CMSC 412  
Spring 2007  
Processes and Threads

Announcements
- Reading
  - Chapter 3-4
  - Chapter 6 (for next week)
    • Skipping chapter 5 for now
- Project #1 posted on Friday
  - Adding useful features to GeekOS processes

Processes
- What is a process?
  - A program in execution
    • Either sequentially or with multiple “threads of control.”
- What’s not a process?
  - A program on a disk - a process is an active object, but a program is just a file

Computation Abstractions

Processes vs. Threads

Processes do not share data

Threads share data within a process

More on threads later ...

Process State
- Processes switch between different states based on internal and external events
- Each process is in exactly one state at a time
- Typical States of Processes (varies with OS)
  - New: just been created
  - Running: instructions are being executed
    • only one process per processor may be running
  - Waiting: waiting for an event to occur
    • examples: I/O events, signals
  - Ready: waiting to be assigned the CPU
  - Terminated: finished execution
Process State Transitions

Components of a Process
- Memory Segments
  - Program - often called the text segment
  - Data - global variables
  - Stack - contains activation records
  - Heap - contains dynamically-allocated data
- Processor Registers
  - Control registers
    - program counter - next instruction to execute
    - stack pointer
    - processor status word (from cmp instructions)
  - General purpose registers
  - Floating-point registers

Scheduling
- OS must decide when a process is allowed to run; i.e. it must schedule processes
- Long-term scheduler (or job scheduler) - selects which processes should be brought into the ready queue.
- Short-term scheduler (or CPU scheduler) - selects which process should be executed next and allocates CPU. A.k.a the dispatcher.

Scheduling Policy
- How should the scheduler choose a process to run?
  - Can simply pick the first item in the queue - called round-robin scheduling
  - is round-robin scheduling fair?
  - Various scheduling criteria
    - Process class (I/O bound vs. CPU bound)
    - Priority
    - Resources consumed
    - Etc.

Scheduling Implementation
- Use alarm interrupts to switch between processes
  - when time is up, a process is put back on the end of the ready queue
  - frequency of these interrupts (a.k.a. the quantum) is an important parameter
    - need to balance overhead of switching vs. responsiveness
Context Switch

- When the OS switches a CPU to another process, it is called a **context switch**.
- The system must save the state of the old process and load the saved state for the new process.
- Context-switch time is overhead; the system does no useful work while switching.
  - Total time depends on hardware support.
  - Writing context-switch routines almost always requires some assembly language

OS Process Control Block

- Stores all of the information about a process
- PCB contains
  - Process state: new, ready, etc.
  - (saved) processor registers
  - Memory Management Information
    - page tables, limit registers for segments
  - CPU scheduling information
    - process priority; pointers to process queues
  - Accounting information
    - time used (and limits); files used; program owner; parent process id
  - I/O status information
    - list of open files; pending I/O operations

Sample PCB

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>pointer</th>
<th>process state</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>process number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>program counter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>registers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>memory limits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>list of open files</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Context Switch using PCBs

GeekOS PCB (part I)

- **struct Kernel_Thread**, contains
  - Process Identifier (PID)
  - Scheduling criteria (priority)
  - Accounting info (CPU clock ticks)
  - Kernel stack pointer
    - Context-switch information stored here; i.e. general-purpose registers, program counter, etc.
  - User processes in GeekOS are a special kind of kernel thread

GeekOS PCB (part II)

- **struct User_Context**, contains
  - Pointer to process (physical) memory
    - Includes all the segments you set up in Project 1; i.e. code segment, data segment, etc.
  - Pointers to initial program entry point, initial argument, and initial stack.
  - Information for managing address space protection
    - x86 descriptor tables and selectors
  - You’ll set this up in Project 2
Storing PCBs

- Track which processes are in which states
  - Collection of PCBs is called a **process table**
- How to store the process table?
  - First Option:
    - Simple, but slow to find processes
    - Also need additional data structures for fairness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>P1</th>
<th>P2</th>
<th>P2</th>
<th>P3</th>
<th>P4</th>
<th>P5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>Ready</td>
<td>Waiting</td>
<td>New</td>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Waiting</td>
<td>Ready</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Queues of Processes

- Store processes in state-based queues

Forking a New Process

- New process is called the **child**; the process that created it is the **parent**
- Create a PCB for the new process
  - copy most entries from the parent
  - clear accounting fields
  - buffer pending I/O
  - allocate a **PID** for the new process

Fork vs. Spawn

- UNIX fork() creates a duplicate of the current process
  - Returns PID to the parent
  - Returns 0 to the child
  - Call exec() to replace the current image with a new one
- Windows (and GeekOS) use Spawn() to create a new process directly
- Why would we want one or the other?

State Transitions with Queues

Forking a New Process

- Allocate memory for it
  - Might copy all of the parents’ segments
  - Text segment could be shared
    - rarely changes
  - Use memory mapping hardware to help
    - will talk more about this in the memory management part of the class
- Add it to the ready queue
Process Termination

- Process can terminate itself
  - via the exit system call
- One process can terminate another process
  - use the kill system call
  - can any process kill any other process?
    - No, that would be bad.
    - Normally an ancestor can terminate a descendant
- OS kernel can terminate a process
  - exceeds resource limits
  - tries to perform an illegal operation

Orphan Processes

- What if a parent terminates before the child?
  - the child called an orphan process
  - in UNIX - becomes child of the root process
  - in VMS - terminated

UNIX example

- Terminated process
  - signals parent of its death (SIGCHLD)
  - is called a zombie in UNIX
  - remains around waiting to be reclaimed
- Parent process
  - wait system call retrieves info about the dead process
    - exit status
    - accounting information
  - signal handler is generally called the reaper
    - since its job is to collect the dead processes

Kernel Mode and User Mode

Threads

- Processes can be a heavy (expensive) object
- Threads are like processes but generally a collection of threads will share
  - memory (except stack)
  - open files (and buffered data)
  - signals
- Can be user or system level
  - user level: kernel sees one process
    - easy to implement by users
    - I/O management is difficult
  - in an multi-processor can’t get parallelism
  - system level: kernel schedules threads

Single and Multithreaded Processes
**Execution Abstractions**

- **Kernel Threads**
  - Threads that run with kernel privileges
- **User Threads**
  - Threads running in user space
  - Kernel may not be aware of them
- **Processes**
  - An execution context with an address space
  - Visible to and scheduled by the kernel
- **Light-Weight Processes**
  - An execution context sharing an address space
  - Visible to and scheduled by the kernel

**Multithreading Models**

- **Many-to-One**
- **One-to-One**
- **Many-to-Many**

**Why multiple threads?**

- **Performance:**
  - Parallelism on multiprocessors
  - Concurrency of computation and I/O
- **Can easily express some programming paradigms**
  - Event processing
  - Simulations
- **Keep computations separate**
Why not multiple threads?

- Complexity:
  - Dealing with safety, liveness, composition
- Overhead
  - Higher resource usage

- Check out CMSC 433 for lots of information on threads and their alternatives!

Thread Systems

- Specifications
  - POSIX Threads (Pthreads)
  - WinThreads
  - Java Threads
- See the text for many examples