



Victoria University  
of Wellington, New Zealand  
*Te Whare Wananga o te  
Upoko o te Ika a Maui  
Aotearoa*



# SWEN221: Software Development

## 17: Generics I

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Modified from David J. Pearce & Nicholas Cameron & James Noble

# Why Generics?

```
class Vec {  
    private Object[] elems = new Object[16];  
    private int end = 0;  
    public void add(Object e) {  
        if(end == elems.length) { ... }  
        elems[end] = e; end=end+1;  
    }  
    public Object get(int index) {  
        if(index >= end) { throw ... }  
        else return elems[index];  
    }  
}
```

java: incompatible types:

java.lang.Object cannot be converted to generics.Cat

```
Vec v = new Vec();  
v.add(new Cat());  
Cat c = v.get(0);
```

# Why Generics?

```
class Vec {  
    private Object[] elems = new Object[16];  
    private int end = 0;  
    public void add(Object e) {  
        if(end == elems.length) { ... }  
        elems[end] = e; end=end+1;  
    }  
    public Object get(int index) {  
        if(index >= end) { throw ... }  
        else return elems[index];  
    }  
}
```

This says v is a  
Vec of  
Objects

We know this  
returns a Cat,  
but we still  
have to cast

```
Vec v = new Vec();  
v.add(new Cat());  
Cat c = (Cat) v.get(0); // have to cast :-)
```

How can we  
say v is a Vec  
of Cats?

# Java Generics

- History
  - Introduced in Java 1.5
  - Similar to C++ templates, but actually quite different as well!
- Before Java generics:
  - **Can only say things like: 'v' is a Vector of Objects**
  - Then, can put any Object into 'v' without restriction
  - With a Vector of just Cats, have to cast Objects to Cats
- With Java Generics:
  - **Can say things like: 'v' is a Vector of Cats**
  - Then, can only put Cats into 'v'
  - And, can only get Cats out of 'v' - no casting required!

# The Vec Class

```
class Vec {  
    private Object[] elems = new Object[16];  
    private int end = 0;  
    public void add(Object e) {  
        if(end == elems.length) { ... }  
        elems[end] = e; end=end+1;  
    }  
    public Object get(int index) {  
        if(index >= end) { throw ... }  
        else return elems[index];  
    }  
}
```

```
Vec v = new Vec();  
v.add(new Cat());  
Cat c = (Cat) v.get(0); // have to cast :-)
```

# The Generic Vec Class

```
class Vec<T> {  
    private Object[] elems = new Object[16];  
    private int end = 0;  
    public void add(T e) {  
        if(end == elems.length) { ... }  
        elems[end] = e; end=end+1;  
    }  
    public T get(int index) {  
        if(index >= end) { throw ... }  
        else return (T) elems[index];  
    }  
}
```

"T" is a generic parameter

"T" represents the type of object held in Vec

This says v is a Vec of Cats

Can only put Cats into v

```
Vec<Cat> v = new Vec<Cat>();  
v.add(new Cat());  
Cat c = v.get(0); // don't have to cast :-)
```

Can only get Cats out of v

# Pair Example

```
class Pair {  
    private Object first;  
    private Object second;  
  
    public Pair(Object f, Object s) {  
        first = f; second = s;  
    }  
    public Object first() { return first; }  
    public Object second() { return second; }  
}
```

```
Pair p1 = new Pair("Cat",1);  
Pair p2 = new Pair(10,20);  
String c = (String) p1.first();  
Integer i = (Integer) p2.first();
```

# Pair Example

```
class Pair<FIRST,SECOND> {  
    private FIRST first;  
    private SECOND second;  
  
    public Pair(FIRST f, SECOND s) {  
        first = f; second = s;  
    }  
    public FIRST first() { return first; }  
    public SECOND second() { return second; }  
}
```

No need to  
cast!

```
Pair<String,Integer> p1 = new Pair<String,Integer>("Cat",1);  
Pair<Integer,Integer> p2 = new Pair<Integer,Integer>(10,20);  
String c = p1.first();  
Integer i = p2.first();
```



# Shape Example

A

```
interface Shape { void draw(Graphics g); }
```

```
class Square implements Shape { ... }
```

```
class Circle implements Shape { ... }
```

B

```
class ShapeGroup implements Shape {
```

```
    private List shapes = new ArrayList();
```

C

```
    ...
```

D

```
    public void draw(Graphics g) {
```

```
        for(Shape s : shapes) {
```

```
            s.draw(g);
```

```
        }  
    }  
}
```

- Which part will cause **error**?
- Which part should be **changed**?

# Shape Example

```
interface Shape { void draw(Graphics g); }
```

```
class Square implements Shape { ... }
```

```
class Circle implements Shape { ... }
```

```
ShapeGroup.java:7: incompatible types  
found   : java.lang.Object  
required: Shape  
    for(Shape s : shapes) {  
        ^  
1 error
```

```
public void draw(Graphics g) {  
    for(Shape s : shapes) {  
        s.draw(g);  
    }  
}
```

D

# Using Generics in Shape

```
interface Shape { void draw(Graphics g); }

class Square implements Shape { ... }
class Circle implements Shape { ... }

class ShapeGroup implements Shape {
    private List<Shape> shapes = new ArrayList<Shape>();

    ...

    public void draw(Graphics g) {
        for(Shape s : shapes) {
            s.draw(g);
        }
    }
}
```

**Group of Square or Circle?**

# Generic ShapeGroup ?

A

```
interface Shape { void draw(Graphics g); }
```

```
class Square implements Shape { ... }
```

```
class Circle implements Shape { ... }
```

B

```
class ShapeGroup<T> implements Shape {
```

```
    private List<T> shapes = new ArrayList<T>();
```

C

```
    ...
```

D

```
    public void draw(Graphics g) {
```

```
        for(T s : shapes) {
```

```
            s.draw(g);
```

```
        }}}
```

- Q) Now what's wrong?

# Generic ShapeGroup ?

A

```
interface Shape { void draw(Graphics g); }
```

```
class Square implements Shape { ... }
```

```
class Circle implements Shape { ... }
```

B

```
class ShapeGroup<T> implements Shape {
```

C

```
    private List<T> shapes = new ArrayList<T>();
```

```
    ...
```

D

```
    public void draw(Graphics g) {
```

```
        for(T s : shapes) {
```

```
            s.draw(g);
```

```
        }  
    }  
}
```

Are we sure T has a  
draw() method?

- Q) Now what's wrong?

# Type Bounds

- Upper Bound on *Generic Type*:

```
<T extends Shape>
```

- "T is a generic parameter which must extend Shape"

# Generic ShapeGroup

```
interface Shape { void draw(Graphics g); }

class Square implements Shape { ... }
class Circle implements Shape { ... }

class ShapeGroup<T extends Shape> implements Shape {
    private List<T> shapes = new ArrayList<T>();
    ...
    public void draw(Graphics g) {
        for(T s : shapes) {
            s.draw(g);
        }
    }
}
```

# Using Generic ShapeGroup

```
public static void main(String[] args) {  
    ShapeGroup<Square> sg1 = new ShapeGroup<Square>();  
    ShapeGroup<String> sg2 = new ShapeGroup<String>();  
    sg1.add(new Square());  
    sg2.add("Hello World");  
}
```

```
class SpecialShapeGroup<T> implements Shape {  
    private ShapeGroup<T> group;  
    ...  
}
```

- Spot the errors!!



# Type Bounds

- Upper Bound on *Generic Type*:

```
<T extends Type>
```

- **Type** is the name of **class** or **interface**

# Type Bounds

- Upper Bound on *Generic Type*:

```
<T extends T1 & T2 ...>
```


- You can provide **more than one!**

# Type Bounds

- Upper Bound on *Generic Type*:

```
<T2 extends List<T1>>
```

- You can express non-trivial ones!



# Generic classes vs Generic methods

# Generic Methods

- `<type parameter> (return type) (method)`
- **Examples**
- `<T> T get(List<T> list, int index) { ... }`
- `<T extends Comparable> void sort(List<T> list) { ... }`
- ...

# Generic Methods

```
class Point { int x; int y; }  
class ColPoint extends Point { int colour; }  
  
class PointCmp {  
    Point min(Point p1, Point p2) {  
        if(p1.x < p2.x || (p1.x == p2.x && p1.y < p2.y)) {  
            return p1;  
        } else { return p2; }  
    }  
}  
  
ColPoint c1 = new ColPoint();  
ColPoint c2 = new ColPoint();  
c1 = min(c1,c2);
```

- Is it working?

# Generic Methods

```
class Point { int x; int y; }  
class ColPoint extends Point { int colour; }  
  
class PointCmp {  
    Point min(Point p1, Point p2) {  
        if(p1.x < p2.x || (p1.x == p2.x && p1.y < p2.y)) {  
            return p1;  
        } else { return p2; }  
    }  
}  
}}  
java: incompatible types:  
generics.Point cannot be converted to generics.ColPoint  
  
ColPoint c1 = new ColPoint();  
ColPoint c2 = new ColPoint();  
c1 = min(c1,c2);
```

- Is it working?


# Generic Methods

```
class Point { int x; int y; }
class ColPoint extends Point { int colour; }

class PointCmp {
    Point min(Point p1, Point p2) {
        if(p1.x < p2.x || (p1.x == p2.x && p1.y < p2.y)) {
            return p1;
        } else { return p2; }
    }
}

ColPoint c1 = new ColPoint();
ColPoint c2 = new ColPoint();
c1 = (ColPoint) min(c1, c2);
```

Needs cast on the return value!



- Can we remove casting by using generics?

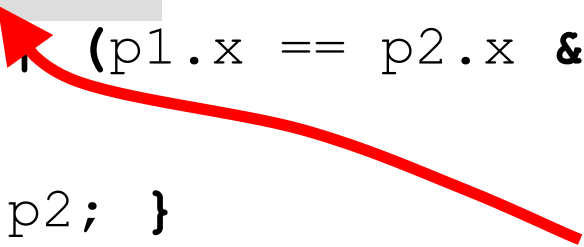


# Generic Methods

```
class Point { int x; int y; }  
class ColPoint extends Point { int colour; }  
  
class PointCmp {  
    <T> T min(T p1, T p2) {  
        if(p1.x < p2.x || (p1.x == p2.x && p1.y < p2.y)) {  
            return p1;  
        } else { return p2; }  
    }  
}  
  
ColPoint c1 = new ColPoint();  
ColPoint c2 = new ColPoint();  
c1 = min(c1, c2);
```

# Generic Methods

```
class Point { int x; int y; }  
class ColPoint extends Point { int colour; }  
  
class PointCmp {  
    <T> T min(T p1, T p2) {  
        if(p1.x < p2.x || (p1.x == p2.x && p1.y < p2.y)) {  
            return p1;  
        } else { return p2; }  
    }  
}
```



**T doesn't necessarily  
have x or y fields!**

```
ColPoint c1 = new ColPoint();  
ColPoint c2 = new ColPoint();  
c1 = min(c1, c2);
```

# Generic Methods + Type Bounds

```
class Point { int x; int y; }  
class ColPoint extends Point { int colour; }  
  
class PointCmp {  
    <T extends Point> T min(T p1, T p2) {  
        if(p1.x < p2.x || (p1.x == p2.x && p1.y < p2.y)) {  
            return p1;  
        } else { return p2; }  
    }  
}  
  
ColPoint c1 = new ColPoint();  
ColPoint c2 = new ColPoint();  
c1 = min(c1, c2);
```

# Type Erasure

- Java compiler replaces each type parameter with its first bound
- `Object` for unbounded type parameters

```
class Vec<T> {  
    private Object[] elems = new Object[16];  
    private int end = 0;  
    public void add(T e) {  
        if(end == elems.length) { ... }  
        elems[end] = e; end=end+1;  
    }  
    public T get(int index) {  
        if(index >= end) { throw ... }  
        else return (T) elems[index];  
    }  
}
```

# Type Erasure

- Java compiler replaces each type parameter with its first bound
- `Object` for unbounded type parameters

```
class Vec {  
    private Object[] elems = new Object[16];  
    private int end = 0;  
    public void add(Object e) {  
        if(end == elems.length) { ... }  
        elems[end] = e; end=end+1;  
    }  
    public Object get(int index) {  
        if(index >= end) { throw ... }  
        else return elems[index];  
    }  
}
```

# Type Erasure

- Java compiler replaces each type parameter with its first bound
- `Object` for unbounded type parameters

```
class Vec<T extends Comparable> {  
    private Object[] elems = new Object[16];  
    private int end = 0;  
    public void add(T e) {  
        if(end == elems.length) { ... }  
        elems[end] = e; end=end+1;  
    }  
    public T get(int index) {  
        if(index >= end) { throw ... }  
        else return (T) elems[index];  
    }  
}
```

# Type Erasure

- Java compiler replaces each type parameter with its first bound
- Object for unbounded type parameters

```
class Vec {  
    private Object[] elems = new Object[16];  
    private int end = 0;  
    public void add(Comparable e) {  
        if(end == elems.length) { ... }  
        elems[end] = e; end=end+1;  
    }  
    public Comparable get(int index) {  
        if(index >= end) { throw ... }  
        else return (Comparable) elems[index];  
    }  
}
```