Basics of the Rust language

For FOSS developers

Boot

While you're waiting for the class to start

Relax.

Breathe.

Don't worry.

It will be OK.

In memory of a programmer. v0.3.

In a corner of the cemetery, on grass, beneath an old tree, lies a tombstone, fallen, covered by moss and leaf, a name, two dates, five words, a summary of a life of grief: "how hard can it be?"

Boot

Goals of this training

- You can make sense of Rust code you read.You can learn more Rust on your own.

Method

We will be using mix of teaching / learning methods.

- Lecture.Group discussion.
- Hands-on practice.Active participation expected.

Discussion

Why are you interested in learning Rust?

A Rust "hello, world" program

To verify that you have a working Rust installation:

\$ cargo init hello
\$ cd hello
\$ cargo check
\$ cargo build
\$ cargo run
\$ cargo clippy
\$ cargo doc --open

A Rust "hello, world" program

This the output of cargo init hello

Cargo.toml

```
[package]
name = "hello"
version = "0.1.0"
edition = "2021"
[dependencies]
```

src/main.rs

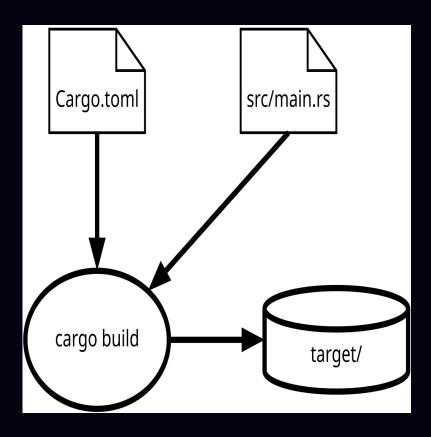
```
fn main() {
    println!("Hello, world!");
}
```

Cargo

- workflow tool
 think make or cmake that is also pip or apt-get
 downloads dependencies
 builds code

- runs the built program
- runs testsruns benchmarks

Cargo build process



Rust strengths

- memory safety
 no memory leaks, no use-after-free, no dangling pointers, no NULL pointers
 no data races, almost painless concurrency
- strong type system with inferenceResult and Option types
 - no runtime exceptionsno NULL values
- performance
 - zero cost abstractions, iteratorsfast execution speed
- control of how memory is used
 pretty good tooling
 friendly compiler
 strong support for IDEs, programmer's editors
 - fearless refactoring
- evolves carefully, rarely breaks working code

Rust weaknesses

- builds can be slow
 statically linked by default

 binaries are large

 not very good for rapid prototyping: requires careful thought
 doesn't support as many target architectures as C does
 still young, keeps changing

Rust concepts

- automatic memory management, borrow checker, lifetimes
 enumerated types where variants can contain data
- traits, generics
- match on values, structure, unpacking
- crate
- edition

Note that Rust is not an object oriented language. It does not have classes or inheritance. Traits serve similar needs.

Rust ecosystem

- ∘ Rust Foundation
- various teams: compiler, libraries, toolchain, ...
 default central, public repository of crates: https://crates.io
 as of 2025-09-20...

- as of 2025-09-20...
 about 197 thousand crates
 about 175 billion downloads
 cultural bias against very small libraries
 semantic versioning, heavily relied-on by cargo
 heavy emphasis on being careful, not breaking things
 heavy emphasis on being welcoming and constructive

Installing Rust

- Common and preferred: rustup

 - bad: downloads code from the Internet, runs it
 good: does its best to be safe and secure
 - good: easy to get latest version of Rust toolchain and tooling

- Packaged in Debian, other Linux distributions.
 good: uses system package manager
 bad: tends to lag behind Rust development
 perfectly fine for learning
 Other implementations are starting to appear but are not ready for production use yet.

Important sites

https://www.rust-lang.org/
https://crates.io/
https://docs.rs/
https://doc.rust-lang.org/std/

https://doc.rust-lang.org/book/
https://stevedonovan.github.io/rust-gentle-intro/
https://www.chiark.greenend.org.uk/~ianmdlvl/rust-polyglot/
https://blessed.rs/
https://serde.rs/

Plan

We will develop an enterprise grade version of the "hello, world" program that cargo init produces. We will do this in several

- □ the first, simplistic, version from cargo init
 □ allow the user to specify who gets greeted on the command line
 • add command line parsing using the clap library
 • with default value
- 3. □ read who is greeted from a file

 reading a file while handling errors

Whom should we greet? The Cargo.toml file

```
[package]
name = "enterprise-hello"
version = "0.1.0"
edition = "2021"

[dependencies]
clap = { version = "4.0.2", features = ["derive"] }
```

To add a dependency using a tool:

\$ cargo add clap --features derive

Whom should we greet? The src/main.rs file

```
use clap::Parser;
#[derive(Parser)]
struct Args {
    #[clap(default_value = "world")]
    whom: String,
}

fn main() {
    let args = Args::parse();
    println!("hello, {}", args.whom);
}
```

Whom should we greet? The demo

```
$ cargo run -q
Hello, world!
$ cargo run -q -- there
Hello, there!
$
```

Read name from file: the Cargo.toml file

```
[package]
name = "enterprise-hello"
version = "0.1.0"
edition = "2021"

[dependencies]
clap = { version = "4.0.2", features = ["derive"] }
thiserror = "1.0.37"
```

Read name from file: command line arguments

```
use clap::Parser;
use std::fs::read;
use std::path::{Path, PathBuf};

#[derive(Parser)]
struct Args {
    #[clap(default_value = "world")]
    whom: String,

    #[clap(short, long)]
    filename: Option<PathBuf>,
}
```

Read name from file: error codes

```
#[derive(Debug, thiserror::Error)]
enum HelloError {
    #[error("failed to read file {0}")]
    Read(PathBuf, #[source] std::io::Error),

    #[error("failed to parse file {0} as UTF-8")]
    Utf8(PathBuf, #[source] std::string::FromUtf8Error),
}
```

Read name from file: read name from file

```
impl Args {
  fn whom(&self) -> Result<String, HelloError> {
    if let Some(filename) = &self.filename {
        let whom = Self::read(filename)?;
        Ok(whom)
    } else {
        Ok(self.whom.clone())
    }
}
fn read(filename: &Path) -> Result<String, HelloError> {
    let data = read(filename)
        .map_err(|e| HelloError::Read(filename.into(), e))?;
    let whom = String::from_utf8(data)
        .map_err(|e| HelloError::Utf8(filename.into(), e))?;
    Ok(whom.trim().to_string())
}
```

Aside: self in Rust

Method arguments:

- Reference to the value that owns the method
- Mutable reference
- Transfer ownership of value to the method

Alias for the type being implemented:

Read name from file: main program

```
use std::error::Error;

fn main() {
    if let Err(e) = fallible main() {
        eprintln!("ERROR: {}", e);
        let mut err = e.source();
        while let Some(underlying) = err {
            eprintln!("caused by: {}", underlying);
            err = underlying.source();
        }
    }
}

fn fallible_main() -> Result<(), HelloError> {
    let args = Args::parse();
    println!("hello, {}", args.whom()?);
    Ok(())
}
```

Read name from file: the demo

```
$ cargo run -q
Hello, world!
$ cargo run -q -- there
Hello, there!
$ echo Earth > name.txt
$ cargo run -q -- -f name.txt
Hello, Earth!
$ cargo run -q -- -f who-me.txt
ERROR: failed to read file who-me.txt
caused by: No such file or directory (os error 2)
$
```

Hands-on

Install a Rust program from crates.io and try it.

\$ cargo install ripgrep

Common command line tools you may enjoy:

- ripgrep---a fast, versatile "grep"
 bat---a "less" with colors
 starship---a fancy shell prompt

Or you can find something else.

There can't be only one string type

```
    arbitrary binary data: Vec<u8>

            sub-vector or slice: &[u8]
            binary string literal b"hello"

    human-oriented text as UTF8: String
    String::from("hello, world")
    string literal: "hello, world", type &str

            slice: &str, &s, &s[10..20] or s.as_str()

    file names: std::path::PathBuf

            PathBuf::from("file.txt")
            slice: std::path::Path

    native text for operating system: std::ffi::0sString

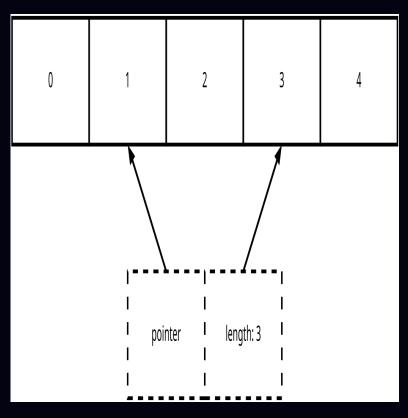
            slice: std::ffi::0sStr
            command line arguments, environment variables, ...
```

■ Vectors, slices

```
let mut v = vec![]; // v is Vec<i32>
v.push(97);
v.push(98);
v.push(99);
println!("v1: {:?}", v);
// v1: [97, 98, 99]
let v2 = vec![97, 98, 99]; // v2 is Vec<i32>
println!("v2: {:?}", v2);
// v2: [97, 98, 99]
let v3 = &v2[1..]; // v3 is &[i32]
println!("v3: {:?}", v3);
// v3: [98, 99]
```

Vectors, slices (2)

- A vector Vec allocates memory for the values.A slices references values stored elsewhere.



Strings, filenames

```
let s = String::from("hello, world");
println!("s: {:?}", s);
println!("s: {}", s);
// s: "hello, world"
// s: hello, world

let bytes: Vec<u8> = vec![97, 98, 99];
let s2 = String::from_utf8_lossy(&bytes);
println!("s2: {:?}", s2);
// s2: "abc"

let filename = PathBuf::from("README.md");
println!("filename: {:?}", filename);
println!("filename: {!?}", filename.display());
// filename: "README.md"
// filename: README.md
```

Native strings for the operating system

- command line argumentsenvironment variable names and valuesraw filenames

As Rust types:

Hands-on: byte counting

Using the enterprise version of "hello, world" as an example, write this program:

- user gives filenames on the command line
- iterate over all the filenames
- read each file

- count number of bytes in each file for each file, output the filename and number of bytes at the end, output the total number of bytes in all files

For extra credit, if you spare time, count number of lines instead of bytes.

https://codeberg.org/liw-rust-training/enterprise-hello.git

Generic types

- This is advanced, but it's used very commonly in Rust, so you need to understand it.
 Types that contain values of some type, or functions that act on values of a type, but don't mind what the actual type is.

 The contained type is expressed using a type variable.

 There can be some constraints on the contained type.

 it might need to have a size known at the compile time

- A vector is a container of values of some type T: Vec<T>
 Vec needs to know how large values of type T are
 Vec doesn't do anything with the values, just stores them
 Vec is generic for type T

The Option type

- An Option either contains a value of a specific type, or doesn't

 implemented using an enum

 Always use Option if a value might be there or not be there. There is no "NULL pointer" or "nil reference" or "zero value".
 the compiler understands the Option type and can help you get your code correct; it doesn't understand that, say, an empty string is special
 - you can't get the contained type without checking that the value exists

```
pub enum Option<T> {
    None,
Some(T),
```

Unpacking an Option value: pattern matching

```
fn flaunt(it: Option<i32>) {
    if let Some(value) = it {
        println!("{}", value);
    }
}

fn flaunt2(it: Option<i32>) {
    match it {
        Some(value) => println!("{}", value);
        _ => (),
    }
}
```

The Result type

- A fallible operation returns a result—the operation either succeeded or failed
 If successful, return a useful value of some type T, otherwise return an error value of some type E
 Not a special magic value of the return type to indicate an error—is -1 a valid integer or does it indicate an error?
- The compiler warns if results are not used
 - this is not an error by default, but you can make it be one—the compiler is relentless and forces you to use a result
 you can ignore the result if you can't be bothered to do something about errors, but you have to be explicit about it

```
pub enum Result<T, E> {
   0k(T),
   Err(É),
```

Container: for any type T (using Vec)

```
#[derive(Debug, Default)]
struct Container<T> {
    values: Vec<T>,
}

impl<T> Container<T> {
    fn len(&self) -> usize {
        self.values.len()
    }

fn is_empty(&self) -> bool {
        self.values.is_empty()
    }
}
```

Generics

Container: constrained by a trait

```
impl<T: Eq> Container<T> {
    fn find(&self, v: &T) -> Option<usize> {
        for (i, x) in self.values.iter().enumerate() {
            if x == v {
                return Some(i);
            }
            None
      }
}
```

Generics

Hands-on: generic stack

Implement a simple stack of value of any type. The following code must work with your stack.

```
let mut stack = Stack::new();
stack.push(3);
stack.push(2);
stack.push(1);
while !stack.is_empty() {
    println!("{}", stack.pop().unwrap());
}
```

Hint: Look up the Vec type methods push and pop methods in the standard library documentation: https://doc.rust-lang.org/std

Generics

Homework (for later)

Skim the documentation and code for the Dption type and the Iterator trait in the standard library.

What's the most interesting method for you?

You can implement your own iterator

- for loops and similar constructs want iterators

 ∘ anything that implements the Iterator trait OR the Intolterator trait

 You can implement those traits for your own types.

```
type Item;
fn next(&mut self) -> Option<Self::Item>;
```

Items returned by iterators

- Some iterators return a reference to a value
- Others return the actual items
 - ${}^{\circ}$ this moves ownership if an implicit copy can't be made

- for bar in foo

 foo must be implement Iterator or IntoIterator

 sometimes this ends up being an iterator that returns items

 this can lead to problems of ownership

 the clearer to always create an iterator explicitly: there • it can be clearer to always create an iterator explicitly: there is often a method iter for collection types, such as vectors

Sequence of integers: mission statement

Produce a sequence of increasing integers from a starting value until a goal. Don't include the goal.

```
struct Seq {
    goal: i32,
    next: i32,
}
```

Sequence of integers: using sequence

```
fn main() {
    // 0, 1, 2, etc, through to 9, but not including 10
    for i in Seq::new(10) {
        print!("{} ", i);
    }
    println!();

    // -10, -9, etc, through to 9, but not including 10
    for i in Seq::range(-10, 10) {
        print!("{} ", i);
    }
    println!();
}
```

Sequence of integers: constructors

```
impl Seq {
    fn new(goal: i32) -> Self {
        Self {
            goal,
            next: 0,
        }
    }
    fn range(start: i32, goal: i32) -> Self {
        Self {
            goal,
            next: start,
        }
    }
}
```

Sequence of integers: iterator

```
impl Iterator for Seq {
   type Item = i32;
   fn next(&mut self) -> Option<Self::Item> {
      if self.next < self.goal {
          let item = Some(self.next);
          self.next += 1;
          item
      } else {
          None
      }
   }
}</pre>
```

Any Rust source file may contain a module

```
println!("random number is {}", foo::random());
mod foo {
   pub fn random() -> usize {
     42
```

- pub is necessary for any symbol exported from a module even for "local" modules
 Often used for unit tests.
- Also useful for name space control.

A Rust source file is a module

File src/foo.rs

```
pub fn random() -> usize {
   42
}
```

File src/main.rs

```
mod foo;
fn main() {
    println!("random number is {}", foo::random());
}
```

```
The lib.rs module is special
```

File src/lib.rs

```
pub fn random() -> usize {
    42
}
```

File src/main.rs

```
use foocrate::random;
fn main() {
   println!("random number is {}", random());
}
```

Dark mysterious secrets of the ancient world

There's more to modules in Rust, but this will get you started

Why?

Computer	year	RAM (KiB)
PDP-7	1965	9.2 KiB
Commodore 64	1982	64 KiB
Cray X-MP	1982	128 MiB
Linus' first PC	1991	4 MiB
Nokia X10	2021	6 GiB

- Static allocation: at compile time; wasteful.
 Dynamic memory allocation.
 fit more into less
 get more bang for your buck
 waste not, want not
 simple idea, but hard to get right

Manual memory management

Example: C

Promise:

I'll give you the simplest possible tools to manage memory dynamically. You will make mistakes and they'll be hard to debug. They'll also be security problems.

Motto:

"Suffering builds character"

Garbage collection

Examples: LISP, Python, Ruby, Go, Java, ...

Promise:

I'll free memory you're not using anymore. You don't need to do anything special, but your programs will sometimes stall briefly at run time.

Motto:

"Things will usually... wait for it... work."

Automatic based on ownership

Example: Rust

Promise:

I will give you simple rules to follow that I can check at compile time. I will know at compile time when memory needs to be allocated and when it can be freed. I will tell you if you make a mistake, and I will try to suggest how to fix it.

Motto:

"Prove to me you manage memory correctly."

Allocating memory

```
struct Point {
    x: i32,
    y: i32,
}
let origin = Point { x: 0, y: 0 };
let farfaraway = Point { x: 32000, y: -32000 };
```

Ownership, freeing memory

- Every value is stored in memory

 local variables on the stack, dynamic memory on the heap

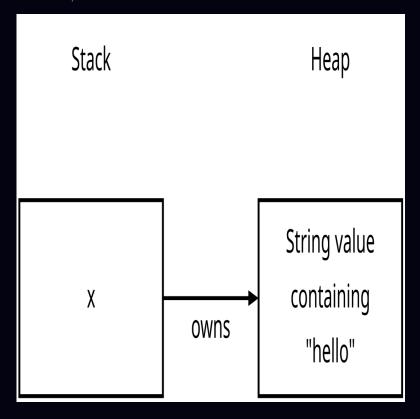
 Each value has exactly one owner

 There can only be owner at a time

- When the owner goes **out of scope**, the value will be freed ∘ "dropped"

```
let x = String::from("hello"); // allocate on heap
```

■ Values on stack may own values on the heap



Keeping track of ownership

- Easy: value is allocated on stack.

 compiler knows what it removes things from the stack
 Hard: value is allocated on heap.

 owner may be on stack, owns value on heap

- $^{\circ}$ owner may be another value on the heap
- compiler does this for you
 Ownership can be moved → same value, new owner.
 compiler keeps track, no code is generated

 - e.g. value is returned from function
- Values can be **copied** or **cloned** → new value, new owner.

 - executed at run time

 Copy trait → copy the bits of the value, e.g., integers

 Clone trait → construct new value that is semantically equal

Borrowing

Borrow = get a reference to a value.

- At any given time, you can have either one mutable reference or any number of immutable references.
 References must always be valid.

This prevents:

- Race conditions when data is changed.
 Using memory before it's been allocated or after it's been freed.
 NULL pointers.

Doesn't prevent:

- Other race conditions.Deadlocks.Live locks.

Mutability and borrowing

```
let a = String::new(); // immutable a and b
let b = &a;

let mut x = String::new(); // mutable x
x.push_str("hello");
let y = &mut x;
y.push_str(", world"); // modify contents of x
println!("y={y:?}"); // OK: we don't use y after this!

let mut z = &x; // immutable reference to x
println!("first z={z:?}");
z = &a; // change what z refers to

println!("a={a:?} b={b:?} z={z:?}");
```

Mutability and borrowing, output

\$ cargo run -q
y="hello, world"
first z="hello, world"
a="" b="" z=""

Lifetime example

```
fn main() {
    let mut refs: Vec<&String> = vec![];
    {
       let x = String::from("hello");
       refs.push(&x);
    }
    for s in refs {
         println!("{}", s);
    }
}
```

Borrow checker error message

Hands-on: generic key/value container

- Create a generic key/value container type.
 any key and value type, as long as keys can be compared
 Method to insert a key and value.
 if key already in container, replace previous value with new
 Method to retrieve value.

Hands-on: key/value container interface

```
struct Container<K: Eq, V> { values: Vec<(K, V)> }
impl<K: Eq, V> Container<K, V> {
    fn new() -> Self { /* FIXME */ }
    fn insert(&mut self, k: K, v: V) { /* FIXME */ }
    fn get(&self, k: &K) -> Option<&V> { /* FIXME */ }
}
fn main() {
    let alice = "alice".to_string();
    let bob = "bob".to_string();
    let robert = "Robert".to_string();
    let mut cont = Container::new();
    cont.insert(bob.clone(), bob.clone());
    cont.insert(bob.clone(), robert);
    println!("{} -> {:?}", &alice, cont.get(&alice));
    println!("{} -> {:?}", &bob, cont.get(&bob));
    // Output should be Robert
}
```

Homework (for later)

Read the documentation for the container types provided by the standard library:

https://doc.rust-lang.org/std/collections/index.html

- Can you find use for them in your own programs?What else would you like to have? Can you find that on crates.io?

Why?

Computer	year	price	cores
Cray X-MP Rasp Pi 3B	1982 2016	\$15 million \$50	4 4
Nokia 6.1	2018	\$200	8

- CPU cores aren't getting significantly faster anymore
 Even cheap CPUs now have more than one core or hyperthread
 To get results faster, compute more things at the same time
 Traditionally really hard to get right

0verview

- Fearless concurrency.

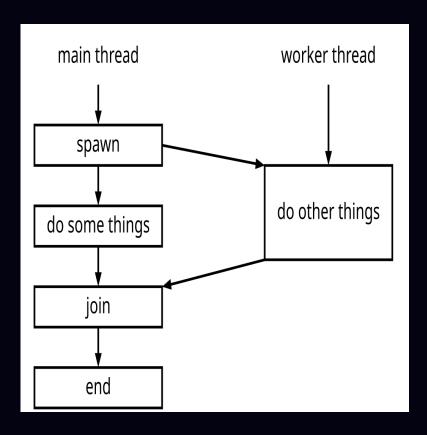
 ∘ safety rules apply: no data races → you must use locking if anything mutates
- Threads.

 - pre-emptive
 map well into operating system threads

 - mature, well supported, part of std
 good choice for CPU intensive applications
- async / await
 collaborative

 - fairly new, maturing fast
 needs additional crates, e.g., tokio
 good choice for I/O intensive applications

Threads, conceptually



Threads, as code

```
use std::thread::spawn;
let mut handles = vec![];
for filename in args.filenames {
    let handle = spawn(move || checksum(&filename));
    handles.push(handle);
}

for handle in handles {
    let sumresult = handle.join().expect("thread join");
    let sum = sumresult?;
    sum.print();
}
```

Hands on: Concurrent file checksums

- https://codeberg.org/liw-rust-training
 repository /checksums-hands-on.git
 Open that page, clone the repository, read the README.
 You may ask questions.
 This slide will not self-destruct in five seconds.

- Complete your mission.

Async: conceptually

- Operating system threads tend to be "heavy" \circ RAM, context switches
- RAM, context switches
 thread runs until it blocks, or its time slot ends
 careful management of inter-thread communication
 Co-operative multi-tasking can be light-weight
 task runs alone in its thread until it blocks
 almost like writing sequential code
 little RAM, no extra task switches
 enormous numbers of tasks is feasible
- async is provided by many languages: JS, Python, Rust, ...

 o async fn → return promise of a value existing in the future

 o await on a promise returns when value is computed

 - a runtime executes futures to compute actual values

Async: the Rust story

- rustc implements the async and await syntax and related semantics. std implements futures, and other necessary types for using async. Crates provide run-times (executors):

- sync-std

- vary by maturity, functionality, size, intended use, etcyou can write your own

Async: example (1/2)

Async: example (2/2)

Hands-on: Concurrent HTTP requests

- https://codeberg.org/liw-rust-training/get.git
 Make sure you can get that code to work.
 be kind: don't hit on a public site hard, at most 100 repetitions
 Then change the code so it's given only URLs on the command line, and fetches each concurrently, and prints the status code for each URL at the end.

End

Advice for writing Rust, at first

- Use clone liberally, if the borrow checker gets in the way.
 it's wasteful, but OK when learning
 Use cargo fmt and cargo clippy frequently.
 anyhow is easy, but use thiserror for better error messages.
 Learn to use and implement traits.
 Take small steps. No, much smaller than that.

End

Advice for writing Rust, at first

Now what?

- Write code.Read std docs.
- Read docs for crates.

- Read code.Join community fora.Start or join an internal group.

End

FIN

No, really.

It's over.

I hope you enjoyed it.

If you want to, I would appreciate a public review of this training, on your blog or social media.

