CSE 332 Winter 2024
Lecture 23: Race Conditions, Deadlock

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Race Condition

- Occurs when the computation result depends on scheduling (how threads are interleaved)
  - We, as programmers can’t influence scheduling of threads
  - We need to write programs that work independent of scheduling
- Data Race:
  - When there is the potential for two threads to be writing a variable in parallel
  - When there is the potential for one thread to be reading a variable while another writes to it
- Bad Interleaving:
  - A race condition other than a data race
  - Usually it looks like exposing a “bad” intermediate state
Example: Shared Stack (no problems so far)

class Stack {
    private E[] array = (E[])new Object[SIZE];
    private int index = -1;
    synchronized boolean isEmpty() {
        return index== -1;
    }
    synchronized void push(E val) {
        array[++index] = val;
    }
    synchronized E pop() {
        if(isEmpty())
            throw new StackEmptyException();
        return array[index--];
    }
    }

Critical sections of this code?
Race Condition, but no Data Race

class Stack {
    private E[] array = (E[])new Object[SIZE];
    private int index = -1;
    synchronized boolean isEmpty() { ... }
    synchronized void push(E val) { ... }
    synchronized E pop() { ... }
    E peek()
    {
        E ans = pop();
        push(ans);
        return ans;
    }
}

Critical sections of this code?
Race Condition, including a Data Race

class Stack {
    private E[] array = (E[])new Object[SIZE];
    private int index = -1;
    synchronized boolean isEmpty() { ... }
    synchronized void push(E val) { ... }
    synchronized E pop() { ... }
    E peek()
    {
        System.out.println(index);
        E ans = pop();
        push(ans);
        push(ans);
        return ans;
    }
}

### Peek and isEmpty

**Thread 1:**
```
peek();
```

**Thread 2:**
```
push(x);
boolean b = isEmpty();
```

### Expected Behavior:
Thread 2 should not see an empty stack if there is a push but no pop.

**Thread 1:**
```
E ans = pop();
push(ans);
return ans;
```

**Thread 2:**
```
push(x);
boolean b = isEmpty();
```
Peek and Push

Expected Behavior:
Thread 2 items from a stack are popped in LIFO order

Thread 1:
peek();

Thread 2:
push(x);
push(y);
System.out.println(pop());
System.out.println(pop());
Peek and Pop

Expected Behavior:
Thread 2 items from a stack are popped in LIFO order
How to fix this?

class Stack {
    private E[] array = (E[])new Object[SIZE];
    private int index = -1;
    synchronized boolean isEmpty() { ... }
    synchronized void push(E val) { ... }
    synchronized E pop() { ... }
    E peek(){
        E ans = pop();
        push(ans);
        return ans;
    }
}

Make a bigger critical section
class Stack {
    private E[] array = (E[])new Object[SIZE];
    private int index = -1;
    synchronized boolean isEmpty() { ... }
    synchronized void push(E val) { ... }
    synchronized E pop() { ... }
    synchronized E peek() {
        E ans = pop();
        push(ans);
        push(ans);
        return ans;
    }
}

Make a bigger critical section
Did this fix it?

No! Now it has a data race!

class Stack {
    private E[] array = (E[])new Object[SIZE];
    private int index = -1;
    synchronized boolean isEmpty() { ... }
    synchronized void push(E val) { ... }
    synchronized E pop() { ... }
    E peek(){
        return array[index];
    }
}
Parallel Code Conventional Wisdom
Memory Categories

All memory must fit one of three categories:

1. Thread Local: Each thread has its own copy
2. Shared and Immutable: There is just one copy, but nothing will ever write to it
3. Shared and Mutable: There is just one copy, it may change
   • Requires Synchronization!
Thread Local Memory

• Whenever possible, avoid sharing resources
• Dodges all race conditions, since no other threads can touch it!
  • No synchronization necessary! (Remember Ahmdal’s law)
• Use whenever threads do not need to communicate using the resource
  • E.g., each thread should have its own Random object
• In most cases, most objects should be in this category
Immutable Objects

• Whenever possible, avoid changing objects
  • Make new objects instead
• Parallel reads are not data races
  • If an object is never written to, no synchronization necessary!
• Many programmers over-use mutation, minimize it
Shared and Mutable Objects

• For everything else, use locks
• Avoid all data races
  • Every read and write should be projected with a lock, even if it “seems safe”
  • Almost every Java/C program with a data race is wrong
• Even without data races, it still may be incorrect
  • Watch for bad interleavings as well!
Consistent Locking

• For each location needing synchronization, have a lock that is always held when reading or writing the location
• The same lock can (and often should) “guard” multiple fields/objects
  • Clearly document what each lock guards!
  • In Java, the lock should usually be the object itself (i.e. “this”)  
• Have a mapping between memory locations and lock objects and stick to it!
Lock Granularity

• Coarse Grained: Fewer locks guarding more things each
  • One lock for an entire data structure
  • One lock shared by multiple objects (e.g. one lock for all bank accounts)

• Fine Grained: More locks guarding fewer things each
  • One lock per data structure location (e.g. array index)
  • One lock per object or per field in one object (e.g. one lock for each account)

• Note: there’s really a continuum between them...
Example: Separate Chaining Hashable

• Coarse-grained: One lock for the entire hashtable
• Fine-grained: One lock for each bucket
• Which supports more parallelism in insert and find?
• Which makes rehashing easier?
• What happens if you want to have a size field?
Tradeoffs

• Coarse-Grained Locking:
  • Simpler to implement and avoid race conditions
  • Faster/easier to implement operations that access multiple locations (because all guarded by the same lock)
  • Much easier for operations that modify data-structure shape

• Fine-Grained Locking:
  • More simultaneous access (performance when coarse grained would lead to unnecessary blocking)
  • Can make multi-location operations more difficult: say, rotations in an AVL tree

• Guideline:
  • Start with coarse-grained, make finer only as necessary to improve performance
Similar But Separate Issue: Critical Section

Granularity

• Coarse-grained
  • For every method that needs a lock, put the entire method body in a lock

• Fine-grained
  • Keep the lock only for the sections of code where it’s necessary

• Guideline:
  • Try to structure code so that expensive operations (like I/O) can be done outside of your critical section
  • E.g., if you’re trying to print all the values in a tree, maybe copy items into an array inside your critical section, then print the array’s contents outside.
Atomicity

• Atomic: indivisible

• Atomic operation: one that should be thought of as a single step

• Some sequences of operations should behave as if they are one unit
  • Between two operations you may need to avoid exposing an intermediate state
  • Usually ADT operations should be atomic
    • You don’t want another thread trying to do an insert while another thread is rotating the AVL tree

• Think first in terms of what operations need to be atomic
  • Design critical sections and locking granularity based on these decisions
Use Pre-Tested Code

• Whenever possible, use built-in libraries!
• Other people have already invested tons of effort into making things both efficient and correct, use their work when you can!
  • Especially true for concurrent data structures
  • Use thread-safe data structures when available
    • E.g. Java as ConcurrentHashMap
Deadlock

• Occurs when two or more threads are mutually blocking each other
• T1 is blocked by T2, which is blocked by T3, ..., Tn is blocked by T1
  • A cycle of blocking
Bank Account

class BankAccount {
    ...
synchronized void withdraw(int amt) {...}
synchronized void deposit(int amt) {...}
synchronized void transferTo(int amt, BankAccount a) {
    this.withdraw(amt);
    a.deposit(amt);
}
}
The Deadlock

Thread 1:

x.transferTo(1,y);

Thread 2:

y.transferTo(1,x);

**Expected Behavior:**
Thread 2 items from a stack are popped in LIFO order

*acquire lock for account x b/c transferTo is synchronized*

*acquire lock for account y b/c deposit is synchronized*

*release lock for account y after deposit*

*release lock for account x at end of transferTo*

*acquire lock for account y b/c transferTo is synchronized*

*acquire lock for account x b/c deposit is synchronized*

*release lock for account x after deposit*

*release lock for account y at end of transferTo*
The Deadlock

Thread 1:

`x.transferTo(1,y);`

Thread 2:

`y.transferTo(1,x);`

**Expected Behavior:**
Thread 2 items from a stack are popped in LIFO order

**Thread 1:**
- acquire lock for account x b/c transferTo is synchronized
- acquire lock for account y b/c deposit is synchronized
- release lock for account y after deposit
- release lock for account x at end of transferTo

**Thread 2:**
- acquire lock for account y b/c transferTo is synchronized
- acquire lock for account x b/c deposit is synchronized
- release lock for account x after deposit
- release lock for account y at end of transferTo
Resolving Deadlocks

• Deadlocks occur when there are multiple locks necessary to complete a task and different threads may obtain them in a different order

• Option 1:
  • Have a coarser lock granularity
  • E.g. one lock for ALL bank accounts

• Option 2:
  • Have a finer critical section so that only one lock is needed at a time
  • E.g. instead of a synchronized transferTo, have the withdraw and deposit steps locked separately

• Option 3:
  • Force the threads to always acquire the locks in the same order
  • E.g. make transferTo acquire both locks before doing either the withdraw or deposit, make sure both threads agree on the order to acquire
Option 1: Coarser Locking

static final Object BANK = new Object();
class BankAccount {
    
    synchronized void withdraw(int amt) {...}
    synchronized void deposit(int amt) {...}
    void transferTo(int amt, BankAccount a) {
        synchronized(BANK){
            this.withdraw(amt);
            a.deposit(amt);
        }
    }
}
Option 2: Finer Critical Section

class BankAccount {
    ...
    synchronized void withdraw(int amt) {...}
    synchronized void deposit(int amt) {...}
    void transferTo(int amt, BankAccount a) {
        synchronized(this){
            this.withdraw(amt);
        }
        synchronized(a){
            a.deposit(amt);
        }
    }
}
Option 3: First Get All Locks In A Fixed Order

class BankAccount {
  ...
  synchronized void withdraw(int amt) {...}
  synchronized void deposit(int amt) {...}
  void transferTo(int amt, BankAccount a) {
    if (this.acctNum < a.acctNum){
      synchronized(this){
        synchronized(a){
          this.withdraw(amt);
          a.deposit(amt);
        }
      }
    } else {
      synchronized(a){
        synchronized(this){
          this.withdraw(amt);
          a.deposit(amt);
        }
      }
    }
  }
}