Administrivia

- Homework #1 due
- Homework #2 out today
Synchronization

- Threads cooperate in multithreaded programs
  - To share resources, access shared data structures
    - Threads accessing a memory cache in a Web server
  - To coordinate their execution
    - One thread executes relative to another (recall ping-pong)
- For correctness, we need to control this cooperation
  - Threads *interleave executions arbitrarily* and at *different rates*
  - Scheduling is not under program control
- We control cooperation using *synchronization*
  - Synchronization enables us to restrict the possible interleavings of thread executions
- Discuss in terms of threads, also applies to processes
Shared Resources

We initially focus on coordinating access to shared resources

• **Basic problem**
  - If two concurrent threads (processes) are accessing a shared variable, and that variable is read/modified/written by those threads, then access to the variable must be controlled to avoid erroneous behavior

• Over the next few lectures, we will look at
  - **Mechanisms to control access to shared resources**
    » Locks, mutexes, semaphores, monitors, condition variables, etc.
  - **Patterns for coordinating accesses to shared resources**
    » Bounded buffer, producer-consumer, etc.
Classic Example

• Suppose we have to implement a function to handle withdrawals from a bank account:

```java
withdraw (account, amount) {
    balance = get_balance(account);
    balance = balance - amount;
    put_balance(account, balance);
    return balance;
}
```

• Now suppose that you and your significant other share a bank account with a balance of $1000

• Then you each go to separate ATM machines and simultaneously withdraw $100 from the account
Example Continued

- We’ll represent the situation by creating a separate thread for each person to do the withdrawals.
- These threads run on the same bank server:

```java
withdraw (account, amount) {
    balance = get_balance(account);
    balance = balance – amount;
    put_balance(account, balance);
    return balance;
}
```

- What’s the problem with this implementation?
  - Think about potential schedules of these two threads.
Interleaved Schedules

- The problem is that the execution of the two threads can be interleaved:

  ```
  balance = get_balance(account);
  balance = balance - amount;
  balance = get_balance(account);
  balance = balance - amount;
  put_balance(account, balance);
  put_balance(account, balance);
  ```

- What is the balance of the account now?
- Is the bank happy with our implementation?
Shared Resources

• The problem is that two concurrent threads (or processes) accessed a shared resource (account) without any synchronization
  ♦ Known as a race condition (memorize this buzzword)
• We need mechanisms to control access to these shared resources in the face of concurrency
  ♦ So we can reason about how the program will operate
• Our example was updating a shared bank account
• Also necessary for synchronizing access to any shared data structure
  ♦ Buffers, queues, lists, hash tables, etc.
When Are Resources Shared?

- Local variables are **not shared** (private)
  - Refer to data on the stack
  - Each thread has its own stack
  - **Never pass/share/store a pointer to a local variable on the stack for thread T1 to another thread T2**

- Global variables and static objects are **shared**
  - Stored in the static data segment, accessible by any thread

- Dynamic objects and other heap objects are **shared**
  - Allocated from heap with `malloc/free` or `new/delete`
How Interleaved Can It Get?

How contorted can the interleavings be?

- We'll assume that the only atomic operations are instructions (e.g., reads and writes of words)
  - (Some earlier architectures don't even give you that)
- We'll assume that a **context switch** can occur at any time
  - Examples may show code
  - But actually at instruction granularity
- We'll assume that you can delay a thread as long as you like as long as it's not delayed forever

```c
.............. get_balance(account);
balance = get_balance(account);
balance = balance - amount;
balance = balance - amount;
balance = get_balance(account);
put_balance(account, balance);
put_balance(account, balance);
```
Mutual Exclusion

• We want to use **mutual exclusion** to synchronize access to shared resources
  ♦ This allows us to have larger atomic blocks
• Code that uses mutual exclusion to synchronize its execution is called a **critical section**
  ♦ Only one thread at a time can execute in the critical section
  ♦ All other threads are forced to wait on entry
  ♦ When a thread leaves a critical section, another can enter
  ♦ Example: bathrooms on airplanes
• What requirements would you place on a critical section?
Critical Section Requirements

1) **Mutual exclusion (mutex)**
   - If one thread is in the critical section, then no other is

2) **Progress**
   - If some thread T is not in the critical section, then T cannot prevent some other thread S from entering the critical section
   - A thread in the critical section will eventually leave it

3) **Bounded waiting (no starvation)**
   - If some thread T is waiting on the critical section, then T will eventually enter the critical section

4) **Performance**
   - The overhead of entering and exiting the critical section is small with respect to the work being done within it
About Requirements

Requirements also expressed as three properties:

• **Safety property**: nothing bad happens
  ♦ Mutex

• **Liveness property**: something good happens
  ♦ Progress, Bounded Waiting

• **Performance property**
  ♦ Performance

• Properties hold for each run, while performance depends on all the runs
  ♦ Rule of thumb: When designing a concurrent algorithm, worry about safety first (but don't forget liveness!)
Mechanisms For Building Critical Sections

- **Atomic read/write**
  - Can it be done?
- **Locks**
  - Primitive, minimal semantics, used to build others
- **Semaphores**
  - Basic, easy to get the hang of, but hard to program with
- **Monitors**
  - High-level, requires language support, operations implicit
- **Messages**
  - Simple model of communication and synchronization based on atomic transfer of data across a channel
  - Direct application to distributed systems
Mutex with Atomic R/W:
Peterson's Algorithm

```
int turn = 1;
bool try1 = false, try2 = false;
```

```
while (true) {
    try1 = true;
    turn = 2;
    while (try2 && turn != 1) ;
    critical section
    try1 = false;
    outside of critical section
}
```

```
while (true) {
    try2 = true;
    turn = 1;
    while (try1 && turn != 2) ;
    critical section
    try2 = false;
    outside of critical section
}
```

• This satisfies all the requirements
• And it can be proved to do so…
Mutex with Atomic R/W: Peterson's Algorithm

while (true) {
  {¬ try1 ∧ (turn == 1 ∨ turn == 2) }
  try1 = true;
  { try1 ∧ (turn == 1 ∨ turn == 2) }
  turn = 2;
  { try1 ∧ (turn == 1 ∨ turn == 2) }
  while (try2 && turn != 1) ;
  { try1 ∧ (turn == 1 ∨ ¬ try2 ∨
    (try2 ∧ (yellow at 6 or at 7)) }  
  critical section
  try1 = false;
  {¬ try1 ∧ (turn == 1 ∨ turn == 2) }
  outside of critical section
}  

(int turn = 1;
  bool try1 = false, try2 = false;
)

while (true) {
  {¬ try2 ∧ (turn == 1 ∨ turn == 2) }
  try2 = true;
  { try2 ∧ (turn == 1 ∨ turn == 2) }
  turn = 1;
  { try2 ∧ (turn == 1 ∨ turn == 2) }
  while (try1 && turn != 2) ;
  { try2 ∧ (turn == 2 ∨ ¬ try1 ∨
    (try1 ∧ (blue at 2 or at 3)) } 
  critical section
  try2 = false;
  {¬ try2 ∧ (turn == 1 ∨ turn == 2) }
  outside of critical section
}

(blue at 4) ∧ try1 ∧ (turn == 1 ∨ ¬ try2 ∨ (try2 ∧ (yellow at 6 or at 7))
  ∧ (yellow at 8) ∧ try2 ∧ (turn == 2 ∨ ¬ try1 ∨ (try1 ∧ (blur at 2 or at 3))
... ⇒ (turn == 1 ∧ turn == 2)
Locks

• A lock is an object in memory providing two operations
  ♦ `acquire()`: to enter a critical section
  ♦ `release()`: to leave a critical section

• Threads **pair calls** to acquire and release
  ♦ Between `acquire/release`, the thread **holds** the lock
  ♦ `acquire` does not return until any previous holder releases
  ♦ What can happen if the calls are not paired?

• Locks can spin (a spinlock) or block (a mutex)
  ♦ Can break apart Peterson's to implement a spinlock
Using Locks

withdraw (account, amount) {
    acquire(lock);
    balance = get_balance(account);
    balance = balance – amount;
    put_balance(account, balance);
    release(lock);
    return balance;
}

acquire(lock);
balance = get_balance(account);
balance = balance – amount;
acquire(lock);
put_balance(account, balance);
release(lock);

balance = get_balance(account);
balance = balance – amount;
put_balance(account, balance);
release(lock);

What happens when blue tries to acquire the lock?
Why is the “return” outside the critical section? Is this ok?
What happens when a third thread calls acquire?
Implementing Locks (1)

• How do we implement locks? Here is one attempt:

```c
struct lock {
    int held = 0;
}

void acquire (lock) {
    while (lock->held);
    lock->held = 1;
}

void release (lock) {
    lock->held = 0;
}
```

• This is called a spinlock because a thread spins waiting for the lock to be released

• Does this work?
Implementing Locks (2)

- No. Two independent threads may both notice that a lock has been released and thereby acquire it.

```c
struct lock {
    int held = 0;
};
void acquire (lock) {
    while (lock->held);
    lock->held = 1;
}
void release (lock) {
    lock->held = 0;
}
```

A context switch can occur here, causing a race condition.
Implementing Locks (3)

• The problem is that the implementation of locks has critical sections, too
• How do we stop the recursion?
• The implementation of acquire/release must be atomic
  ♦ An atomic operation is one which executes as though it could not be interrupted
  ♦ Code that executes “all or nothing”
• How do we make them atomic?
• Need help from hardware
  ♦ Atomic instructions (e.g., test-and-set)
  ♦ Disable/enable interrupts (prevents context switches)
Atomic Instructions: Test-And-Set

- The semantics of test-and-set are:
  - Record the old value
  - Set the value to indicate available
  - Return the old value
- Hardware executes it atomically!

```c
bool test_and_set (bool *flag) {
  bool old = *flag;
  *flag = True;
  return old;
}
```

- When executing test-and-set on “flag”
  - What is value of flag afterwards if it was initially False? True?
  - What is the return result if flag was initially False? True?
Using Test-And-Set

- Here is our lock implementation with test-and-set:

```c
struct lock {
    int held = 0;
};
void acquire (lock) {
    while (test-and-set(&lock→held));
}
void release (lock) {
    lock→held = 0;
}
```

- When will the while return? What is the value of held?
- What about multiprocessors?
Problems with Spinlocks

• The problem with spinlocks is that they are wasteful
  ♦ If a thread is spinning on a lock, then the thread holding the lock cannot make progress (on a uniprocessor)

• How did the lock holder give up the CPU in the first place?
  ♦ Lock holder calls yield or sleep
  ♦ Involuntary context switch

• Only want to use spinlocks as primitives to build higher-level synchronization constructs
Disabling Interrupts

• Another implementation of acquire/release is to disable interrupts:

```c
struct lock {

}

void acquire (lock) {
    disable interrupts;
}

void release (lock) {
    enable interrupts;
}
```

• Note that there is no state associated with the lock
• Can two threads disable interrupts simultaneously?
On Disabling Interrupts

- Disabling interrupts blocks notification of external events that could trigger a context switch (e.g., timer)
  - This is what Nachos uses as its primitive
- In a “real” system, this is only available to the kernel
  - Why?
- Disabling interrupts is insufficient on a multiprocessor
  - Interrupts are only disabled on a per-core basis
  - Back to atomic instructions
- Like spinlocks, only want to disable interrupts to implement higher-level synchronization primitives
  - Don’t want interrupts disabled between acquire and release
Summarize Where We Are

- **Goal:** Use mutual exclusion to protect critical sections of code that access shared resources
- **Method:** Use locks (spinlocks or disable interrupts)
- **Problem:** Critical sections (CS) can be long

**Spinlocks:**
- Threads waiting to acquire lock spin in test-and-set loop
- Wastes CPU cycles
- Longer the CS, the longer the spin
- Greater the chance for lock holder to be interrupted

```plaintext
acquire(lock)
...
Critical section
...
release(lock)
```

**Disabling Interrupts:**
- Should not disable interrupts for long periods of time
- Can miss or delay important events (e.g., timer, I/O)
Higher-Level Synchronization

- Spinlocks and disabling interrupts are useful only for very short and simple critical sections
  - Wasteful otherwise
  - These primitives are “primitive” – don’t do anything besides mutual exclusion
- Need higher-level synchronization primitives that:
  - Block waiters
  - Leave interrupts enabled within the critical section
- All synchronization requires atomicity
- So we’ll use our “atomic” locks as primitives to implement them
Implementing Locks (4)

- Block waiters, interrupts enabled in critical sections
  - How Nachos implements locks (see threads/Lock.java)

```c
struct lock {
    int held = 0;
    queue Q;
}

void acquire (lock) {
    Disable interrupts;
    while (lock->held) {
        put current thread on lock Q;
        block current thread;
    }
    lock->held = 1;
    Enable interrupts;
}

void release (lock) {
    Disable interrupts;
    if (Q) remove waiting thread;
    unblock waiting thread;
    lock->held = 0;
    Enable interrupts;
}
```

acquire(lock)  \[\text{Interrupts Disabled}\]
...
Critical section
...
release(lock)  \[\text{Interrupts Disabled}\]
Implementing Locks (5)

- Using test-and-set
  - Interrupts always enabled, can be used at user level
  - Works on multiprocessors

```c
struct lock {
    int held = 0;
};
void acquire (lock) {
    while (test-and-set(&lock->held));
}
void release (lock) {
    lock->held = 0;
}
```

acquire(lock)

```
...
Critical section
...
release(lock)
```

Interrupts Enabled
Next time...

- Read Chapters 30, 31