Overview

- Two Titles

  Theory of Languages

  Foundations of Programming
- Theory is needed if we want to understand foundations.
- This course will cover the essential theory, and will apply it as well.
- 3 Streams:
  - Theory: Syntax and Semantics of Programming Languages
  - Applications: Core languages which illustrate essential concepts: Funnel + Oz.
  - Practice: Programming Examples, Interpreters.

Goals of this course

- Better understanding of programming languages:
    - Which concepts are essential?
    - Which are ephemeral?
    - How can fundamental concepts encode derived ones?
- Better understanding of programming:
    - Fundamental composition principles
    - Language as a means of abstraction
    - Interpreters and compilers
- Better understanding of definitions of programming languages
    - Which things can/should be formalized?
    - What techniques are available for formalization?

⇒ Increased competence as a programmer, language implementer, library and language designer.

Language Definitions

- A programming language is defined by its *syntax* and *semantics*.
- Language: A set of strings over a given alphabet.
- Syntax: The set of rules which determines whether a given string is a member of the language (i.e. is legal according to the rules of the language).
- Syntax is usually split into
  - Context-free syntax – what can be described by a context-free grammar.
  - Context-dependent syntax – what can't. Examples: scope rules, type systems.
- Semantics tells us what the meaning of a legal program string is.

We have covered context-free syntax in Compiler Construction.

This course will be mainly concerned with semantics and also with context-dependent syntax.

Semantics

There are several different ways of assigning meaning to programs.

- Operational – by specifying evaluation rules. Two main flavors:
  - Abstract machine: Translate programs into an hypothetical machine and explain translation rules, and machine execution.
  - Rewrite or transition system: Rewrite the program itself.
- Denotational – by specifying a translation from program strings to some other domain, which is well understood.

  Example: Functions in a program → mathematical functions.
- Axiomatic – by stating laws that programs in the language satisfy.

We will learn about

- operational semantics of functional and concurrent programming
- axiomatic semantics of a simple imperative language
- semantics by translation of derived constructs into our core languages.

Programming Paradigms

This course will cover a large spectrum of programming paradigms

- Functional programming
- Imperative programming
- Object-oriented programming
- Concurrency
- Logic programming
- Constraint programming

The first 4 styles will all be expressed as *functional nets*, using our Funnel notation.

The last 2 styles will be presented using Oz.

Organization of the Course

- 6 hours per week.
- Roughly 2 hours each for theory, programming language applications, and practical work.
- Proposed times:

Tuesdays	10.15 – 1
Thursdays	1.15 – 4

- Tuesdays: Theory and applications in IN 010
- Thursdays: Applications and programming in IN 010 + ???

Material

- Web site: `http://lampwww.epfl.ch/courses/fondements00/`.

  This contains pointers to everything you need, including preprints of the transparencies (but they might be uploaded late because we are developing this course ”just in time”.)
- Papers: We'll add references to the site as needed. For the first part of the course there are two papers you should read:
  - Programming with Functional Nets. M. Odersky. Gives an overview of our programming notation and the concepts behind it.
  - Functional Nets. M. Odersky. Gives a more thorough introduction to the notation and its theoretical foundations in join calculus.

  Both are available by http from our resources page (which is linked into root)

- Books: No book covers the course as a whole, but here are three books I recommend:
  - Structure and Interpretation of Computer Programs. Harold Jay Abelson and Gerald J. Sussmann with Julie Sussmann. MIT Press, 2nd Edition 1996.
  - Essentials of Programming Languages. David Friedman, Mitchell Wand and Christopher Haynes, Wand. MIT Press. 1992.
  - The Structure of Typed Programming Languages. David Schmidt. MIT Press 1994.

  If you want to read just one book, go with the first, it's worth it.

Questions?