorphism)
• Modularity
  – Object-oriented programming
  – See also: OCaml module system, Aspect-oriented programming
• *Programmer efficiency vs. program efficiency*
Should we bury C/C++/Java?

• No! C/C++ is good for certain things:
  – writing the inner loop of a matrix multiplier
  – writing device drivers (but use formal verification)
  – implementing some runtime libraries (e.g., fast string libs)
• But can we please stop implementing entire software systems with it?
• Java was/is a great step forward...
  – brought type-safe programming to the masses
  – popularized automated garbage-collection
• But it still has major weaknesses
  – uncaught exceptions are only slightly better than crashes
  – language definition defies optimization
Grand Challenges

• What kind of language might segue the imperative programming world toward functional/declarative programming?
  – Example: F# [Syme et al., 2001]

• Can we use modern PL theory to debug/correct/analyze legacy codes?
  – Example: REINS [Wartell, Mohan, Hamlen, Lin; ACSAC 2012]

• Can we use PL theory to solve security problems like data confidentiality enforcement?
  – Example: Java Information Flow [Myers, POPL 1999]

• How can we create verified, highly parallelized software?
  – Example: *Verification of Parameterized Concurrent Programs By Modular Reasoning about Data and Control* [Farzan & Kincaid, POPL 2012]
Relevance/Usefulness

• Practical right now
  – Functional Programming
  – Operational/Denotational Semantics for compiler design and analysis
  – Type-checker design & implementation

• Not practical in itself, but fundamental for understanding real-world software verification
  – Lambda calculus
  – Hoare Logic
  – Structural Induction

• Learning how to write formal, rigorous proofs
  – essential if you want to do science, and not just programming
  – infrequently taught at the undergraduate level
  – if you can’t prove easy things, you can’t program hard things
    • every program is a constructive proof (Curry-Howard)
    • Example: if you can’t reason inductively, you can’t program recursively
Microsoft’s Functional Language: F#
(OCaml for Visual Studio .NET)
Facebook’s New Polymorphic, Statically-typed Web Dev Language
Next Steps

- **CS 6353 Compiler Construction**
  - we learned how to design and analyze a language
  - 6353 teaches how to build a compiler for a language
- **CS 6374 Computational Logic**
  - learn about automated theorem proving
  - tools for doing formal software verification
- **CS 6301-005 Language-based Security (shameless plug)**
  - type theory for security analysis & enforcement
  - information flow, access control, etc.
- **Independent study research**
  - Dr. Gupta: logic programming
  - Me: language-based security
Course Evaluations

• Online
  – Please provide (constructive!) feedback
  – Non-anonymous feedback is even more helpful!
    • I never allow student comments (negative or positive) to affect the student’s grade, so please don’t worry about that.

• Some issues of interest...
  – Topics you wish had been included but weren’t?
  – Homework/exam difficulty level
  – Helpfulness of instructor/TA
  – No textbook (make Winskel a required text?)
Questions?
Feedback?