



Hochschule  
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# ROS Nodes, Topics, and Messages

Foundation Course

September 5, 2019

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# 1. Recap

## 2. ROS nodes in Python

- 2.1 A simple ROS node in Python
- 2.2 Writing a publisher node in Python
- 2.3 How to use ROS messages
- 2.4 Writing a subscriber node in Python
- 2.5 General notes

## 3. ROS Launch Files

## 4. Names in ROS

- 4.1 Namespaces
- 4.2 Name Remappings

## 5. Parameter Server

## 6. Catkin and Custom ROS messages

- 6.1 Catkin
- 6.2 Package Manifest
- 6.3 CMakeLists file
- 6.4 Custom ROS Messages



# Recap

## *Summary of yesterday's session*

- ROS is a collection of libraries and tools that helps you when you develop software for robots.
- ROS provides several ways to transfer data between nodes:
  1. ROS topics and messages (**publish/subscribe**).
  2. ROS services (**request/reply**).
  3. ROS actions (**request/reply**).
  4. Parameter server.

# Recap

## *Summary of yesterday's session*

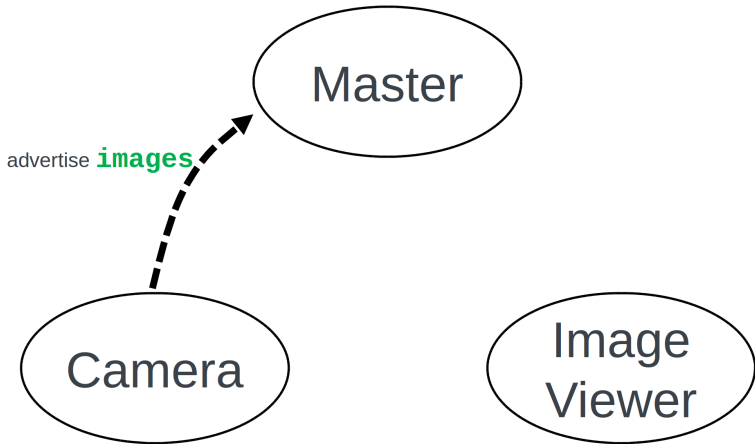
- We will focus today on ROS topics and messages..

```
graph TD; Master([Master]); Camera([Camera]); ImageViewer([Image Viewer]);
```

Master

Camera

Image  
Viewer









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# A simple ROS node

*../scripts/00\_simple\_node.py*

```
#!/usr/bin/env python

import rospy
from time import sleep

rospy.init_node("print_text")

while True:
    print "Hello world!"
    sleep(1)
```

# A simple ROS node

*../scripts/01\_simple\_node.py*

```
#!/usr/bin/env python
```

```
import rospy
```

```
rospy.init_node("print_text")
```

```
rate = rospy.Rate(1)
```

```
while not rospy.is_shutdown():
```

```
    print "Hello world!"
```

```
    rate.sleep()
```

# Writing a publisher node in Python

*../scripts/02\_simple\_publisher.py*

```
rospy.init_node('node name')
```

- nodes name must be unique. If you want to make sure the name of the node is unique:

```
rospy.init_node('node name', anonymous= True)
```

- node name will look like this:  
/print\_text\_19637\_1567065017476

# Three ways to run a node

## *ROS Nodes*

There are 3 ways to run a node:

1. Like you normally do (not recommended). Example (in case of python node):

```
python <file name>
```

2. using rosrun command:

```
rosrun <package name> <node name>
```

3. Using launch files. (we'll see it later)

# Let's create a package first!

## *ROS Nodes*

- ROS commands find your files (python scripts, cpp files, launch files, message definitions) if they are located in a package inside the workspace.
- Normally, a package looks like this:



include



launch



msg



scripts



src



srv



CMakeLists.txt



package.xml

# Let's create a package first!

## *ROS Nodes*

- go to the README and do the steps for **creating a package**.



# ROS commands

## *ROS Nodes*

- Navigate to a ROS package directly:

```
roscd <package name>
```

- run a node without navigating to it's directory:

```
roslaunch <package name> <executable>
```

# Let's create a package first!

## *ROS Nodes*

- go to the README and do the steps for **running a node**.

# More ROS commands

## *ROS Nodes, Topics, and Messages*

- List all the running nodes:

```
rostopic list
```

- Get more info. about a certain node:

```
rostopic info <node name>
```

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# Writing a publisher node in Python

*ROS Nodes, Topics, and Messages*

- Let's extend our previous node and make it publish a String ROS message.

# Writing a publisher node in Python

*../scripts/02\_simple\_publisher.py*

```
#!/usr/bin/env python

import rospy

from std_msgs.msg import String

rospy.init_node('talker')

pub = rospy.Publisher('myFirstTopic', String, queue_size=10)

rate = rospy.Rate(1)

my_message = String()
my_message.data = "Hello there! How are you?"

while not rospy.is_shutdown():
    pub.publish(my_message)
    rate.sleep()
```

# Writing a publisher node in Python

*../scripts/02\_simple\_publisher.py*

```
rospy.Publisher(name, data_class, queue_size)
```

- `name`: Name of the topic to publish on.
- `data_class`: The type of message. It is a ROS message class.
- `queue_size`: The size of the outgoing message queue.

# Writing a publisher node in Python

*../scripts/02\_simple\_publisher.py*

```
rospy.Publisher(  
    name,  
    data_class,  
    subscriber_listener=None,  
    tcp_nodelay=False,  
    latch=False,  
    headers=None,  
    queue_size=None  
)
```



# Writing a publisher node in Python

*Things to note..*

- ROS messages are implemented as classes.
- To publish a message you also need to define a **Publisher** class.
- Most of ROS concepts and functionalities are implemented as classes. This is why understanding OOP helps you understand ROS better.

# Writing a publisher node in Python

*ROS Nodes, Topics, and Messages*

- Go to the README file and do the instructions of section:  
**some of ROS commands.**

# More ROS commands

## *ROS Nodes, Topics, and Messages*

- Get the current list of topics:

```
rostopic list
```

- Print published messages:

```
rostopic echo <topic name>
```

# More ROS commands

## *ROS Nodes, Topics, and Messages*

- Publish a message from terminal:

```
rostopic pub <topic name> <msg type> <msg>
```

- Get message type of a topic:

```
rostopic type <topic name>
```

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# How to use ROS messages

## *ROS Nodes, Topics, and Messages*

- ROS messages are just classes with attributes you can fill.
- ROS messages are defined in separate files and have to be placed in a package. (will be covered today).
- The following command can be used to see the class attributes, or the description, of a ROS message:

```
rosmmsg show <package/msg>
```

# How to use ROS messages

## *Example*

```
rosmmsg show std_msgs/String
```

The output is:

```
string data
```

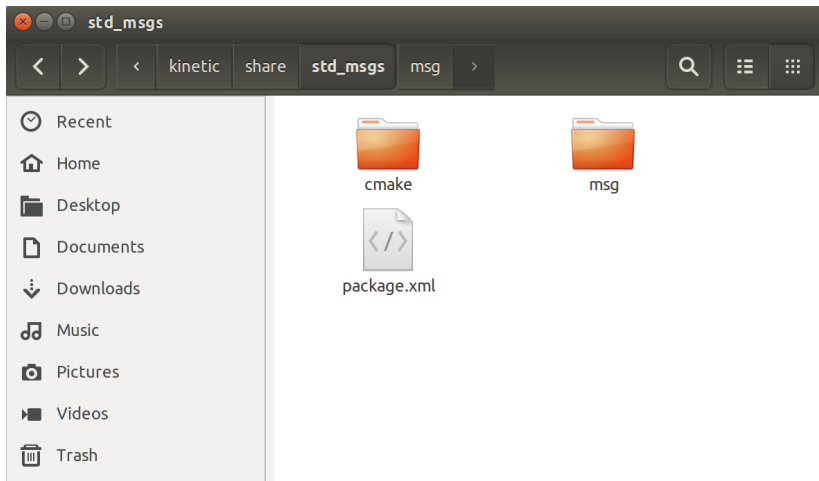
- It means ROS **String** message is a class with an attribute named **data** of type string (Python string).

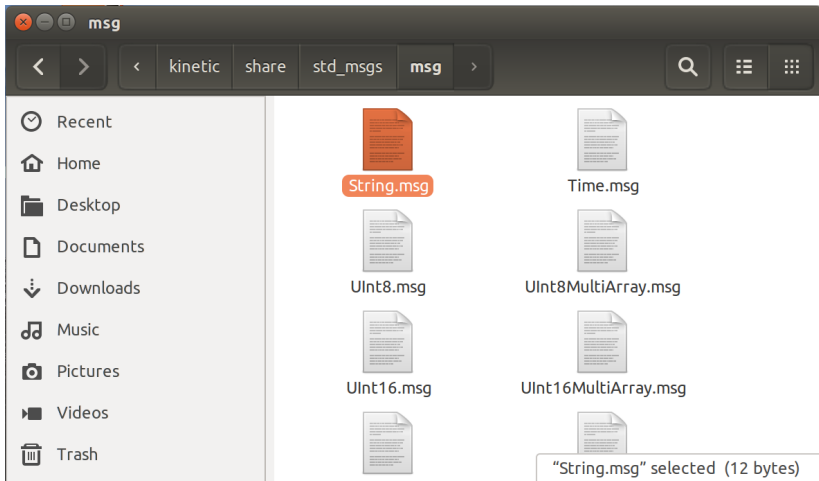
# How to use ROS messages

## *Importing a ROS message*

- `String` message is located in the `std_msgs` package.







Note: this is not the file that is imported in our script though! this file is not even Python nor C++. We will see later what this file is.

# How to use ROS messages

## *Importing a ROS message*

### Python

```
from std_msgs.msg import String
```

### C++

```
#include "std_msgs/String.h"
```

# Exercise 1

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# Writing a subscriber node in Python

*../scripts/03\_simple\_subscriber.py*

```
#!/usr/bin/env python

import rospy
from std_msgs.msg import String

def my_callback_function(msg):
    print msg

rospy.init_node('listener')
rate = rospy.Rate(100)
sub = rospy.Subscriber('myFirstTopic', String,
                        callback=my_callback_function)

while not rospy.is_shutdown():
    pass
```

# Writing a subscriber node in Python

*../scripts/04\_simple\_subscriber.py*

```
#!/usr/bin/env python
```

```
import rospy  
from std_msgs.msg import String
```

```
def my_callback_function(msg):  
    print msg
```

```
rospy.init_node('listener')  
rate = rospy.Rate(100)
```

```
rospy.Subscriber('myFirstTopic', String, callback=my_callback_function)
```

```
rospy.spin()
```

# Writing a subscriber node in Python

## *Subscriber class*

- go to the README, and let's do section:  
**Simple subscriber**



# Writing a subscriber node in Python

## *Subscriber class*

```
rospy.Subscriber(  
    name,  
    data_class,  
    callback=None,  
    callback_args=None,  
    queue_size=None,  
    buff_size=65536,  
    tcp_nodelay=False  
)
```

# Writing a subscriber node in Python

## *Subscriber class*

- go to the README, and let's do section:  
**Simple subscriber**

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# General notes

*more on ROS nodes*

- You can define multiple publishers and subscribers in a node.
- You can call `init_node` function once only!
- To make your code look neat, you can wrap ROS stuff in a class and hide them!

Let's see an example with multiple publishers/subscribers and let's define them in a class...

Let's see script  
**05\_node\_example.py**

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# ROS Launch Files

- If you are working on a project that is comprised of multiple nodes, it's not practical to run each node manually everytime!
- ROS Launch files provide a way to run/launch multiple nodes at once.

# ROS Launch Files

*../launch/00\_simple.launch*

```
<!-- Example launch file to run the turtlesim node-->
```

```
<launch>
```

```
  <node pkg="turtlesim" type="turtlesim_node" name="turtle"/>
```

```
</launch>
```



# ROS Launch Files

- To run a launch file:

```
roslaunch <package name> <launch file>
```

- Example

```
roslaunch my_first_package 00_simple.launch
```

# ROS Launch Files

- Ros launch files are XML files that consists for tags.
- They have `.launch` file extension.
- You would ideally place them inside a `launch` folder inside your package.



include



launch



msg



scripts



src



srv



CMakeLists.txt



package.xml

# ROS Launch Files

- With launch files, you can do the following:
  - Define nodes to be run.
  - Set ROS parameters on the parameter server.
  - Name remapping (will be covered later).
  - Define arguments for the launch file itself.
  - Include other launch files, and pass arguments to them.
  - Bring up the master (no need to call `roscore`).
  - Push a group of nodes into a separate namespace (will be covered later).
  - The list goes on..

# ROS Launch Files

*../launch/01\_simple.launch*

```
<!-- Example launch file to run  
the turtlesim node and our script 06-->
```

```
<launch>
```

```
  <node pkg="turtlesim" type="turtlesim_node" name="turtle"/>
```

```
  <node pkg="my_first_package" type="06_parameters_example.py"  
    name="commander"/>
```

```
</launch>
```

# ROS Launch Files

- Go to the README, and do section  
**Using launch files**

## Exercise 2

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# Names in ROS

- Resources in ROS computation graph (nodes, topics, parameters, etc..) must all have unique names.



# Names in ROS

- Suppose we have a `camera` node that publishes on a topic named `image`
- what if you added a camera to your robot, and want to run two `camera` nodes?
- You will get name collision if you run the node twice!

# Names in ROS

- ROS provides two mechanisms to avoid such situation:
  - Namespaces.
  - Remappings.

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# Namespaces

## *Names in ROS*

- A node can be run under a namespace. For example, if we have two cameras, left camera, and right camera, the two `camera` nodes can have different namespaces:
- Node names:

```
/left/camera  
/right/camera
```

- Topic names:

```
/left/image  
/right/image
```

# Namespaces

## *How to? Using rosrn*

- From the terminal using `rosrn` command:

```
rosrn <package name> <node name> __ns:=<namespace>
```

Example:

```
rosrn turtlesim turtlesim_node __ns:=first
```

Node name becomes:

```
/first/turtlesim
```

- Notice the forward slash (/) is used as a separator.

# Namespaces

*How to? from a launch file*

- Using the `group` tag, you can push down resource names under a chosen namespace.

# Namespaces

*How to? from a launch file*

*../launch/02\_group\_tag.launch*

```
<!-- Example launch file using the group tag-->
```

```
<launch>
```

```
  <group ns="/first">
```

```
    <node pkg="turtlesim" type="turtlesim_node" name="turtle"/>
```

```
  </group>
```

```
</launch>
```

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# Name Remappings

- The second way ROS provides to change resource names is **remapping**.
- With name remapping, you can rename any resource.  
Examples:
  - rename a node.
  - Change the name of the topic a node publishes/subscribes to.
- Again, this is done without having to edit source code of the node. (node is reusable without altering it).

# Name Remappings

*How to? Using rosrn*

- Example, from the terminal using `rosrn` command:

```
rosrn turtlesim turtlesim_node /turtle1/cmd_vel:=/vel
```

Changes topic name to:

```
/vel
```

- Example, from the terminal changing node name:

```
rosrn turtlesim turtlesim_node /turtlesim:=/second_turtle
```

Changes node name to:

```
/second_turtle
```

# Name Remappings

*How to? from a launch file*

*../launch/03\_remap\_tag.launch*

```
<!-- Example launch file using remap tag-->

<launch>
  <node pkg="turtlesim" type="turtlesim_node" name="turtle">
    <remap from="/turtle1/cmd_vel" to="/vel"/>
  </node>
</launch>
```

# Name resolution

- When you define a resource name (ex: node name, topic name, etc.), you can specify how names should be resolved.

# Name resolution

- Example, suppose the snippet below is for a node named `talker` and has a namespace of `group1` (so the resolved node name is `/group1/talker`):

```
rospy.Publisher(myTopic, String, queue_size=10)
```

- The resolved topic name (what appears when you do `rostopic list`) will be:

```
/group1/myTopic
```

# Name resolution

- The previous example shows **relative** name resolution, which is the default way names are resolved in ROS.
- The following table shows all types of name resolutions

# Figures

*Tables, graphs, and images*

node name	syntax	type	resolved name
/group1/talker	myTopic	relative	/group1/myTopic
/group1/talker	/myTopic	global	/myTopic
/group1/talker	~myTopic	private	/group1/talker/myTopic

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# Parameter Server

- A network-shared dictionary accessible to all nodes.
- All nodes can access and modify those values.
- Parameter server is a part of ROS Master.

# Parameter Server

## *Command line tools*

- The `rosparam` command can do the following:
  - Get a list of parameter names currently held by the master.

```
rosparam list
```

- Set/change the value of a parameter:

```
rosparam set <parameter name>
```

- Get/fetch the value of a parameter:

```
rosparam get <parameter name>
```

# Parameter Server

*rospy interface to the parameter server*

- A node can fetch/retrieve a parameter as follows:

```
rospy.get_param(param_name)
```

- It can optionally define a default value in case the parameter is not set in the parameter server:

```
rospy.get_param(param_name, default=value)
```

- A node can set a parameter on the parameter server:

```
rospy.set_param(param_name, param_value)
```

Let's see script  
**06\_parameters\_example.py**

# Parameter Server

*Using launch files*

*../launch/04\_param\_tag.launch*

```
<!-- Example launch file using param tag-->
```

```
<launch>
```

```
<param name="rate" value="100"/>
```

```
<param name="radius" value="0.5"/>
```

```
<param name="angular_speed" value="1"/>
```

```
<node pkg="my_first_package" type="06_parameters_example.py" name="command">
```

```
<node pkg="turtlesim" type="turtlesim_node" name="turtle"/>
```

```
</launch>
```

# Parameter Server

## *Name resolution*

- Name resolution applies also to parameter names (as we discussed earlier).
- The examples that follows, assume the node name is `move` and has a namespace of `/robot1`, so the resolved node name is `/robot1/move`.

# Parameter Server

- Global naming:

```
var = rospy.get_param("/speed")  
resolves to ⇒ /speed
```

- Relative naming:

```
var = rospy.get_param("speed")  
resolves to ⇒ /robot1/speed
```

- Private naming:

```
var = rospy.get_param("~speed")  
resolves to ⇒ /robot1/move/speed
```

Let's use private parameter names instead of relative

**07\_parameters\_example.py**



# Parameter Server

*Using launch files*

*../launch/05\_private\_params.launch*

```
<!-- Example launch file, setting private parameters-->
```

```
<launch>  
<node pkg="my_first_package" type="07_parameters_example.py" name="command">  
  <param name="rate" value="100"/>  
  <param name="radius" value="0.5"/>  
  <param name="angular_speed" value="1"/>  
</node>  
<node pkg="turtlesim" type="turtlesim_node" name="turtle"/>  
</launch>
```

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- In ROS, packages are compiled and built using Catkin.
- The build process is not only to compile C++ nodes, it's also used to generate source files (ex. Python and C++ files that define ROS messages as classes which you can import/include).
- Today, we will look at ROS message generation, and how to define custom ROS messages.

- Catkin is not a compiler. It is a tool that handles the compilation process starting from source files up to generating executables.
- It invokes system's compiler (ex. g++, gcc, etc..) and handles your package dependencies.
- to do that, Catkin needs information on what to compile, where to find, etc...

# A ROS package

- The `CMakeLists.txt` file is what tells Catkin these things.
- `package.xml` file is where you add information about the package (author, maintainer, dependencies, etc..).



include



launch



msg



scripts



src



srv



CMakeLists.txt



package.xml

- These files are auto-generated by `catkin_create_pkg` command.



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# Package Manifest

*package.xml file*

- Go to the package we have created earlier  
( `my_first_package` ) and open the `package.xml` file there.

# Package Manifest

*package.xml* file

- It's an XML file that consists of tags you need to fill.
- It defines properties of the package which include:
  - Name of the package: `<name>`.
  - Version number: `<version>`.
  - Description: `<description>`.
  - Package maintainer: `<maintainer>`.
  - License: `<license>`.
  - Package URL: `<url>`.
  - Author of package `<author>`.

# Package Manifest

*package.xml file*

- It also defines package dependencies:
  - Build Dependencies: `<build_depend>`.
  - Build Export Dependencies: `<build_export_depend>`.
  - Execution Dependencies: `<exec_depend>`.
  - Test Dependencies: `<test_depend>`.
  - Build Tool Dependencies: `<buildtool_depend>`. (catkin)
  - Documentation Tool Dependencies: `<doc_depend>`
  - All of the above: `<depend>`.

## 1. Recap

## 2. ROS nodes in Python

- 2.1 A simple ROS node in Python
- 2.2 Writing a publisher node in Python
- 2.3 How to use ROS messages
- 2.4 Writing a subscriber node in Python
- 2.5 General notes

## 3. ROS Launch Files

## 4. Names in ROS

- 4.1 Namespaces
- 4.2 Name Remappings

## 5. Parameter Server

## 6. Catkin and Custom ROS messages

- 6.1 Catkin
- 6.2 Package Manifest
- 6.3 CMakeLists file
- 6.4 Custom ROS Messages



# CMakeLists.txt

- The second file is ( `CMakeLists.txt` ). This defines how to build the package, what to compile, etc..
- Go to the package we have created earlier ( `my_first_package` ) and open the ( `CMakeLists.txt` ).

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# Custom ROS message

## *How to define them*

- Custom messages are defined in separate text files.
- These files have `.msg` extension and have to be placed in `msg` folder inside the package.



include



launch



msg



scripts



src



srv



CMakeLists.txt



package.xml



# Custom ROS message

## *msg file format*

- The format is as follows:

```
fieldtype1    fieldname1
fieldtype2    fieldname2
fieldtype3    fieldname3
```

# Custom ROS message

## *Examples*

- `String.msg`:

```
string data
```

- The `String` message has one field of built-in type `string`.

# Custom ROS message

## *Built-in types*

- Some of the built-in field types:

Built-in type	C++	Python
bool	uint8_t	bool
int8	int8_t	int
int32	int32_t	int
string	std::string	string (str)
float32	float	float

# Custom ROS message

## *Examples*

- `Twist.msg`:

```
Vector3 linear  
Vector3 angular
```

- It's possible to embed other message descriptions. In this example `Vector3` is another message.

# Custom ROS message

## *Examples*

- `Twist.msg`:

```
Vector3 linear  
Vector3 angular
```

- `Vector3.msg`:

```
float64 x  
float64 y  
float64 z
```

# Custom ROS message

- Let's define a custom message and see how to build the package!
- Go to the README and see section **Custom ROS messages**.

# Custom ROS message

## *Behind the scenes*

- Catkin uses these message description files to generate Python and C++ source files.
- The generated source files actually define the messages as classes, with public attributes matching the fields defined in the message description file.
- The generated source files are what you actually import or include in your nodes.

# Custom ROS message

## *Behind the scenes*

- This is why you need to build your package after writing a new `.msg` file. Otherwise you won't be able to import it.
- You need to explicitly tell Catkin about your `.msg` files and the dependencies needed to generate message classes.
- You do that in both the `CMakeLists.txt` and `package.xml` files.



# rospy reference

- rospy full documentation (all the classes, all the functions ..etc):

<http://docs.ros.org/kinetic/api/rospy/html/>

- ROS wiki
- On ROS names: "Programming Robots with ROS: a practical introduction to the Robot Operating System" Book, 2015, by Quigley and others.
- More on ROS names:  
<https://wiki.ros.org/Remapping%20Arguments>