Process management

- This module begins a series of topics on processes, threads, and synchronization
  - this is the most important part of the class
  - there definitely will be several questions on these topics on the midterm
- In this module: processes and process management
  - What is a "process"?
  - What’s the OS’s process namespace?
  - How are processes represented inside the OS?
  - What are the executing states of a process?
  - How are processes created?
  - How can this be made faster?
  - Shells
  - Signals

What is a “process”?
- The process is the OS’s abstraction for execution
  - A process is a program in execution
- Simplest (classic) case: a sequential process
  - An address space (an abstraction of memory)
  - A single thread of execution (an abstraction of the CPU)
- A sequential process is:
  - The unit of execution
  - The unit of scheduling
  - The dynamic (active) execution context
  - vs. the program – static, just a bunch of bytes

What’s “in” a process?
- A process consists of (at least):
  - An address space, containing
    - the code (instructions) for the running program
    - the data for the running program (static data, heap data, stack)
  - CPU state, consisting of
    - The program counter (PC), indicating the next instruction
    - The stack pointer
    - Other general purpose register values
  - A set of OS resources
    - open files, network connections, sound channels, ...
- In other words, it’s all the stuff you need to run the program
  - or to re-start it, if it’s interrupted at some point

A process’s address space (idealized)

The OS’s process namespace
- (Like most things, the particulars depend on the specific OS, but the principles are general)
- The name for a process is called a process ID (PID)
  - An integer
- The PID namespace is global to the system
  - Only one process at a time has a particular PID
- Operations that create processes return a PID
  - E.g., fork()
- Operations on processes take PIDs as an argument
  - E.g., kill(), wait(), nice()
Representation of processes by the OS

- The OS maintains a data structure to keep track of a process’s state
  - Called the process control block (PCB) or process descriptor
  - Identified by the PID
- OS keeps all of a process’s execution state in (or linked from) the PCB when the process isn’t running
  - PC, SP, registers, etc.
  - when a process is unscheduled, the state is transferred out of the hardware into the PCB
  - (when a process is running, its state is spread between the PCB and the CPU)
- Note: It’s natural to think that there must be some esoteric techniques being used
  - fancy data structures that you’d never think of yourself
  - Wrong! It’s pretty much just what you’d think of!

PCBs and CPU state

- When a process is running, its CPU state is inside the CPU
  - PC, SP, registers
  - CPU contains current values
- When the OS gets control because of a …
  - Trap: Program executes a syscall
  - Exception: Program does something unexpected (e.g., page fault)
  - Interrupt: A hardware device requests service
  - the OS saves the CPU state of the running process in that process’s PCB

The OS kernel is not a process

- It’s just a block of code!
- (In a microkernel OS, many things that you normally think of as the operating system execute as user-mode processes. But the OS kernel is just a block of code.)
Process execution states

• Each process has an execution state, which indicates what it’s currently doing
  – ready: waiting to be assigned to a CPU
  – running: executing on a CPU
  – waiting (aka “blocked”: waiting for an event, e.g., I/O completion, or a message from (or the completion of) another process
    • cannot make progress until the 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 in most of the time?

Process states and state transitions

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 the current state of the process it represents
  – as a process changes state, its PCB is unlinked from one queue, and linked onto another
• Once again, this is just as straightforward as it sounds! The PCBs are moved between queues, which are represented as linked lists. There is no magic!

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 does other things not related to the 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:
  – PCB may be retained for a while (to receive signals, etc.)
  – eventually, OS deallocates the PCB

Process creation

• New processes are created by existing processes
  – 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?
Process creation semantics

- (Depending on the OS) child processes inherit certain attributes of the parent
  - Examples:
    - Open file table: implies stdin/stdout/stderr
    - On some systems, resource allocation to parent may be divided among children
- (In Unix) when a child is created, the parent may either wait for the child to finish, or continue in parallel

UNIX process creation details

- UNIX process creation through `fork()` system call
  - creates and initializes a new PCB
    - initializes kernel resources of new process with resources of parent (e.g., open files)
    - initializes PC, SP to be same as parent
  - creates a new address space
    - initializes new address space with a copy of the entire contents of the address space of the parent
  - 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()` = "clone me"

```
testparent – use of fork()
```

```c
#include <sys/types.h>
#include <unistd.h>
#include <stdio.h>

int main(int argc, char **argv)
{
    char *name = argv[0];
    int pid = fork();
    if (pid == 0) {
        printf("Child of %s is %d\n", name, pid);
        return 0;
    } else {
        printf("My child is %d\n", pid);
        return 0;
    }
}
```
testparent 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 571

eexec() vs. fork()

• Q: So how do we start a new program, instead of just forking the old program?
• A: First fork, then exec
  – int exec(char * prog, char * argv[])
  • exec()
    – stops the current process
    – loads program ‘prog’ into the address space
      • i.e., over-writes the existing process image
    – initializes hardware context, args for new program
    – places PCB onto ready queue
    – note: does not create a new process!

• So, to run a new program:
  – fork()
  – Child process does an exec()
  – Parent either waits for the child to complete, or not

Making process creation faster

• The semantics of fork() say the child’s address space is a copy of the parent’s
• Implementing fork() that way is slow
  – Have to allocate physical memory for the new address space
  – Have to set up child’s page tables to map new address space
  – Have to copy parent’s address space contents into child’s address space
    • Which you are likely to immediately blow away with an exec()
Method 1: vfork()

- vfork() is the older (now uncommon) of the two approaches we’ll discuss.
- Instead of "child’s address space is a copy of the parent’s," the semantics are "child’s address space is the parent’s".
  - With a "promise" that the child won’t modify the address space before doing an execve().
  - Unenforced! You use vfork() at your own peril.
- When execve() is called, a new address space is created and it’s loaded with the new executable.
- Parent is blocked until execve() is executed by child.
- Saves wasted effort of duplicating parent’s address space, just to blow it away.

Method 2: copy-on-write

- Retains the original semantics, but copies “only what is necessary” rather than the entire address space.
- On fork():
  - Create a new address space.
  - Initialize page tables with same mappings as the parent’s (i.e., they both point to the same physical memory).
  - No copying of address space contents have occurred at this point – with the sole exception of the top page of the stack.
  - Set both parent and child page tables to make all pages read-only.
  - If either parent or child writes to memory, an exception occurs.
  - When exception occurs, OS copies the page, adjusts page tables, etc.

UNIX shells

```c
int main(int argc, char **argv)
{
    while (1) {
        printf("\$ ");
        char *cmd = get_next_command();
        int pid = fork();
        if (pid == 0) {
            exec(cmd);
            panic("exec failed!");
        } else {
            wait(pid);
        }
    }
}
```

Input/output redirection

- `$ ./myprog < input.txt > output.txt` # UNIX
- Each process has an open file table.
  - By (universal) convention:
    - 0: stdin
    - 1: stdout
    - 2: stderr
- A child process inherits the parent’s open file table.
- Redirection: the shell ...
  - Copies its current stdin/stdout open file entries.
  - Opens input.txt as stdin and output.txt as stdout.
  - Fork ...
  - Restore original stdin/stdout.

Truth in advertising …

- In Linux today, clone is replacing fork (and vfork)
  - Clone has additional capabilities/options.
- But you need to clearly understand fork as described here.
- In Linux today, exec is not a system call; execute is the only “exec-like” system call.
  - Execute knows whether you have done a fork or a vfork by a flag in the PCB.
- But you need to clearly understand exec as described here.
Inter-process communication via signals

- Processes can register event handlers
  - Feels a lot like event handlers in Java, which...
  - Feel sort of like catch blocks in Java programs
- When the event occurs, process jumps to event handler routine
- Used to catch exceptions
- Also used for inter-process (process-to-process) communication

  A process can trigger an event in another process using signal

Signals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>signal</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SIGHUP</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Hangup detected on controlling terminal or death of controlling process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIGINT</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Interrupt from keyboard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIGQUIT</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Core</td>
<td>Quit from keyboard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIGILL</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Core</td>
<td>Illegal Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIGABRT</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Core</td>
<td>Abort signal from abort(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIGFPE</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Core</td>
<td>Floating point exception</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIGKILL</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Kill signal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIGBUS</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Core</td>
<td>Invalid memory reference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIGPIPE</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Broken pipe: write to pipe with no reader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIGALRM</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Timer signal from alarm(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIGTERM</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Termination signal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIGUSR1</td>
<td>30, 10, 16</td>
<td>Term</td>
<td>User-defined signal 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIGUSR2</td>
<td>31, 12, 17</td>
<td>Term</td>
<td>User-defined signal 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIGCHLD</td>
<td>20, 17, 18</td>
<td>Ign</td>
<td>Child stopped or terminated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIGCONT</td>
<td>19, 18, 25</td>
<td>Continue if stopped</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIGSTOP</td>
<td>17, 19, 23</td>
<td>Stop</td>
<td>Stop process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIGTSTP</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Stop</td>
<td>Stop typed at tty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIGTTIN</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Stop</td>
<td>Stop tty input for background process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIGTTOU</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Stop</td>
<td>Stop tty output for background process</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Example use

- You're implementing Apache, a web server
- Apache reads a configuration file when it is launched
  - Controls things like what the root directory of the web files is, what permissions there are on pieces of it, etc.
- Suppose you want to change the configuration while Apache is running
  - If you restart the currently running Apache, you drop some unknown number of user connections
- Solution: send the running Apache process a signal
  - It has registered a signal handler that gracefully re-reads the configuration file