

**CSE 451: Operating Systems
Winter 2001**

**Lecture 3
Operating System Structure:
Components and Interfaces**

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OS Structure

- We've described how an OS is sandwiched between the hardware and user-level processes
 - and in the previous class, we talked about the relationship between OS and hardware
 - this class: look at the functionality that the OS provides to the user-level, and the components that provide it
 - later in the course: explore each component in detail
- A useful taxonomy:
 - modules: the major OS services and abstractions
 - interfaces: specific operations that modules provide
 - structure: the way the modules are stitched together

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Major OS components

- processes
- memory
- I/O
- secondary storage
- file systems
- protection
- accounting
- shells (command interpreter, or OS UI)

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Process Management

- An OS executes many kinds of activities:
 - users' programs
 - batch jobs or scripts
 - system programs
 - print spoolers, name servers, file servers, network daemons, ...
- Each of these activities is encapsulated in a process
 - a process includes the execution context
 - PC, registers, VM, OS resources (e.g. open files), etc...
 - plus the program itself (code and data)
 - the OS's process module manages these processes
 - creation, destruction, scheduling, ...

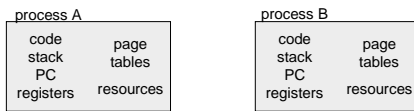
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Processes

- Note that a program is totally passive
 - just bytes on a disk that contain instructions to be run
- A process is an instance of a program being executed
 - at any instance, there may be many processes running copies of the same program (e.g. an editor); each process is separate and (usually) independent
 - Linux: `ps -auwx` to list all processes



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Process operations

- The OS provides the following kinds operations on processes (i.e. the process abstraction interface):
 - create a process
 - delete a process
 - suspend a process
 - resume a process
 - clone a process
 - inter-process communication
 - inter-process synchronization
 - create/delete a child process (subprocess)

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Memory management

- The primary memory (or RAM) is the directly accessed storage for the CPU
 - programs must be stored in memory to execute
 - memory access is fast (e.g. 60 ns to load/store)
 - but memory doesn't survive power failures
- OS must:
 - allocate memory space for programs (explicitly and implicitly)
 - deallocate space when needed by rest of system
 - maintain mappings from physical to virtual memory
 - through page tables
 - decide how much memory to allocate to each process
 - a policy decision
 - decide when to remove a process from memory
 - also policy

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I/O

- A big chunk of the OS kernel deals with I/O
 - hundreds of thousands of lines in NT
- The OS provides a standard interface between programs (user or system) and devices
 - file system (disk), sockets (network), frame buffer (video)
- Device drivers are the routines that interact with specific device types
 - encapsulates device-specific knowledge
 - e.g., how to initialize a device, how to request I/O, how to handle interrupts or errors
 - examples: SCSI device drivers, Ethernet card drivers, video card drivers, sound card drivers, ...

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Secondary Storage

- Secondary storage (disk, tape) is persistent memory
 - often magnetic media, survives power failures (hopefully)
- Routines that interact with disks are typically at a very low level in the OS
 - used by many components (file system, VM, ...)
 - handle scheduling of disk operations, head movement, error handling, and often management of space on disks
- Usually independent of file system
 - although there may be cooperation
 - file system knowledge of device details can help optimize performance
 - e.g. place related files close together on disk

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File Systems

- Secondary storage devices are crude and awkward
 - e.g. "write 4096 byte block to sector 12"
- File system: a convenient abstraction
 - defines logical objects like files and directories
 - hides details about where on disk files live
 - as well as operations on objects like read and write
 - read/write byte ranges instead of blocks
- A file is the basic long-term storage unit
 - file = named collection of persistent information
- A directory is just a special kind of file
 - directory = named file that contains names of other files and metadata about those files (e.g. file size)

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File system operations

- The file system interface defines standard operations:
 - file (or directory) creation and deletion
 - manipulation of files and directories (read, write, extend, rename, protect)
 - copy
 - lock
- File systems also provide higher level services
 - accounting and quotas
 - backup
 - (sometimes) indexing or search
 - (sometimes) file versioning

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Protection

- Protection is a general mechanism used throughout the OS
 - all resources needed to be protected
 - memory
 - processes
 - files
 - devices
 - ...
 - protection mechanisms help to detect and contain errors, as well as preventing malicious destruction

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Command Interpreter (shell)

- a particular program that handles the interpretation of users' commands and helps to manage processes
 - user input may be from keyboard (command-line interface), from script files, or from the mouse (GUIs)
 - allows users to launch and control new programs
- on some systems, command interpreter may be a standard part of the OS (e.g. MSDOS, Apple II)
- on others, it's just a non-privileged process that provides an interface to the user
 - e.g. bash/csh/tcsh/zsh on UNIX
- on others, there may be no command language
 - e.g. MacOS

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Accounting

- Keeps track of resource usage
 - both to enforce quotas
 - "you're over your disk space limit"
 - or to produce bills
 - important for timeshared computers like mainframes

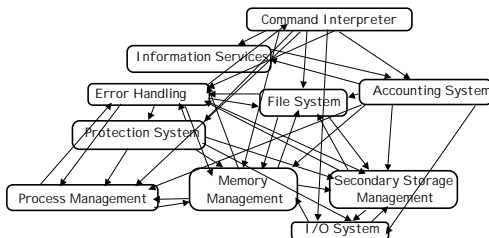
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OS Structure

- It's not always clear how to stitch OS modules together:



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OS Structure

- An OS consists of all of these components, plus:
 - many other components
 - system programs (privileged and non-privileged)
 - e.g. bootstrap code, the init program, ...
- Major issue:
 - how do we organize all this?
 - what are all of the code modules, and where do they exist?
 - how do they cooperate?
- Massive software engineering and design problem
 - design a large, complex program that:
 - performs well, is reliable, is extensible, is backwards compatible, ...

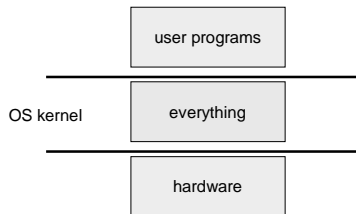
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Early structure

- Traditionally, OS's (like UNIX) were built as a monolithic kernel:



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Monolithic kernels

- Major advantage:
 - cost of module interactions is low (procedure call)
- Disadvantages:
 - hard to understand
 - hard to modify
 - unreliable (no isolation between system modules)
 - hard to maintain
- What is the alternative?
 - find a way to organize the OS in order to simplify its design and implementation

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Layering

- The traditional approach is layering
 - implement OS as a set of layers
 - each layer acts as a 'virtual machine' to the layer above
- The first description of this approach was Dijkstra's THE system
 - layer 0: hardware
 - layer 1: CPU scheduling
 - layer 2: memory management (sees virtual processors)
 - layer 3: console device (sees VM segments)
 - layer 4: I/O device buffering (sees 'virtual console')
 - layer 5: user programs (sees 'virtual I/O drivers')
- Each layer can be tested and verified independently

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Problems with Layering

- Imposes hierarchical structure
 - but real systems are more complex:
 - file system requires VM services (buffers)
 - VM would like to use files for its backing store
 - strict layering isn't flexible enough
- Poor performance
 - each layer crossing has overhead associated with it
- Disjunction between model and reality
 - systems modeled as layers, but not really built that way

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Microkernels

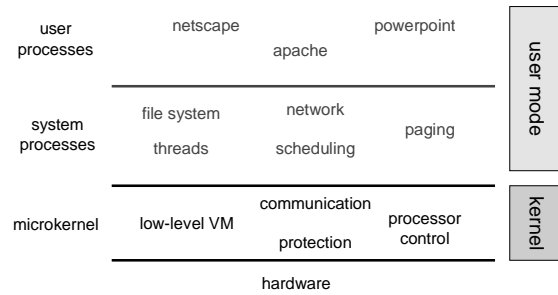
- Popular in the late 80's, early 90's
 - recent resurgence of popularity for small devices
- Goal:
 - minimize what goes in kernel
 - organize rest of OS as user-level processes
- This results in:
 - better reliability (isolation between components)
 - ease of extension and customization
 - poor performance (user/kernel boundary crossings)
- First microkernel system was Hydra (CMU, 1970)
 - follow-ons: Mach (CMU), Chorus (French UNIX-like OS), and in some ways NT (Microsoft), OSX (Apple)

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Microkernel structure illustrated



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