Lecture 1 — Introduction and Our C Toolkit

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ECE 252 Spring 2019 1/15

Course Syllabus

As our first order of business, let's go over the course syllabus.

ECE 252 Spring 2019 2/15

Collaborative Course

The source material for the ECE 252 notes and slides is open-sourced via Github.

If you find an error in the notes/slides, or have an improvement, go to https://github.com/jzarnett/ece252 and open an issue.

If you know how to use git and ETEX, then you can go to the URL and submit a pull request (changes) for me to look at and incorporate!

ECE 252 Spring 2019 3 / 1!

Some Background on the Operating System

An operating system (OS) sits between the hardware and programs.

It does many different things and has many often-conflicting goals.

You might think of the OS as the "secretary" of the system.

ECE 252 Spring 2019 4/15

OS: Resource Manager

The OS is responsible for resource management and allocation.

Resources like CPU time or memory space are limited.

The OS must decide how to allocate & to keep track of system resources.

In the event of conflicting requests, choose the winner.

ECE 252 Spring 2019 5/1

OS: Environment Provider

The OS enables useful programs like Photoshop or Microsoft Word to run.

The OS is responsible for abstracting away the details of hardware.

Imagine Hello World had to be written differently for different hardware.

ECE 252 Spring 2019 6/15

OS: Multitasking

Multiple programs means some resources are shared.

 \rightarrow A source of conflicts!

OS creates and enforces the rules so all can get along.

Sometimes processes want to co-operate and not compete.

The OS can help them to do so.

The OS is the backdrop to what we will do in this course: systems programming.

ECE 252 Spring 2019 7/:

Systems Programming

Some examples of systems programming:

- **■** File Manipulation
- Communication
- Processes and Thread Management

ECE 252 Spring 2019 8 / 15

Systems Programming

Programming at this level is more difficult than regular programs.

It may require knowledge of the hardware, or perhaps programming facilities like debugging are limited.

Systems programs must take concurrency into account.

ECE 252 Spring 2019 9 / 15

Ask for Help

We want to do certain operations that involve the operating system.

There are things that the operating system does not allow programs to do.

What they have to do instead is ask the operating system to do it instead.

ECE 252 Spring 2019 10 / 15

Concurrency

A program is said to be concurrent if it can support two or more actions in progress at the same time.

It is parallel if it can have two or more actions executing simultaneously.

Soon enough we will spend a great deal of time examining the differences between parallelism and concurrency in the program.

ECE 252 Spring 2019 11/1!

Concurrency

It is already the case that many programs you use are to a greater or smaller degree concurrent.

Depending on your level of programming experience, you may have already written a concurrent program, intentionally or without knowing it.

We will learn about how to take a program and make it concurrent, as well as how to write it with concurrency in mind from the ground up.

ECE 252 Spring 2019 12 / 1!

Concurrency Problems

Consider a program that performs a simple calculation given some input.

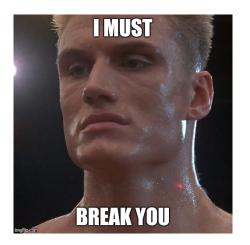
If the program has a concurrency problem, then the answer could be:

- Consistently the wrong answer every single time
- 2 Different on consecutive runs with the same input, or
- 3 Correct some of the time but incorrect some of the time.

As you can imagine, none of these options are acceptable.

ECE 252 Spring 2019 13/15

This course is going to be hard.



If your programming skills need work, better to start trying to catch up now.

ECE 252 Spring 2019 14 / 15

Our C Toolkit

We will need some introduction to the conventions and tools of C:

- Functions
- Header files
- Comments
- Structures
- Type Names
- Memory Allocation, Deallocation, and Pointers
- Dereferencing, Address-Of, The Arrow
- Arrays
- Strings
- Calling Conventions & Errno
- Printing
- Constants
- main and its arguments

■ void*

ECE 252 Spring 2019 15/