CS 31: Intro to Systems C Programming L22-23: Synchronization and Race Conditions

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OS Big Picture Goals

- OS is a layer of code between user programs and hardware.
- Goal: Make life easier for users and programmers.
- How can the OS do that?

Key OS Responsibilities

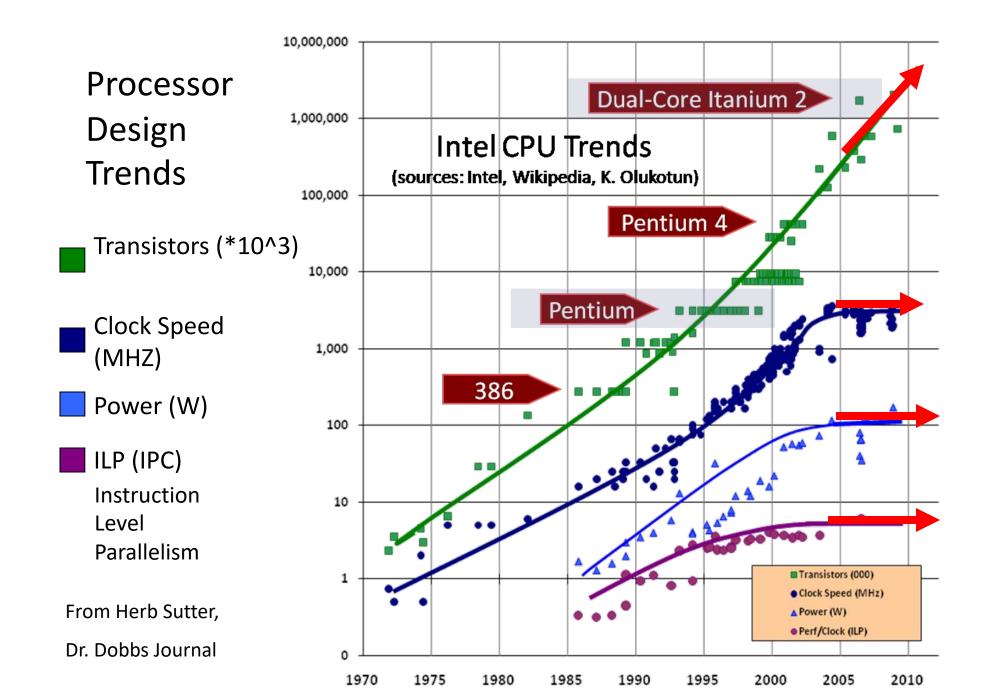
- 1. Simplifying abstractions for programs
- 2. Resource allocation and/or sharing
- 3. Hardware gatekeeping and protection

OS: Turn undesirable into desirable

- Turn undesirable inconveniences: reality
 - Complexity of hardware
 - Single processor
 - Limited memory
- Into desirable conveniences: illusions
 - Simple, easy-to-use resources
 - Multiple/unlimited number of processors
 - Large/unlimited amount of memory

Making Programs Run Faster

- In the "old days" (1980's 2005):
 - Algorithm too slow? Wait for HW to catch up.
- Modern CPUs exploit parallelism for speed:
 - Executes multiple instructions at once
 - Reorders instructions on the fly
- Today, can't make a single core go much faster.
 Limits on clock speed, heat, energy consumption
- Use extra transistors to put multiple CPU cores on the chip.
- Programmer's job to speed-up computation
 - Humans bad at thinking in parallel



Parallel Abstraction

- To speed up a job, must divide it across multiple cores.
- A process contains both execution information and memory/resources.
- What if we want to separate the execution information to give us parallelism in our programs?

Which components of a process might we replicate to take advantage of multiple CPU cores?

- A. The entire address space (memory not duplicated)
- B. Parts of the address space (memory stack)
- C. OS resources (open files, etc not duplicated.)
- D. Execution state (PC, registers, etc.)
- E. More than one of these (which?)

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Don't duplicate shared resources, duplicate resources where we need a private copy per thread: like execution state, and stack

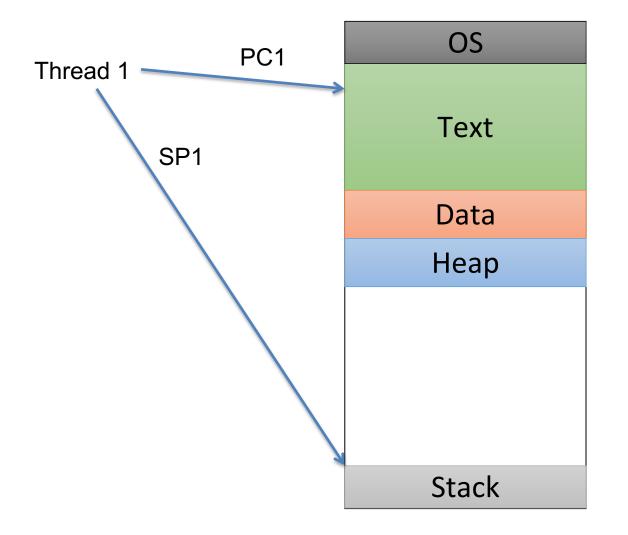
Threads

- Modern OSes separate the concepts of processes and threads.
 - The process defines the address space and general process attributes (e.g., open files)
 - The thread defines a sequential execution stream within a process (PC, SP, registers)
- A thread is bound to a single process
 - Processes, however, can have multiple threads
 - Each process has at least one thread (e.g. main)

Processes versus Threads

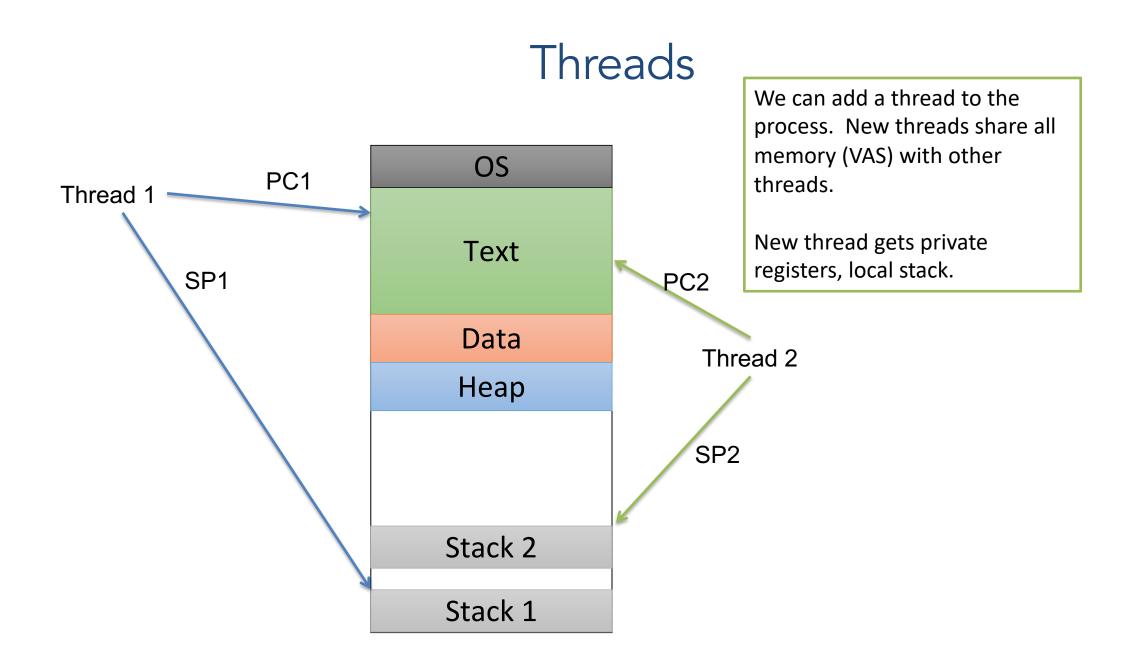
- A process defines the address space, text, resources, etc.,
- A thread defines a single sequential execution stream within a process (PC, stack, registers).
- Threads extract the thread of control information from the process
- Threads are bound to a single process.
- Each process may have multiple threads of control within it.
 - The address space of a process is shared among all its threads
 - No system calls are required to cooperate among threads

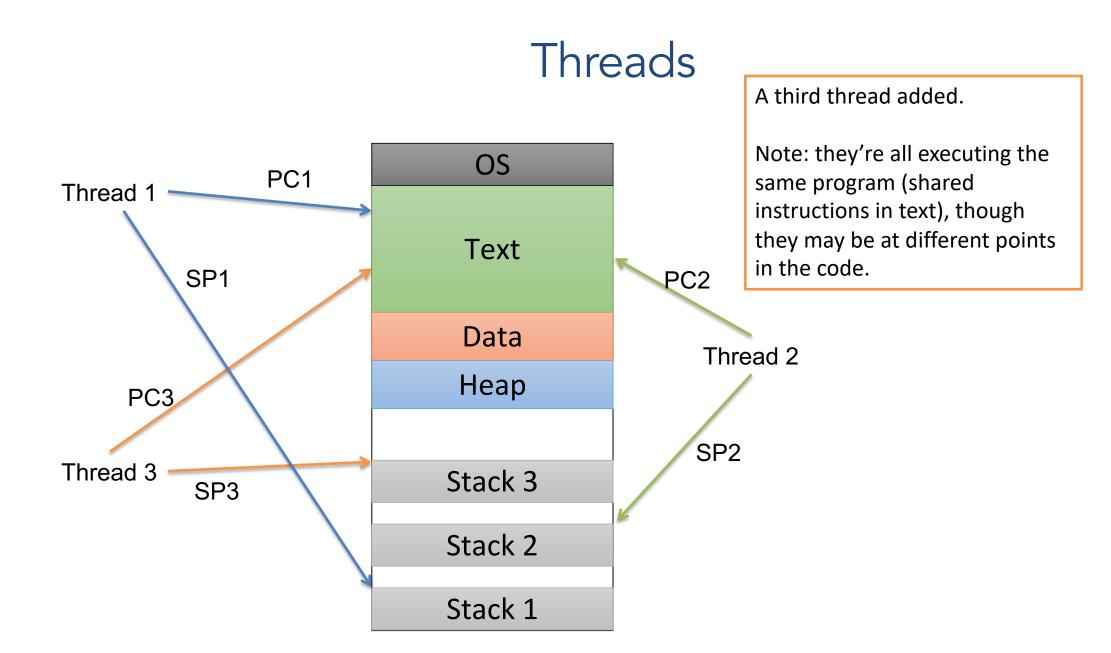
Threads



This is the picture we've been using all along:

A process with a single thread, which has execution state (registers) and a stack.





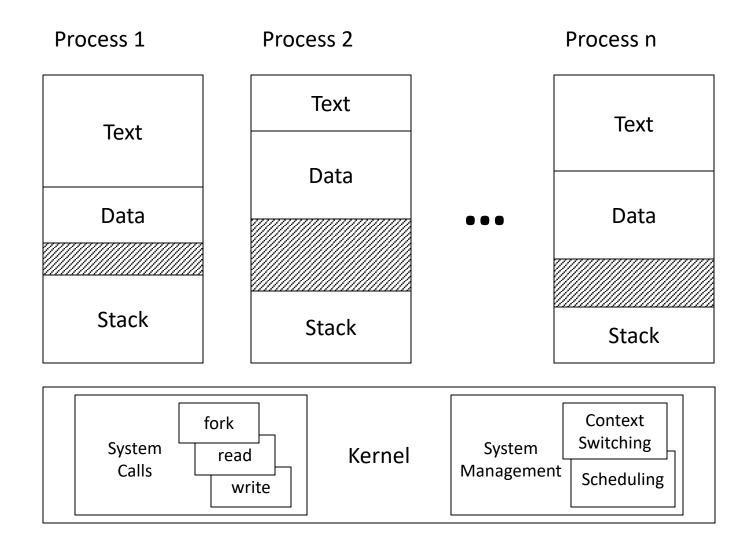
Why Use Threads?

- Separating threads and processes makes it easier to support parallel applications:
 - Creating multiple paths of execution does not require creating new processes (less state to store, initialize Light Weight Process)
 - Low-overhead sharing between threads in same process (threads share page tables, access same memory)
- Concurrency (multithreading) can be very useful

Concurrency?

- Several computations or threads of control are executing simultaneously, and potentially interacting with each other.
- We can multitask! Why does that help?
 - Taking advantage of multiple CPUs / cores
 - Overlapping I/O with computation
 - Improving program structure

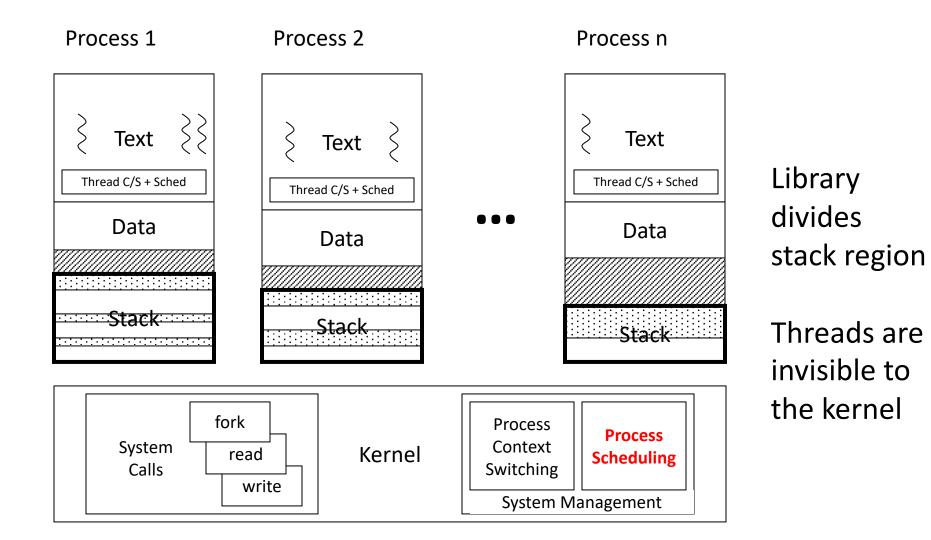
Recall: Processes



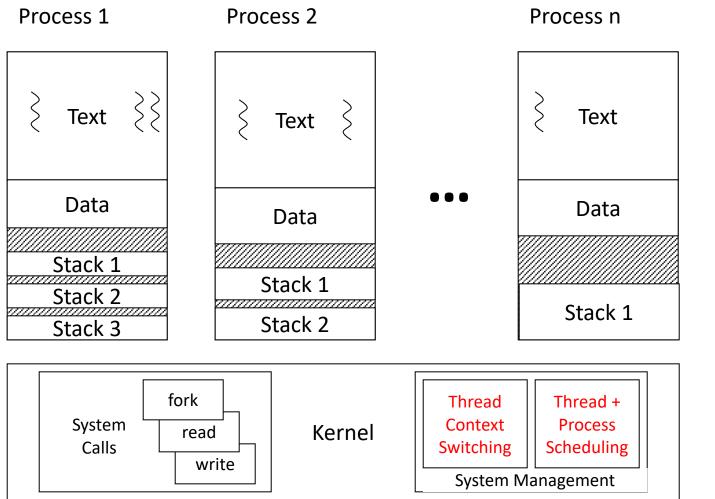
Scheduling Threads

- We have basically two options
 - 1. Kernel explicitly selects among threads in a process
 - 2. Hide threads from the kernel, and have a user-level scheduler inside each multithreaded process
- Why do we care?
 - Think about the overhead of switching between threads
 - Who decides which thread in a process should go first?
 - What about blocking system calls?

User-Level Threads



Kernel-Level Threads



Kernel Context switching over threads

Each process has explicitly mapped regions for stacks If you call thread_create() on a modern OS (Linux/Mac/Windows), which type of thread would you expect to receive? (Why? Which would you pick?)

A. Kernel threads

- B. User threads
- C. Some other sort of threads

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A. Kernel threads

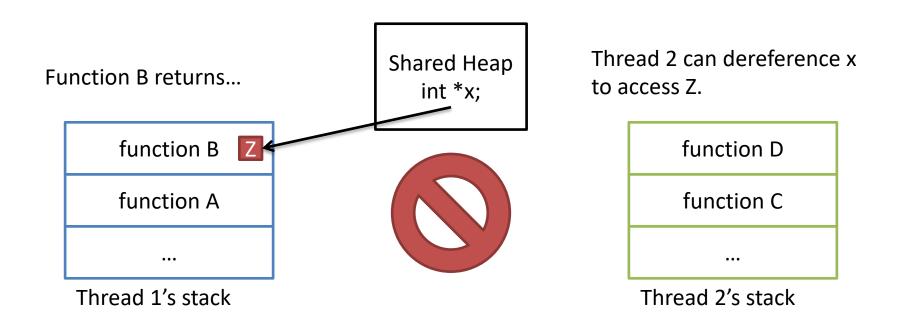
- B. User threads
- C. Some other sort of threads

Kernel vs. User Threads

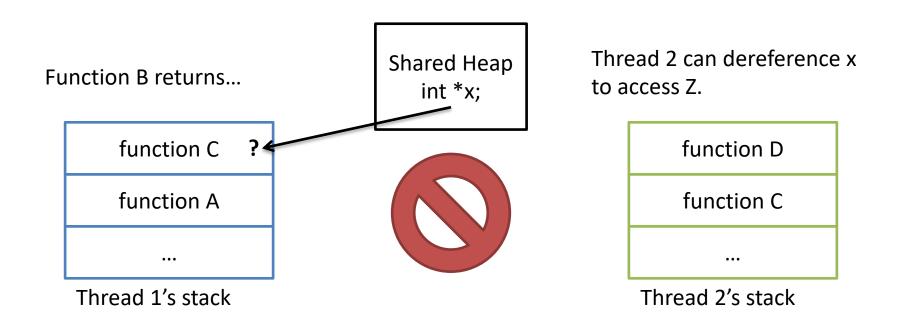
- Kernel-level threads
 - Integrated with OS (informed scheduling)
 - Slower to create, manipulate, synchronize
 - Requires getting the OS involved, which means changing context (relatively expensive)
- User-level threads
 - Faster to create, manipulate, synchronize
 - Not integrated with OS (uninformed scheduling)
 - If one thread makes a syscall, all of them get blocked because the OS doesn't distinguish.

- Code (text) shared by all threads in process
- 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
- Local variables should not be shared
 - Refer to data on the stack
 - Each thread has its own stack
 - Never pass/share/store a pointer to a local variable on another thread's stack!!

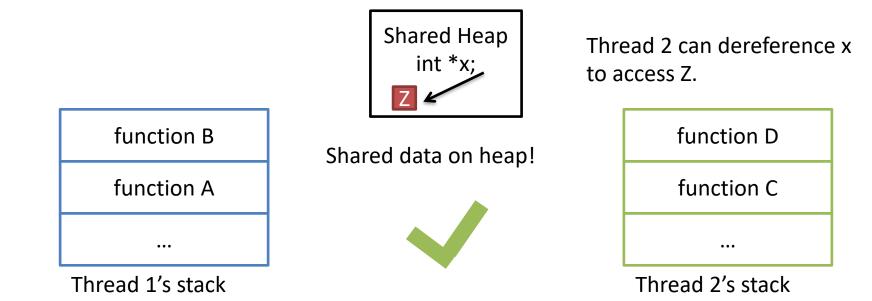
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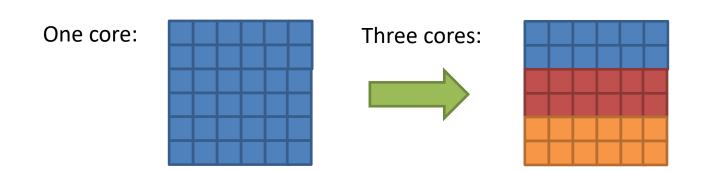


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Thread-level Parallelism

- Speed up application by assigning portions to CPUs/cores that process in parallel
- Requires:
 - partitioning responsibilities (e.g., parallel algorithm)
 - managing their interaction
- Example: game of life (next lab)



If one CPU core can run a program at a rate of X, how quickly will the program run on two cores? Why?

- A. Slower than one core (<X)
- B. The same speed (X)
- C. Faster than one core, but not double (X-2X)
- D. Twice as fast (2X)
- E. More than twice as fast(>2X)

If one CPU core can run a program at a rate of X, how quickly will the program run on two cores? Why?

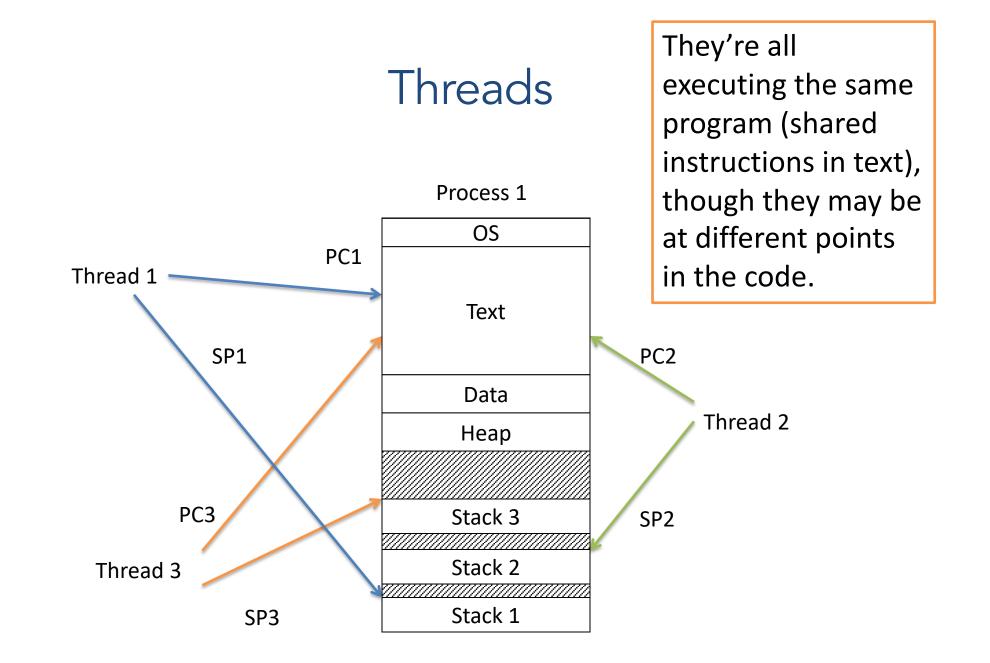
- A. Slower than one core (<X) (if we try to parallelize serial applications!)
- B. The same speed (X) (some applications are not parallelizable)
- C. Faster than one core, but not double (X-2X): most of the time: (some communication overhead to coordinate/synchronization of the threads)
- D. Twice as fast (2X)(class of problems called embarrassingly parallel programs. E.g. protein folding, SETI)
- E. More than twice as fast(>2X) (rare: possible if you have more CPU + more memory)

Parallel Speedup

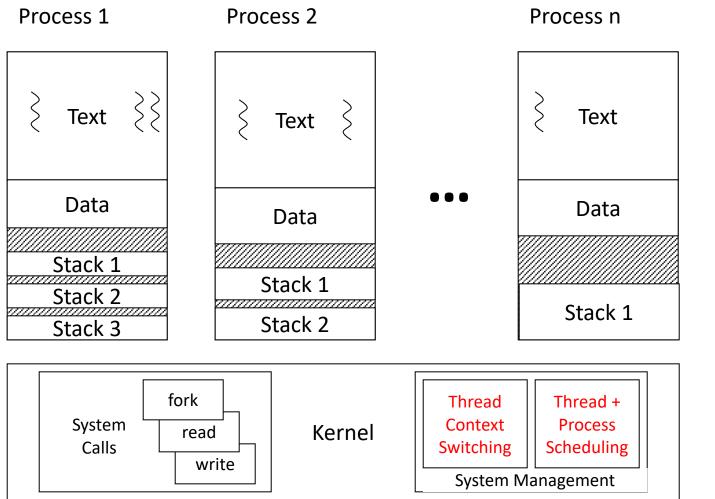
- Performance benefit of parallel threads depends on many factors:
 - algorithm divisibility
 - communication overhead
 - memory hierarchy and locality
 - implementation quality
- For most programs, more threads means more communication, diminishing returns.

Summary

- Physical limits to how much faster we can make a single core run.
 - Use transistors to provide more cores.
 - Parallelize applications to take advantage.
- OS abstraction: thread
 - Shares most of the address space with other threads in same process
 - Gets private execution context (registers) + stack
- Coordinating threads is challenging!



Kernel-Level Threads



Kernel Context switching over threads

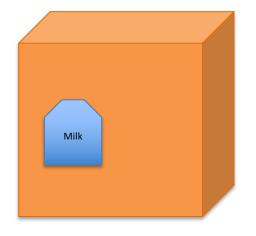
Each process has explicitly mapped regions for stacks

Synchronization

- Synchronize: to (arrange events to) happen such that two events do not overwrite each other's work.
- Thread synchronization
 - When one thread has to wait for another
 - Events in threads that occur "at the same time"
- Uses of synchronization
 - Prevent race conditions
 - Wait for resources to become available (only one thread has access at any time - deadlocks)

Synchronization: Too Much Milk (TMM)

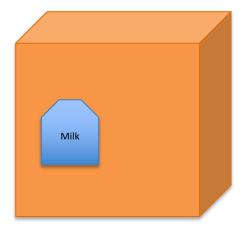
| Time | You | Your Roommate |
|------|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 3.00 | Arrive home | |
| 3.05 | Look in fridge, no milk | |
| 3.10 | Leave for the grocery store | |
| 3.15 | | |
| 3.20 | Arrive at the grocery store | |
| 3.25 | Buy Milk | |
| 3.30 | | |
| 3.35 | Arrive home, put milk in fridge | Arrive Home |
| 3.40 | | Look in fridge, find milk |
| 3.45 | | Cold Coffee (nom) |



What mechanisms do we need for two independent threads to communicate and get a consistent view (computer state)?

How many cartons of milk can we have in this scenario? (Can we ensure this somehow?)

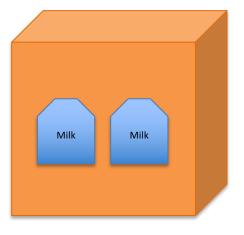
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- A. One carton (you)
- B. Two cartons
- C. No cartons
- D. Something else

Synchronization: Too Much Milk (TMM): One possible scenario

| Time | You | Your Roommate |
|------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 3.00 | Arrive home | |
| 3.05 | Look in fridge, no milk | |
| 3.10 | Leave for grocery | Arrive Home |
| 3.15 | | Look in fridge, no milk |
| 3.20 | Arrive at grocery | Leave for grocery |
| 3.25 | Buy Milk | |
| 3.30 | | Arrive at grocery |
| 3.35 | Arrive home, put milk in fridge | |
| 3.40 | | Arrive home, put milk in fridge |
| 3.45 | | Oh No! |

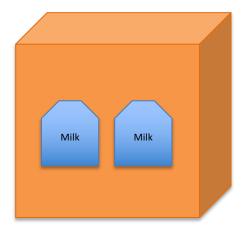


What mechanisms do we need for two independent threads to communicate and get a consistent view (computer state)?

Synchronization:

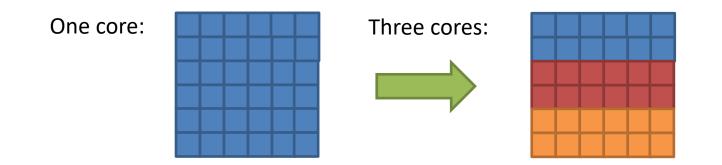
<u>Threads get scheduled in an arbitrary manner:</u> bad things may happen: ...or nothing may happen

| Time | You | Your Roommate |
|------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 3.00 | Arrive home | |
| 3.05 | Look in fridge, no milk | |
| 3.10 | Leave for grocery | Arrive Home |
| 3.15 | | Look in fridge, no milk |
| 3.20 | Arrive at grocery | Leave for grocery |
| 3.25 | Buy Milk | |
| 3.30 | | Arrive at grocery |
| 3.35 | Arrive home, put milk in fridge | |
| 3.40 | | Arrive home, put milk in fridge |
| 3.45 | | Oh No! |



What mechanisms do we need for two independent threads to communicate and get a consistent view (computer state)?

Synchronization Example



- Coordination required:
 - Which thread goes first?
 - Threads in different regions must work together to compute new value for boundary cells.
 - Threads might not run at the same speed (depends on the OS scheduler). Can't let one region get too far ahead.
 - Context switches can happen at any time!



(Why threads require care. Humans aren't good at reasoning about this.)

- As a programmer you have *no idea* when threads will run. The OS schedules them, and the schedule will vary across runs.
- It might decide to context switch from one thread to another *at any time*.
- Your code must be prepared for this!
 - Ask yourself: "<u>Would something bad happen if we context switched here?</u>"
- hard to debug this problem if it is not reproducible

Example: The Credit/Debit Problem

- Say you have \$1000 in your bank account
 - You deposit \$100
 - You also withdraw \$100
- How much should be in your account?
- What if your deposit and withdrawal occur at the same time, at different ATMs?

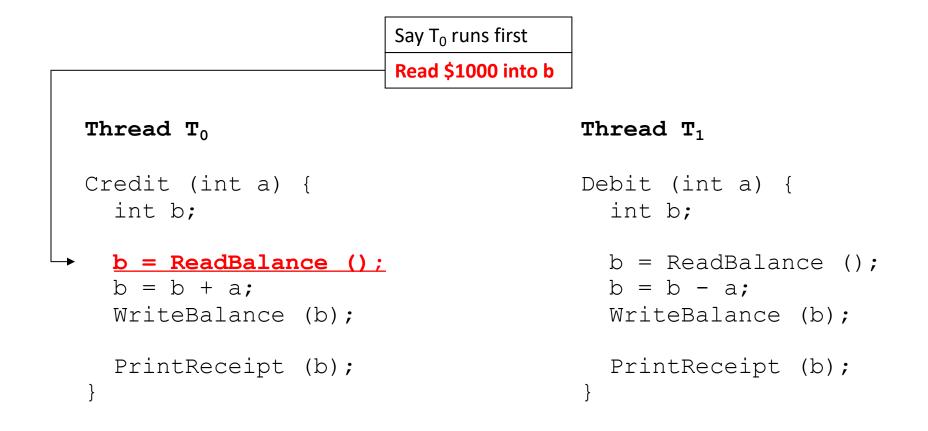
```
Thread T<sub>0</sub>
Credit (int a) {
    int b;
    b = ReadBalance ();
    b = b + a;
    WriteBalance (b);
    PrintReceipt (b);
}
```

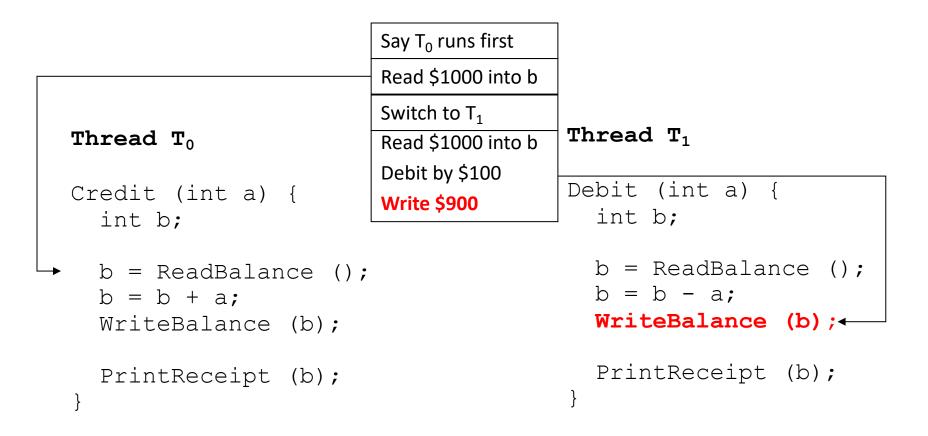
Thread T_1

```
Debit (int a) {
    int b;
```

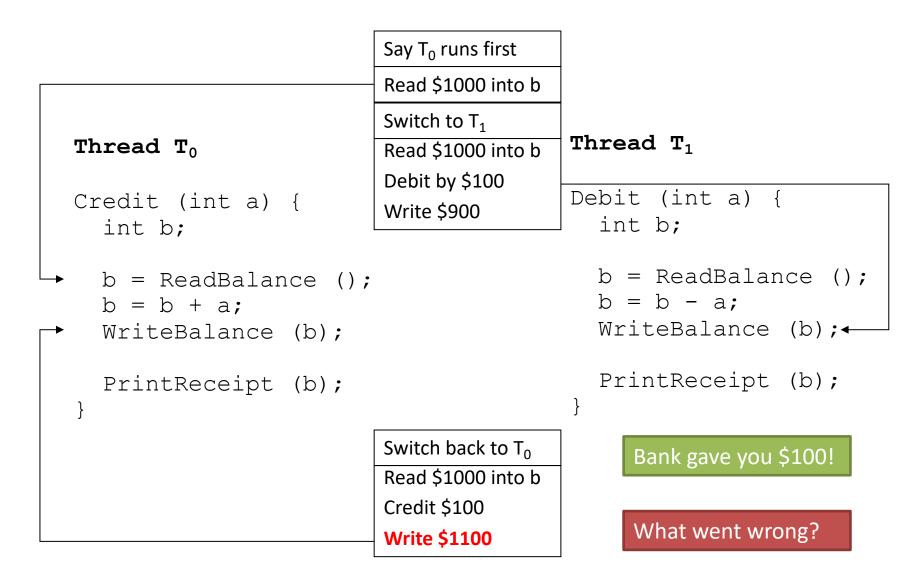
```
b = ReadBalance ();
b = b - a;
WriteBalance (b);
```

```
PrintReceipt (b);
```

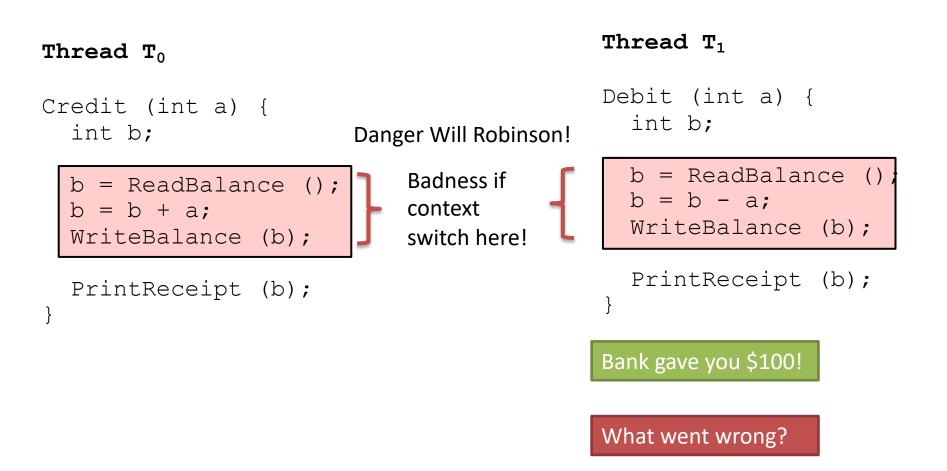




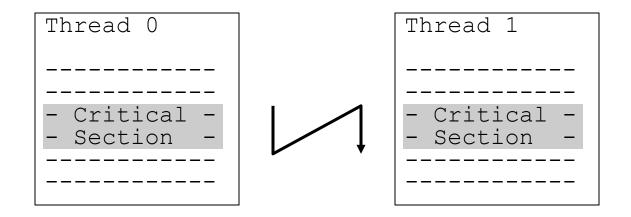
CONTEXT SWITCH



"Critical Section"



To Avoid Race Conditions



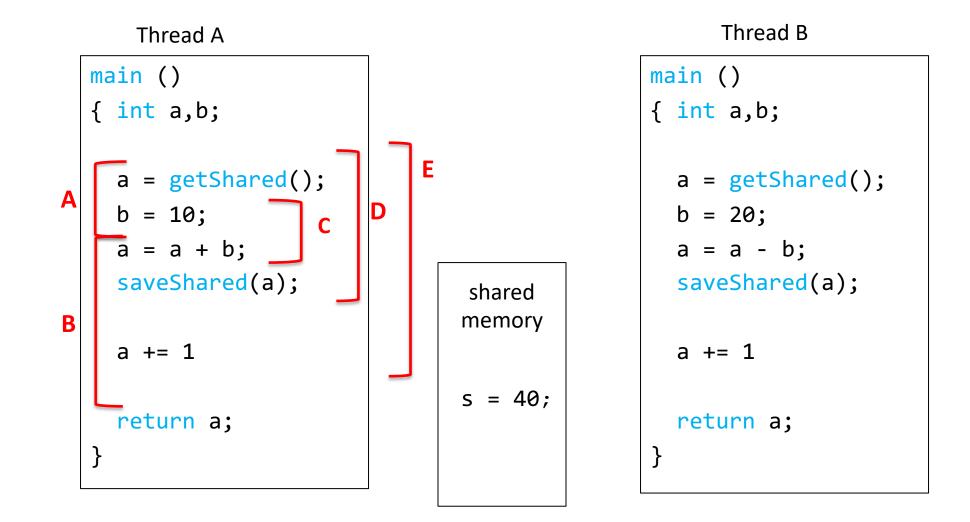
1. Identify critical sections

Use synchronization to enforce mutual exclusion
– Only one thread active in a critical section

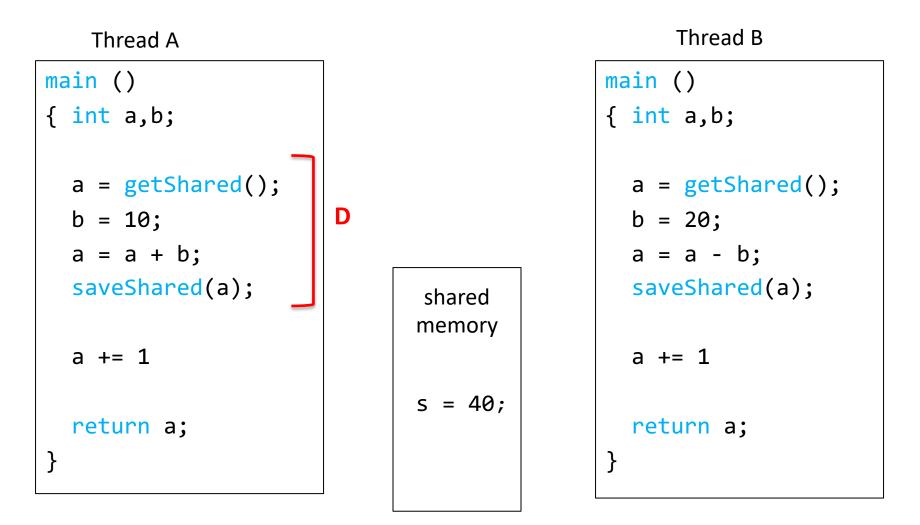
Critical Section and Atomicity

- Sections of code executed by multiple threads
 - Access shared variables, often making local copy
 - Places where order of execution or <u>thread interleaving will affect the</u> <u>outcome</u>
 - Follows: read + modify + write of shared variable
- Must run atomically with respect to each other
 - <u>Atomicity</u>: runs as an entire instruction or not at all. Cannot be divided into smaller parts.

Which code region is a critical section?

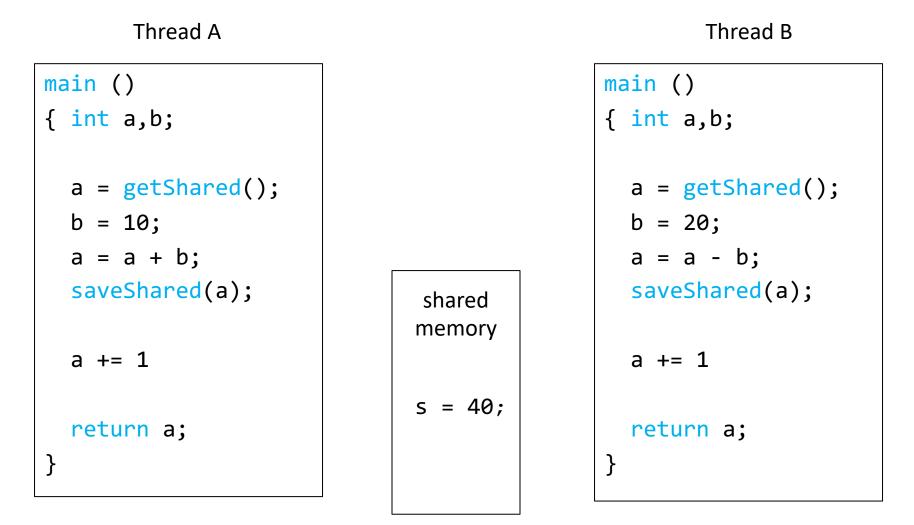


Which code region is a critical section? read + modify + write of shared variable

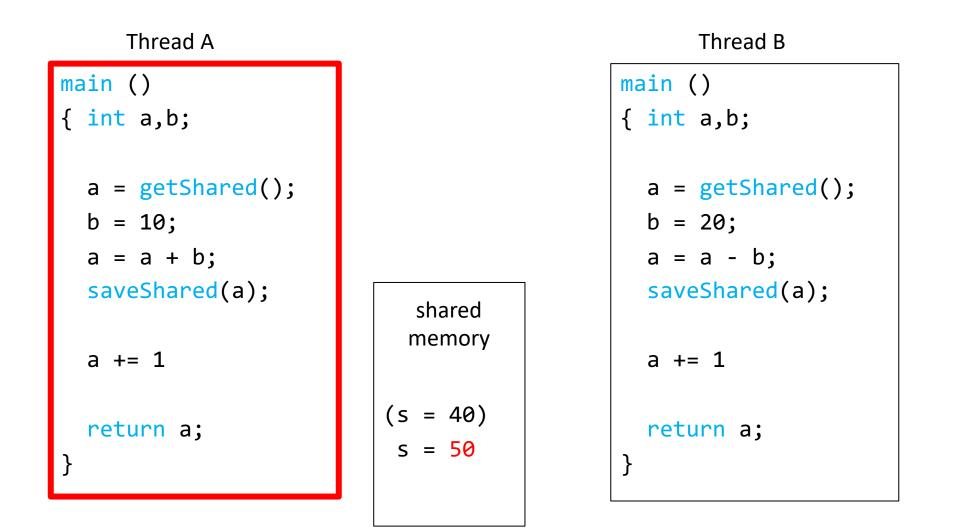


Large enough for correctness + Small enough to minimize slow down

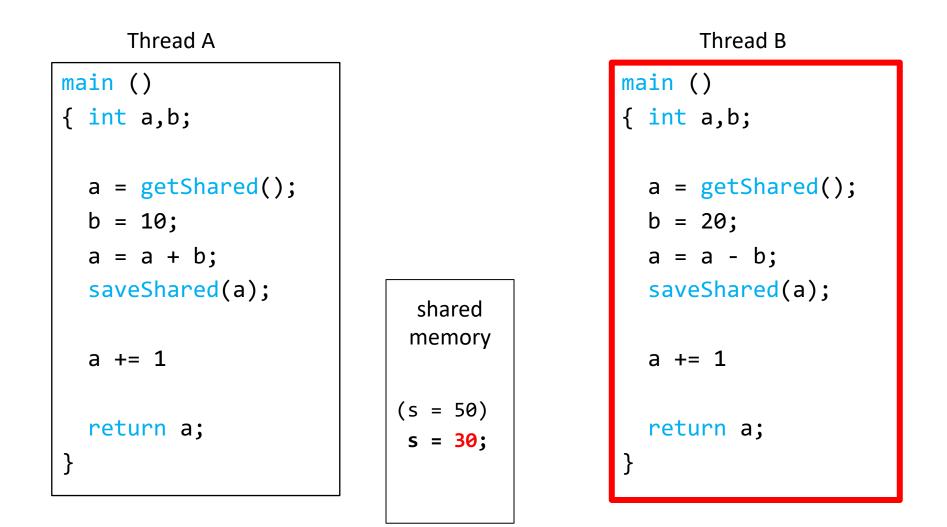
Which values might the shared s variable hold after both threads finish?



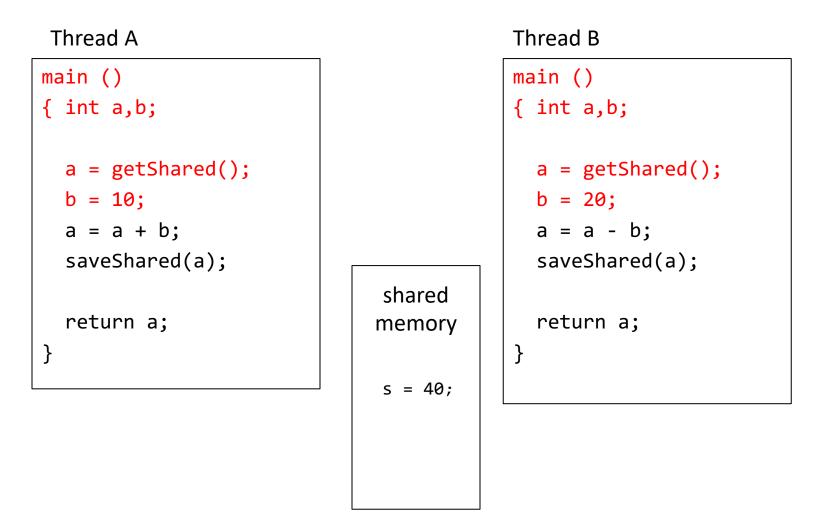
If A runs first



B runs after A Completes



What about interleaving?



One of the threads will overwrite the other's changes.

Is there a race condition?

Suppose count is a global variable, multiple threads increment it: count++;

- A. Yes, there's a race condition (count++ is a critical section).
- B. No, there's no race condition (count++ is not a critical section).
- C. Cannot be determined

How about if compiler implements it as:

| movq (%rdx), %rax | // read count value |
|-------------------|----------------------------|
| addq \$1, %rax | <pre>// modify value</pre> |
| movq %rax, (%rdx) | // write count |

How about if compiler implements it as:

incq (%rdx) // increment value

Atomicity

- The implementation of acquiring/releasing critical section 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?
 - Atomic instructions (e.g., test-and-set, compare-and-swap)
 - Allows us to build "semaphore" OS abstraction

Four Rules for Mutual Exclusion

- No two threads can be inside their critical sections at the same time (one of many but not more than one).
- 2. No thread outside its critical section may prevent others from entering their critical sections.
- No thread should have to wait forever to enter its critical section. (Starvation)
- 4. No assumptions can be made about speeds or number of CPU's.



Railroad Semaphore

 Help trains figure out which track to be on at any given time.



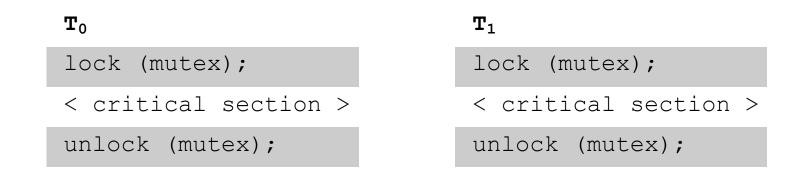
Railroad Semaphore

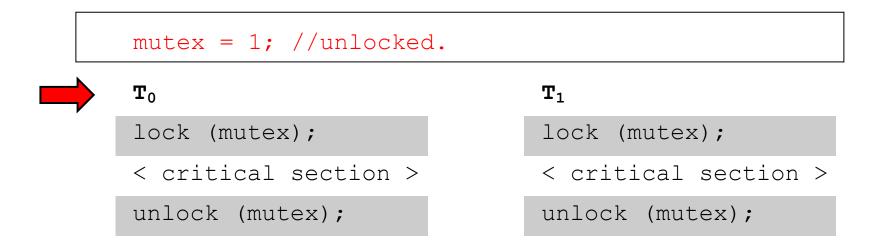
 Help trains figure out which track to be on at any given time.

O.S. Semaphore:

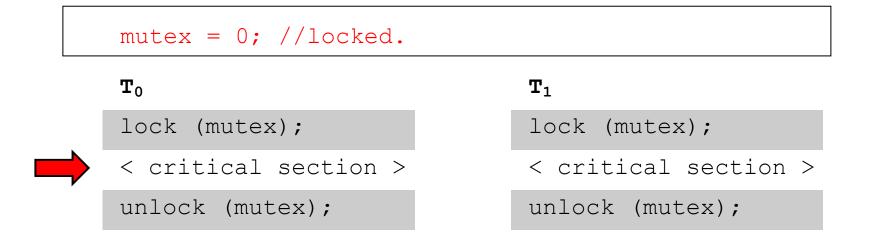
- Construct that the OS provides to processes.
- Make system calls to modify their value

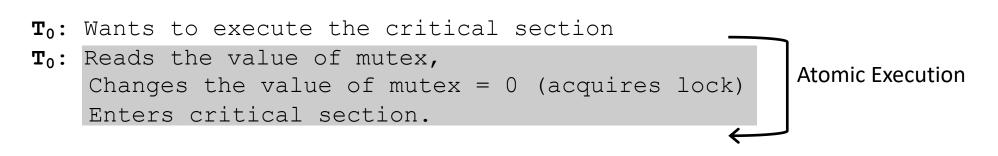
mutex = 1; //lock and unlock mutex atomically.

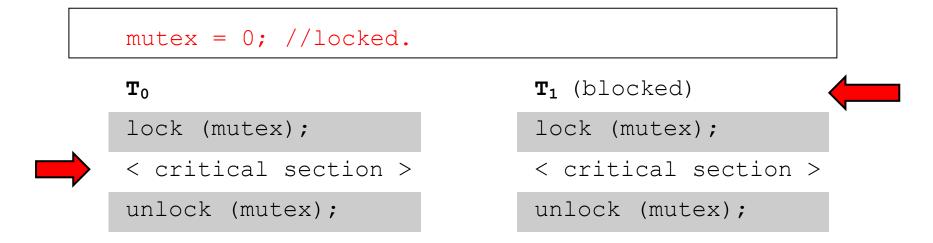


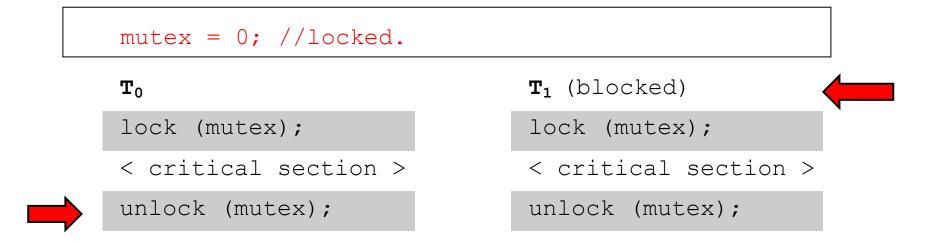


- $\mathbf{T}_0\colon$ Wants to execute the critical section
- \mathbf{T}_0 : Reads the value of mutex, Changes the value of mutex = 0 (acquires lock) Enters critical section.



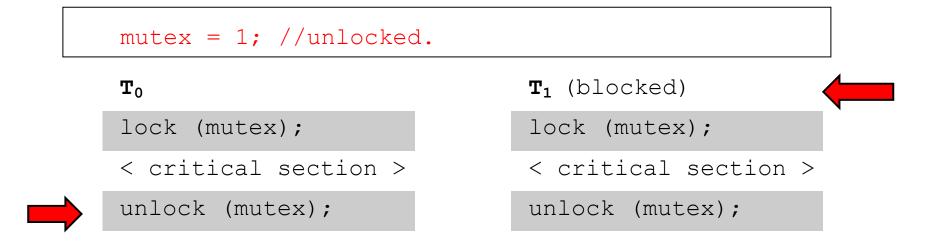


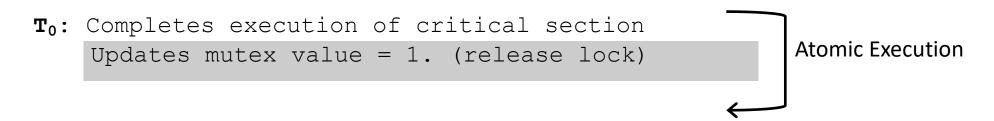


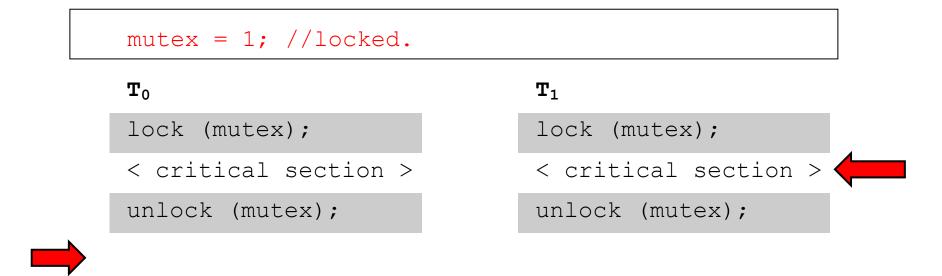


Atomicity: run the entire instruction without interruption.

 T_0 : Completes execution of critical section Updates mutex value = 1. (release lock)



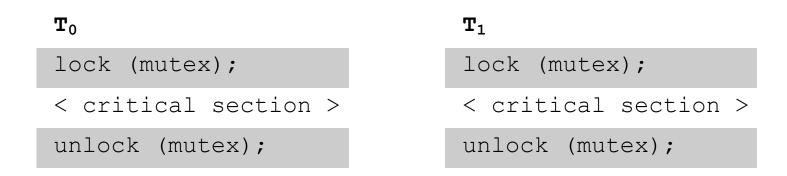




Atomicity: run the entire instruction without interruption.

 $\mathbf{T_{1}}$: Can now acquire lock atomically and Enter the critical section

mutex = 1; //lock and unlock mutex atomically.

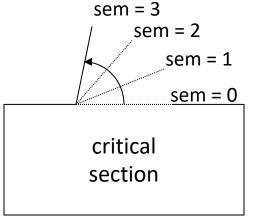


- Use a "mutex" semaphore initialized to 1
- Only one thread can enter critical section at a time.
- Simple, works for any number of threads

Atomicity: runs as an entire instruction or not at all.

Semaphores

- Semaphore: OS synchronization variable
 - Has integer value
 - List of waiting threads
- Works like a gate
- If sem > 0, gate is open
 - Value equals number of threads that can enter
- Else, gate is closed
 - Possibly with waiting threads



Semaphores

- Associated with each semaphore is a queue of waiting threads
- When wait() is called by a thread:
 - If semaphore is open, thread continues
 - If semaphore is closed, thread blocks on queue
- Then signal() opens the semaphore:
 - If a thread is waiting on the queue, the thread is unblocked
 - If no threads are waiting on the queue, the signal is remembered for the next thread

Semaphore Operations

| sem s = n; | <pre>// declare and initialize</pre> |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| <pre>wait (sem s) decrement s; if s < 0: block thread (and associate with s);</pre> | <pre>// Executes atomically(*)</pre> |
| <pre>signal (sem s) increment s; if blocked threads: unblock (any) one of them;</pre> | <pre>// Executes atomically(*)</pre> |

(*) With help from special hardware instructions.

Semaphore Operations

```
sem s = n; // declare and initialize
wait (sem s) // Executes atomically(*)
decrement s;
if s < 0:
    block thread (and associate with s);
signal (sem s) // Executes atomically(*)
increment s;
if blocked threads:
    unblock (any) one of them;</pre>
```

Based on what you know about semaphores, should a process be able to check beforehand whether wait(s) will cause it to block?

- A. Yes, it should be able to check.
- B. No, it should not be able to check.

Semaphore Operations

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|---|--------------------------------------|
| <pre>wait (sem s) decrement s; if s < 0: block thread (and associate with s);</pre> | <pre>// Executes atomically(*)</pre> |
| <pre>signal (sem s) increment s; if blocked threads: unblock (any) one of them;</pre> | <pre>// Executes atomically(*)</pre> |

- No other operations allowed
- In particular, semaphore's value can't be tested!
 - No thread can tell the value of s

Synchronization: More than Mutexes

- "I want to block a thread until something specific happens."
 Condition variable: wait for a condition to be true
- "I want all my threads to sync up at the same point."

- Barrier: wait for everyone to catch up.

Barriers

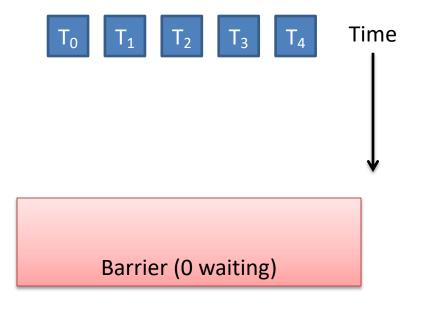
- Used to coordinate threads, but also other forms of concurrent execution.
- Often found in simulations that have discrete rounds. (e.g., game of life)

```
shared barrier b;
```

```
init_barrier(&b, N);
```

```
create_threads(N, func);
```

```
void *func(void *arg) {
  while (...) {
    compute_sim_round()
    barrier_wait(&b)
 }
```



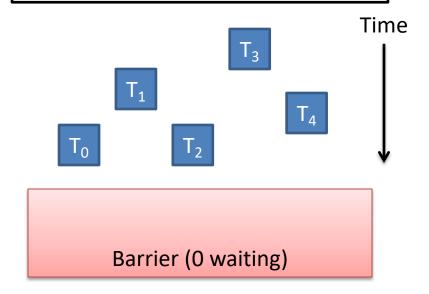
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```
init_barrier(&b, N);
```

```
create_threads(N, func);
```

```
void *func(void *arg) {
  while (...) {
    compute_sim_round()
    barrier_wait(&b)
 }
```

Threads make progress computing current round at different rates.



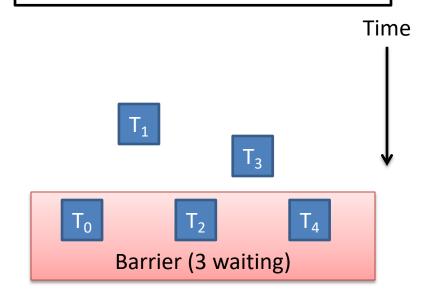
```
shared barrier b;
```

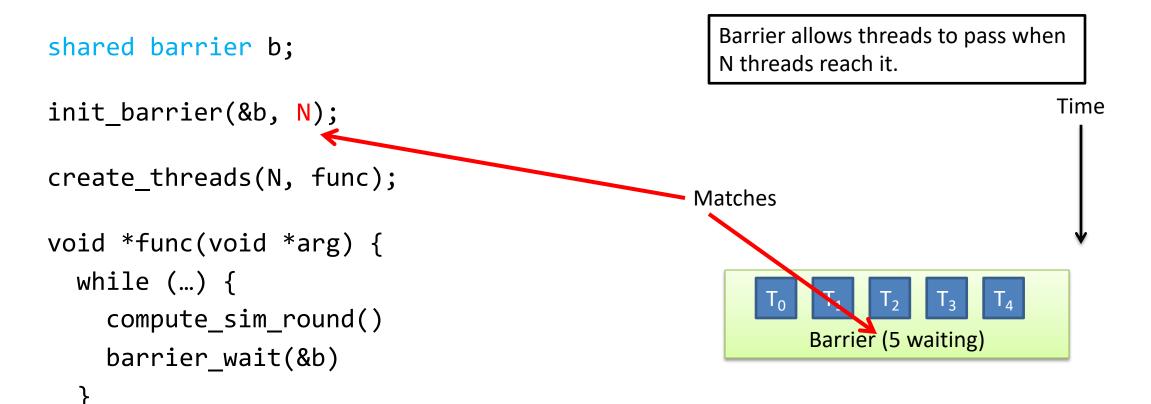
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init_barrier(&b, N);
```

```
create_threads(N, func);
```

```
void *func(void *arg) {
  while (...) {
    compute_sim_round()
    barrier_wait(&b)
 }
```

Threads that make it to barrier must wait for all others to get there.





```
shared barrier b;
```

```
init_barrier(&b, N);
```

```
create_threads(N, func);
```

```
void *func(void *arg) {
  while (...) {
    compute_sim_round()
    barrier_wait(&b)
 }
```

Threads compute next round, wait on barrier again, repeat...

Barrier (0 waiting)

l 2

 T_3

 T_4

 T_0

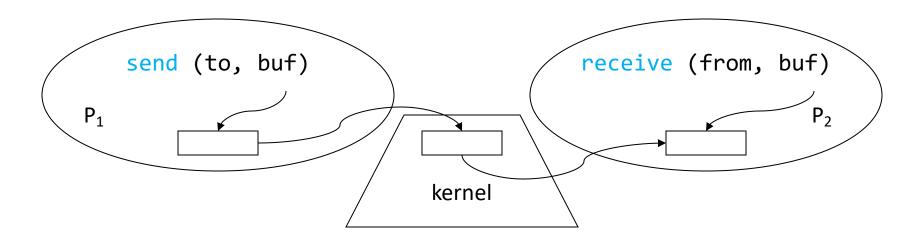
Time

Synchronization: More than Mutexes

- I want all my threads to sync up at the same point.
 - Barrier: wait for everyone to catch up.
- I want to block a thread until something specific happens.
 - Condition variable: wait for a condition to be true
- I want my threads to share a critical section when they're reading, <u>but still safely write</u>.

Readers/writers lock: distinguish how lock is used

Synchronization: Beyond Mutexes Message Passing



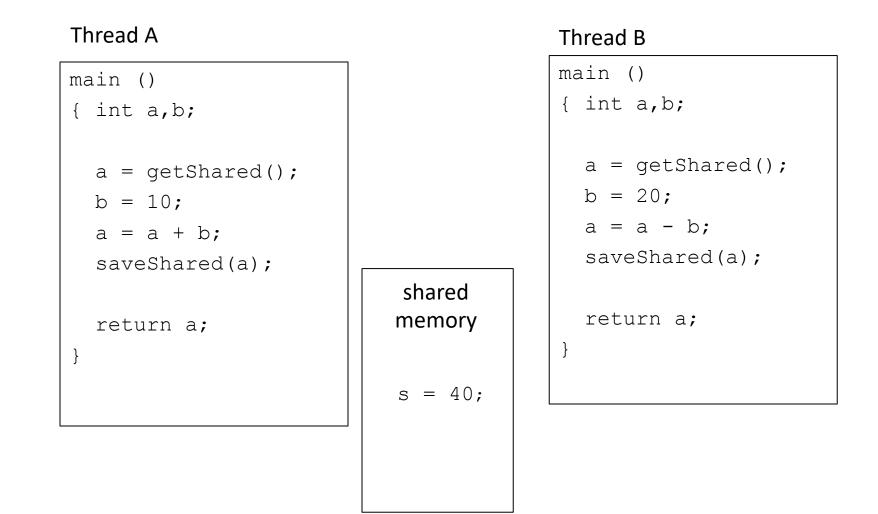
- Operating system mechanism for IPC
 - send (destination, message_buffer)
 - receive (source, message_buffer)
- Data transfer: in to and out of kernel message buffers
- Synchronization: can't receive until message is sent

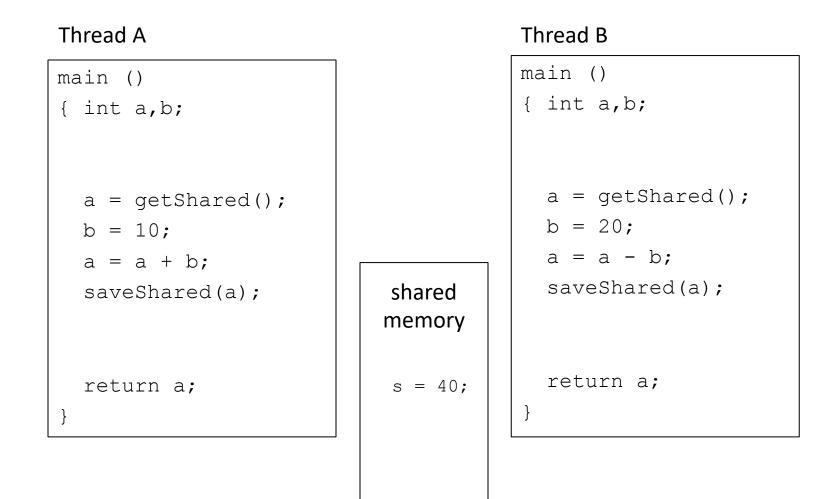
Summary

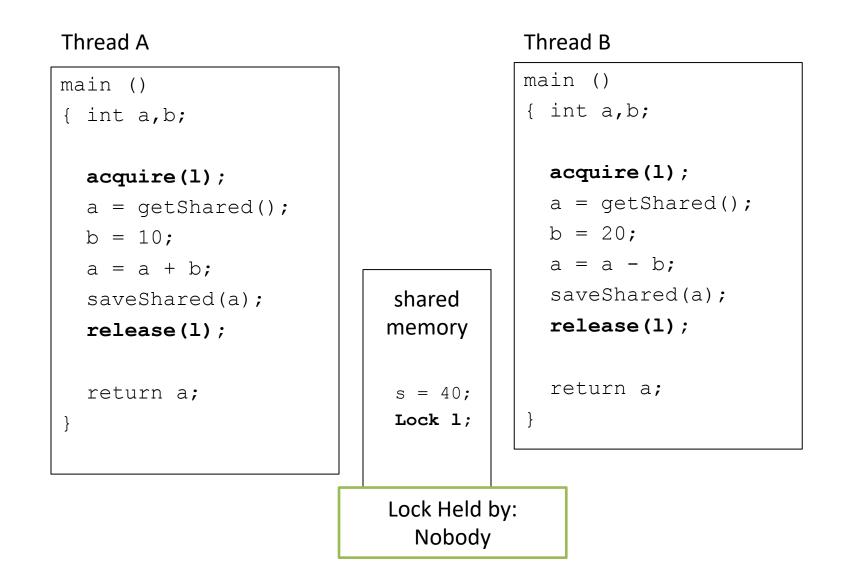
- We have no idea when OS will schedule or context switch our threads.
 - Code must be prepared, tough to reason about.
- Threads often must synchronize
 - To safely communicate / transfer data, without races
- Synchronization primitives help programmers
 - Kernel-level semaphores: limit # of threads that can do something, provides atomicity
 - User-level locks: built upon semaphore, provides mutual exclusion (usually part of thread library)

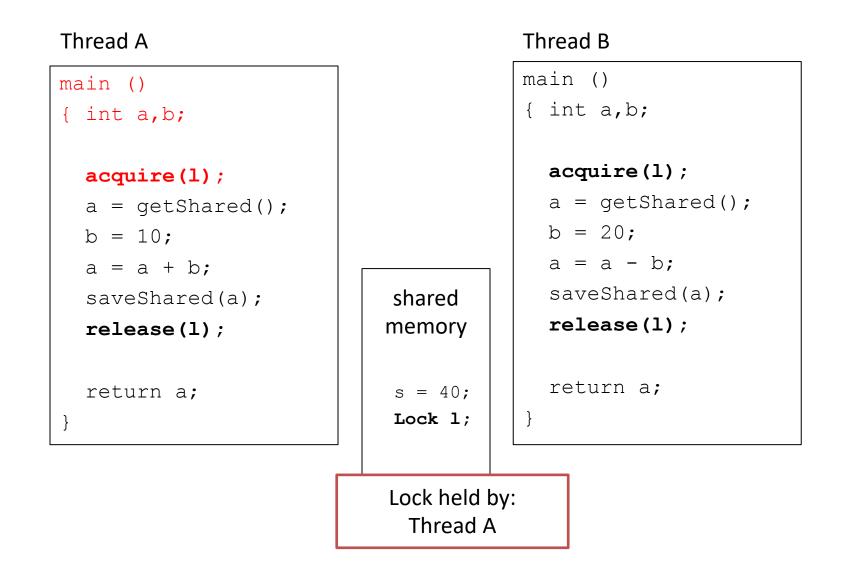
Additional Slides: Solution to the Race Condition

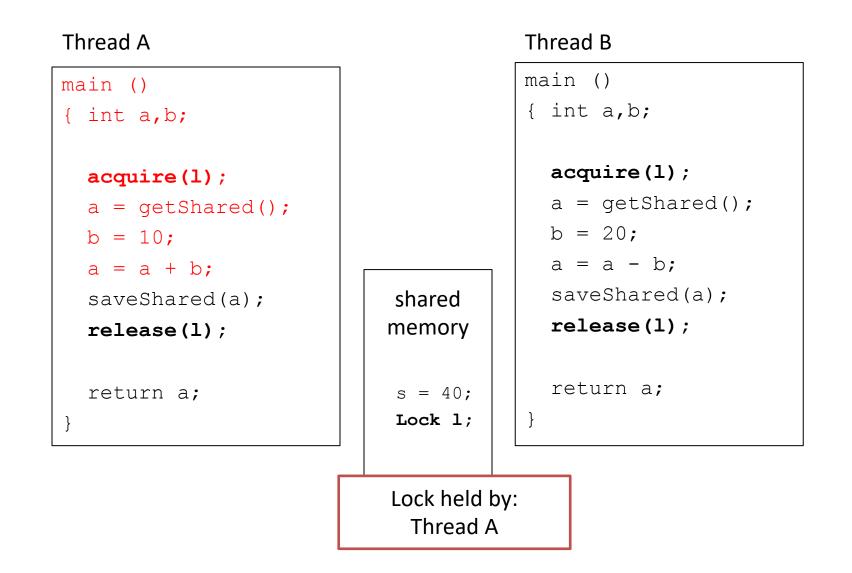
Solution with mutexes

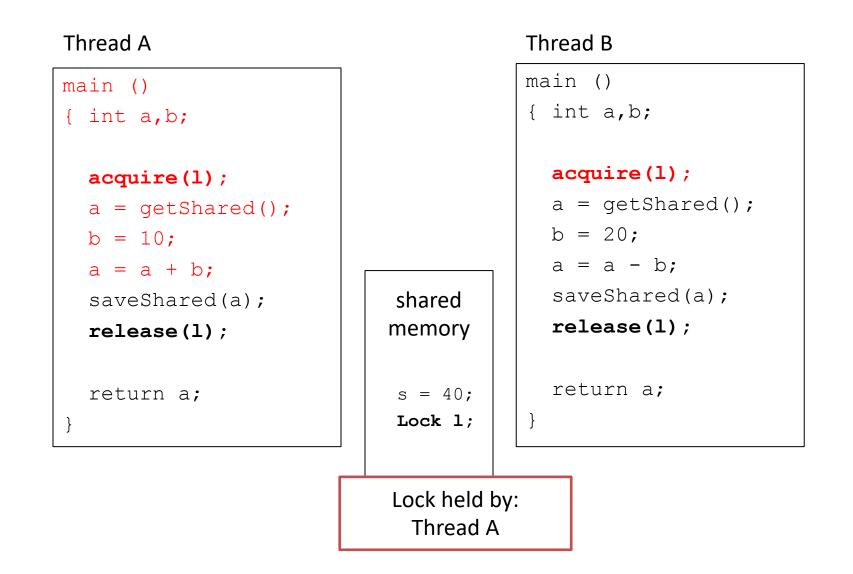


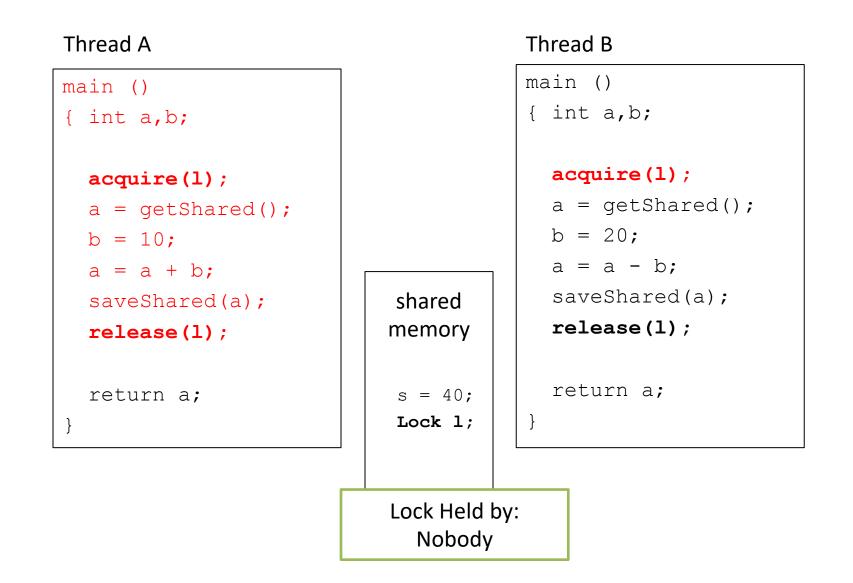


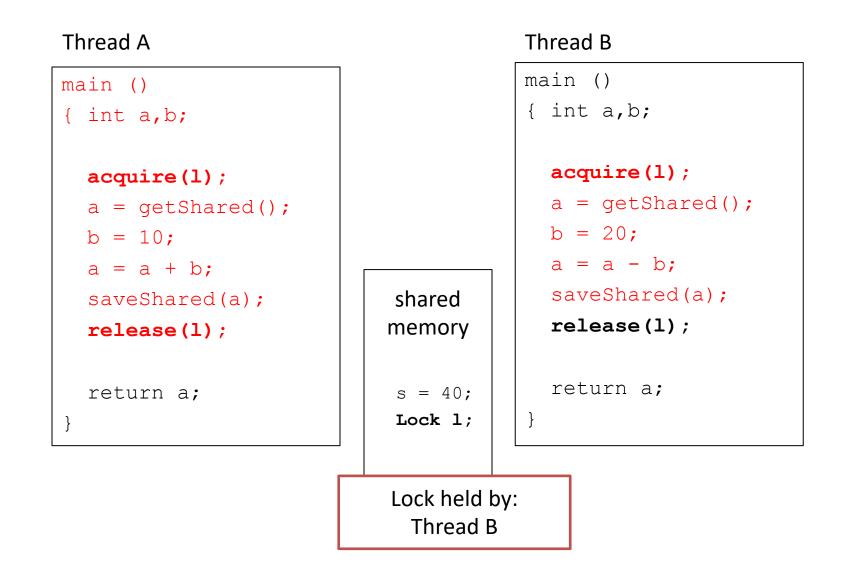


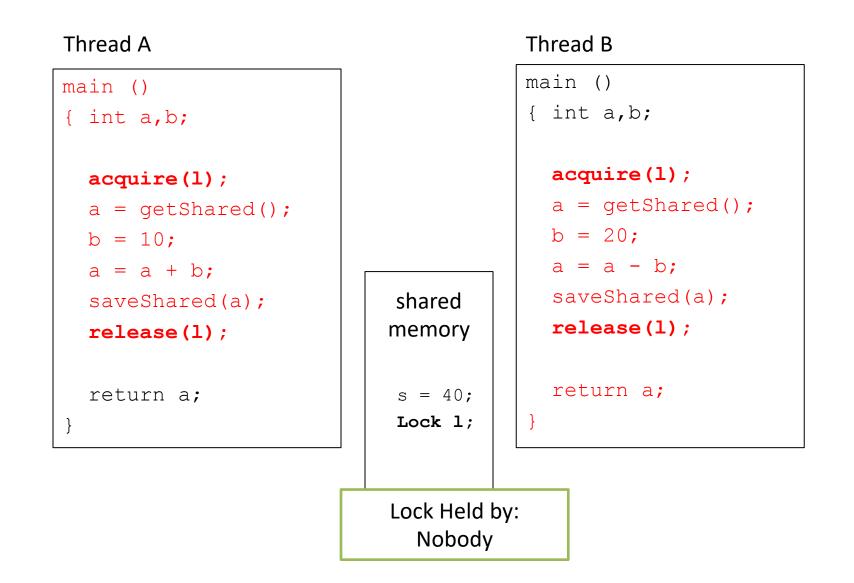


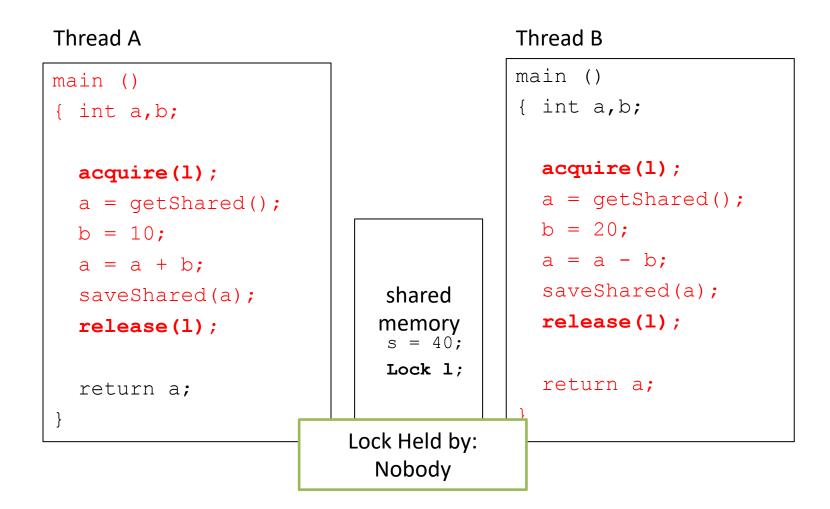












• No matter how we order threads or when we context switch, result will always be 30, like we expected (and probably wanted).