WEB SERVERS ISD COURSE

Maura Pintor - maura.pintor@unica.it

PART 0 : WEB SERVERS BASICS

WEB SERVER FOR THE USER



WEB SERVER FOR THE DEVELOPER



API



HTTP



LOCALHOST



DEPLOY



deploy resources = make them ready to be used

PART I : GETTING STARTED

- We will run a simple web server that will show to **logged-in users** a **webpage**.
- We will cover:
 - web server setup
 - connection to database
 - login logic

We will not cover:

- deployment
- bootstrap
- security enhancements

But you should have a look into those.

Prerequisites:

- install python3 (hope you already have it)
- install pip (same as above)
- install Flask

pip install Flask

Now we are going to create the directory structure. We need the following tree:

```
|* FlaskTutorial
|----* app
|-----* routes
```

Let's create a new file inside the app folder, named ____init___.py. This is the file that is run when we import the app module of our application. At first we will only use it as a python file, but this is a common standard for deployment.





Inside the file, copy the following code:

```
from flask import Flask
app = Flask(__name__)
from app import routes
```

The variable _____name____ is a Python predefined variable, which is set to the name of the module being used. Another important thing to notice is that the routes module is imported in the end of the script. We will see why in a minute.

The routes are the different **URLs** that the application provides.

URL --> mapped to --> handler handler --> calls --> views (python functions)

The **route** defines the **backend** logic to be executed when a client requests a given URL through the **frontend**.



Now we can create a handler. Let's create app/routes/hello.py.

```
from app import app
@app.route('/')
@app.route('/index')
def index():
    return "Hello, World!"
```

The two lines <code>@app.route('...')</code> are decorators, special modifiers for python functions. In this case they are used to associate the URL given as argument and the function.

Remember the line from routes import *? Here we need to create the routes/___init___.py file for allowing the import of our routes, from inside the files.

from .hello import *

The import that we issued at the end of the other file was there because we have to avoid cyclic imports.

CYCLIC IMPORTS



We have almost completed the initial setup. We have to create the main module at the top level. Create and edit the file runserver.py, adding the following lines:

from app import app

This will trigger the _____init___ that we defined inside the app module, running the server.

30 SECONDS BREAK

questions?

In the meanwhile, double check your directory structure:

```
|* FlaskTutorial
|----* app
|-----* routes
|-----* __init__.py
|-----* hello.py
|-----* __init__.py
|----* runserver.py
```

RUNNING THE SERVER

For now we have only one folder in the repo (app), which will be automatically loaded and run, but we want to make sure that Flask always loads the correct application in case we create a more complex app.

Open a terminal in the FlaskTutorial **folder and issue the command:**

export FLASK_APP=app
export FLASK_ENV=development

(see more on **environment variables here**)

From the same terminal, finally run the server:

flask run

Read the output.

- * Serving Flask app "app" (lazy loading)
- * Environment: development
- * Debug mode: on
- * Running on http://127.0.0.1:5000/ (Press CTRL+C to quit)
- * Restarting with stat
- * Debugger is active!
- * Debugger PIN: 273-374-165

Let's comment this line by line.

* Serving Flask app "app" (lazy loading)

Flask is telling us the running app. The lazy loading is due to the debug mode, it will load the resource only if they are requested.

- * Environment: development
- * Debug mode: on

Here we know the environment variable worked. The debug + lazy loading will refresh the app when we apply changes and the page is requested.

* Running on http://127.0.0.1:5000/ (Press CTRL+C to quit)

This is the address where we can find our running app (remember about **localhost**?).

Click on the link!

* Restarting with stat

This line will appear every time we apply changes and save the application. It's a log for the server, which is restarting.

- * Debugger is active!
- * Debugger PIN:

Ignore these lines, no need to understand the meaning.

Notice that when we clicked on the link, a new line appeared:

127.0.0.1 - - [07/Oct/2019 12:15:41] "GET / HTTP/1.1" 200 -

This is a logging line, which tells that there's been a GET request, whith protocol HTTP, to the URL / in the localhost (127.0.0.1), and the response code is 200.

Congratulations, you've issued your first request to a web server!

Actually.... Everything your browser does is HTTP requests

(try this at home)

firefox	>	ctrl +	shift + :	i>	Network
chrome	>	ctrl +	shift + :	j>	Network

And after opening the console, type www.google.it in your address bar.

PART II: TEMPLATES
Templates are used to share the aspect of the application across all pages of our application. This is important for the **user experience**.

Look at this code (DON'T COPY):

The lines:

```
<html>
<head>
<title>Home Page - Microblog</title>
</head>
<body>
<h1>Hello, ''' + user['username'] + '''!</h1>
</body>
</html>
```

Are written in HTML inside a string in Python. It will be rendered automatically by Flask. Of course we cannot expect to write our whole application like this. As the application grows, we should prepare ourselves to organize our app in a smart way. We can use **templates** to separate the application **logic** from the **rendering** part.

We will write our templates in separate files, stored in a templates folder, inside the application package.



Create templates/index.html

```
<html>
<head>
<title>{{ title }} - Microblog</title>
</head>
<body>
<h1>Hello, {{ user.username }}!</h1>
</body>
</html>
```

You can see there is something weird with this html. Those { { . . . } } enclosed things are not really familiar. Those are variables, that we can pass through the flask interface. They are now placeholders that will be filled with dynamic content at runtime.



Get back to routes/hello.py and avoid that ugly html text.

The operation that converts the template in actual html is called rendering.

We use the function render_template for this, passing in the values for our placeholders. Note that we only need to provide the name of the file, since Flask automatically knows where to find the templates folder.

CONDITIONAL STATEMENTS AND LOOPS IN TEMPLATES

If we have to display a list of objects or display something with a condition, it would be better to avoid writing the html in the code.

We can add logic in our template with the following blocks:

Remember the endif statement. This may not seem natural if you use Python

We can also use loops:

Let's add the lines in templates/index.html:

```
<!DOCTYPE html>
<html lang="en">
<head><title>{{ title }} - Blog</title></head>
<body>
  {% if greeting %}
    <h1>{{ greeting }} {{ user.username }}</h1>
  {% else %}
    <h1>Hello {{ user.username }}</h1>
  {% endif %}
  {% for student in students %}
    < div >
     {{ student.name }}: <b>{{ student.id }}</b>
    </div>
  {% endfor %}</body></html>
```

Of course, we should edit our routes/hello.py as well:

```
from flask import render_template
from app import app
@app.route('/')
@app.route('/index')
def index():
    user = { 'username': 'Maura' }
    students = [
        { 'name': 'A', 'id': 1},
        { 'name': 'C', 'id': 111},
    return render template('index.html', title='Home',
                            user=user, students=students,
                            greeting="Yo")
```

IF YOU DON'T LIKE TO WASTE TIME LOOKING FOR AN INVISIBLE SYNTAX ERROR

Remember the single { in the logic control and the double { { in the variable getter.

TEMPLATE INHERITANCE

Would you imagine to create a website always rewriting your html?

What if we want all of our pages to have a bar in the top, and later we decide to change the color of the bar?

How much time would we waste replacing the code in every single html file?

What if we forget some?

THAT'S WHY WE LIKE TO REUSE OUR HTML.

We create a file called templates/base.html.This file will be structured as:

HEADER

CONTENT

FOOTER

Where the content is the only part that changes for each page. Let's first see how it works.

Here is the html templated/base.html.

Here is templates/index.html updated:

```
{% extends "base.html" %}
{% block content %}
{% for student in students %}
    <div>
        {{ student.name }} - ID: <b>{{ student.id }}</b>
        </div>
    {% endfor %}
    {% endfor %}
    {% endblock %}
```

We have introduced another Template element, the {% block ... %} {% endblock %}. This control statement defines:

- in the base: the place where the derived template, inheriting from base.html, will place itself.
- in the child: the content to fit in the block in the base template. The extends statement will establish the inheritance link between the two templates.

Now it's time to add another route.

BUT YOU WILL DO IT YOURSELF

ADD ANOTHER ROUTE (1)

- add route file routes/mypage.py
 - give a path to your page: /mypage
 - remember to give a different name to the
 function (!=index())
- add import in the route routes/__init__.py

ADD ANOTHER ROUTE (2)

- create templates/mypage.html
 - inherit from templates/base.html
 - fill in the block

ADD ANOTHER ROUTE (3)

- visit the page! --> localhost:5000/mypage
- bonus trick: add a link between the pages Back

to Homepage

PART III: WEB FORMS

Ok, our application can now show us some content. We want to add the possibility to accept input from the user.

For that, we will use **web forms**.

WE ARE GOING TO IMPLEMENT THE FOLLOWING LOGIC FOR LOGGING IN USERS



FLASK WTF

Flask-wtf is a Flask **extension**, that means that we can live without that but if we want to use this very useful functionality we will have to install it.

pip install flask-wtf

Before starting with forms, let's talk about configuration. We will have to set several configuration variables for our app. We could also just define them in our runserver.py script, but they can become hard to manage and change if our app becomes big. That's why developers create **configuration files**, where all configuration variables can be collected and loaded by our app without need to search for them in the code.



Create a configuration file, config.py, in the toplevel directory of our app:

```
|* FlaskTutorial
|----* app
|-----* routes
|-----* templates
|----* runserver.py
|----* config.py
```

(NEW!)

```
import os
class Config(object):
    SECRET KEY = os.environ.get('SECRET KEY') or "kkkkkkey!!"
```

As we need new configuration items, we can collect them all here so that they are easy to find and change.

Let's go back to this "secret key" thing... Flask uses this key as the **cryptographic key** for generating signatures and token. This extension uses the key to protect our app from an attack called "Cross-Site Request Forgery" (CSRF - pronounced sea surf).
In a CSRF attack, the attacker's goal is to cause an innocent victim to unknowingly submit a maliciously crafted web request to a website that the victim has privileged access to. There pattern os.environ.get('SECRET_KEY') or 'my very secret key' can allow us to use as first choice an environment variable (remember them?), and if this is not defined we have a fallback option as an hard-coded string. We can add the configuration class to our flask application just adding one line in our ___init___.py script:

```
from flask import Flask
from app.config import Config
app = Flask(__name__)
app.config.from_object(Config)
from app.routes import *
```

Now that we have our configuration done, we can finally head to the creation of a simple web form.

We can create a template form as a python class, just for keeping things structured. Create a file forms.py in the app directory.

Note the particular classes used for each input space.

- StringField
- PasswordField
- BooleanField
- SubmitField

Another important thing to notice is the validators field, that optionally lets us define some validation method. The DataRequired validator only checks that some data is present at the moment of the submission. Now we have to **render** this form as a webpage. The fields defined in our class already know how to render themselves, so we just have to include them in our html.

Go ahead and create a templates/login.html

```
{% extends "base.html" %}
{% block content %}
    <h1>Login</h1>
    <form action="" method="post" novalidate>
        {{ form.hidden_tag() }}

        {{ form.username.label }}<br>
        {{ form.username(size=32) }}
```

```
{{ form.password.label }}<br>
        {{ form.password(size=32) }}

        {p>
        {form.remember_me() }} {{ form.remember_me.label }}

        {{ form.submit() }}
        </form>
        {% endblock %}
```

Remember we are extending the template templates/base.html. This template expects to receive a LoginForm object as argument, which we reference inside the html as form.

Pay attention to this line:

<form action="" method="post" novalidate>

- The action tells the browser to which url submit the data (we use this same url so the field is empty).
- The method field is to specify the method of the HTTP request
- The novalidate attribute is specified here because the validation will be performed by the web app, not by the browser.

Now, there is another weird line...

{{ form.hidden_tag() }}

This line is used for generating a hidden token that is used to protect the form against CRSF attacks. Flask will handle everything nicely as long as:

- there is a hidden tag in the form
- there is a specified secret key in the config

Now we have to link the form in our application. Create routes/login.py.

We can include the login button in our navigation bar. Edit templates/base.html:

```
<div>
My Page:
<a href="/index">Home</a>
<a href="/login">Login</a>
</div>
```

Comment the user part for now ...

Go and try your login form. Of course you can't expect that everything runs smoothly :D

ACCEPTING DATA FROM FORMS METHOD NOT ALLOWED...

This is Flask telling us that we are trying to send information through a POST method, but we forgot to define it in the code!

HTTP METHODS

GET	retrieve information
HEAD	retrieve resource headers
POST	submit data to the server.
PUT	save an object at the location
DELETE	delete the object at the location

More info here

Now we can accept user data and **validate** them. First, let's have a look at the line:

@app.route('/login', methods=['GET', 'POST'])
...

The methods argument tells Flask that we want to use both POST and GET methods in this same url.

QUICK RECAP

GET: return information to the client (browser)

POST: client (browser) sends information to the server

We can always send information with GET, but that is probably a bad idea...

Do you really want to store in the server this line?

"GET /login HTTP/1.1" 200 - login?user=myUser&pass=MyPassword

This line accepts the input and validates it. This method returns True only if the browser sends a POST request AND if the validation methods in all the fields run smoothly.

if form.validate_on_submit():
 ...

If the validation fails, it will return False, so we will have to handle that later.

You see now that if we try to validate the form without filling the required fields, the actual behavior will be that the server re-display the form. Of course we want to show some information to the user, so that she/he can understand what happened with the login.

The form validators already have some pre-defined error message, but the are not actually rendered in our form.

```
{% extends "base.html" %}
{% block content %}
   {{ form.username.label }}<br>>
        { { form.username(size=32) } <br>
        {% for error in form.username.errors %}
        <span style="color: red;">[{{ error }}]</span>
        {% endfor %}
   { { form.password.label } }<br>
        { { form.password(size=32) } }<br>
        {% for error in form.password.errors %}
        <span style="color: red;">[{{ error }}]</span>
        {% endfor %}
   {% endblock %}
```

The only change here is in the for loops that display all error messages added by the validators. The error messages in the form can be get through form. <field_name>.errors.

We are using a form because the errors are a list. This is because fields can have more than one validator.

Let's try to generate the errors! http://127.0.0.1:5000/login

JUST SOME SMALL IMPROVEMENT ... GENERATING LINKS INSIDE THE APPLICATION

Now we have used the line:

return redirect('/index')

Which is for redirecting the browser to the resource /index.

Many times you may want to change your links. If you decide to do some refactoring, you will have to replace all links in your application. One solution is to use a function that creates URLs inside Flask, with its **internal mapping** to view functions.

url_for('index')

will generate an URL for the view function index. The argument is the endpoint name, which is the name of the view function.

Another important aspect of this **separation** of URL and view function is the generation of dynamic urls.

Let's go and fix all the urls that we placed in our app:

- app/templates/base.html
- app/routes.py
Notice that in the html file we will have to use the double "{"

```
<div>
    My Page:
        <a href="{{ url_for('index') }}">Home</a>
        <a href="{{ url_for('login') }}">Login</a>
        </div>
```

PART IV: DATABASES

We want our server to remember the registered users. In order to do so we have to connect to a **database**.

For this application we will use a simple non relational database, called Mongo.

Mongo elements:

ver Database		
Collection		
Document		
	{key : value}	

pip install flask_mongoengine flask_login



Now we need to add our database settings to our config file:

database configuration
MONGODB_HOST = "localhost"
MONGODB_PORT = 27017
MONGODB_USERNAME = "username"
MONGODB_CONNECT = True
MONGODB_DB = "my_app_db"

The complete db connection string is called db URI, and it is needed by the library for connecting to the right source.

It contains (at least):

- the driver name mongodb
- the host (server on which the db is hosted)
 in this case our localhost
- the port where the db is accessible

```
from flask import Flask
from flask_mongoengine import MongoEngine
from app.config import Config
app = Flask(__name__)
app.config.from_object(Config)
db = MongoEngine(app)
from app.routes import *
```

Mongoengine will connect our application to the specified database and expose the db attribute in the app. We can use it directly in views.

ORM = OBJECT-RELATIONAL MAPPERS

We have to create a model for storing our data in a structured way.

For example, all users will have a username, password and additional information such as the email for password recovery, phone number for two factor auth etc.

Let's create a file models.py in our source root, where runserver.py is located.

```
from app import db
class User(db.Document):
    meta = {'collection': 'users'}
    email = db.StringField(max_length=30)
    password = db.StringField()
```

You probably noticed that the fields are the same that we have in our form. This will of course come in handy when we have to use the information in the form for logging in the user.

Ok, but we don't have users yet. We need to create a **Sign In** form.

EXERCISE: CREATE THE SIGN-IN FORM. (HINT: START FROM THE LOGIN FORM)

- forms.py
- routes/signin.py
- templates/signin.html
- button in the navbar (base.html)
- routes/__init__.py

Other improvements:

Let's add the email field to the registration form. The email may be used for password recovery or to send nice emails with updates (we won't cover them in this course).

IMPORTANT: ALWAYS ADD THE (ANNOYING) EMAIL VALIDATION PROCESS IN THE WEBSITES.

It will prevent users to insert other people's mails in the field (and fill their inbox with unwanted spam).



It's time to try out the new path we added. (remember to try out also the validation of the email field!)

STORING THE USER DATA IN MONGO DB

Now we have to implement the following logic for signing-in:

- valid email + valid username + not in database: user info should be stored.
- valid email already registered: error (email already in use).
- valid username already registered: error (username already in use).

Inside routes/signin.py:

```
if form.validate_on_submit():
    user = User(email=form.email.data,
        username=form.username.data,
        password=form.password.data)
    user.save()
```

For now we are just adding a user, of course we cannot store the password as it is.

Let's verify that the user is correctly added. Connect to a mongodb shell using a terminal:

```
mongo
use my_app_db
coll = db.users
coll.find()
```

Now let's add the check for username and email. In routes/signin.py:

```
from flask import abort

if form.validate_on_submit():
    same_email = User.objects(email=form.email.data)
    if len(same_email) > 0:
        abort(403, "Forbidden. Email already in use.")
    else:
        user = User(email=form.email.data,
            username=form.username.data,
            password=form.password.data)
    user.save()
```

EXERCISE: ADD THE SAME CHECK FOR "USERNAME ALREADY IN USE".

WHAT COULD GO WRONG?

Registration	form
--------------	------

Login

Password

Confirm password

Sorry, this password is already used by another account ("mario"). Please choose other pasword.

Register

Credits: www.codewell.com

We must also hide the password when we store it. It is not a good strategy to store it directly as it is inserted.

HASHING PASSWORDS



Credits: medium article

HASHING PASSWORDS

LET'S TEST THE PASSWORD HASHING

1) sign in a new account.

- 2) enter mongo shell and see the registered users.
- 3) you should see a user with the hashed password.

Now we can finally add the logic for logging in a registered user. We will edit routes/login.py

```
from werkzeug.security import check password hash
from flask login import login user
. . .
if form.validate on submit():
   user = User.objects(username=form.username.data)
    if len(user) > 1:
        if check password hash(user.password,
                                form.password.data):
            login user(user)
            return redirect(url for('index'))
    else:
        abort(404, "User not found. Please register.")
```

The method check_password_hash will match the hash of the password submitted by the user with the password stored at registration. The method login_user will set the user logged in. Let's add the login_user method also after a user registers.

In order to use login_user we have to provide a method for flask to handle the user logins.

More information here.

We add the following to ____init___.py:

from flask_login import LoginManager
login_manager = LoginManager(app)

- Does not work yet. This is because the User model that we defined does not have the attributes required for checking the login.
- We have to add to the inheritances of User the mixin class UserMixin.



Another small change to models.py and we are good to go. Here we provide a method for the Login Manager to load the object that contains the user.

```
from app import login_manager
@login_manager.user_loader
def load_user(user_id):
    return User.objects(pk=user_id).first()
```
Now let's remove all trash we have in the database ...

mongo
use my_app_db
db.dropDatabase()

Ok now we can log in. In the next sections we will create a view that is only accessible to logged in users and a logout button.

LOGIN REQUIRED

Edit routes/mypage.py and add the following decorator:

Now let's also use the user information.

USER LOGOUT

Let's create a view routes/logout.py for logging
out the user:

```
from flask import url_for
from flask_login import login_required, logout_user
from app import app, redirect
@app.route("/logout")
@login_required
def logout():
    logout_user()
    return redirect(url_for('index'))
```

We don't need to create an html file related to the logout, since we can directly render the index page again.

But we need to change base.html and add the button in our nav bar.

```
<div>
<a href="{{ url_for('index') }}">Home</a>
{% if not current_user.is_authenticated %}
<a href="{{ url_for('login') }}">Login</a>
<a href="{{ url_for('register') }}">Sign In</a>
{% endif %}
{% if current_user.is_authenticated %}
<a href="{{ url_for('logout') }}">Logout</a>
{% endif %}
</div>
```

ERROR HANDLING

Try to log out and visit http://localhost:5000/does-not-exist

We want to add a custom template to our error pages. For doing so, create routes/errors.py

```
from flask import render_template
from app import app
@app.errorhandler(404)
def page_not_found(e):
    # note that we set the 404 status explicitly
    return render template('404.html'), 404
```

Now create templates/404.html

```
{% extends "base.html" %}
{% block content %}
    <h1>Page Not Found</h1>
    What you were looking for is just not there.
    <a href="{{ url_for('index') }}">Go somewhere else.</a>
{% endblock %}
```

Finally, add the import in routes/___init___.py. Navigate again to http://localhost:5000/does-not-exist

EXERCISE: CREATE A BLOG

- create a page /blog
- redirect to that page after login and sign in
- show comments stored in mongo
- create / comment path (login required)
- create a button for sending new comments
- logged in users can post comment and they will be displayed in the blog

TO-REMEMBER (DO NOT ERASE AFTER EXAM) CHECKLIST:

- Web server
- Frontend vs. Backend
- API
- Deployment and Localhost
- URI and URL
- Requests
- Static vs. Dynamic website
- Rendering and Templates
- Connection to databases

THE END