Lecture 17 Processes

CS213 – Intro to Computer Systems Branden Ghena – Winter 2025

Slides adapted from:

St-Amour, Hardavellas, Bustamente (Northwestern), Bryant, O'Hallaron (CMU), Garcia, Weaver (UC Berkeley)

Today's Goals

Introduce the role of an operating system

- Explore various mechanisms by which OS and processes interact
 - System calls and signals

Discuss operations on files as example system calls

Introduce the idea of "scheduling" processes

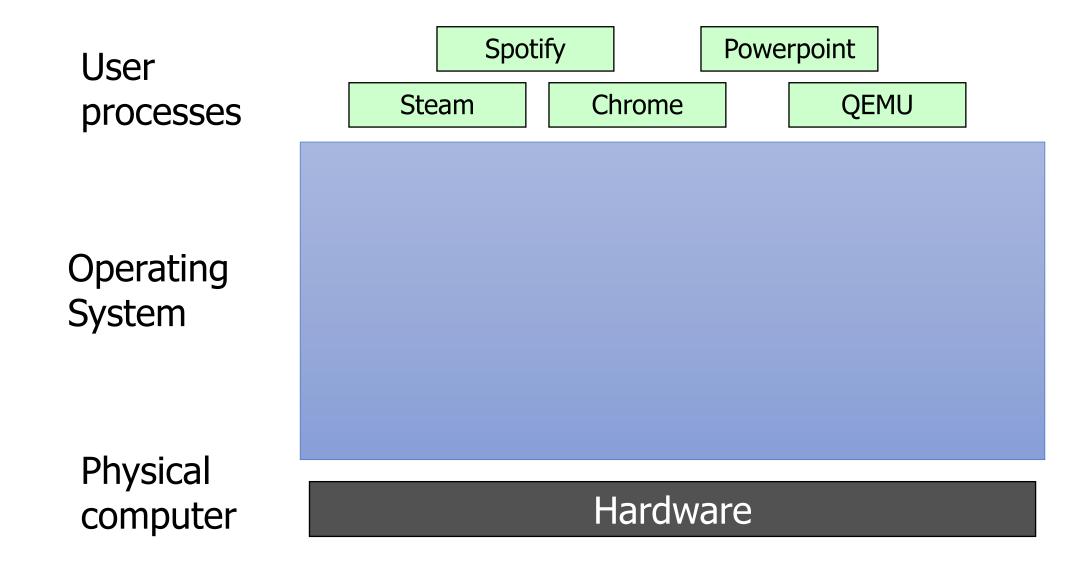
Outline

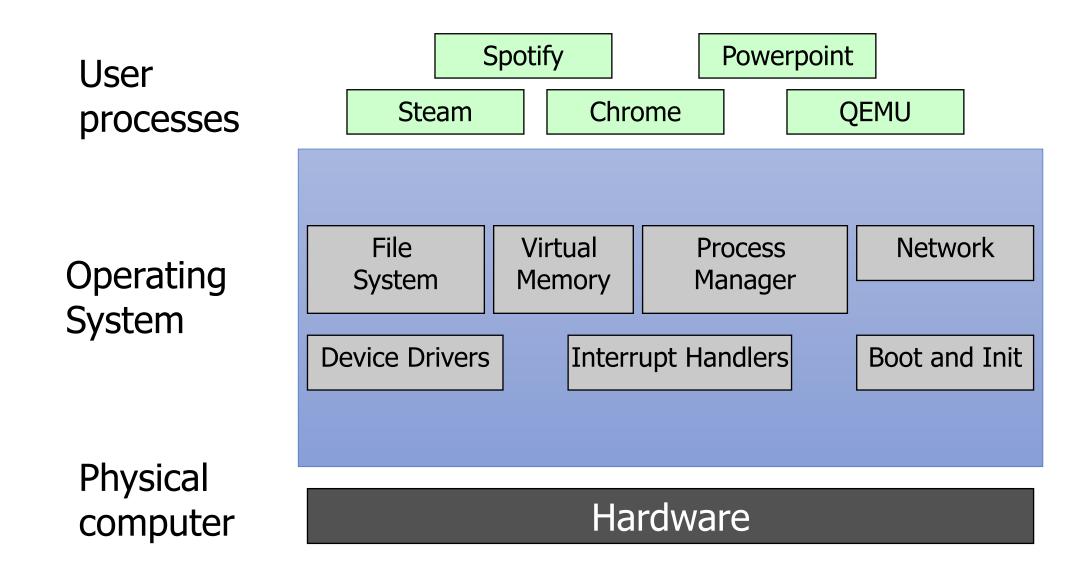
- Intro to Operating Systems
- Process Control Flow
- System Calls
- File I/O
 - Standard I/O
- Signals
- Scheduling Processes

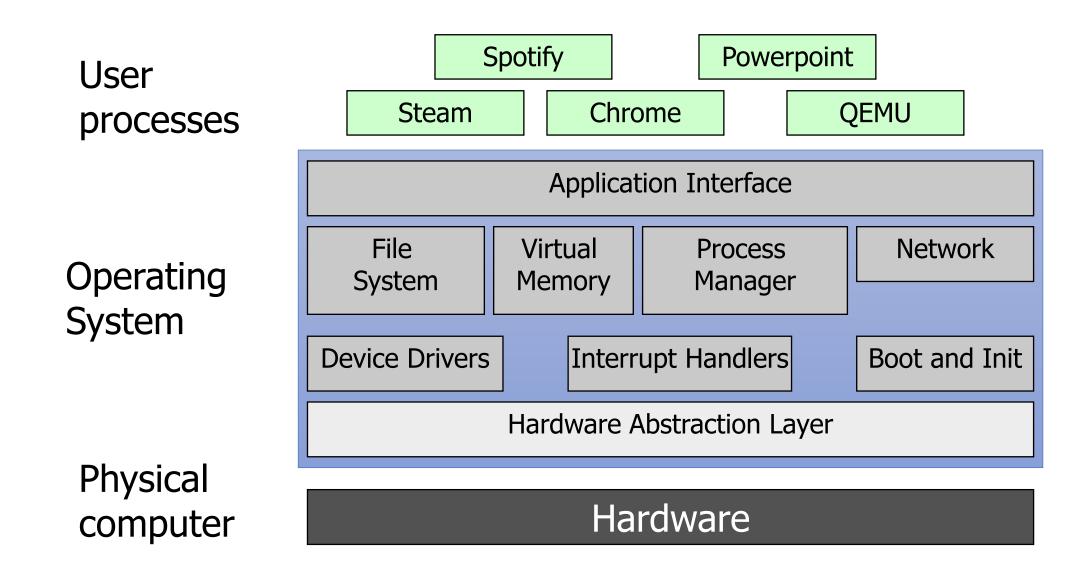
User Spotify Powerpoint Processes Steam Chrome QEMU

Physical computer

Hardware







What's part of the OS?

- OS kernel the part of the OS code that has full control of the system
- Process scheduling (who uses CPU)
- Memory allocation (who uses RAM)
- Accesses hardware devices
 - Outputs graphics
 - Reads/writes to network
 - Read/write to disks
 - Handles boot-up and power-down

- OS distribution the kernel + lots of other useful stuff
- GUI / Window manager
- Command shell
- Software package manager
 - "app store", yum, apt, brew
- Common software libraries
- Useful apps:
 - Text editor, compilers, web browser, web server, SSH, antivirus, file-sharing, media libraries,

Major goals of an Operating System

- OSes make advancing technology available to rapidly evolving applications. They do so with two major goals:
 - 1. Provide **abstractions** to applications to enable hardware compatibility
 - Why: allow reuse of common features, avoid low-level details
 - Challenges: What are the correct abstractions?
 - 2. Manage **sharing of resources** across many applications
 - Why: protect applications, enforce fair access
 - Challenges: What are the mechanisms and what are the policies?
- Good operating systems do these quickly, efficiently, and securely

Processes are an abstraction provided by the OS

- The machine itself usually doesn't support processes
 - Just has a processor and a set of registers
 - Memory is just arbitrary memory
- OS provides the abstraction
 - Multiple processes can run at the "same time"
 - Each has its own registers
 - Each has its own isolated memory
- Processes enable
 - Multiple functionalities on a computer
 - Multiprogramming of a system

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Reminder: view of a process

- Process: program that is being executed
- Contains code, data, and a thread
 - Thread contains registers, instruction pointer, and stack



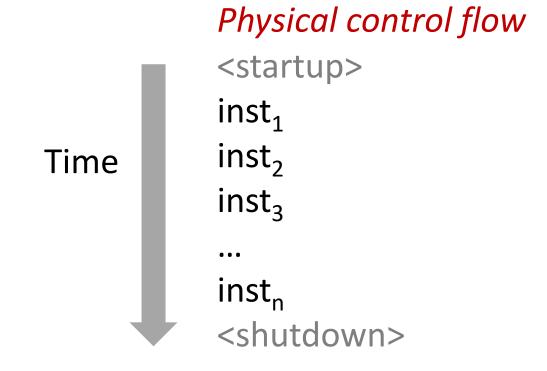
Questions remaining about processes

- Interaction mechanisms with OS
 - How do processes make requests of the OS?
 - How does the OS inform processes of various events?

 Both answered by the same basic mechanism: exceptional control flow

Control flow

- Processors do only one thing:
 - From startup to shutdown, a CPU simply reads and executes (interprets) a sequence of instructions, one at a time
 - This sequence is the CPU's control flow (or flow of control)

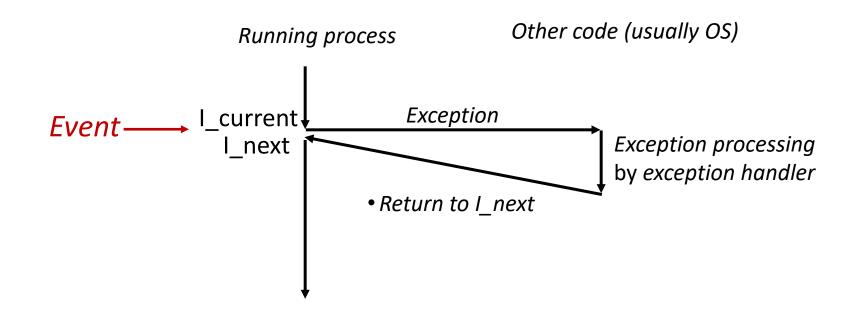


Altering control flow

- Instructions that change control flow allow software to react changes in program state
 - Jumps/branches
 - Call/return
- But comptuers also need to react to changes in system state
 - Data arrives at network adapter
 - Instruction divides by zero
 - User hits Ctrl-C on the keyboard
 - System timer expires
- These mechanisms are known as "exceptional control flow"

Exceptional control flow

- Mechanisms that could cause exceptional control flow
 - Exceptions: events cause execution to jump to OS handler
 - Context switch: request or timeout causes execution to jump to OS
 - Signals: event plus OS causes execution to jump to process handler



Exceptions

- Hardware detects an event that OS software needs to resolve immediately
- Could be an error
 - Invalid memory access
 - Invalid instruction
- Could just be something the OS should handle
 - Page fault
 - USB device detected
- OS has a table of "exception handlers", which are functions that handle each exception class (also known as interrupt handlers)
 - Hardware jumps execution to the proper handler

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Things a program cannot do itself

- Print "hello world"
 - because the display is a shared resource.
- Download a web page
 - because the network card is a shared resource.
- Save or read a file
 - because the filesystem is a shared resource, and the OS wants to check file permissions first.
- Launch another program
 - because processes are managed by the OS
- Send data to another program
 - · because each program runs in isolation, one at a time

How does a process ask the OS to do something?

- Certain things can only be accessed from kernel mode
 - All of memory, I/O devices, etc.
 - Kernel: the portion of the OS that is running and in memory
- Bad Idea to allow processes to just enter kernel mode
 - We do NOT trust processes
 - So there shouldn't be any instruction that switches to kernel *mode* unless that instruction also switches to kernel *code*
- Requirements
 - 1. Switch execution to the kernel
 - 2. Change into kernel mode
 - 3. Inform the kernel what you want it to do

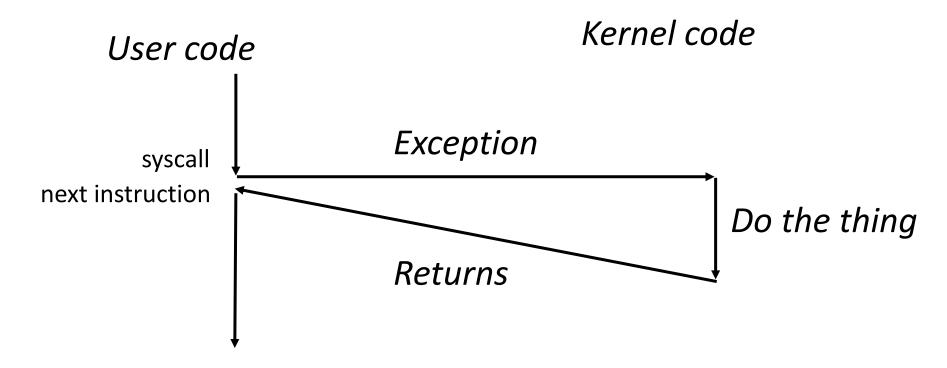
Hardware can save us!

- Solution: trigger an exception to run an OS handler
 - Hardware instruction: trap
- When instruction runs:
 - Mode is changed to kernel mode AND
 - 2. Instruction Pointer is moved to a known location in the kernel

- Same mechanism is used for other exceptions
 - Division by zero, invalid memory access
 - Also very similar to hardware interrupts

System call example

- System call: making a request of the OS from a process
 - Uses exceptional control flow to enter OS kernel
 - Returns back to process when complete
 - Returns to instruction after the system call



System call steps (simplification)

- 1. Process loads parameters into registers (just like a function call)
- 2. Process executes trap instruction (int, syscall, svc, etc.)
- 3. Hardware moves %rip to "handler" and switches to kernel mode
- 4. OS checks what the process wants to do from registers
- 5. OS decides whether the process is allowed to do so

Returning from a system call (simplification)

- After OS finishes whatever operation it was asked to do
 - And when the process is scheduled to run again

- 1. OS places return result in a register (just like a function call)
- 2. OS changes mode to user mode (and sets virtual memory stuff)
- 3. OS sets %rip to instruction after the system call

Process continues and can use results of system call

Linux system calls

- Example system calls
 - https://man7.org/linux/man-pages/man2/syscalls.2.html

Number	Name	Description
0	read	Read file
1	write	Write file
2	open	Open file
3	close	Close file
4	stat	Get info about file
57	fork	Create process
59	execve	Execute a program
60	_exit	Terminate process
62	kill	Send signal to process

Example using system calls

Let's create new processes with system calls

- From process view:
 - Just look like regular C functions
 - Take arguments, return values
- Underneath:
 - Function uses special assembly instruction to trigger exception

The C function for syscalls just performs the correct assembly

• Example system call: fork

Number	Name	Description
57	fork	Create process

```
• C code:
fork();
```

• x86-64 assembly implementation:

```
fork:

movq $57, %rdi

syscall

retq
```

Process management system calls

```
pid_t fork(void);
```

- Create a new process that is a copy of the current one
- Returns either PID of child process (parent) or 0 (child)

```
void _exit(int status);
```

• Exit the current process (exit(), the library call cleans things up first)

```
pid_t waitpid(pid_t pid, int *status, int options);
```

Suspends the current process until a child (pid) terminates

```
int execve(const char *filename, char *const argv[], char *const envp[]);
```

- Execute a new program, replacing the existing one
- Replaces code and data, clears registers, sets %rip to start again

Creating a new process

```
#include <stdio.h>
#include <unistd.h>
int main(){
  if(fork() == 0) {
    printf("Child!\n");
  } else {
    printf("Parent!\n");
  printf("Both!\n");
  return 0;
```

Creating a new process

```
#include <stdio.h>
#include <unistd.h>
int main(){
 if(fork() == 0) {
   } else {
   printf("Parent!\n");
 printf("Both!\n");
 return 0;
```

Executing a new program

```
#include <stdio.h>
#include <unistd.h>
int main(){
  if(fork() == 0) {
    execve("/bin/python3", ...);
  } else {
    printf("Parent!\n");
  printf("Only parent!\n");
  return 0;
```

Break + Question

 What does the following code do?

```
#include <stdio.h>
#include <sys/types.h>
int main() {
 while(1){
    fork();
  return 0;
```

Break + Question

 What does the following code do?

```
#include <stdio.h>
#include <sys/types.h>
int main() {
  while (1) {
    fork();
  return 0;
```

- Creates a new process
 - Then each process creates a new process
 - Then each of those creates a new process...
- Known as a Fork bomb!
 - Machine eventually runs out of memory and processing power and will stop working
- Defense: limit number of processes per user

Fork bombs in various languages

Python fork bomb

```
import os
while 1:
    os.fork()
```

Rust fork bomb

```
#[allow(unconditional_recursion)]
fn main() {
    std::thread::spawn(main);
    main();
}
```

Bash fork bomb

```
:(){:|:&};:
```

 Bash with spacing and a clearer function name

```
fork() {
    fork | fork &
}
fork
```

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Another example OS abstraction: File Systems

OS manages file systems to restrict and abstract them

Restrictions

Prevent users from accessing other's files without permission

Abstractions

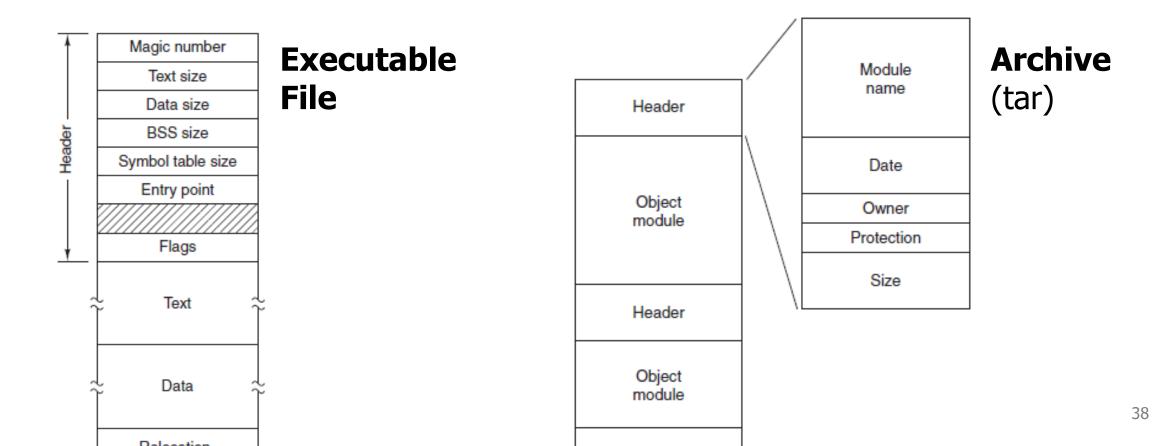
- Files can grow infinitely large
- Where a file exists in memory or disk isn't important!
- Default file system types, named directories, file explorer

Files

- Collections of data
 - Usually in permanent storage on your computer
 - Interactions managed by the OS
- Types of files
 - Regular files
 - Arbitrary data
 - Think of as a big array of bytes
 - Directories
 - Collections of regular files
 - Special files
 - Links, pipes, devices (see CS343)

Sidebar: what about types of regular files?

- Text files versus Executables versus Tar files
 - All just differing patterns of bytes!
 - It really is just all data. The meaning is in how you interpret it.



```
[brghena@ubuntu code] $ ls -la
total 32
drwxrwxr-x 2 brghena brghena 4096 Nov 18 22:07 .
drwxr-xr-x 4 brghena brghena 4096 Nov 18 18:38 ..
-rwxrwxr-x 1 brghena brghena 16704 Nov 18 21:42 arguments
-rw-rw-r-- 1 brghena brghena 235 Nov 18 21:42 arguments.c
```

```
[brghena@ubuntu code] $ ls -la
total 32
drwxrwxr-x 2 brghena brghena 4096 Nov 18 22:07 .
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-rwxrwxr-x 1 brghena brghena 16704 Nov 18 21:42 arguments
-rw-rw-r-- 1 brghena brghena 235 Nov 18 21:42 arguments.c
```

- Permissions for the owner and name of the owner
 - Read, Write, eXecute
 - Cannot execute `arguments.c`
 - For directories: Read contents, Write new contents, Traverse directory

```
[brghena@ubuntu code] $ ls -la
total 32
drwxrwxr-x 2 brghena brghena 4096 Nov 18 22:07 .
drwxr-xr-x 4 brghena brghena 4096 Nov 18 18:38 ..
-rwxrwxr-x 1 brghena brghena 16704 Nov 18 21:42 arguments .c
```

- Permissions for the group and name of the group
 - Example: I could make a CS213 group, add you all to it, and only give that group access to some folder or file

```
[brghena@ubuntu code] $ ls -la
total 32
drwxrwxr-x 2 brghena brghena 4096 Nov 18 22:07 .
drwxr-xr-x 4 brghena brghena 4096 Nov 18 18:38 .
-rwxrwxr-x 1 brghena brghena 16704 Nov 18 21:42 arguments
-rw-rw-r-- 1 brghena brghena 235 Nov 18 21:42 arguments.c
```

- Permissions for everyone else on the computer
 - Not the owner and not in the group
 - For my personal machine, not particularly relevant
 - For Moore, probably don't want to let others read your files...

How does a process access files?

This is an example use case for system calls

- Files are a shared and managed resource on the computer
 - Need to follow permissions settings
 - Handle if multiple processes try to edit a file simultaneously
- Also need to simplify what the interface looks like
 - Files are actually structures in filesystem likely on disk
 - But the process shouldn't need to care about the details of that

How do we interact with files?

- Analogy: think of a file as a book
 - Big array of characters (bytes)

- 1. Open the book, starting at the first page
- 2. Read from the book
- 3. Write to the book
- 4. Change pages (without reading everything in between)
- 5. Close the book when finished

System calls for interacting with files

- 1. Open the book, starting at the first page
 - open()
- 2. Read from the book
 - read()
- 3. Write to the book
 - write()
- 4. Change pages (without reading everything in between)
 - lseek()
- 5. Close the book when finished
 - close()

Higher-level methods of file interaction

- Here, we're talking about system calls to the OS
- C standard library also defines file interactions
 - fopen, fread, fwrite, fseek, fclose
 - All are wrappers on top of the actual syscalls
 - Buffers your interactions to make them more efficient
 - Reads/Writes large chunks of data at a time
 - Might collect multiple fwrite's before doing a single real write
 - fflush() guarantees that the buffer is written now

Opening files

• int open (const char *pathname, int flags);

- pathname is the string path for the file
 - "/home/brghena/class/cs213/s21/code/arguments.c"
 - "./arguments.c"
 - "arguments.c"
- flags include access permission requests
 - Read only, Write only, Read and Write (O_RDONLY, O_WRONLY, O_RDWR)
 - Also can choose to append to a file (O_APPEND)
 - Or to create the file if it does not exist (O_CREAT)

Open returns a "file descriptor"

• int open (const char *pathname, int flags);

- OS keeps track of opened files for each process
 - File descriptor is **just a number** referring to the opened file
 - Non-negative number. Always the lowest unused, starting at zero
 - A "handle" to the file

- File descriptor is used in other calls to reference the file
 - That way the OS doesn't have to look up pathname every time
- Negative number instead specifies an error (for all of these calls)

Sidebar: how do you figure out how these calls work?

- Manual pages
- Online: https://man7.org/linux/man-pages/man2/close.2.html

```
close(2) — Linux manual page
```

int close(int fd):

```
NAME | SYNOPSIS | DESCRIPTION | RETURN VALUE | ERRORS | CONFORMING TO | NOTES | SEE ALSO | COLOPHON

CLOSE(2)

Linux Programmer's Manual

CLOSE(2)

NAME top

close - close a file descriptor

SYNOPSIS top

#include <unistd.h>
```

Example: read a file and print it to terminal

```
int main(int argc, char *argv[]) {
    // check argument count
    if (argc != 2) {
        printf("Usage: ./kitten FILE\n");
        return -1;
   // try opening file
    int fd = open(argv[1], 0 RDONLY);
    if (fd < 0) {
        printf("Error opening file!\n");
        return -1;
    // array to hold read data
    uint8 t read size = 10;
    uint8 t read data[read size];
```

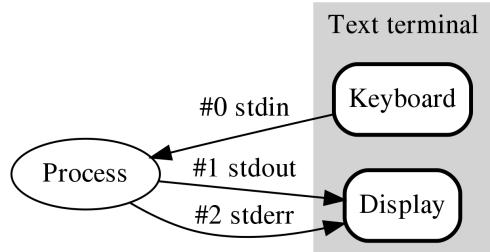
```
while(true) {
       // read from file
       ssize_t read_length = read(fd, read_data, read_size);
       if (read length < 0) {</pre>
           printf("Error reading file!\n");
           return -1;
       if (read length == 0) {
           break;
       // print out data
       for (int i=0; i<read_length; i++) {</pre>
           printf("%c", read data[i]);
   return 0;
```

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How do programs talk to users?

- We often gloss over this in CS211
 - printf()
 - gets()



- Work through the same file mechanism
 - Three special files created for each program
 - stdin standard input (file descriptor 0)
 - stdout standard output (file descriptor 1)
 - stderr standard error (file descriptor 2)
- printf(...) -> fprintf(1, ...) -> handle arguments then write(1, ...)

Standard I/O is a process thing, not a C thing

- You can access them in Python, for instance
 - https://docs.python.org/3/library/sys.html#sys.stdin

```
sys.stdin
sys.stdout
sys.stderr
```

File objects used by the interpreter for standard input, output and errors:

- stdin is used for all interactive input (including calls to input());
- stdout is used for the output of print() and expression statements and for the prompts of input();
- The interpreter's own prompts and its error messages go to stdern.

These streams are regular text files like those returned by the open() function. Their parameters are chosen as follows:

Example: printing to terminal with a write call

```
int main(int argc, char *argv[]) {
    // check argument count
    if (argc != 2) {
        printf("Usage: ./kitten FILE\n");
        return -1;
   // try opening file
    int fd = open(argv[1], 0 RDONLY);
    if (fd < 0) {
        printf("Error opening file!\n");
        return -1;
    // array to hold read data
    uint8 t read size = 10;
    uint8 t read data[read size];
```

```
while(true) {
       // read from file
       ssize_t read_length = read(fd, read_data, read_size);
       if (read length < 0) {</pre>
           printf("Error reading file!\n");
           return -1;
       if (read length == 0) {
           break;
       // print out data
       ssize_t write_length = write(STDOUT_FILENO,
               read data, read length);
   return 0;
```

Example: trace system calls for commands

- strace -o syscalls.txt COMMAND
 - Tracks every system call made by the command
 - Outputs to a file: syscalls.txt
- Try on
 - cat
 - parallel-sum-ex

Break + Open Question

How does printf() work?

Break + Open Question

- How does printf() work?
 - 1. Read in arguments and determine what it needs to format
 - 2. Create a new string buffer and write formatted values into it
 - 3. Call write() on STDOUT with the string

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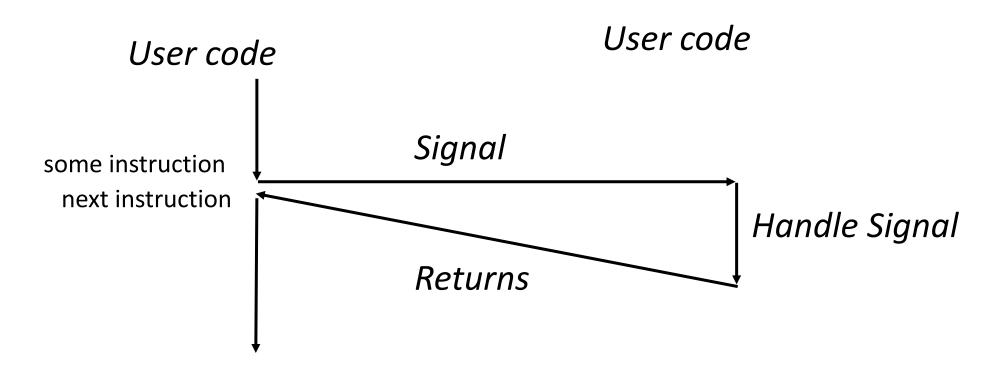
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Alerting processes of events

- How do we let a process know there was an event?
 - Errors
 - Termination
 - User commands (like CTRL-C or CTRL-\)
- Events could happen whenever
 - Need to interrupt process control flow and run an event handler
 - Linux mechanism to do so is called "signals"

Signals are a different version of exceptional control flow

- Signal is generated by the OS
- Interrupts user code and jumps to a signal handler
 - Then returns back to user code afterwards
 - Unless the signal handler ends the program (this is the default handler)



Signals are asynchronous messages to processes

- Sometimes the OS wants to send something like an interrupt to a process
 - Your child process completed
 - You tried to use an illegal instruction
 - You accessed invalid memory
 - You are terminating now
- In POSIX systems, this idea is called "Signals"

```
1) SIGHUP 2) SIGINT 3) SIGQUIT 4) SIGILL 5) SIGTRAP
6) SIGABRT 7) SIGBUS 8) SIGFPE 9) SIGKILL 10) SIGUSR1
11) SIGSEGV 12) SIGUSR2 13) SIGPIPE 14) SIGALRM 15) SIGTERM
16) SIGSTKFLT 17) SIGCHLD 18) SIGCONT 19) SIGSTOP 20) SIGTSTP
21) SIGTTIN 22) SIGTTOU 23) SIGURG 24) SIGXCPU 25) SIGXFSZ
26) SIGVTALRM 27) SIGPROF 28) SIGWINCH 29) SIGIO 30) SIGPWR
31) SIGSYS ...
```

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```
3) SIGOUIT 4) SIGILL
                                                5) SIGTRAP
1) SIGHUP
             2) STGTNT
                                                                     Process Errors
6) STGABRT
             7) SIGBUS
                         8) SIGFPE
                                      9) SIGKILL 10) SIGUSR1
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Signals are asynchronous messages to processes

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(26) SIGVTALRM 27) SIGPROF 28) SIGWINCH 29) SIGIO 30) SIGPWR

(31) SIGSYS ...
```

Process Termination

Sending signals

OS sends signals when it needs to

- Processes can ask the OS send signals with a system call
 - int kill(pid_t pid, int sig);
- Users send signals through OS from command line or keyboard
 - Shell command: kill -9 pid (SIGKILL)
 - CTRL-C (SIGINT)

Handling signals

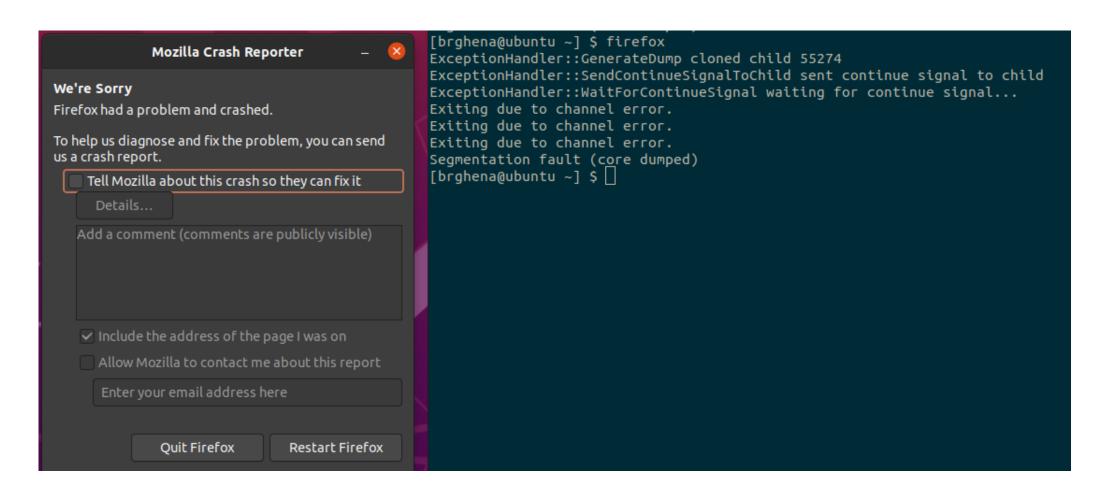
- Programs can register a function to handle individual signals
 - signal(int sig, sighandler_t handler);
- What are you supposed to do about it?
 - Do some *quick* processing to handle it
 - That needs to be <u>"reentrant" safe</u>
 - Reset the process and try again
 - Quit the process (default handler)

Examples: sending a signal

> kill -11 *pid* (11 is SIGSEGV – a.k.a segfault)

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> kill -11 *pid* (11 is SIGSEGV – a.k.a segfault)



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Lies your operating system always told you

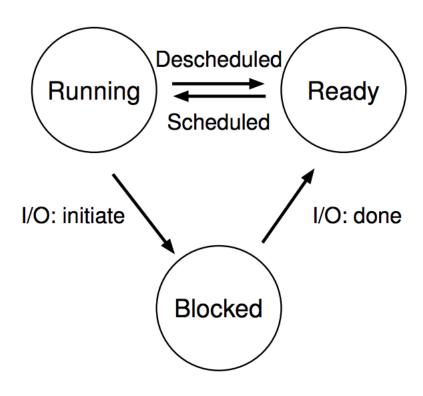
- "Every process on your computer gets to run at the same time!"
 - This is an *illusion*

- My desktop at home (running Windows)
 - Current load: 250 processes with 2987 threads

So how does the magic work?

Processes don't run all the time

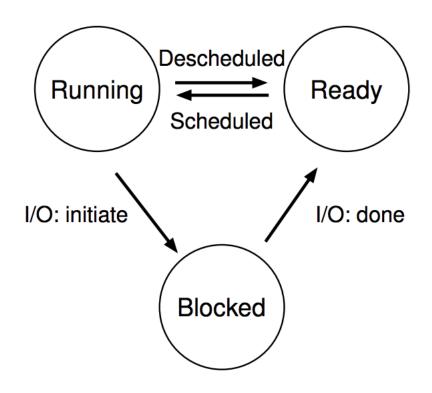
The three basic process states:



- OS schedules processes
 - Decides which of many competing processes to run.
- A blocked process is not ready to run and is waiting on I/O
- I/O means input/output anything other than computing.
 - For example, reading/writing disk, sending network packet, waiting for keystroke
 - While waiting for results, the OS blocks the process, waiting to do more computation until the result is ready

Multiprogramming processes

The three basic process states:



- Even with a single processor, the OS can provide the illusion of many processes running simultaneously
 - And also use this opportunity to get more useful work done
- When one process is Blocked, OS can schedule a different process that is Ready
- OS can also swap between various Ready processes so they all make progress

Scheduling

- We know that multiple processes will be sharing the CPU
 - Possibly multiple threads in each process
 - Possibly multiple cores in the CPU

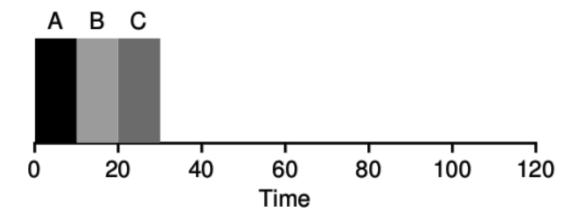
- Scheduling is creating a policy for sharing the CPU
 - Which process/thread is chosen to run, and when?
 - When (if ever) does the OS change which process is running?

When can the OS make scheduling decisions?

- Whenever the OS is actually running
 - i.e. after a context switch
- Possible triggers
 - System calls
 - Process/Thread creation/termination
 - I/O requests
 - Hardware events (interrupts)
 - I/O complete
 - Timer triggers

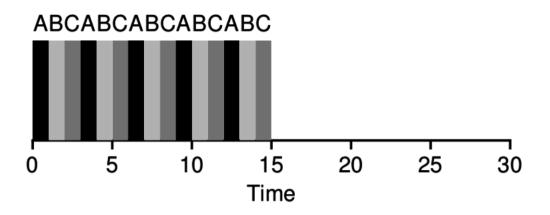
Example scheduler: FIFO Scheduling

- First In, First Out (FIFO)
 - also known as First Come First Served (FCFS)
- Policy
 - First job to arrive gets scheduled first
 - Let a job continue until it is complete
 - Then schedule next remaining job with earliest arrival



Example scheduler: Round Robin Scheduling

 Round Robin scheduling runs a job for a small timeslice (quanta), then schedules the next job



- Over time each job makes growing amounts of progress
- If we switch fast enough, it seems to the user that all jobs are running in parallel

CS343 – Operating Systems

- 213 topics in more depth: Concurrency, Processes, Virtual Memory
 - Deal with data races directly
 - Implement virtual memory system
- Also, totally new topics: File Systems and Devices

Focus: "how does the Operating System make the computer work"?

Outline

- Intro to Operating Systems
- Process Control Flow
- System Calls
- File I/O
 - Standard I/O
- Signals
- Scheduling Processes