The Hardware/Software Interface

CSE351 Winter 2013

Memory Allocation I

Roadmap

C:

```
car *c = malloc(sizeof(car));
c->miles = 100;
c->gals = 17;
float mpg = get_mpg(c);
free(c);
```

Java:

```
Car c = new Car();
c.setMiles(100);
c.setGals(17);
float mpg =
    c.getMPG();
```

Assembly language:

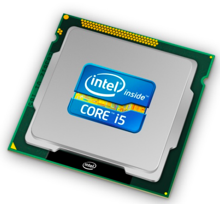
```
get_mpg:
    pushq   %rbp
    movq    %rsp, %rbp
    ...
    popq    %rbp
    ret
```

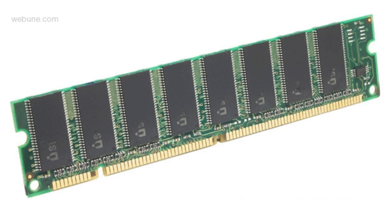
Machine code:

```
0111010000011000
100011010000010000000010
1000100111000010
110000011111101000011111
```

OS:

Computer system:



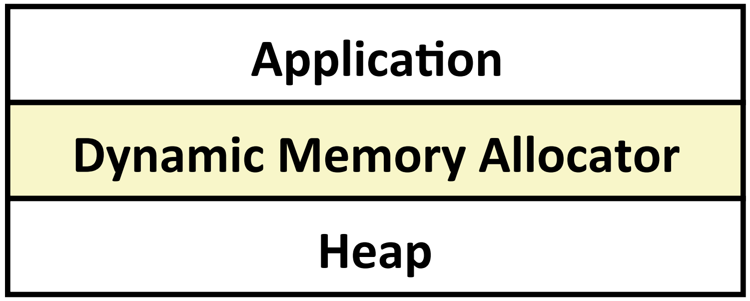


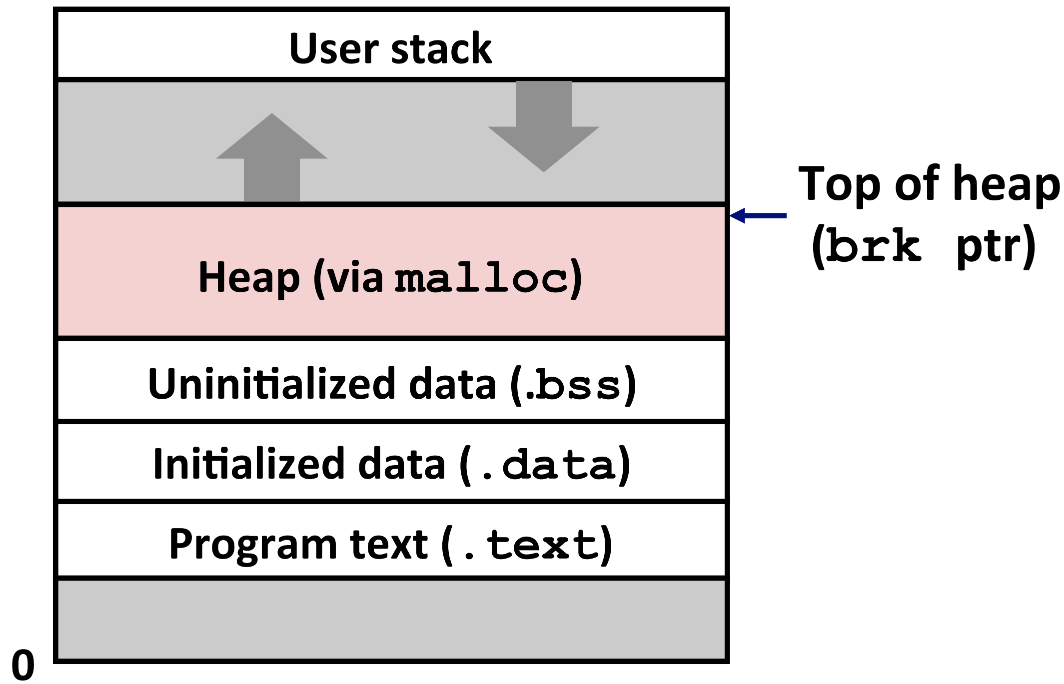

Memory Allocation Topics

- **Dynamic memory allocation**
  - Size/number of data structures may only be known at run time
  - Need to allocate space on the heap
  - Need to de-allocate (free) unused memory so it can be re-allocated
- **Implementation**
  - Implicit free lists
  - Explicit free lists – subject of next programming assignment
  - Segregated free lists
- **Garbage collection**
- **Common memory-related bugs in C programs**

Dynamic Memory Allocation

- Programmers use ***dynamic memory allocators*** (such as `malloc`) to acquire VM at run time.
  - For data structures whose size is only known at runtime.
- Dynamic memory allocators manage an area of process virtual memory known as the ***heap***.





Dynamic Memory Allocation

- **Allocator maintains heap as collection of variable sized *blocks*, which are either *allocated* or *free***
  - Allocator requests space in heap region; VM hardware and kernel allocate these pages to the process
  - Application objects are typically smaller than pages, so the allocator manages blocks *within* pages
- **Types of allocators**
  - ***Explicit allocator*:** application allocates and frees space
    - E.g. **`malloc`** and **`free`** in C
  - ***Implicit allocator:*** application allocates, but does not free space
    - E.g. garbage collection in Java, ML, and Lisp

The `malloc` Package

```
#include <stdlib.h>
```

`void *malloc(size_t size)`

- Successful:
  - Returns a pointer to a memory block of at least **`size`** bytes (typically) aligned to 8-byte boundary
  - If **`size == 0`**, returns NULL
- Unsuccessful: returns NULL and sets **`errno`**

`void free(void *p)`

- Returns the block pointed at by **`p`** to pool of available memory
- **`p`** must come from a previous call to **`malloc`** or **`realloc`**

Other functions

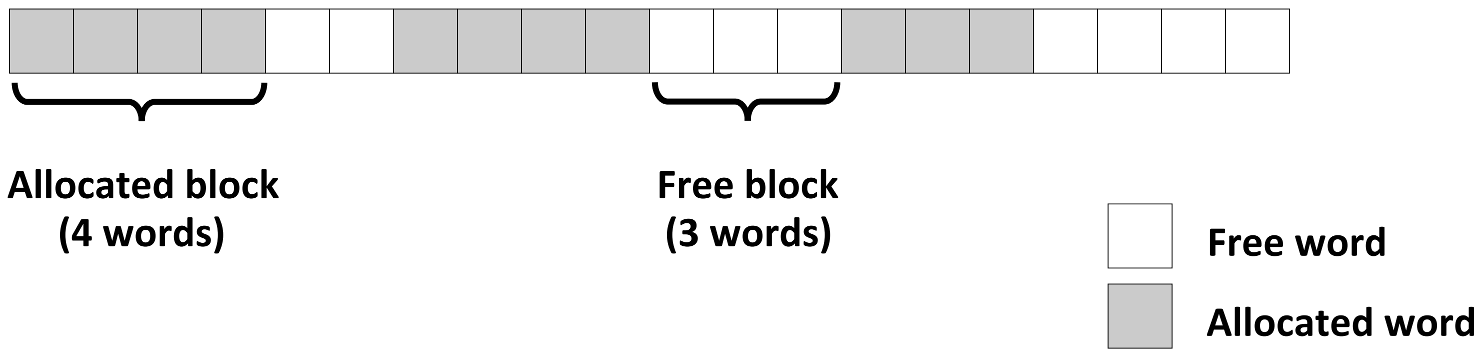
- **`calloc`:** Version of **`malloc`** that initializes allocated block to zero.
- **`realloc:`** Changes the size of a previously allocated block.
- **`sbrk`:** Used internally by allocators to grow or shrink the heap.

Malloc Example

```
void foo(int n, int m) {
  int i, *p;

  /* allocate a block of n ints */
  p = (int *)malloc(n * sizeof(int));
  if (p == NULL) {
    perror("malloc");
    exit(0);
  }
  for (i=0; i<n; i++) p[i] = i;

  /* add space for m ints to end of p block */
  if ((p = (int *)realloc(p, (n+m) * sizeof(int))) == NULL) {
    perror("realloc");
    exit(0);
  }
  for (i=n; i < n+m; i++) p[i] = i;

  /* print new array */
  for (i=0; i<n+m; i++)
    printf("%d\n", p[i]);

  free(p); /* return p to available memory pool */
}
```

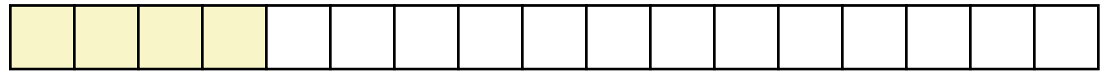
Assumptions Made in This Lecture

- **Memory is word addressed (each word can hold a pointer)**
  - block size is a multiple of words

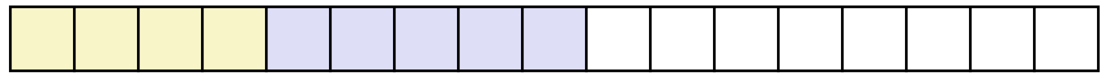


Allocation Example

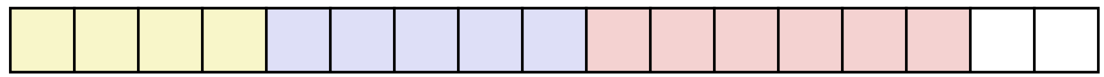
`p1 = malloc(4)`



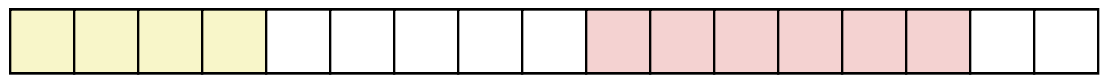
`p2 = malloc(5)`



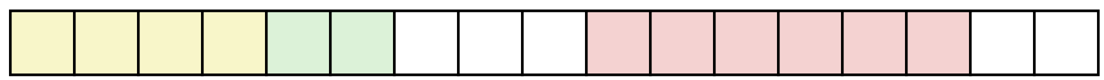
`p3 = malloc(6)`



`free(p2)`



`p4 = malloc(2)`



How are going to implement that?!?

- *Ideas?*

Constraints

- **Applications**
  - Can issue arbitrary sequence of malloc() and free() requests
  - free() requests must be made only for a previously malloc()'d block

- **Allocators**
  - Can't control number or size of allocated blocks
  - Must respond immediately to malloc() requests
    - *i.e.*, can't reorder or buffer requests
  - Must allocate blocks from free memory
    - *i.e.*, blocks can't overlap
  - Must align blocks so they satisfy all alignment requirements
    - 8 byte alignment for GNU malloc (**`libc`** malloc) on Linux boxes
  - Can't move the allocated blocks once they are malloc()'d
    - *i.e.*, compaction is not allowed. *Why not?*

Performance Goal: Throughput

- **Given some sequence of `malloc` and `free` requests:**
  - $R_0, R_1, \ldots, R_k, \ldots, R_{n-1}$

- **Goals: maximize throughput and peak memory utilization**
  - These goals are often conflicting

- **Throughput:**
  - Number of completed requests per unit time
  - Example:
    - 5,000 **`malloc()`** calls and 5,000 **`free()`** calls in 10 seconds
    - Throughput is 1,000 operations/second

Performance Goal: Peak Memory Utilization

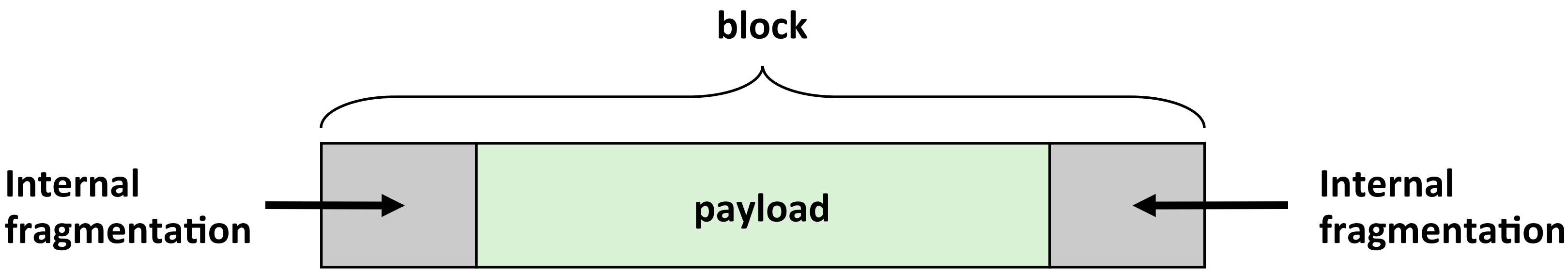
- **Given some sequence of `malloc` and `free` requests:**
  - $R_0, R_1, \ldots, R_k, \ldots, R_{n-1}$
- ***Def: Aggregate payload P_k***
  - `malloc(p)` results in a block with a ***payload*** of `p` bytes
  - After request R_k has completed, the ***aggregate payload*** P_k is the sum of currently allocated payloads
- ***Def: Current heap size = H_k***
  - Assume H_k is monotonically nondecreasing
    - Allocator can increase size of heap using `sbrk()`
- ***Def: Peak memory utilization after k requests***
  - $U_k = (max_{i<k} P_i) / H_k$
  - Goal: maximize utilization for a sequence of requests.
  - *Why is this hard? And what happens to throughput?*

Fragmentation

- **Poor memory utilization is caused by *fragmentation***
  - ***internal*** fragmentation
  - ***external*** fragmentation

Internal Fragmentation

- **For a given block, *internal fragmentation* occurs if payload is smaller than block size**



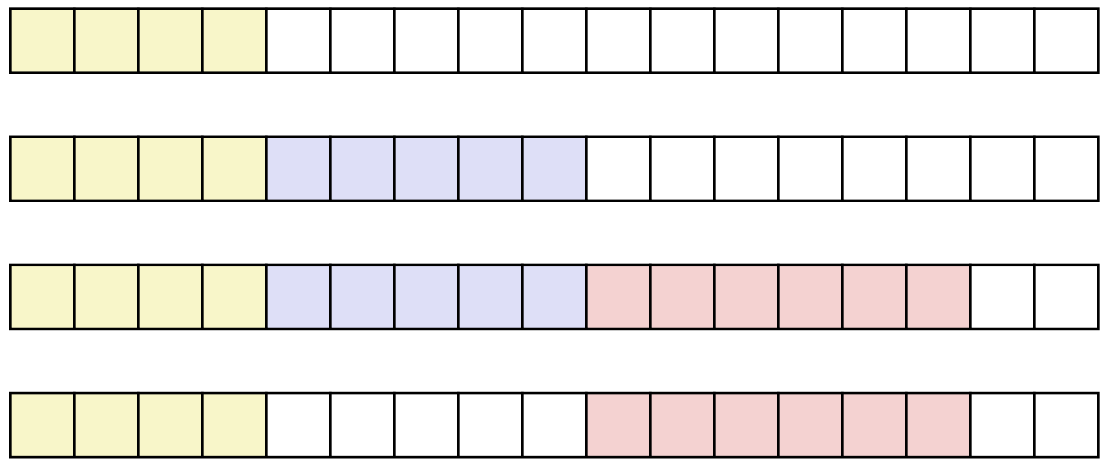
- **Caused by**
  - overhead of maintaining heap data structures (inside block, outside payload)
  - padding for alignment purposes
  - explicit policy decisions (e.g., to return a big block to satisfy a small request)
    why would anyone do that?

- **Depends only on the pattern of *previous* requests**
  - thus, easy to measure

External Fragmentation

- **Occurs when there is enough aggregate heap memory, but no single free block is large enough**

```
p1 = malloc(4)
p2 = malloc(5)
p3 = malloc(6)
free(p2)
p4 = malloc(6)
```



Oops! (what would happen now?)

- **Depends on the pattern of future requests**
  - Thus, difficult to measure