COS 318: Operating Systems

Processes and Threads

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(http://www.cs.princeton.edu/courses/cos318/)

Today's Topics

- Concurrency
- Processes
- Threads

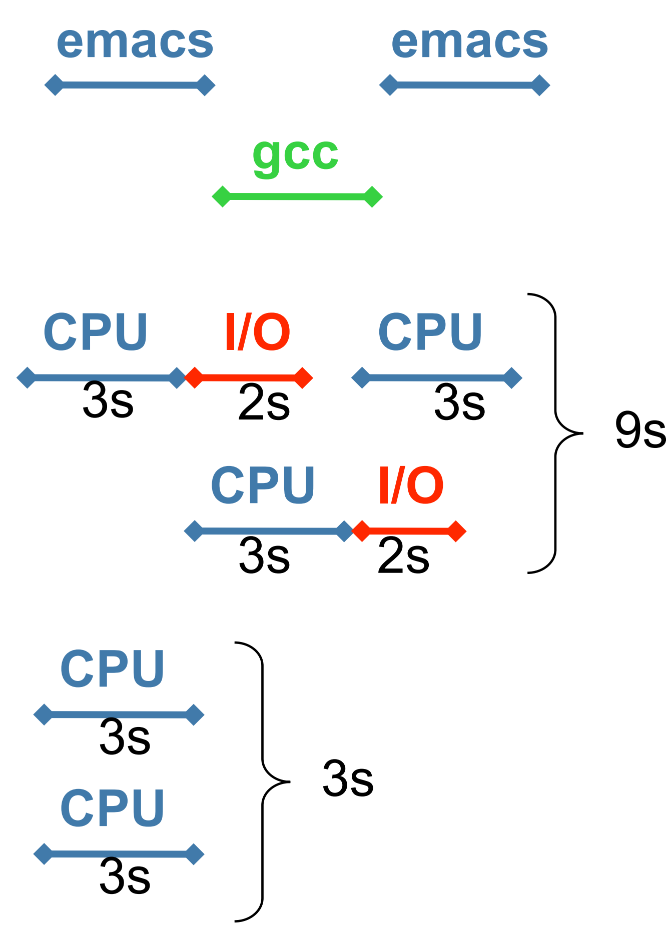
- Reminder:
  - Hope you're all busy implementing your assignment

Concurrency and Process

- Concurrency
  - Hundreds of jobs going on in a system
  - CPU is shared, so are I/O devices
  - Each job would like to have its own computer
- Process concurrency
  - Decompose complex problems into simple ones
  - Make each simple one a process
  - Deal with one at a time
  - Each process feels like it has its own computer
- Example: gcc (via "gcc –pipe –v") launches
  - /usr/libexec/cpp | /usr/libexec/cc1 | /usr/libexec/as | /usr/libexec/elf/ld
  - Each instance is a process

Process Parallelism

- Virtualization
  - Each process runs for a while
  - Each virtually has its own CPU
  - Make one CPU seem like many
- I/O parallelism
  - CPU process overlaps with I/O
  - Each runs almost as fast as if it had its own computer
  - Reduce total completion time for all processes
- CPU parallelism
  - Multiple CPUs (such as SMP)
  - Processes running in parallel
  - Speedup



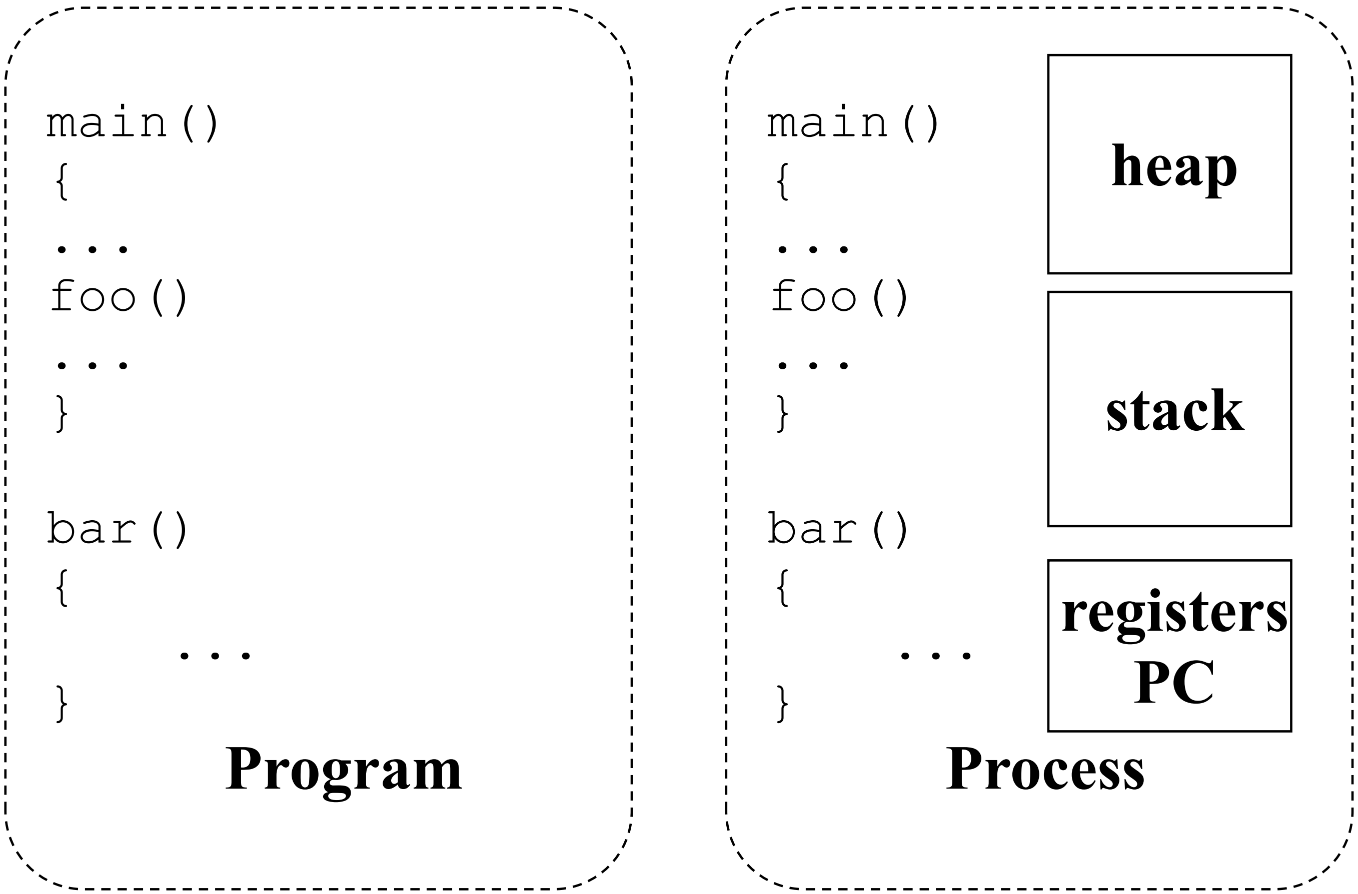
More on Process Parallelism

- Process parallelism is common in real life
  - Each sales person sell $1M annually
  - Hire 100 sales people to generate $100M revenue
- Speedup
  - Ideal speedup is factor of N
  - Reality: bottlenecks + coordination overhead
- Question
  - Can you speed up by working with a partner?
  - Can you speed up by working with 20 partners?
  - Can you get super-linear (more than a factor of N) speedup?

Simplest Process

- Sequential execution
  - No concurrency inside a process
  - Everything happens sequentially
  - Some coordination may be required
- Process state
  - Registers
  - Main memory
  - I/O devices
    - File system
    - Communication ports
  - …

Program and Process



Process vs. Program

- Process > program
  - Program is just part of process state
  - Example: many users can run the same program
    - Even though the program has a single set of variable names, the same variable in different instances may have different values
    - The different processes running the program have different address spaces
- Process < program
  - A program can invoke more than one process
  - Example: Fork off processes

Process Control Block (PCB)

- Process management info
  - State
    - Ready: ready to run
    - Running: currently running
    - Blocked: waiting for resources
  - Registers, EFLAGS, and other CPU state
  - Stack, code and data segment
  - Parents, etc
- Memory management info
  - Segments, page table, stats, etc
- I/O and file management
  - Communication ports, directories, file descriptors, etc.
- How OS takes care of processes
  - Resource allocation and process state transition
- Question: why is some information indirect?

Primitives of Processes

- Creation and termination
  - Exec, Fork, Wait, Kill
- Signals
  - Action, Return, Handler
- Operations
  - Block, Yield
- Synchronization
  - We will talk about this later

Make A Process

- Creation
  - Load code and data into memory
  - Create an empty call stack
  - Initialize state to same as after a process switch
  - Make the process ready to run
- Clone
  - Stop current process and save state
  - Make copy of current code, data, stack and OS state
  - Make the process ready to run

Example: Unix

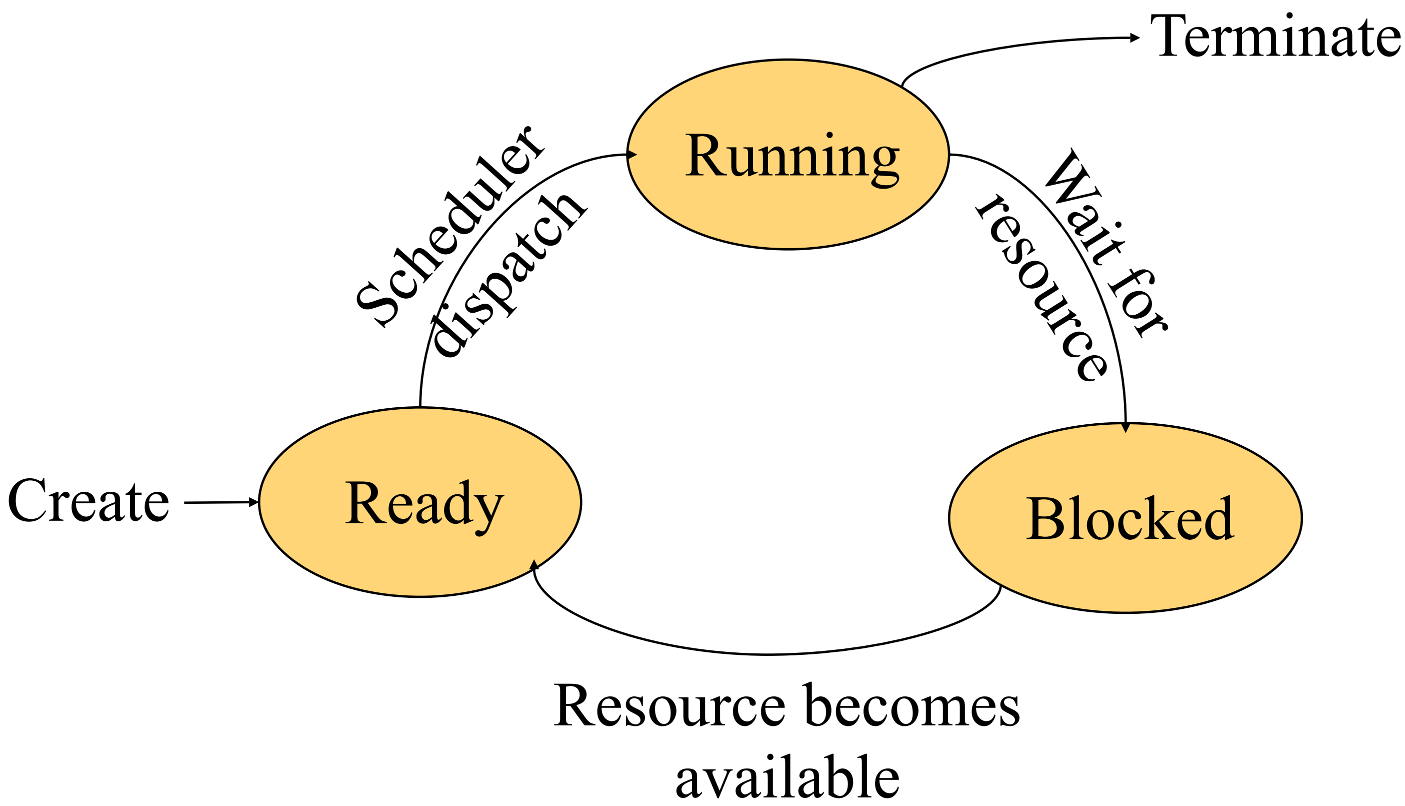
- How to make processes:
  - fork clones a process
  - exec overlays the current process

```
If ((pid = fork()) == 0) {
        /* child process */
       exec("foo");  /* does not return */
else
       /* parent */
       wait(pid);    /* wait for child to die */
```

Process Context Switch

- Save a context (everything that a process may damage)
  - All registers (general purpose and floating point)
  - All co-processor state
  - Save all memory to disk?
  - What about cache and TLB stuff?
- Start a context
  - Does the reverse
- Challenge
  - OS code must save state without changing any state
  - How to run without touching any registers?
    - CISC machines have a special instruction to save and restore all registers on stack
    - RISC: reserve registers for kernel or have way to carefully save one and then continue

Process State Transition



Threads

- Thread
  - A sequential execution stream within a process (also called lightweight process)
  - Threads in a process share the same address space
- Thread concurrency
  - Easier to program I/O overlapping with threads than signals
  - Users often like to do several things at a time: Web browser
  - A server (e.g. file server) serves multiple requests
  - Multiple CPUs sharing the same memory

Thread Control Block (TCB)

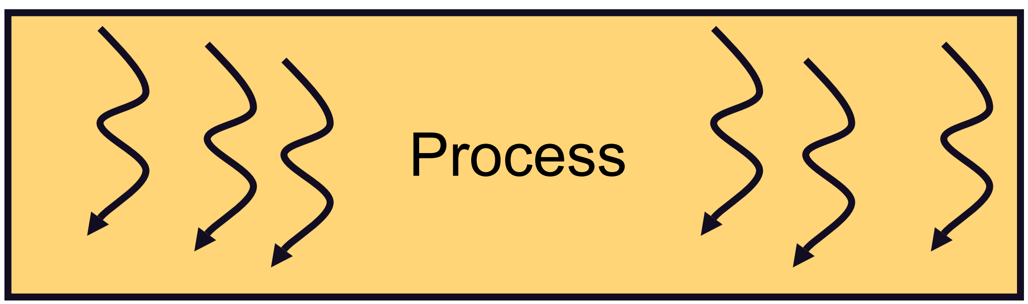
- State
  - Ready: ready to run
  - Running: currently running
  - Blocked: waiting for resources
- Registers
- Status (EFLAGS)
- Program counter (EIP)
- Stack
- Code

Typical Thread API

- Creation
  - Fork, Join
- Mutual exclusion
  - Acquire (lock), Release (unlock)
- Condition variables
  - Wait, Signal, Broadcast
- Alert
  - Alert, AlertWait, TestAlert

Revisit Process

- Process
  - Threads
  - Address space
  - Environment for the threads to run on OS (open files, etc)
- Simplest process has 1 thread



Thread Context Switch

- Save a context (everything that a thread may damage)
  - All registers (general purpose and floating point)
  - All co-processor state
  - Need to save stack?
  - What about cache and TLB stuff?
- Start a context
  - Does the reverse
- May trigger a process context switch

Procedure Call

- Caller or callee save some context (same stack)
- Caller saved example:

```
save active caller registers
call foo
```

```
foo() {
      do stuff
}
```

```
restore caller regs
```

Threads vs. Procedures

- Threads may resume out of order
  - Cannot use LIFO stack to save state
  - Each thread has its own stack
- Threads switch less often
  - Do not partition registers
  - Each thread “has” its own CPU
- Threads can be asynchronous
  - Procedure call can use compiler to save state synchronously
  - Threads can run asynchronously
- Multiple threads
  - Multiple threads can run on multiple CPUs in parallel
  - Procedure calls are sequential

Process vs. Threads

- Address space
  - Processes do not usually share memory
  - Process context switch page table and other memory mechanisms
  - Threads in a process share the entire address space
- Privileges
  - Processes have their own privileges (file accesses, e.g.)
  - Threads in a process share all privileges
- Question
  - Do you really want to share the "entire" address space?

Real Operating Systems

- One or many address spaces
- One or many threads per address space

	1 address space	Many address spaces
1 thread per address space	MSDOS Macintosh	Traditional Unix
Many threads per address spaces	Embedded OS, Pilot	VMS, Mach (OS-X), OS/2, Windows NT/XP/Vista, Solaris, HP-UX, Linux

Summary

- Concurrency
  - CPU and I/O
  - Among applications
  - Within an application
- Processes
  - Abstraction for application concurrency
- Threads
  - Abstraction for concurrency within an application