CSCE 313-201
Introduction to Computer Systems
Fall 2020

Synchronization
Dmitri Loguinov
Texas A&M University

September 10, 2020
Chapter 5: Roadmap

5.1 Concurrency
   Appendix A.1
5.2 Hardware mutex
5.3 Semaphores
5.4 Monitors
5.5 Messages
5.6 Reader-Writer
Inter-Process Communication (IPC)

- IPC enables exchange of information between threads/processes
- Two main approaches
  - Shared memory
  - Messages
- Shared memory
  - Primary method to pass data between threads
  - Much faster than messages
  - However, requires protection against concurrent modification to shared data
- Messages
  - Data copied through a kernel buffer
  - OS provides exclusion
  - Can be used between hosts in distributed applications (e.g., pipes, network sockets)
- Pipes already covered, now deal with shared-memory IPC
Motivation

• Most examples will be in C++ style pseudocode
  – See MSDN for detailed usage of functions
• Start with two threads
  – Shared class passed to each thread
  – Thread1 computes a+b and saves into a
  – Thread2 does the same, but saves into b
• What is the outcome?

```cpp
class Shared {
    int a;
    int b;
};

Shared::Thread1 ()
    a += b

Shared::Thread2 ()
    b += a

main ()
    Shared st;
    st.a = 1
    st.b = 2
    CreateThread (st.Thread1)
    CreateThread (st.Thread2)
    print (st.a, st.b)
```

• Prints (1,2) and quits
  – Need to wait for threads
  – Assuming this problem is fixed, what is the result?
Motivation

• Analyze the various execution paths
  – Two threads concurrently execute this:

```
// initial state
st.a = 1
st.b = 2
```

```
thread 1
Shared::Thread1()
1) a += b
```

```
thread 2
Shared::Thread2()
2) b += a
```

• CPU trace:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Version</th>
<th>Thread 1 Actions</th>
<th>Thread 2 Actions</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ver 1</td>
<td>1) a = 3, b = 2</td>
<td>2) a = 3, b = 5</td>
<td>main prints (3, 5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ver 2</td>
<td>1) a = 4, b = 3</td>
<td>2) a = 1, b = 3</td>
<td>main prints (4, 3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ver 3</td>
<td>1) reads a, b into registers</td>
<td>2) reads a, b into registers</td>
<td>unintended result (depends on compiler)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

non-deterministic result that depends on who gets there first (race condition)
Motivation

• How about the next example
  – Now both variables are modified, threads print their values

thread 1

Shared::Thread1 ()
1) a += b
2) b += a
3) print (a, b)

thread 2

Shared::Thread2 ()
4) a = 2*a + b
5) b = a + 2*b
6) print (a, b)

• CPU trace:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ver 1</th>
<th>ver 2</th>
<th>ver 3</th>
<th>ver 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) a = 3, b = 2</td>
<td>1) a = 3, b = 2</td>
<td>1) a = 3, b = 2</td>
<td>1) a = 3, b = 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) a = 3, b = 5</td>
<td>4) a = 8, b = 2</td>
<td>2) a = 3, b = 5</td>
<td>4) a = 8, b = 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) prints (3,5)</td>
<td>2) a = 8, b = 10</td>
<td>4) a = 11, b = 5</td>
<td>2) a = 8, b = 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) a = 11, b = 5</td>
<td>5) a = 8, b = 28</td>
<td>5) a = 11, b = 21</td>
<td>3) prints (8,10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) a = 11, b = 21</td>
<td>3) prints (8,28)</td>
<td>3) prints (11,21)</td>
<td>5) a = 8, b = 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) prints (11,21)</td>
<td>6) prints (8,28)</td>
<td>6) prints (11,21)</td>
<td>6) prints (8,28)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Motivation

• Example (cont’d)
  - How many possible execution traces?
  - Build an execution tree:

Generalization: for two threads with m and n instructions respectively, the number of possible ways to interleave them:

\[
\binom{m + n}{m}
\]

For m = n = 100, this is \(10^{59}\)
Motivation

• Actual tree is deeper since we have to consider each assembler-level instruction
  – Even most basic $c = a + b$ may be implemented as 4 CPU instructions: load (reg1, a), load(reg2, b), add(reg1, reg2), store (c, reg1)
  – Also could be load(reg, a), add(reg, b), store (c,reg)
• Because of this, synchronization bugs may be compiler-specific
  – Some may only appear in debug or release mode
• Conclusion: proper synchronization is mandatory for access to shared memory
• However, not all access needs protection
  – Required only if data is modified by at least one thread
Terminology

- **Critical section**
  - Piece of code that is sensitive to concurrent events in other threads
- Critical sections require synchronization to exclude other threads from damaging data
- **Atomic operation**
  - Set of instructions that cannot be interrupted by another thread

- Single CPU instruction is always atomic
  - Is the code above safe?
- Nope, L2/L3 cache coherency problems on multi-core platforms
  - Result unpredictable
- Also, compiler may split this into multiple instructions
  - Possible in debug mode
- **Deadlock**
  - Infinite wait for events or some conditions

```
Shared::Thread()
a++
```
**Terminology**

- **Livelock**
  - Non-stop activity that typically changes *shared state*, but makes no progress
  - Unlike deadlock, which makes no change to shared variables

- **Elevator example:**
  - Every time a button is pressed, elevator responds by moving towards the floor where it was pressed
  - New button commands *preempt* old ones
  - Selfish customers
**Terminology**

- **Mutual exclusion (mutex)**
  - Data structure that allows only one thread in its critical section at one time
- **Multiple critical sections within a thread possible**
- **Race condition**
  - Situation where the outcome depends on the order of thread execution
  - Hw1-part3: robots race to find the exit; found solution is non-deterministic
  - Sometimes acceptable
- **Busy-spinning**
  - A while loop that tests variable(s) until some condition is reached
  - Not used often in user space, but parts of the kernel rely on it
- **Work starvation**
  - Certain threads are under-utilized (ready to run, but no work)

```cpp
Shared::Thread ()
    MutexA.Lock() // enter
    a++
    MutexA.Unlock() // leave
    // do some work here
    MutexB.Lock() // enter
    b++
    c += b
    MutexB.Unlock() // leave
```
Terminology

- **Work starvation (cont’d)**
  - Caused by unbalanced job partitioning or OS scheduler giving less CPU time to certain threads

- **Assuming the OS is well-designed, only the former issue is of concern**

- **Examples**
  - Hw1-part3: one thread deposits new rooms in the queue, then immediately grabs them all back for exploration

- Threads sort keys concurrently, where thread i gets keys whose upper k bits are i

- Does this search loop require a mutex:
  
  ```
  while (exit not found)
  x = U.pop();
  Expore(x);
  ```

- Yes since U.pop() modifies the underlying data structure

- Should Explore(x) be inside a mutex?