Process Management

• This lecture begins a series of topics on processes, threads, and synchronization
  – this is perhaps the most important part of the class
  – there definitely will be several questions on these topics on the midterm

• Today: processes and process management
  – what are the OS units of execution?
  – how are they represented inside the OS?
  – how is the CPU scheduled across processes?
  – what are the possible execution states of a process?
    • and how does the system move between them?
The Process

• The process is the OS’s abstraction for execution
  – the unit of execution
  – the unit of scheduling
  – the dynamic (active) execution context
    • compared with program: static, just a bunch of bytes

• Process is often called a job, task, or sequential process
  – a sequential process is a program in execution
    • defines the instruction-at-a-time execution of a program
What’s in a Process?

• A process consists of (at least):
  – an address space
  – the code for the running program
  – the data for the running program
  – an execution stack and stack pointer (SP)
    • traces state of procedure calls made
  – the program counter (PC), indicating the next instruction
  – a set of general-purpose processor registers and their values
  – a set of OS resources
    • open files, network connections, sound channels, …

• The process is a container for all of this state
  – a process is named by a process ID (PID)
    • just an integer (actually, typically a short)
A process’s address space

[Diagram showing the address space with segments: stack, heap, static data, code, with arrows indicating the order from top to bottom. The diagram also shows the PC and SP.]
Process states

- Each process has an execution state, which indicates what it is currently doing
  - ready: waiting to be assigned to CPU
    - could run, but another process has the CPU
  - running: executing on the CPU
    - is the process that currently controls the CPU
    - pop quiz: how many processes can be running simultaneously?
  - waiting: waiting for an event, e.g. I/O
    - cannot make progress until event happens

- As a process executes, it moves from state to state
  - UNIX: run ps, STAT column shows current state
  - which state is a process is most of the time?
Process state transitions

- What can cause schedule/unschedule transitions?
Process data structures

• How does the OS represent a process in the kernel?
  – at any time, there are many processes, each in its own particular state
  – the OS data structure that represents each is called the process control block (PCB)

• PCB contains all info about the process
  – OS keeps all of a process’ hardware execution state in the PCB when the process isn’t running
    • PC
    • SP
    • registers
  – when process is unscheduled, the state is transferred out of the hardware into the PCB
PCB

• The PCB is a data structure with many, many fields:
  – process ID (PID)
  – execution state
  – program counter, stack pointer, registers
  – memory management info
  – UNIX username of owner
  – scheduling priority
  – accounting info
  – pointers into state queues

• In linux:
  – defined in `task_struct (include/linux/sched.h)`
  – over 95 fields!!!
PCBs and Hardware State

• When a process is running, its hardware state is inside the CPU
  – PC, SP, registers
  – CPU contains current values
• When the OS stops running a process (puts it in the waiting state), it saves the registers’ values in the PCB
  – when the OS puts the process in the running state, it loads the hardware registers from the values in that process’ PCB
• The act of switching the CPU from one process to another is called a context switch
  – timesharing systems may do 100s or 1000s of switches/s
  – takes about 5 microseconds on today’s hardware
State queues

- The OS maintains a collection of queues that represent the state of all processes in the system
  - typically one queue for each state
    - e.g., ready, waiting, ...
  - each PCB is queued onto a state queue according to its current state
  - as a process changes state, its PCB is unlinked from from queue, and linked onto another
State queues

- There may be many wait queues, one for each type of wait (particular device, timer, message, …)
PCBs and State Queues

• PCBs are data structures
  – dynamically allocated inside OS memory

• When a process is created:
  – OS allocates a PCB for it
  – OS initializes PCB
  – OS puts PCB on the correct queue

• As a process computes:
  – OS moves its PCB from queue to queue

• When a process is terminated:
  – OS deallocates its PCB
Process creation

• One process can create another process
  – creator is called the parent
  – created process is called the child
  – UNIX: do ps, look for PPID field
  – what creates the first process, and when?

• In some systems, parent defines or donates resources and privileges for its children
  – UNIX: child inherits parents userID field, etc.

• when child is created, parent may either wait for it to finish, or it may continue in parallel, or both!
UNIX process creation

• UNIX process creation through `fork()` system call
  – creates and initializes a new PCB
  – creates a new address space
  – initializes new address space with a copy of the entire contents of the address space of the parent
  – initializes kernel resources of new process with resources of parent (e.g. open files)
  – places new PCB on the ready queue
• the `fork()` system call returns twice
  – once into the parent, and once into the child
  – returns the child’s PID to the parent
  – returns 0 to the child
fork( )

int main(int argc, char **argv)
{
    char *name = argv[0];
    int child_pid = fork();
    if (child_pid == 0) {
        printf("Child of %s is %d\n", name, child_pid);
        return 0;
    } else {
        printf("My child is %d\n", child_pid);
        return 0;
    }
}

output

spinlock% gcc -o testparent testparent.c
spinlock% ./testparent
My child is 486
Child of testparent is 0
spinlock% ./testparent
Child of testparent is 0
My child is 486
Fork and exec

- So how do we start a new program, instead of just forking the old program?
  - the `exec()` system call!
  - `int exec(char *prog, char **argv)`

- `exec()`
  - stops the current process
  - loads program ‘prog’ into the address space
  - initializes hardware context, args for new program
  - places PCB onto ready queue
  - note: does not create a new process!

- what does it mean for exec to return?
  - what happens if you “exec csh” in your shell?
  - what happens if you “exec ls” in your shell?
UNIX shells

int main(int argc, char **argv)
{
    while (1) {
        char *cmd = get_next_command();
        int child_pid = fork();
        if (child_pid == 0) {
            manipulate STDIN/STDOUT/STDERR fd’s
            exec(cmd);
            panic(“exec failed!”);
        } else {
            wait(child_pid);
        }
    }
}