

Google App Engine Programming Session

ae-09-session

Textbook: Using Google App Engine (Chapter 7)



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First Look: Sessions are Magic!

- Sessions are usually part of the built-in web application framework
- Ruby on Rails
- Java Web Applications
- PHP
- The framework does all the cookie setting and data finding



First Look: Sessions are Magic!

- In our controller code we simply ask to create and/or access a session
- We treat the session like a dictionary storing whatever we like in the session under a set of string keys that we choose

Session Best Practice

- Keep them small - we don't want to put too much in the session or we start taxing memory and other storage resources and slowing down our application
- Focus on data that is used on nearly every incoming request - the lookup key of the current user - the email address of the current user
- Sessions generally go away when the user closes their browser (cookie is lost) or after a period of inactivity (1-3 hours)

Best Practice

- Indication of the current user - management of the login and logout process
- Shopping cart - items / quantities

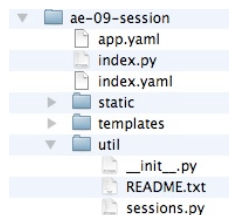
Our Magic - sessions.py

- Since the Google Application Engine does not provide a session capability, we need to add one - extending our application

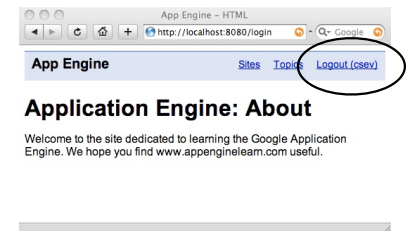
- Download from

<http://www.appenginelearn.com/downloads/util.zip>

- Install in your application in the directory util to make it available in your application



Using the Session



```
from util.sessions import Session
```

```
class LogoutHandler(webapp.RequestHandler):
```

```
def get(self):  
    self.session = Session()  
    self.session.delete_item('username')  
    doRender(self, 'index.htm')
```

The Session() call either establishes a session or accesses the current session.

Inside the Session() call

- We use a session cookie to look up our session
- If the cookie exists and the session exists, return that session
- If not pick a large random number as the session key, make a session and set a temporary cookie with the session key as its value
- See Chapter 11 for more details

The Login/Logout Pattern

- We use a key named 'username' in the session to indicate that the user is logged in
 - If the key is missing the user is logged out
 - If the key is present, its value is the account of the logged in user (e.g. "csev")

```
def post(self):
    self.session = Session()
    acct = self.request.get('account')
    pw = self.request.get('password')
    logging.info("Checking account="+acct+" pw="+pw)

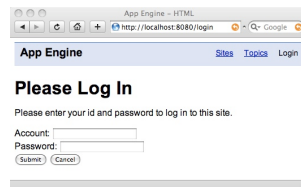
    self.session.delete_item('username')
    self.session['username'] = acct

    if pw == "" or acct == "":
        doRender(self,"login.htm",{ 'error' : 'Please specify Acct/PW' })
    elif pw == "secret":
        doRender(self,"index.htm",{ })
    else:
        doRender(self,"login.htm",{ 'error' : 'Incorrect password' })
```

Get the Session

Log out previous user

Log in new user



Logout

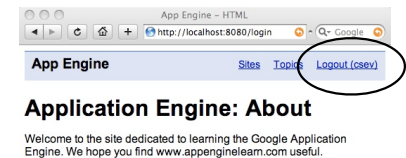
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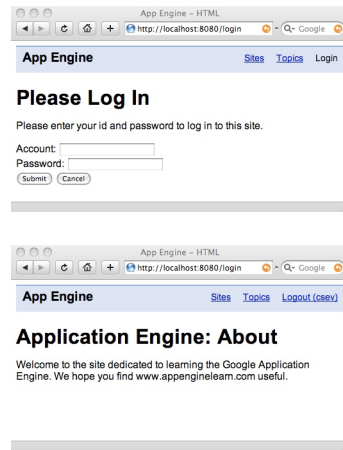
Get the Session

Log out previous user



Navigation

- We want to have the Login / Logout button flip when we log in or out and we want to see the name of the current logged in user.



_base.htm

```
<li><a href="topics.htm"
    {% ifequal path '/topics.htm' %}
      class="selected"
    {% endifequal %}
  >Topics</a></li>
{% ifequal username None %}
<li><a href="/login"
    {% ifequal path '/login' %}
      class="selected"
    {% endifequal %}
  >Login</a></li>
{% else %}
<li><a href="/logout">Logout ({{username}})</a></li>
{% endifequal %}
```

In the view template, we send an additional context variable to the template called "username" if the user is logged in. We use logic in the template to either generate the Login link or the Logout + account name link.

```
def doRender(handler, tname = "index.htm", values = { }):
    logging.info(tname)
    temp = os.path.join(os.path.dirname(__file__), 'templates/' + tname)
    if not os.path.isfile(temp):
        return False
```

Make a copy of the dictionary and add basic values

```
newval = dict(values)
if not 'path' in newval:
    path = handler.request.path
    newval['path'] = handler.request.path
```

```
if not 'username' in newval:
    handler.session = Session()
    if 'username' in self.session:
        newval['username'] = handler.session["username"]
```

```
outstr = template.render(temp, newval)
handler.response.out.write(outstr)
return True
```

We check to see if the username is in the session and if username is in the session we add it to the context variables to be passed into the template.

Summary

- The Cookies and Session work together to give us a relatively simple way to programmatically stash data associated with a particular user/browser
- While the mechanisms are a bit complex, the session pattern turns out to be pretty simple to use in our applications
- The Google Application Engine does not provide us with a Session feature - so we need to write or borrow some code
- Clever use of session is important to application performance