

Introduction to Separation Logic

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Syntax of Separation Logic

- Given a decidable base-theory T , the syntax of separation logic $SL(T)_{Loc, Data}$ is presented
- Loc and $Data$ represent the type of the address and the values
- Loc and $Data$ can be any sorts, but Loc should be countably infinite, for the purpose of the decision procedure
- For example, Loc and $Data$ can be Int

$$\begin{aligned} P, Q ::= & \text{false} \mid P \wedge Q \mid P \vee Q \mid P \rightarrow Q \\ & \mid P * Q \mid P \multimap Q \\ & \mid E = E' \mid E \hookrightarrow E' \mid \text{empty} \end{aligned}$$

We use E and E' to denote expressions in the base theory, where heap indirection is not used. This is needed to syntactically rule out formulas like $F : (x \hookrightarrow v_1) = (y \hookrightarrow v_2)$

Semantics of Separation Logic

The model consists of an interpretation (I) and a heap (h)

$$I : \text{Var} \rightarrow \text{Loc}$$

$$h : \text{Loc} \rightarrow \text{Data}$$

$$I, h \models \text{false} \qquad \text{never satisfied}$$

$$I, h \models P \wedge Q \qquad I, h \models P \text{ and } I, h \models Q$$

$$I, h \models P \vee Q \qquad I, h \models P \text{ or } I, h \models Q$$

$$I, h \models P \rightarrow Q \qquad I, h \models P \text{ implies } I, h \models Q$$

$$I, h \models E = E' \qquad \llbracket E \rrbracket_I = \llbracket E' \rrbracket_I$$

We use $\llbracket E \rrbracket_I$ to denote the value of E under the interpretation I . Also, the domain of h should be a subset of Loc and it can be a partial function.

Empty heap

$$\begin{aligned} I, h &\models \text{empty} \\ \text{iff } h &= \phi \end{aligned}$$

Separating conjunction

$$\begin{aligned} I, h &\models P * Q \\ \text{iff } \exists h_1, h_2. &(h_1 \# h_2) \wedge (h = h_1 \circ h_2) \wedge I, h_1 \models P \wedge I, h_2 \models Q \end{aligned}$$

Where $h_1 \# h_2$ denotes that the heap domains are disjoint and $h_1 \circ h_2$ means their union.

Separating Implication

$$\begin{aligned} I, h &\models P \multimap Q \\ \text{iff } \forall h'. (h \# h') \wedge (I, h' &\models P) \rightarrow I, h \circ h' \models Q \end{aligned}$$

Interpretation : If we extend the current heap with a disjoint heap satisfying P , then the new heap satisfies Q . In some ways, we can imagine that our current heap is only missing the records of P , to make it satisfy Q .

Points to

$$\begin{aligned} I, h &\models E \hookrightarrow E' \\ \text{iff } h(\llbracket E \rrbracket_I) &= \llbracket E' \rrbracket_I \end{aligned}$$

Examples

Points to,

$$F : x \hookrightarrow 10$$

$$I : \{(x, 0)\}$$

$$h : \{(0, 10)\}$$

$$I, h \models F$$

Separating conjunction,

$$F : x \hookrightarrow 10 * y \hookrightarrow 20$$

$$I : \{(x, 0), (y, 1)\}$$

$$h : \{(0, 10), (1, 20)\}$$

$$I, h \models F$$

Another example,

$$F : x \hookrightarrow y * y \hookrightarrow x$$

$$I : \{(x, 0), (y, 1)\}$$

$$h : \{(0, 1), (1, 0)\}$$

$$I, h \models F$$

Separating Implication

$$I, h \models P \multimap Q$$
$$\text{iff } \forall h'. (h \# h') \wedge (I, h' \models P) \rightarrow I, h \circ h' \models Q$$

Example,

$$F : (x \hookrightarrow 10) \multimap (x \hookrightarrow 10 * y \hookrightarrow 20)$$

$$I : \{(x, 0), (y, 1)\}$$

$$h' : \{(0, 10)\}$$

$$h : \{(1, 20)\}$$

$$h \circ h' : \{(0, 10), (1, 20)\}$$

$$I, h \models F$$

Applications

Separation logic has been useful in Hoare logic for program verification. We will have a quick look at Hoare logic.

$$\{P\}S\{Q\}$$

P : Logical assertion on states - precondition

S : Code section that modifies state

Q : Logical assertion on states - postcondition

Example,

$$\{x = 1\}x := 2\{x = 2\}$$

The programs S are defined against a language specification with imperative commands such as skip, loops, variable and pointer assignments.

Now given a post-condition Q and program S , we want to calculate the set of states, that the program can be in before, to end-up in Q after execution.

Example,

$$\{x > 0\}x := x + 1\{x \geq 0\}$$

This is also valid,

$$\{x > -1\}x := x + 1\{x \geq 0\}$$

In fact, $(x > -1) \rightarrow (x > 0)$, thus, $(x > -1)$ is weaker. Finding the weakest unique precondition, can then let us reason about all the states, that the program can be in before, to guarantee Q to hold.

Applications

The first application of separation logic in Hoare-style verification is to do local reasoning, which is defined as,

$$\frac{\{P\}S\{Q\}}{\{P * R\}S\{Q * R\}}$$

Example,

```
{root ↦ (left, right) * tree(left) * tree(right)}  
deletetree(left)  
{root ↦ (left, right) * emp * tree(right)}  
deletetree(right)  
{root ↦ (left, right) * emp * emp}  
free(root)  
{emp * emp * emp}  
{emp}
```

Applications

Another application is to have an operation similar to modus-ponens for heap predicates.

$$P * (P \multimap Q) \models Q$$

Example,

$$(x \hookrightarrow v_1) * (x \hookrightarrow v_1 \multimap y \hookrightarrow v_2) \models (y \hookrightarrow v_2)$$

Also, this is used in weakest pre-condition computation, where if we have a triple,

$$\{P\}x := 3\{Q\}$$

where the weakest precondition would be,

$$wp(x := 3, Q) \equiv (x \hookrightarrow -) * ((x \hookrightarrow 3) \multimap Q)$$

The trivial case being $P = x \hookrightarrow 3$.

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Translating Separation Logic into Pointer Logic

Points to,

$$\begin{aligned} I, h &\models x \hookrightarrow v \\ &\iff \\ L, M &\models *x = v \end{aligned}$$

Separating conjunction,

$$\begin{aligned} I, h &\models x \hookrightarrow v_1 * y \hookrightarrow v_2 \\ &\iff \\ L, M &\models *x = v_1 \wedge *y = v_2 \wedge x \neq y \end{aligned}$$

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Need for inductive predicates

- Most interesting data structures in programs are defined as inductive systems
- For example : linked lists, trees, graphs
- Being able to reason about these in SL is useful
- But inductive predicates introduce quantifiers

This way of specifying a list is quite cumbersome,

$$p \hookrightarrow v_1, p_1 \wedge$$

$$p_1 \hookrightarrow v_2, p_2 \wedge$$

$$p_2 \hookrightarrow v_3, p_3 \wedge$$

...

Lists in pointer logic

First try at defining lists without explicit quantifiers. We define the following predicates for the i^{th} element of the list,

$$\text{list-elem}(p, 0) \equiv p$$

$$\text{list-elem}(p, i) \equiv * \text{list-elem}(p, i - 1)$$

In this formulation, a null-terminated list would be

$$\text{list-elem}(p, l) = \text{NULL}$$

and a cyclic list would be,

$$\text{list-elem}(p, l) = p$$

But the last predicate is also satisfied by an element with length 1.

Lists in pointer logic

To actually get a disjoint list with unique pointer elements, we need to add an extra constraint,

$$\text{overlap}(p, q) \equiv p = q \vee p + 1 = q \vee p = q + 1$$

$$\text{list-disjoint}(p, 0) \equiv \text{TRUE}$$

$$\text{list-disjoint}(p, l) \equiv \text{list-disjoint}(p, l - 1) \wedge$$

$$\forall 0 \leq i < l - 1. \neg \text{overlap}(\text{list-elem}(p, i), \text{list-elem}(p, l - 1))$$

The set of clauses grows quadratically upon the quantifier instantiation.

Lists - Try 2

We now try to define a list with inductive predicates,

$$\text{list } 0 \ x \equiv x = \text{nil}$$

$$\text{list } n \ x \equiv \exists y. (x \hookrightarrow v, y) \wedge (\text{list } (n - 1) \ y)$$

This is a satisfying assignment for *list* 3 *x*,

$$l = \{ (x, 0), (y, 0), (z, 1), (w, \text{nil}) \}$$

$$h = \{ (0, (v, 1)), (1, (v, w)) \}$$

The pointers *x* and *y* got aliased to point to *z*.

$$\text{list } 3 \ x \equiv$$

$$(x = 0) \hookrightarrow v, 1 \wedge$$

$$(y = 0) \hookrightarrow v, 1 \wedge$$

$$(z = 1) \hookrightarrow v, \text{nil} \wedge$$

Lists in Separation Logic

In separation logic, the separating conjunction takes care of ensuring the pointers don't alias.

$$\text{list } 0 \ x \equiv x = \text{nil}$$

$$\text{list } n \ x \equiv \exists y. (x \hookrightarrow v, y) * (\text{list } (n - 1) \ y)$$