

CSC 421: Algorithm Design & Analysis

Spring 2017

See online syllabus: <http://dave-reed.com/csc421> (also on BlueLine)

Course goals:

- To appreciate the role of algorithms in problem solving and software design, recognizing that a given problem might be solved with a variety of algorithms.
- To be capable of selecting among competing algorithms and justifying their selection based on efficiency.
- To be capable of selecting and utilizing appropriate data structures in implementing algorithms as computer programs.
- To develop programs using different problem-solving approaches (divide-and-conquer, backtracking, dynamic programming), and be able to recognize when one approach is a better fit for a given problem.
- To design and implement programs to model real-world systems, and subsequently analyze their behavior.

1

Your programming evolution...

221: programming in the small

- focused on the design & implementation of small programs
- introduced fundamental programming concepts
 - ✓ variables, assignments, expressions, I/O
 - ✓ control structures (if, if-else, while, for), strings, lists
 - ✓ functions, parameters, OO philosophy

222: programming in the medium

- focused on the design & analysis of more complex programs
- introduced object-oriented approach
 - ✓ classes, objects, fields, methods, object composition, libraries
 - ✓ interfaces, inheritance, polymorphism, system modeling
 - ✓ searching & sorting, Big-Oh efficiency, recursion, GUIs

321: programming in the larger

- focus on more complex problems where data structure choices matter
- introduce standard data structures, design techniques, performance analysis
 - ✓ stacks, queues, sets, maps, linked structures, trees, graphs, hash tables
 - ✓ algorithm design, data structure selection/comparison/analysis
 - ✓ algorithm analysis, recurrence relations, counting & proof techniques

you should be familiar with these concepts (we will do some review next week, but you should review your own notes & text)

2

421: programming in the even larger

still not developing large-scale, multi-programmer systems

- see CSC 548, CSC 599

we will tackle medium-sized (3-10 interacting classes) projects in which

- there may be multiple approaches, with different performance characteristics
- the choice of algorithm and accompanying data structure is important
- the wrong choice can make a solution infeasible

- we will consider multiple design paradigms and problem characteristics that suggest which paradigm to apply
 - ✓ brute force, decrease & conquer, divide & conquer, transform & conquer
 - ✓ greedy algorithms, backtracking, dynamic programming, space/time tradeoffs

- we will also study the notions of computability and feasibility
 - ✓ P vs. NP, NP-hard problems, approximation algorithms

3

When problems start to get complex...

...choosing the right algorithm and data structures are important

- e.g., phone book lookup, checkerboard puzzle

- must develop problem-solving approaches (e.g., divide&conquer, backtracking)
- be able to identify appropriate data structures (e.g., lists, trees, sets, maps)

		1		2				
	3	7	8					2
2	4						7	3
4						7	1	
			6	8				
	8	2						9
9	5						3	7
6				5	4	8		
			4		5			

EXAMPLE: solving a Sudoku puzzle

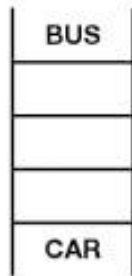
- need to be able to represent the grid
- devise an algorithm to fill in the blanks so that every row, column & subsquare contains 1-9

- how do you solve Sudoku puzzles?
- should the computer use the same approach?
- how complicated/fast would it be?

4

Another example

word ladders are puzzles in which you are to bridge from one word to another by changing only one letter



- need to be able to read and store a dictionary
- need to find a (shortest?) sequence between two words
- in doing so, need to recognize when words differ by 1 letter

- how do you complete a word ladder?
- should the computer use the same approach?
- how complicated/fast would it be?

NICK → ... → WINS

DAVE → ... → REED

5

Another example

suppose you are given a set of integers (positive and negative)

$\{4, -9, 3, 4, -1, -5, 8\}$

is there a subset of integers that add up to 0?

- this is known as the *subset sum problem*

- it turns out that there is no known efficient algorithm to solve this
- may have to exhaustively try every possible subset of numbers

- how many subsets of N items can there be?

6

OOP and code reuse

when solving large problems, code reuse is important

- designing, implementing, and testing large software projects is HARD
whenever possible, want to utilize existing, debugged code
- reusable code is:
 - clear and readable (well documented, uses meaningful names, no tricks)
 - modular (general, independent routines – test & debug once, then reuse)

OOP is the standard approach to software engineering

philosophy: modularity and reuse apply to data as well as functions

- when solving a problem, must identify the objects involved
e.g., banking system: customer, checking account, savings account, ...
- develop a software model of the objects in the form of abstract data types (ADTs)
a program is a collection of interacting software objects
can utilize inheritance to derive new classes from existing ones