

CMPSCI 230  
Computer Systems  
Principles

Concurrency with Threads

# Objectives

- To learn what a thread is
- To understand the difference between processes and threads
- To learn about programming with threads using the pthread library
- To learn about unintended sharing

# iClicker question

After forking, a parent and child process:

- A) Share virtual memory and file descriptors
- B) Share virtual memory but not file descriptors
- C) Share file descriptors but not virtual memory
- D) Share neither file descriptors nor virtual memory

# iClicker question: Solution

After forking, a parent and child process:

- A) Share virtual memory and file descriptors
- B) Share virtual memory but not file descriptors
- C) Share file descriptors but not virtual memory
- D) Share neither file descriptors nor virtual memory

# Process Pros

- Clean Sharing Model
  - Global variables (address spaces) **are not shared**
  - File tables (file descriptors) **are shared**
- Simple and straightforward
  - Forking a child process is easy
  - Reaping child processes is simple
  - Processes are isolated for protection

# Process Cons

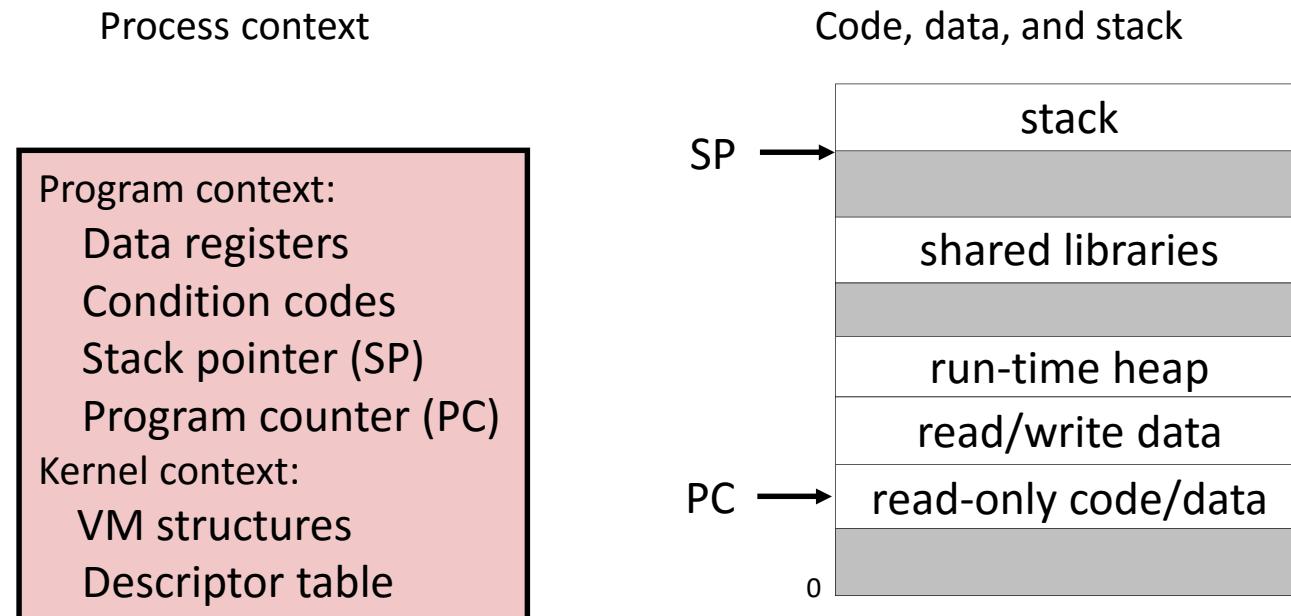
- Forking a process is expensive
  - Need to clone parent's memory space
  - Need to setup a separate context for child

# Process Cons

- Forking a process is expensive
  - Need to clone parent's memory space
  - Need to setup a separate context for child
- Non-trivial to share data between processes
  - Need to use files/pipes to share data
  - Can use shared memory
  - Lots of overhead!

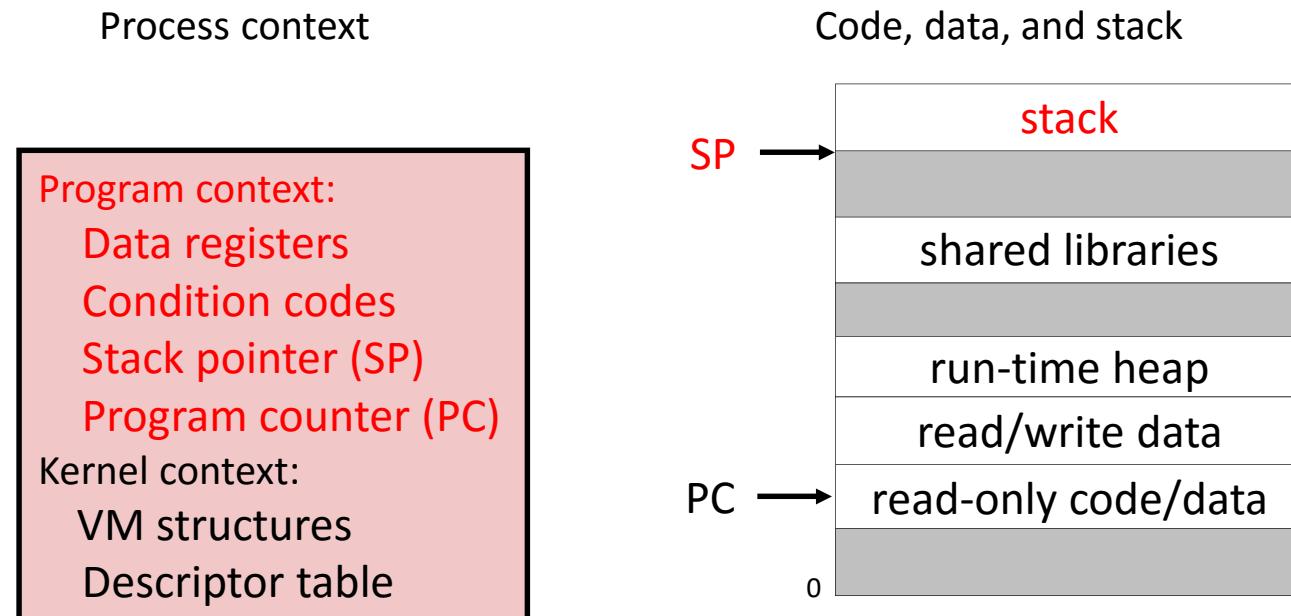
# View of a Process

- Process = context + code, data, and stack



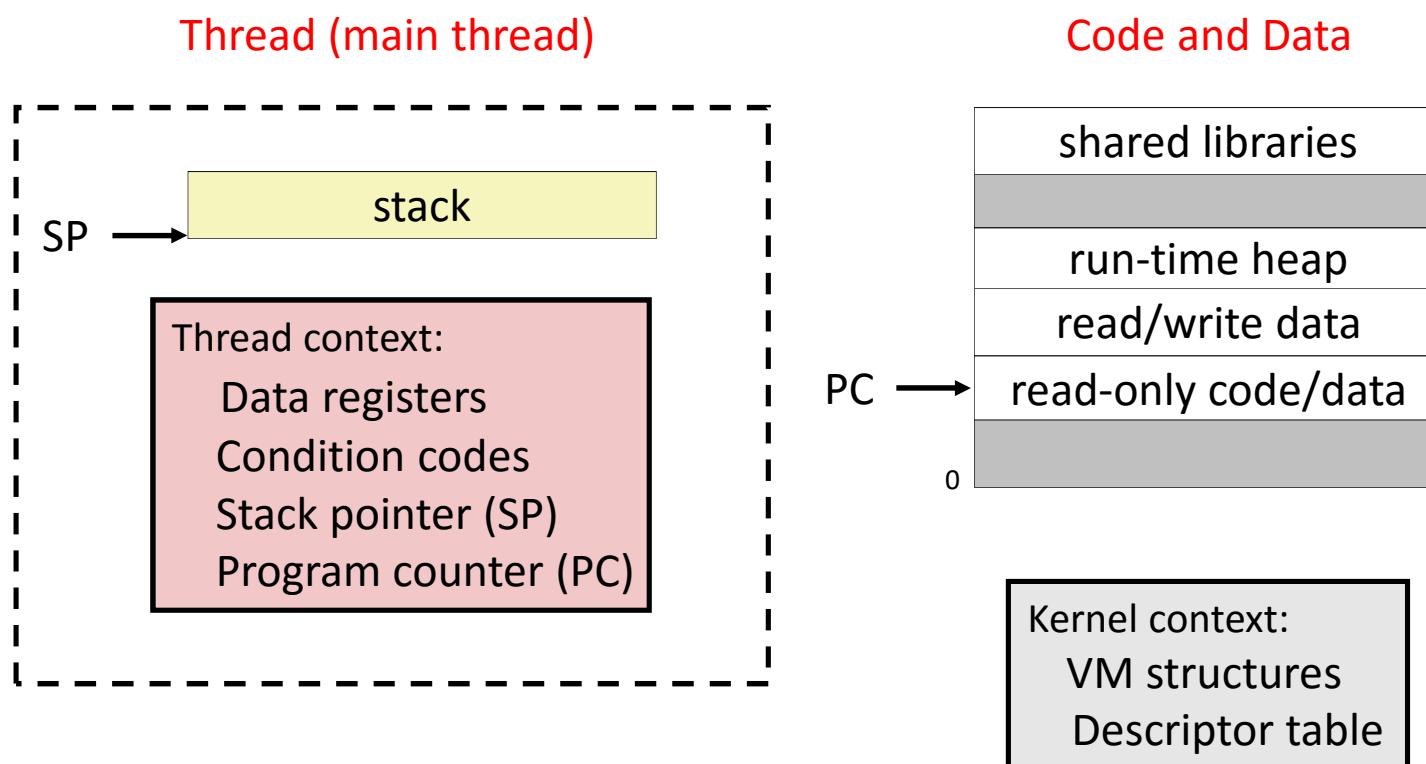
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# Alternate View of a Process

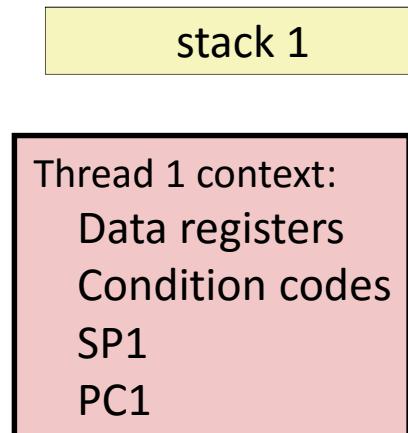
- Process = thread + code, data, and kernel context



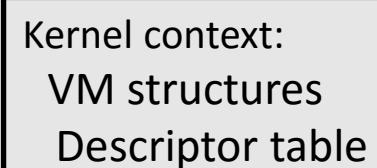
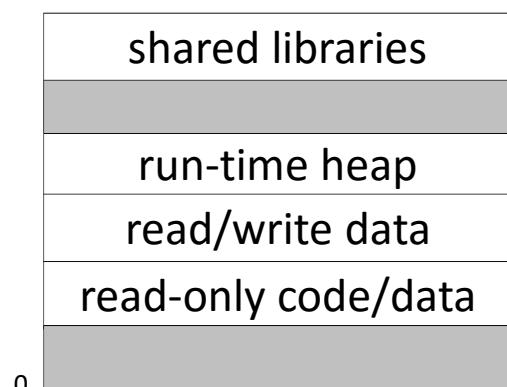
# A Process With Multiple Threads

- Multiple threads can be associated with a process
  - Each thread has its own logical control flow

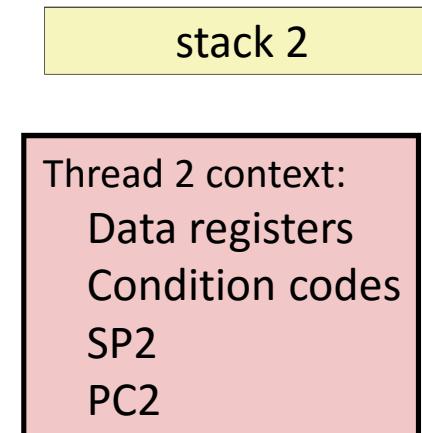
Thread 1 (main thread)



Shared code and data

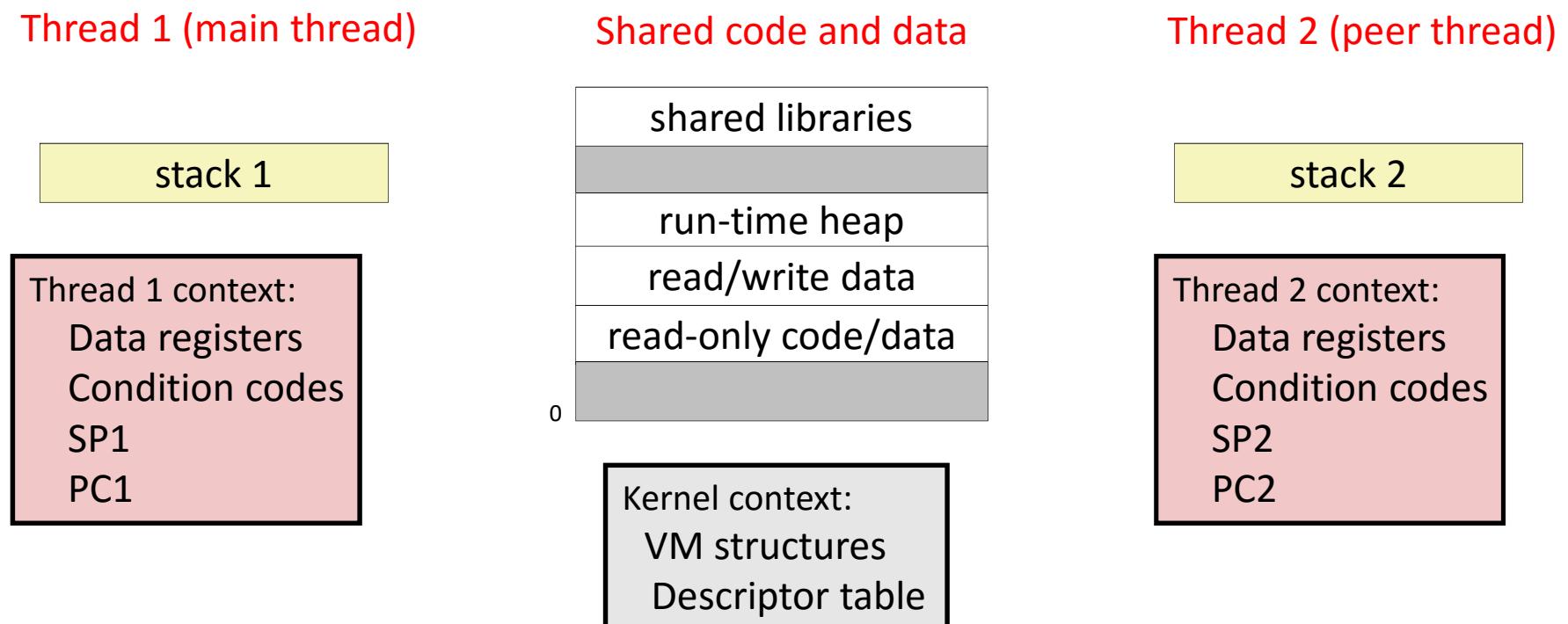


Thread 2 (peer thread)



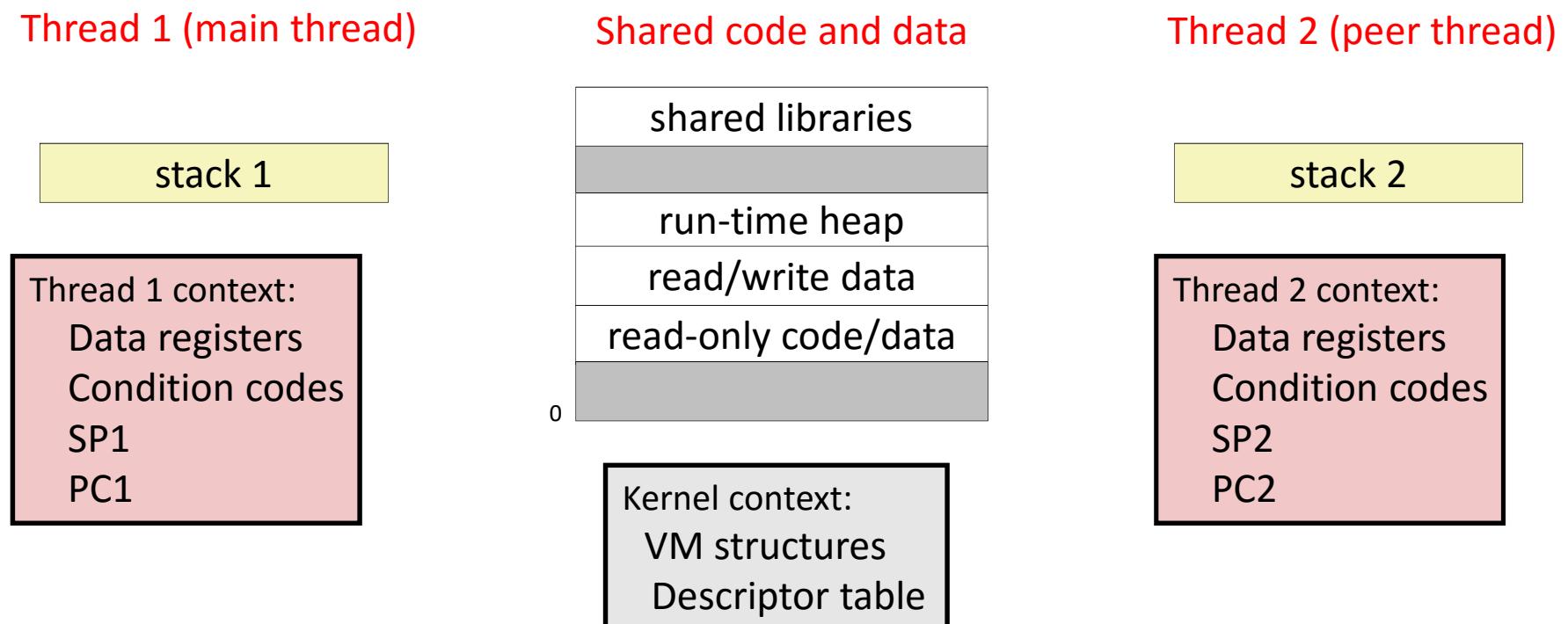
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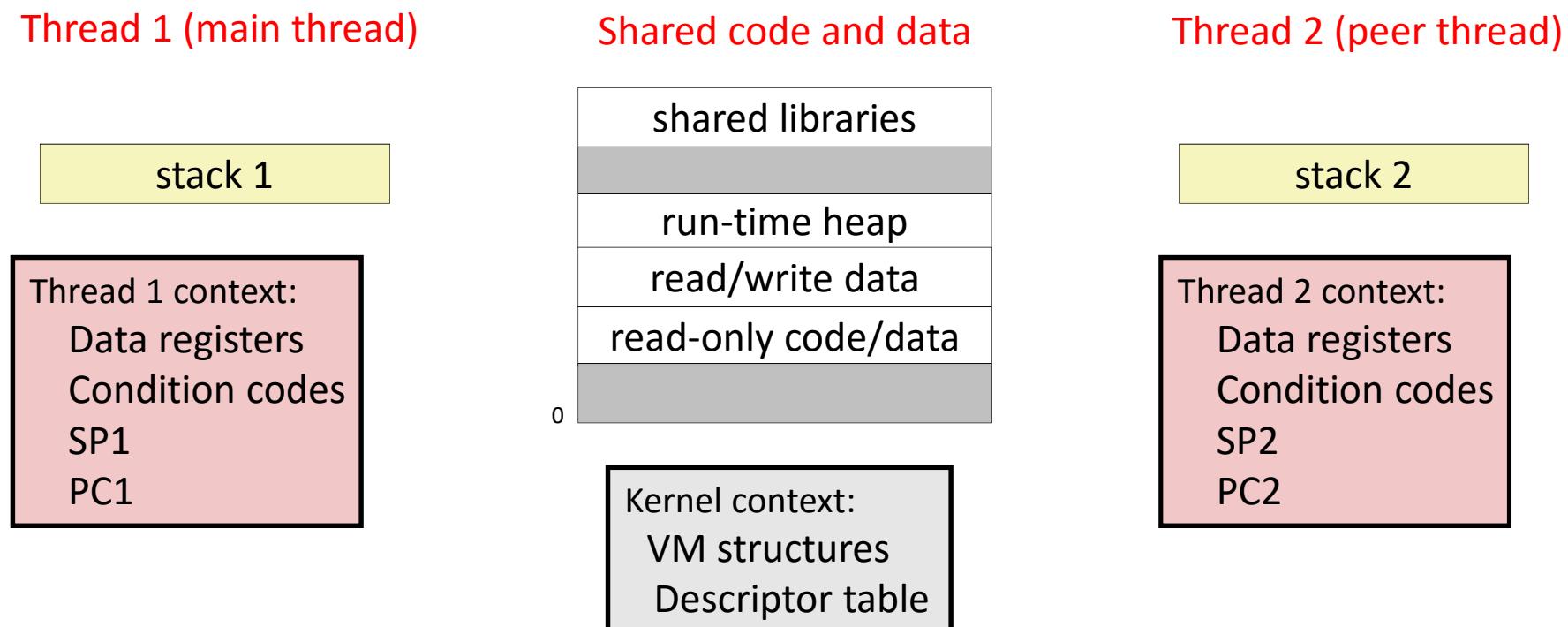
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# A Process With Multiple Threads

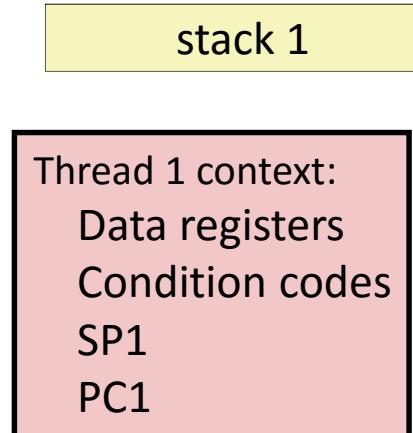
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  - Each thread shares the same code, data, and kernel context
  - Each thread has its own stack for local variables
    - but not protected from other threads



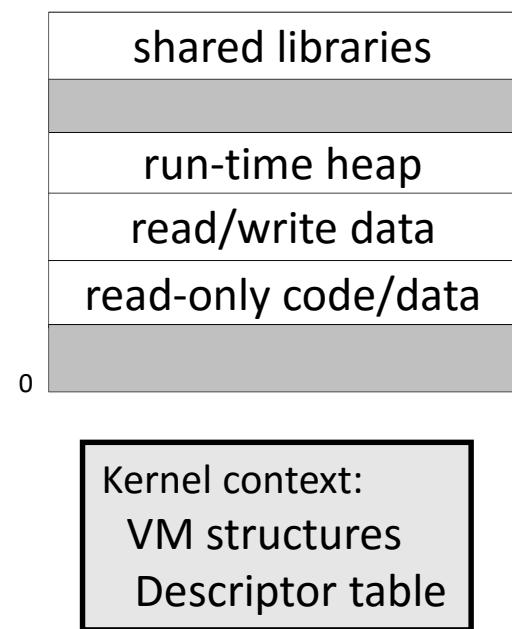
# A Process With Multiple Threads

- Multiple threads can be associated with a process
  - Each thread has its own logical control flow
  - Each thread shares the same code, data, and kernel context
  - Each thread has its own stack for local variables
    - but not protected from other threads
  - Each thread has its own thread id (TID)

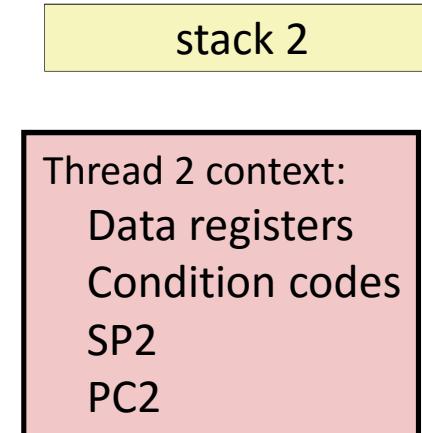
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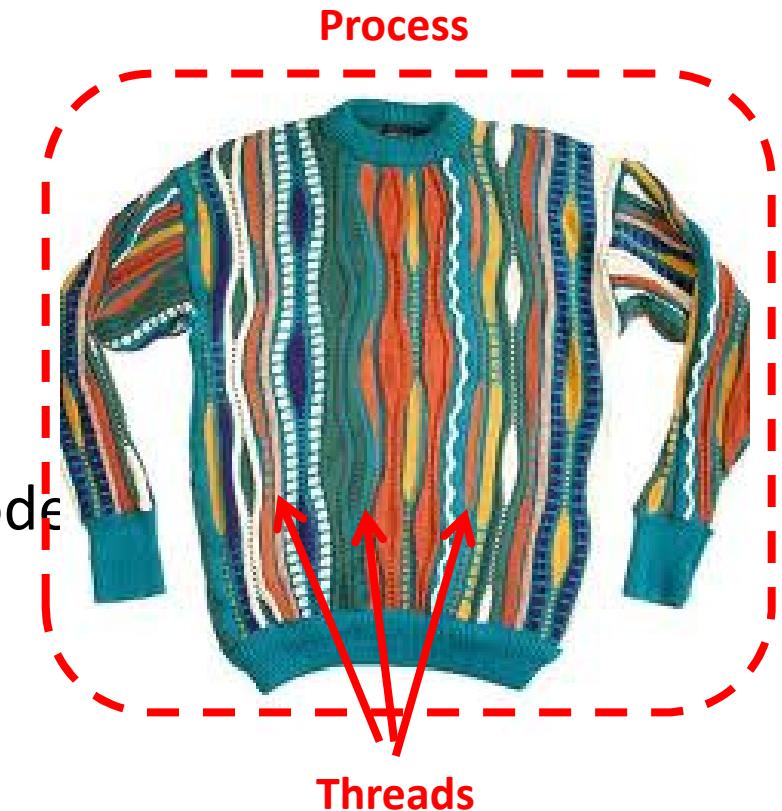


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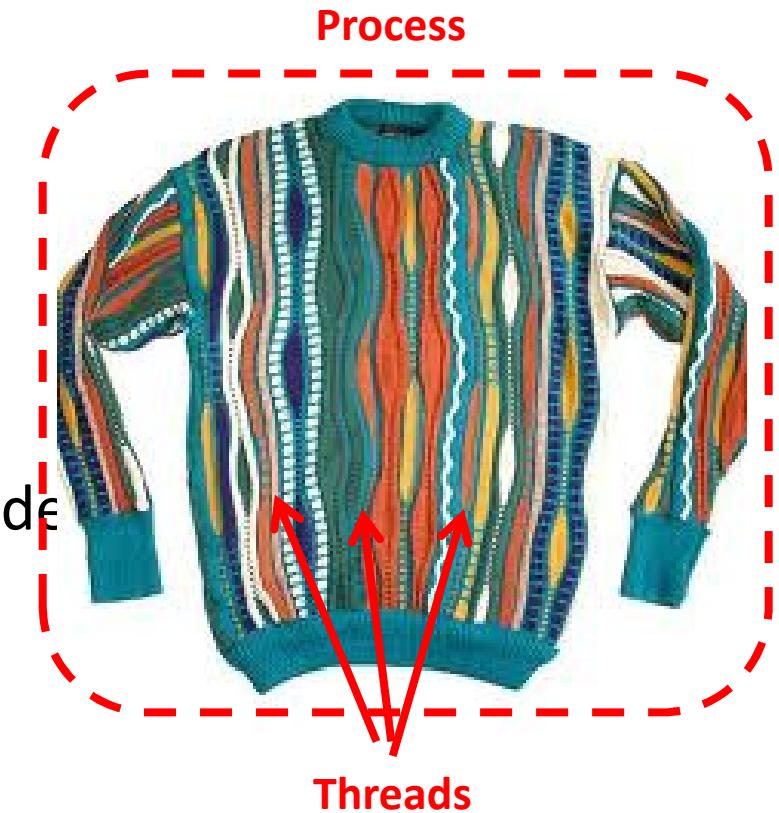
# OS: Concept of a Thread

- **Processes**
  - Represent an entire program
- **Threads**
  - Represents *smaller chunks* of code



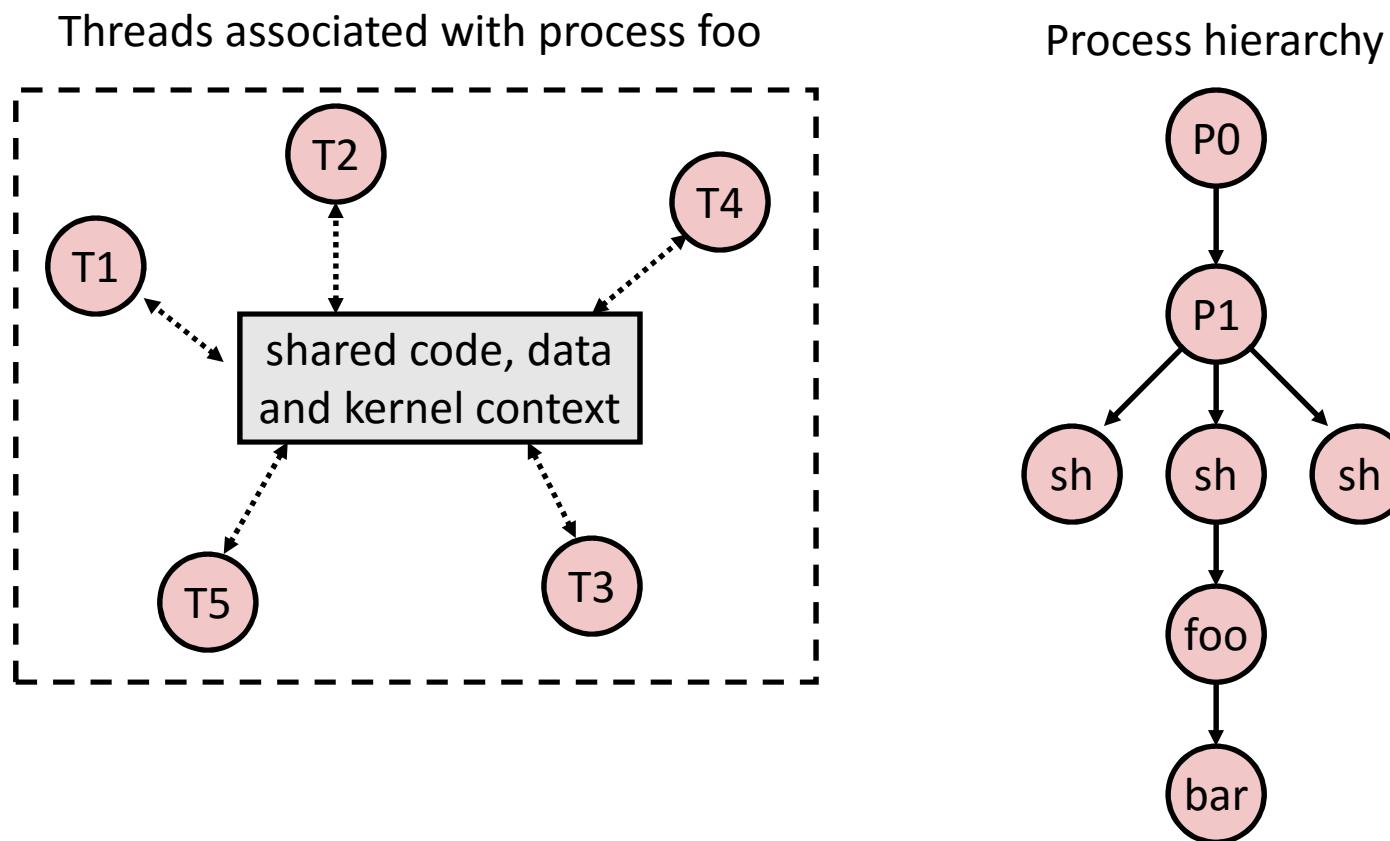
# OS: Concept of a Thread

- **Processes**
  - Represent an entire program
  - High Overhead context switch
- **Threads**
  - Represents *smaller chunks* of code
  - Lower Overhead context switch



# Logical View of Threads

- Threads associated with process form a pool of peers
  - Unlike processes which form a tree hierarchy



# Threads vs. Processes

- **How threads and processes are similar**
  - Each has its own logical control flow
  - Each can run concurrently with others
  - Each is context switched

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  - Threads share code and some data
    - Processes (typically) do not

# Threads vs. Processes

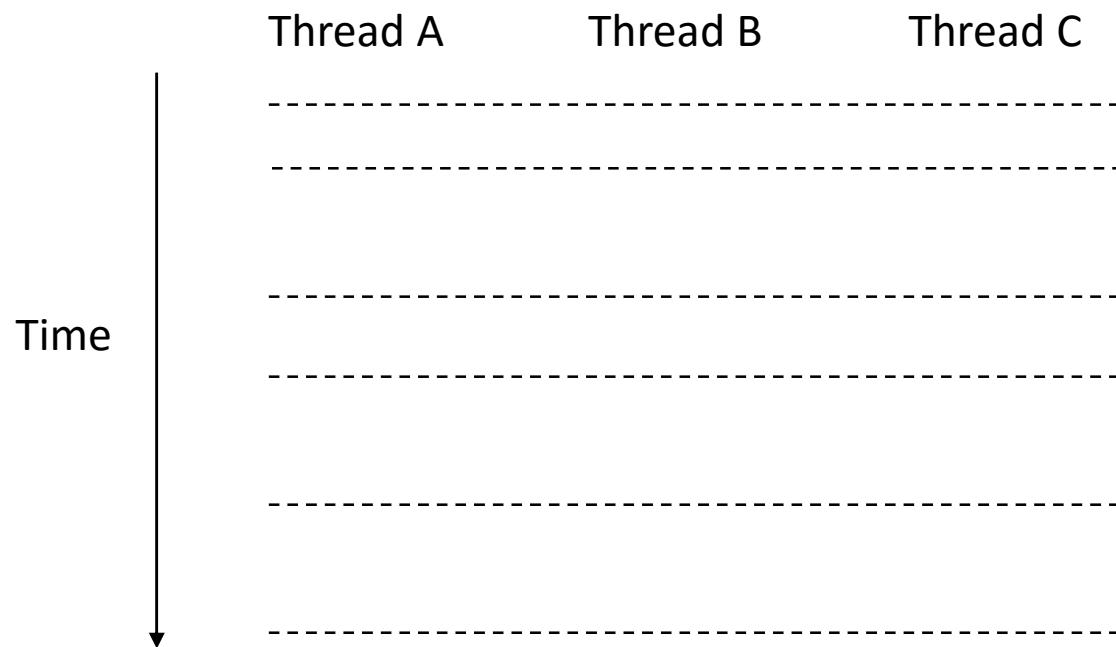
- **How threads and processes are similar**
  - Each has its own logical control flow
  - Each can run concurrently with others
  - Each is context switched
- **How threads and processes are different**
  - Threads share code and some data
    - Processes (typically) do not
  - Threads are somewhat less expensive than processes
    - Process control is twice as expensive as thread control
    - Linux numbers:
      - ~20K cycles to create and reap a process
      - ~10K cycles (or less) to create and reap a thread

# Concurrent Threads

- Two threads are *concurrent* if their flows overlap in time
- Otherwise, they are sequential

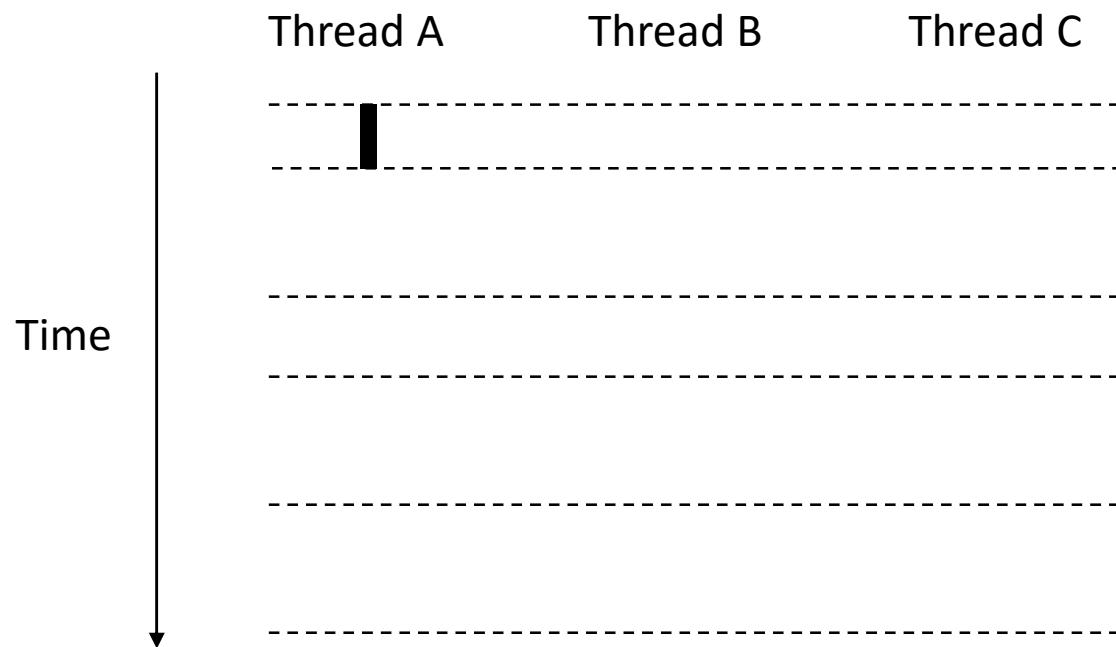
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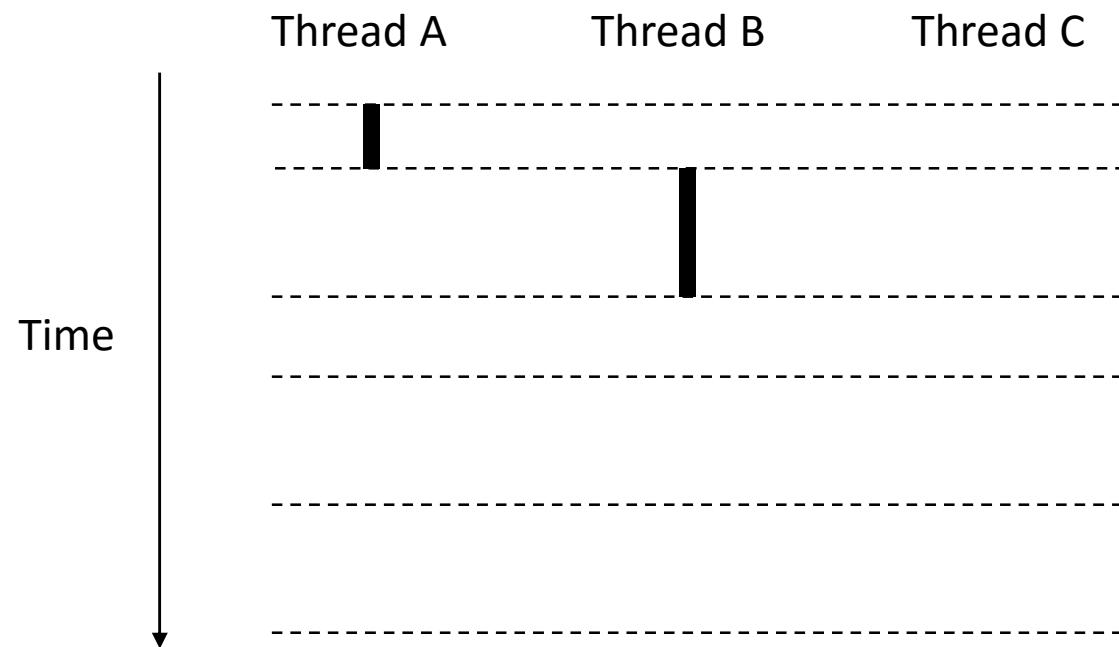
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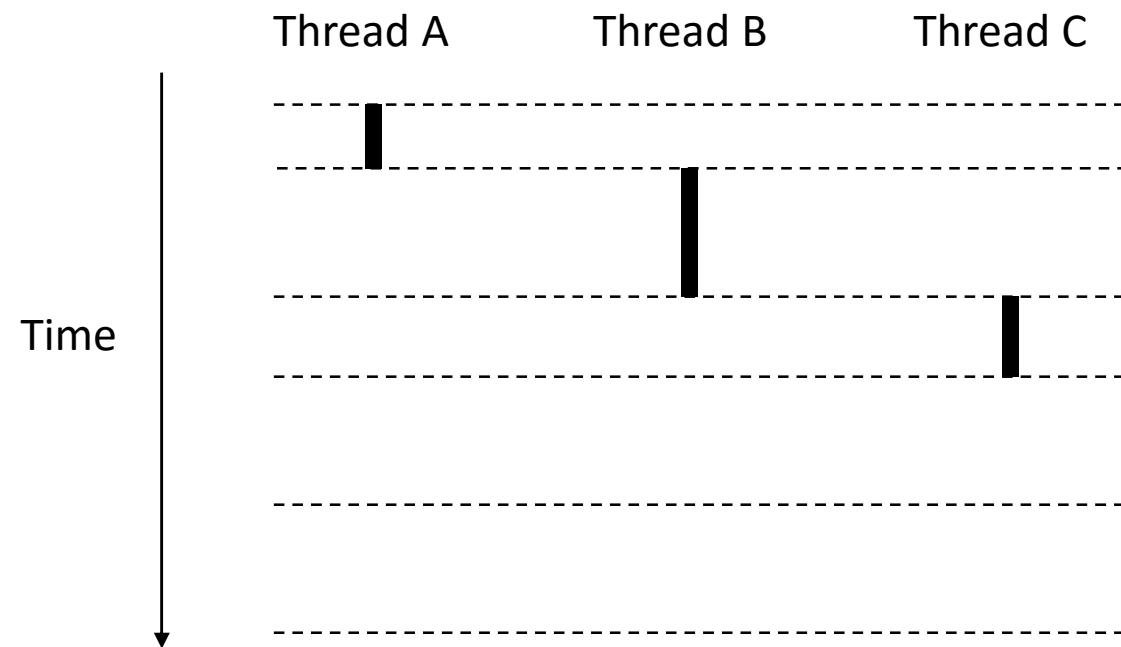
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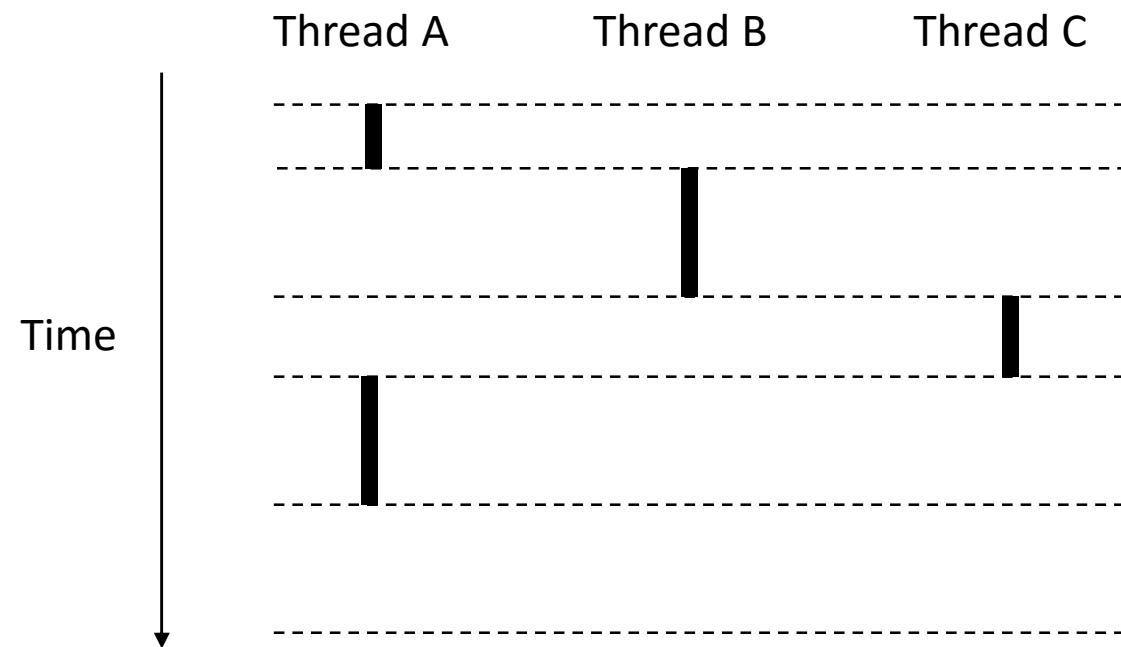
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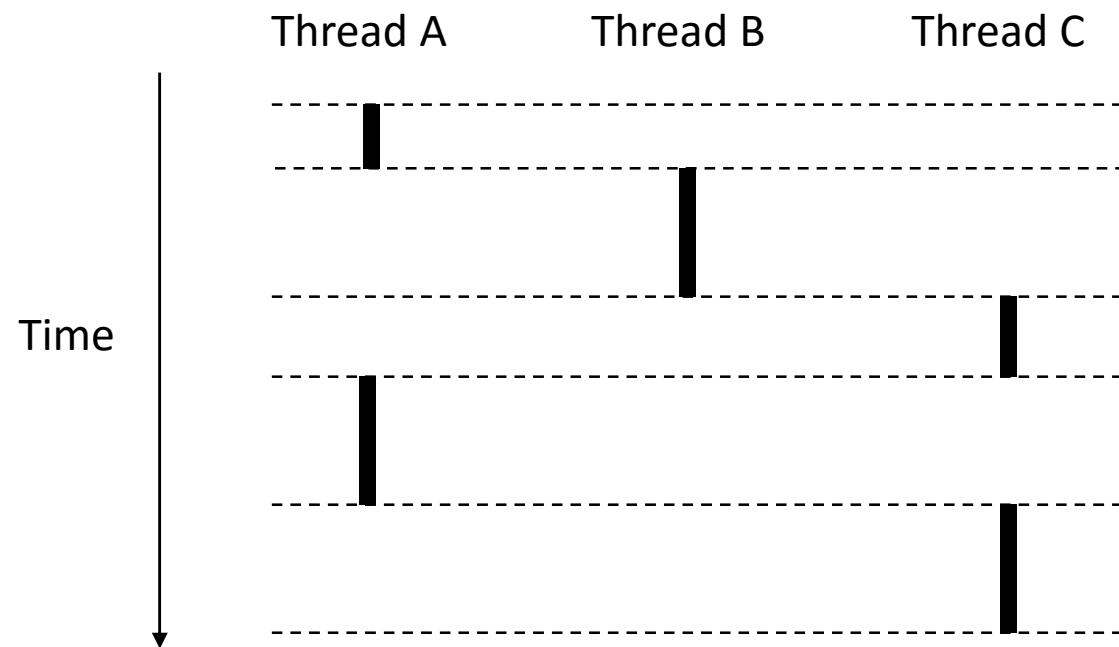
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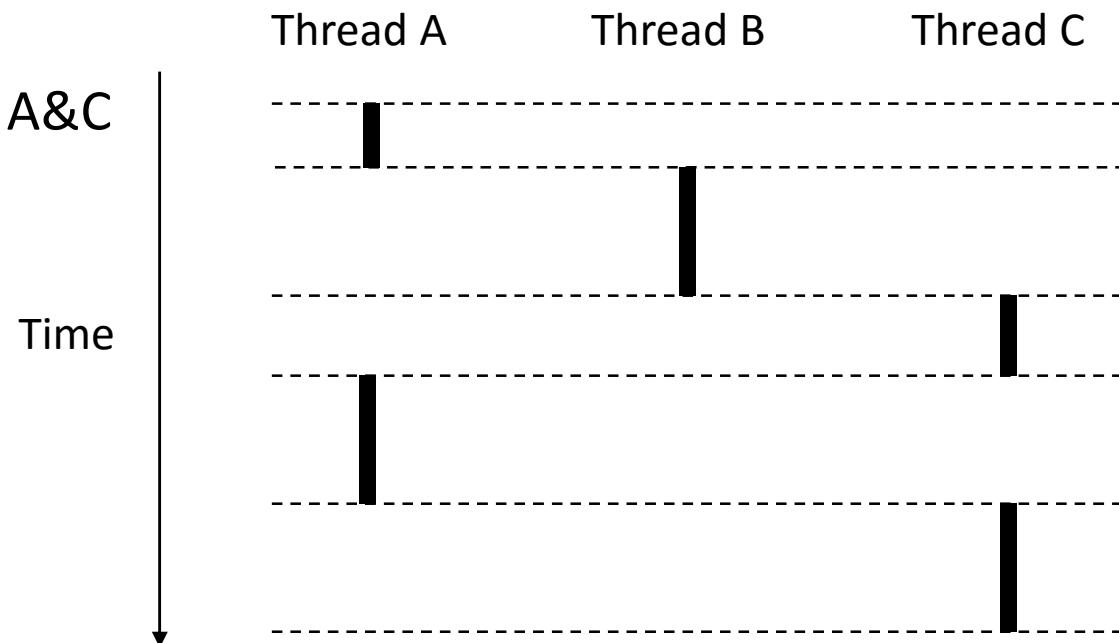
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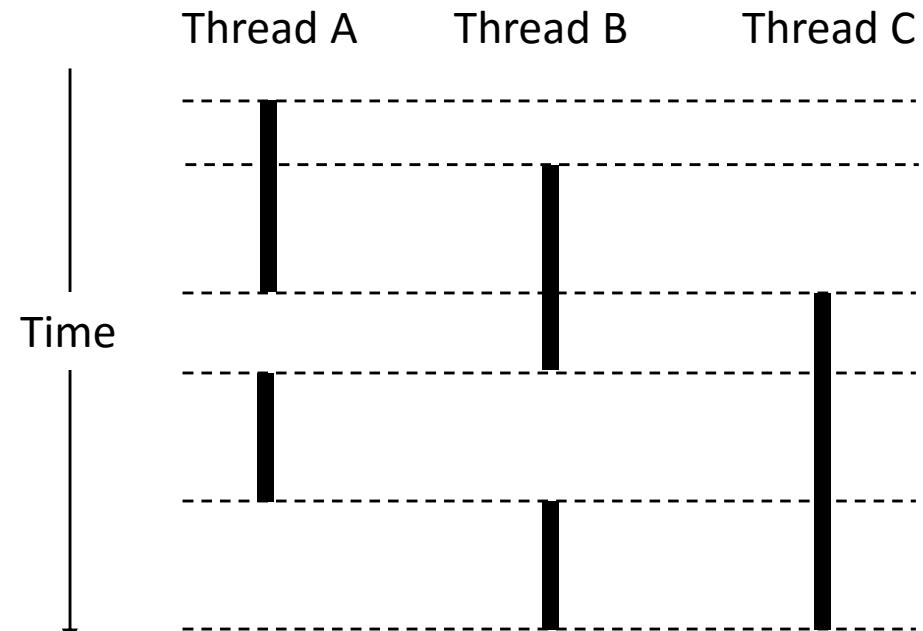
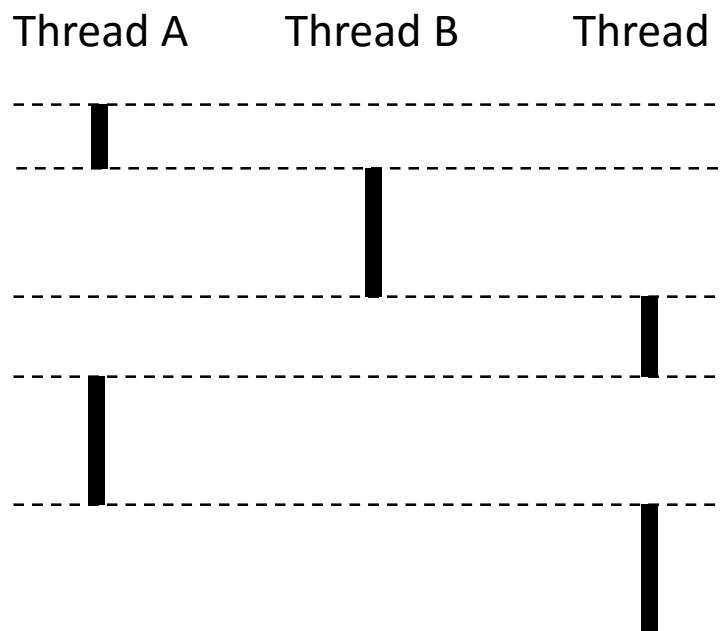
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- Examples:
  - Concurrent: A & B, A&C
  - Sequential: B & C



# Concurrent Thread Execution

- Single Core Processor
  - Simulate parallelism by time slicing
- Multi-Core Processor
  - Can have true parallelism



# Posix Threads (Pthreads) Interface

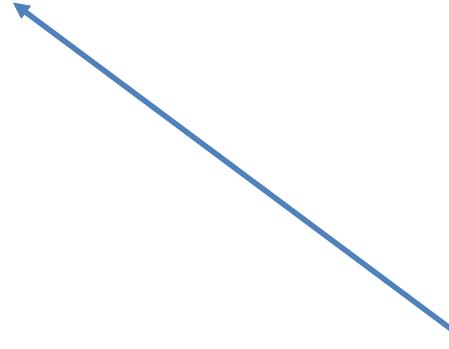
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Can only wait for a specific thread to terminate

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    - `pthread_self()`
  - Terminating threads
    - `pthread_cancel()`
    - `pthread_exit()` [terminates current threads]
    - `exit()` [terminates all threads]

# The Pthreads "hello, world" Program

```
/*
 * hello.c - Pthreads "hello, world" program
 */
#include "csapp.h"

void *thread(void *vargp);

int main() {
    pthread_t tid;

    Pthread_create(&tid, NULL, thread, NULL);
    Pthread_join(tid, NULL);
    exit(0);
}
```

```
/* thread routine */
void *thread(void *vargp) {
    printf("Hello, world!\n");
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*thread routine that  
the new thread executes*

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*thread id*

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*Thread attributes  
(usually NULL)*

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```

*Thread arguments  
(void \*p)*

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*return value  
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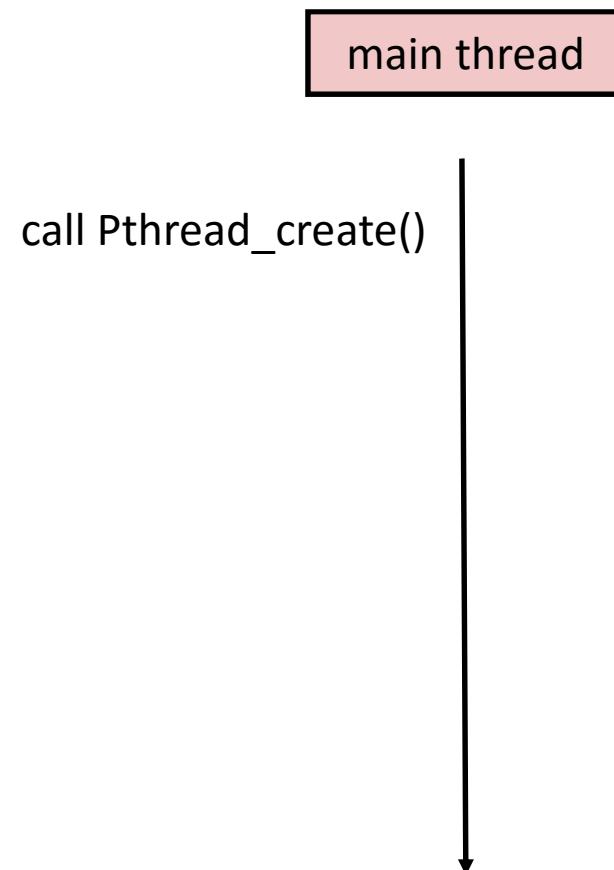
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# Execution of Threaded “hello, world”

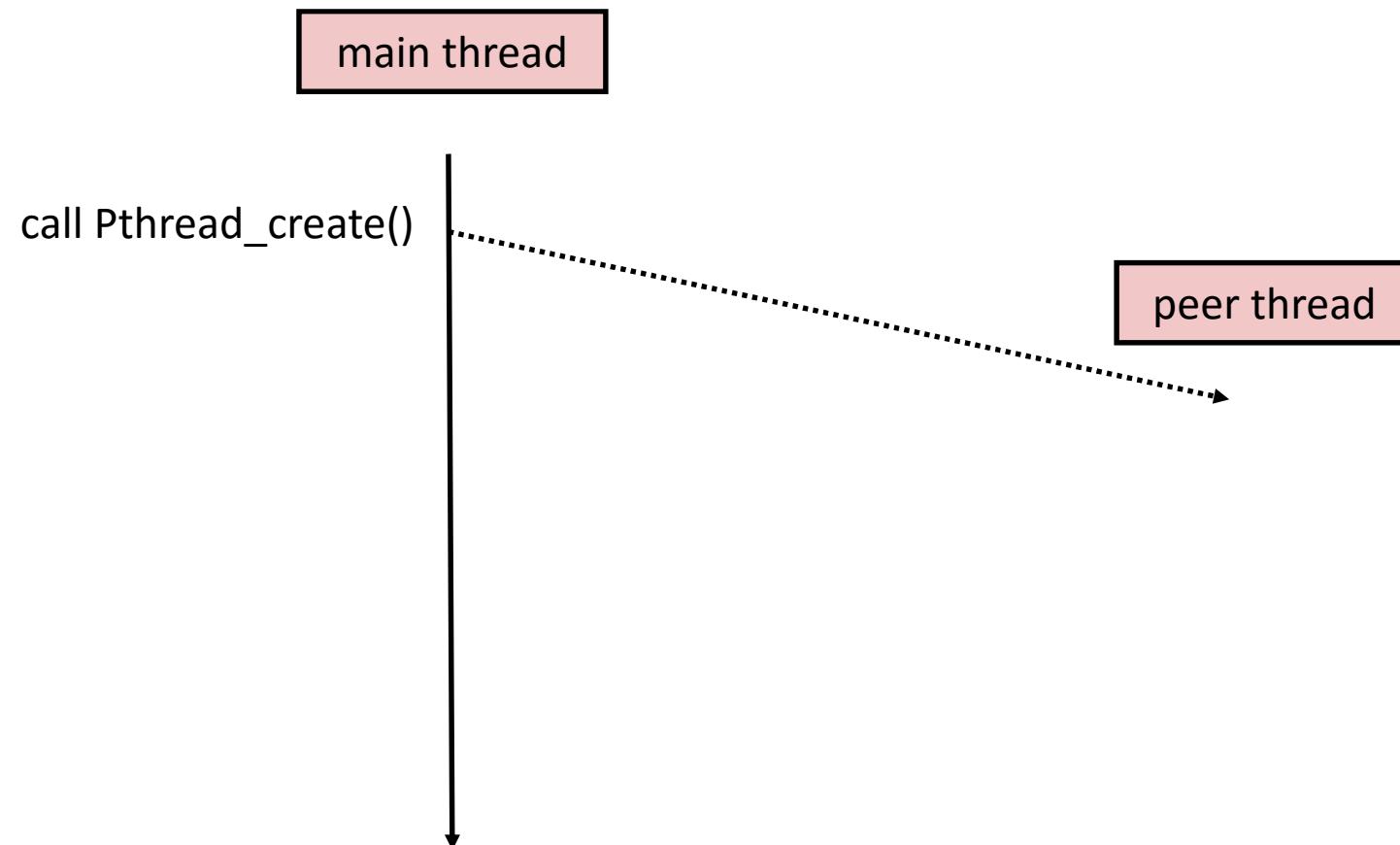
main thread



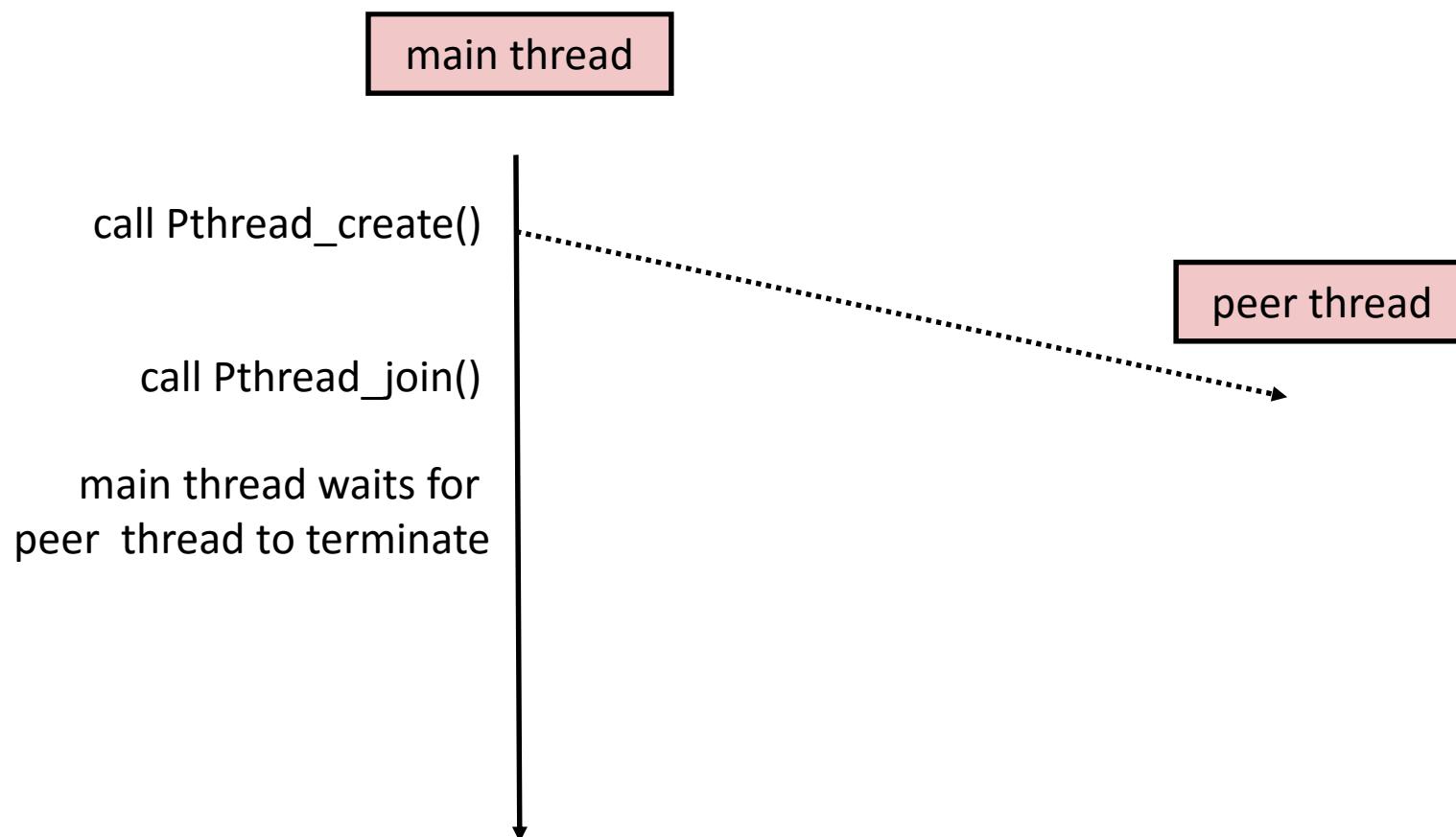
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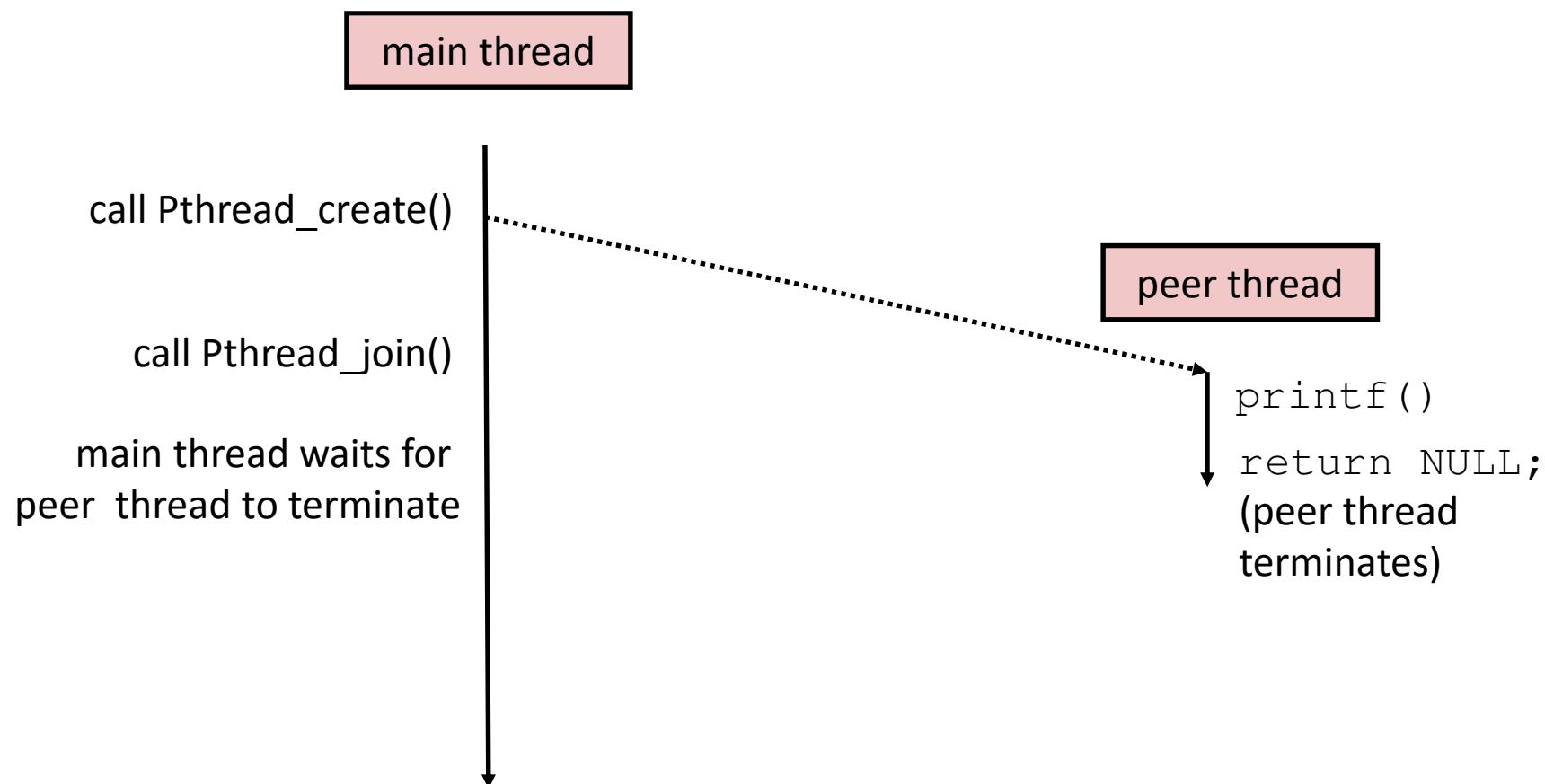
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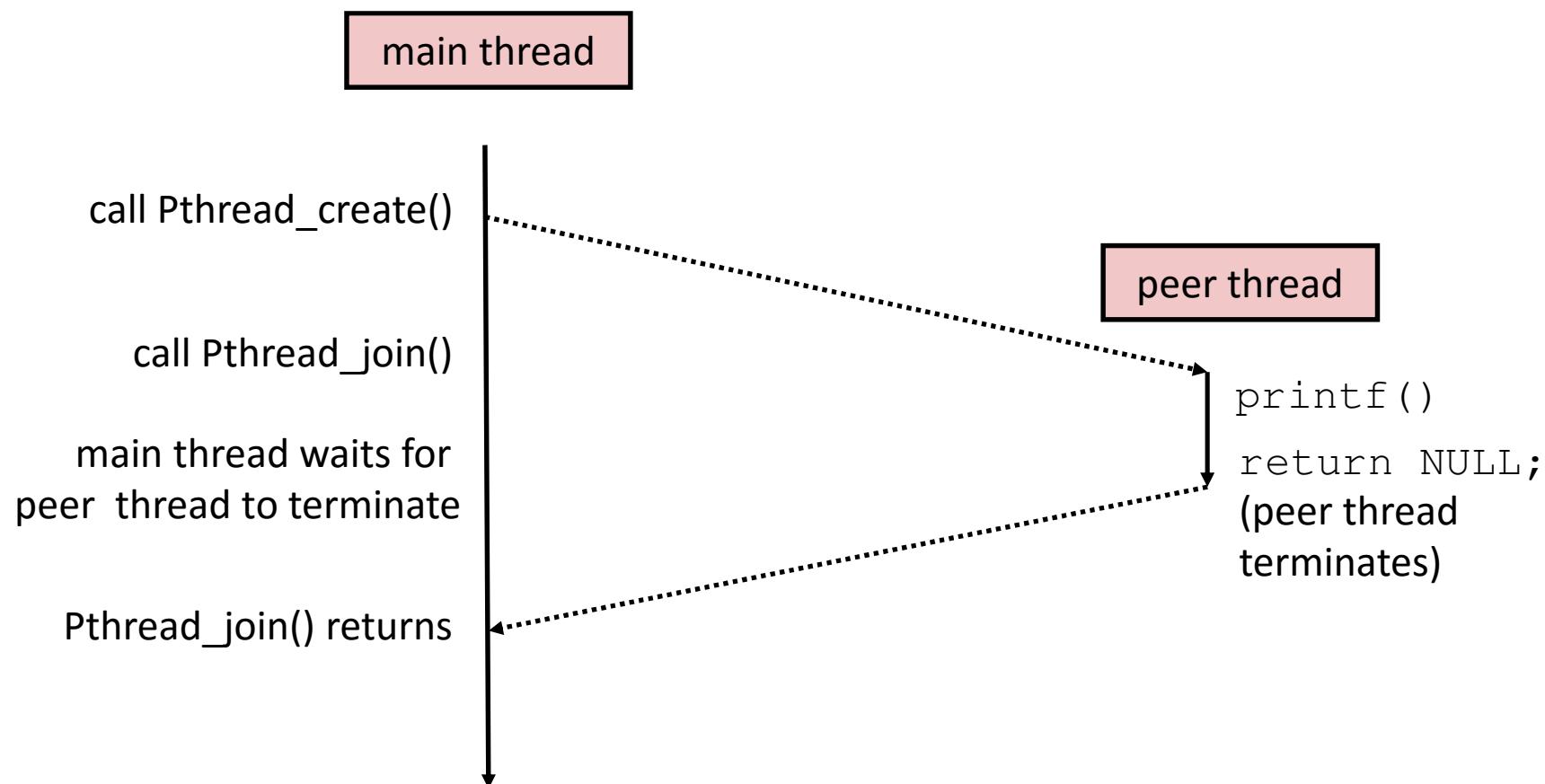
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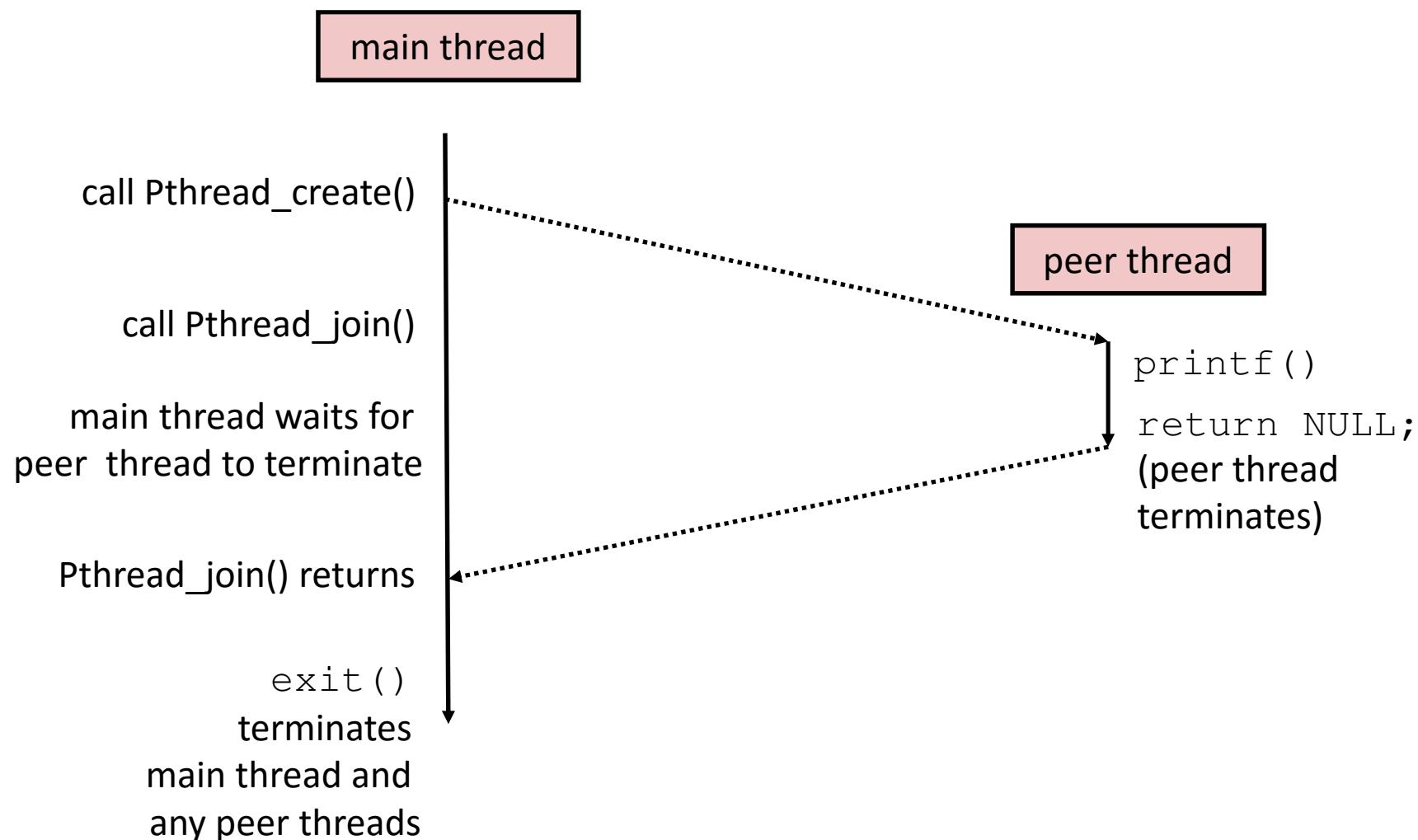
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# Passing argument

```
int main()
{
    int i;
    pthread_t tid;

    for (i = 0; i < 2; i++)
        pthread_create(&tid, NULL, thread, (void *)i);
    pthread_exit(NULL);
}
```

```
void *thread(void *vargp)
{
    int myid = (int)vargp;
    printf("hello from [%d]\n", myid);
    return NULL;
}
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}
```

# Passing pointer

```
int main (int argc, char *argv[] ) {  
    pthread_t tid;  
    int thread_arg = 0xDEADBEEF;  
  
    printf("Main thread creating peer thread.\n");  
    pthread_create(&tid, NULL, thread, &thread_arg);  
    printf("Main thread waiting for peer thread %u to  
complete...\n", (unsigned int) tid);  
    pthread_join(tid, NULL);  
    printf("Main thread joined with peer thread.\n");  
  
    return 0;  
}
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```
void *thread (void *vargp) {  
    int arg = *((int*) vargp);  
    printf("hello from thread %X!\n", arg);  
    return NULL;  
}
```

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```

# Returning value

```
int main (int argc, char *argv[] ) {  
    pthread_t tid;  
    int ret_value;  
  
    pthread_create(&tid, NULL, thread, NULL);  
    pthread_join(tid, (void **)(&ret_value));  
    printf("Main thread joined with peer thread: %X.\n",  
ret_value);  
  
    return 0;  
}
```

```
void *thread (void *vargp) {  
    return (int *) 0xDEADBEEF;  
}
```

# Returning pointer

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    pthread_t tid;  
    int thread_arg = 0xDEADBEEF;  
    int* ret_value;  
    printf("Main thread creating peer thread.\n");  
    pthread_create(&tid, NULL, thread, &thread_arg);  
    printf("Main thread waiting for peer thread %u to  
complete...\n", (unsigned int)(tid));  
    pthread_join(tid, (void **)(&ret_value));  
    printf("Main thread joined with peer thread: %X.\n",  
*ret_value);  
    free(ret_value);  
    return 0; }
```

```
void *thread (void *vargp) {  
    int arg = *((int*)vargp);  
    printf("hello from thread: %X!\n", arg);  
    int *ret = (int*)malloc(sizeof(int));  
    *ret = arg;  
    return ret; }
```

# Returning pointer

```
int main (int argc, char *argv[]){  
    pthread_t tid;  
    int thread_arg = 0xDEADBEEF;  
    int* ret_value;  
    printf("Main thread creating peer thread.\n");  
    pthread_create(&tid, NULL, thread, &thread_arg);  
    printf("Main thread waiting for peer thread %u to  
complete...\n", (unsigned int)(tid));  
    pthread_join(tid, (void **)(&ret_value));  
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*ret_value);  
    free(ret_value);  
    return 0; }
```

```
void *thread (void *vargp) {  
    int arg = *((int*)vargp);  
    printf("hello from thread: %X!\n", arg);  
    int *ret = (int*)malloc(sizeof(int));  
    *ret = arg;  
    return ret; }
```

# Returning pointer

```
int main (int argc, char *argv[]) {  
    pthread_t tid;  
    int thread_arg = 0xDEADBEEF;  
    int* ret_value;  
    printf("Main thread creating peer  
pthread_create(&tid, NULL, thread_func,  
printf("Main thread waiting for peer  
complete...\n", (unsigned int)(  
    pthread_join(tid, (void **)(&ret_value));  
    printf("Main thread joined with value:  
*ret_value);  
    free(ret_value);  
    return 0; }
```

```
void *thread (void *vargp) {  
    int arg = *((int*)vargp);  
    printf("hello from thread: %X!\n", arg);  
    int *ret = (int*)malloc(sizeof(int));  
    *ret = arg;  
    return ret; }
```

What if I don't use  
malloc?

# i-clicker: What is the output?

```
int main (int argc, char *argv[] ) {  
    pthread_t tid;  
    int thread_arg = 0xDEADBEEF;  
    int* ret_value;  
    pthread_create(&tid, NULL, thread, &thread_arg);  
    pthread_join(tid, (void **)(&ret_value));  
    printf("%X\n", *ret_value);  
    return 0; }
```

```
void *thread (void *vargp) {  
    int arg = *((int*)vargp);  
    return &arg; }
```

- A. 0xDEADBEEF
- B. Segfault
- C. 0
- D. -1

# i-clicker solution: What is the output?

```
int main (int argc, char *argv[] ) {  
    pthread_t tid;  
    int thread_arg = 0xDEADBEEF;  
    int* ret_value;  
    pthread_create(&tid, NULL, thread, &thread_arg);  
    pthread_join(tid, (void **)(&ret_value));  
    printf("%X\n", *ret_value);  
    return 0; }
```

```
void *thread (void *vargp) {  
    int arg = *((int*)vargp);  
    return &arg; }
```

- A. 0xDEADBEEF
- B. Segfault
- C. 0
- D. -1

# Detached mode

```
int main (int argc, char *argv[]) {
    // This is used to record the thread id:
    pthread_t tid;

    printf("Main thread creating peer thread.\n");
    pthread_create(&tid, NULL, thread, NULL);

    pthread_exit(NULL);
    return 0;
}
```

```
void *thread (void *vargp) {
    pthread_detach(pthread_self());
    printf("hello from thread world!\n");
}
```

# Detached mode

```
int main (int argc, char *argv[]) {
    // This is used to record the thread id:
    pthread_t tid;

    printf("Main thread creating peer thread.\n");
    pthread_create(&tid, NULL, thread, NULL);

    pthread_exit(NULL);
    return 0;
}
```

```
void *thread (void *vargp) {
    pthread_detach(pthread_self());
    printf("hello from thread world!\n");
}
```

# Detached mode

```
void *thread (void *vargp) {  
    pthread_detach(pthread_self());  
    printf("hello from thread world!\n");  
}
```

- Run thread in “detached” mode.
  - Runs independently of other threads
  - Reaped automatically (by kernel) when it terminates

# Concurrent Programming is Nice!

- Easy to share global data structure
- Easy to implement a cache that all the threads can use

# Concurrent Programming is Hard!

- The human mind tends to be sequential
- The notion of time is often misleading

# Concurrent Programming is Hard!

- The human mind tends to be sequential
- The notion of time is often misleading
- Thinking about all possible sequences of events in a computer system is at least error prone and frequently impossible

# Concurrent Programming is Hard!

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- Classical problem classes of concurrent programs:
  - *Races*: outcome depends on arbitrary scheduling decisions elsewhere in the system
    - Example: who gets the last seat on the airplane?

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- Classical problem classes of concurrent programs:
  - ***Races***: outcome depends on arbitrary scheduling decisions elsewhere in the system
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    - Example: traffic gridlock

# Concurrent Programming is Hard!

- Classical problem classes of concurrent programs:
  - ***Races***: outcome depends on arbitrary scheduling decisions elsewhere in the system
    - Example: who gets the last seat on the airplane?
  - ***Deadlock***: improper resource allocation prevents forward progress
    - Example: traffic gridlock
  - ***Livelock / Starvation / Fairness***: external events and/or system scheduling decisions can prevent sub-task progress
    - Example: people always jump in front of you in line

# Unintended Sharing

- Threads share the heap
- Threads have separate stacks
- But, C has pointers
  - which can point to anywhere, even the stack!
- What if...
  - I pass a pointer to a peer thread that points to a location on the stack
  - Unintended Sharing!

# Unintended sharing

```
int main (int argc, char *argv[ ]) {
    pthread_t tid;
    for(int i=0; i<10; i++) {
        pthread_create(&tid, NULL, thread, &i);
    }
    pthread_exit(NULL);
    return 0;
}
```

```
void *thread (void *vargp) {
    pthread_detach(pthread_self());
    int arg = *((int*) vargp);
    printf("hello from thread %d!\n", arg);
    return NULL;
}
```

# Unintended sharing

```
int main (int argc, char *argv[ ]) {
    pthread_t tid;
    for(int i=0; i<10; i++) {
        pthread_create(&tid, NULL, thread, &i);
    }
    pthread_exit(NULL);
    return 0;
}
```

```
void *thread (void *vargp) {
    pthread_detach(pthread_self());
    int arg = *((int*) vargp);
    printf("hello from thread %d!\n", arg);
    return NULL;
}
```

# Potential Form of Unintended Sharing

```
for(int i=0; i<10; i++) {  
    pthread_create(&tid, NULL, thread, &i);  
}
```

main thread

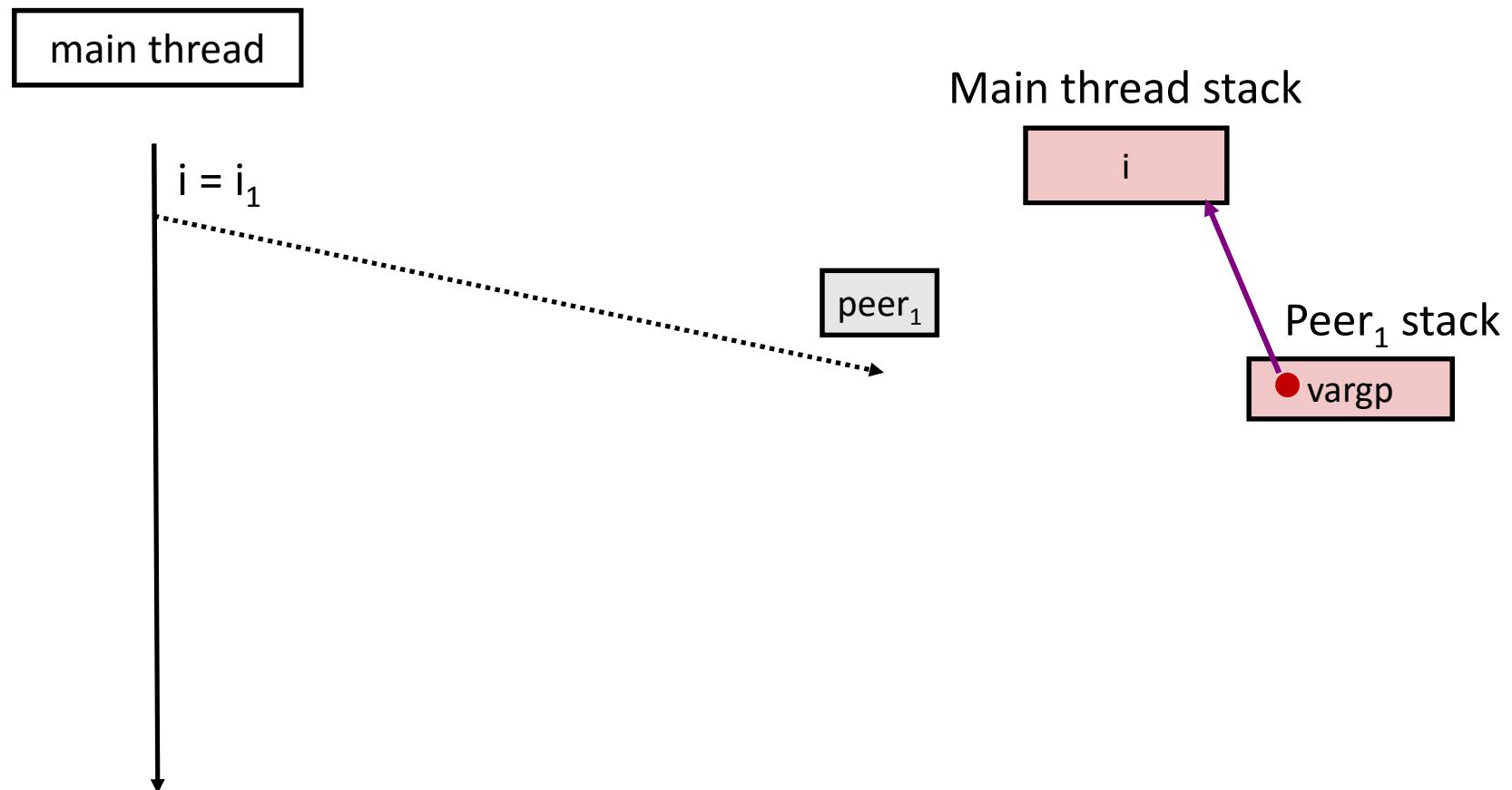
Main thread stack

i



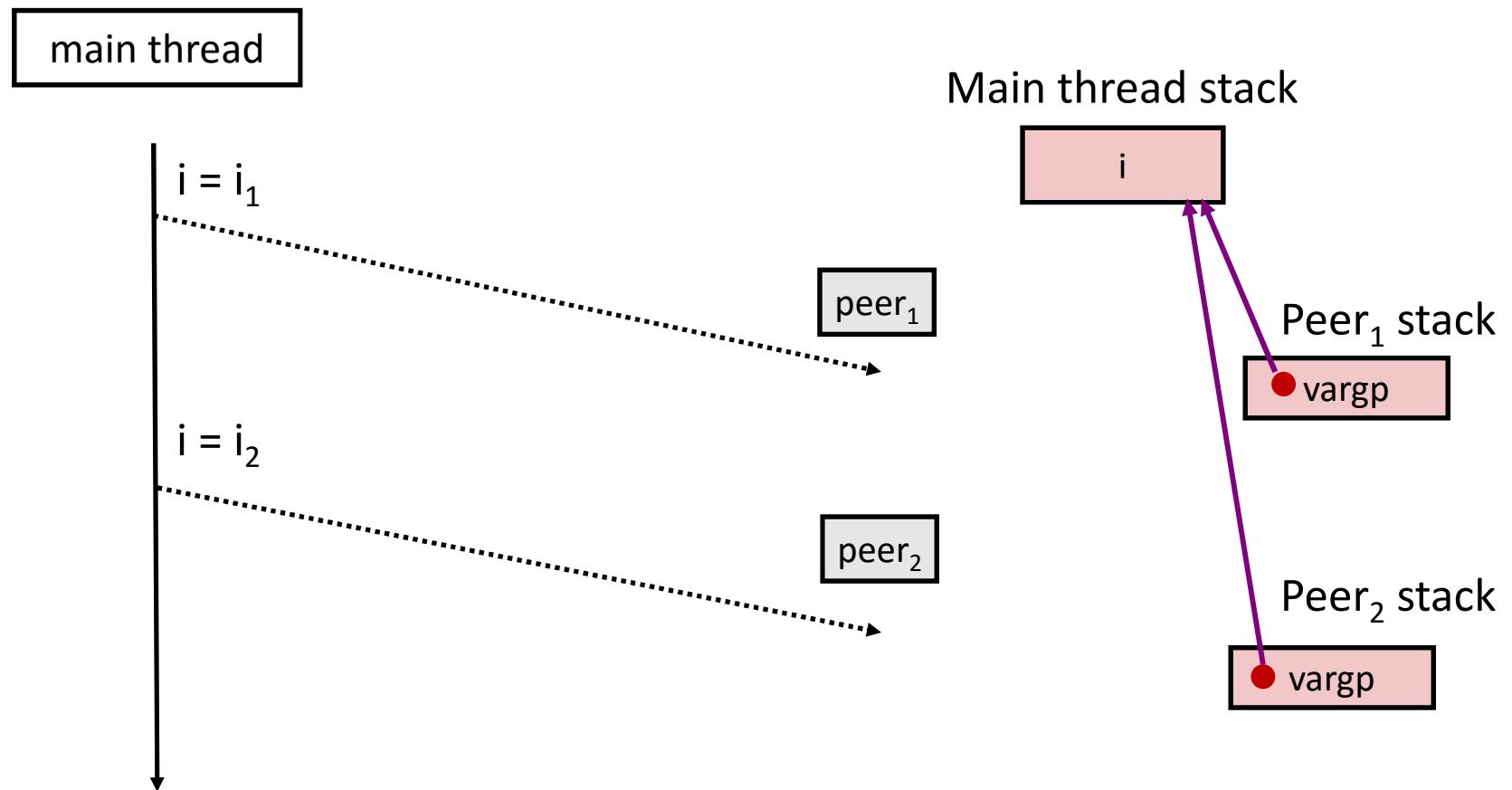
# Potential Form of Unintended Sharing

```
for(int i=0; i<10; i++) {  
    pthread_create(&tid, NULL, thread, &i);  
}
```



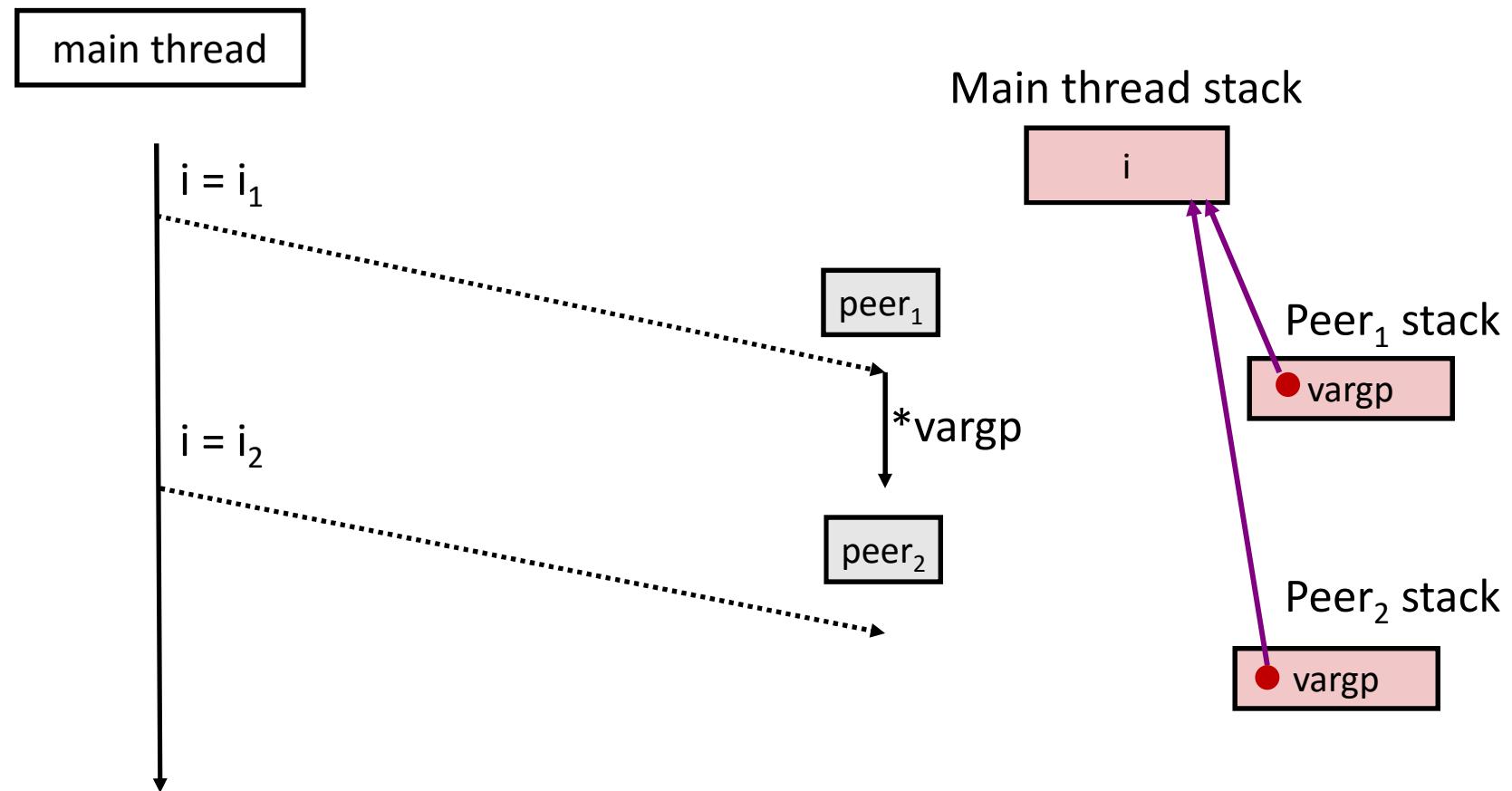
# Potential Form of Unintended Sharing

```
for(int i=0; i<10; i++) {  
    pthread_create(&tid, NULL, thread, &i);  
}
```



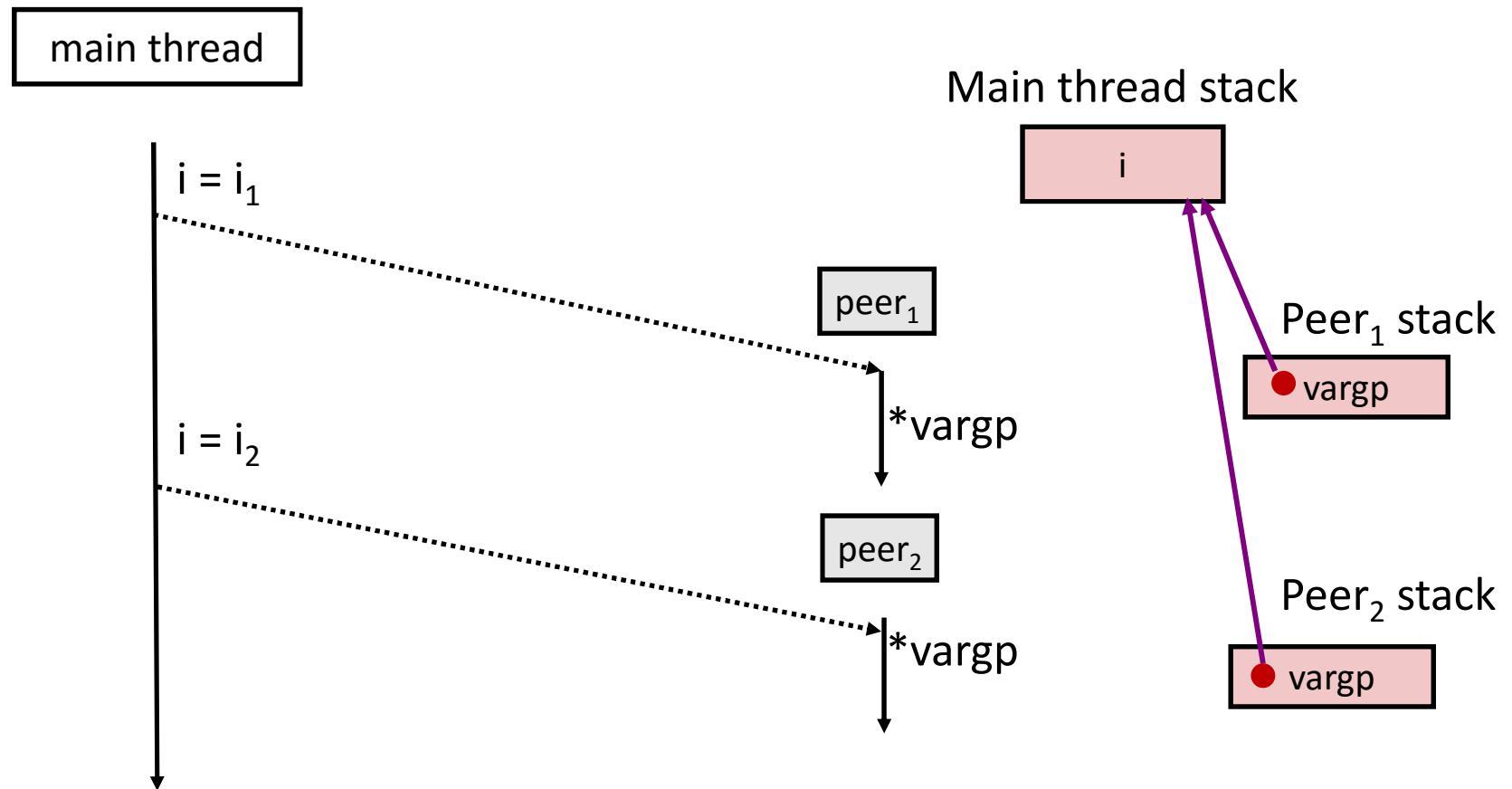
# Potential Form of Unintended Sharing

```
for(int i=0; i<10; i++) {  
    pthread_create(&tid, NULL, thread, &i);  
}
```



# Potential Form of Unintended Sharing

```
for(int i=0; i<10; i++) {  
    pthread_create(&tid, NULL, thread, &i);  
}
```



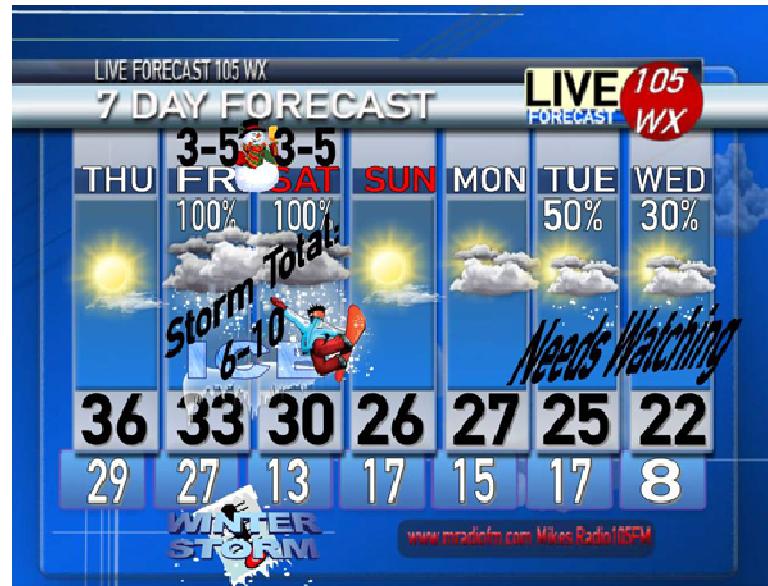
# Fix unintended sharing

```
int main (int argc, char *argv[] ) {  
    pthread_t tid;  
    int *argp;  
    for(int i=0; i<10; i++) {  
        argp = (int*)malloc(sizeof(int));  
        *argp = i;  
        pthread_create(&tid, NULL, thread, argp);  
    }  
    pthread_exit(NULL);  
    return 0;  
}
```

```
void *thread (void *vargp) {  
    pthread_detach(pthread_self());  
    int arg = *((int*) vargp);  
    printf("hello from thread %d!\n", arg);  
    return NULL; }
```

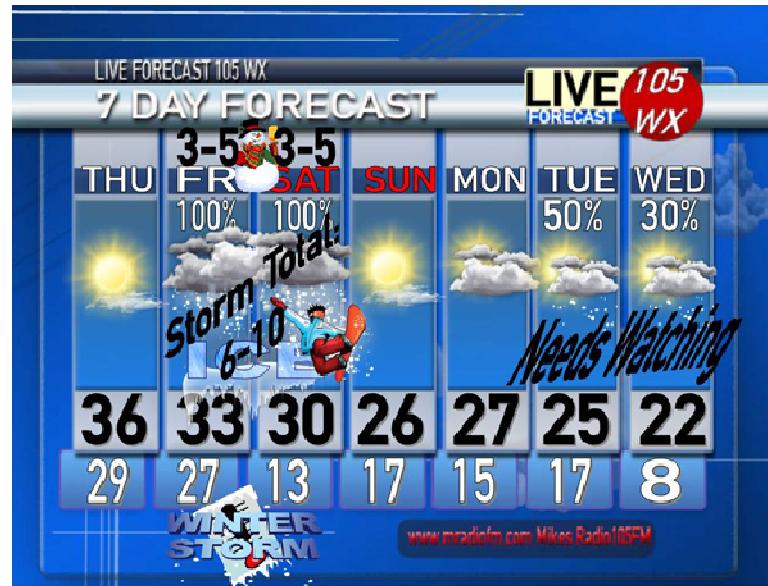
# Race Conditions

- A **race condition** occurs when two or more threads can access shared data and one of them is a write. Because the thread scheduling algorithm can swap between threads at any time, you don't know the order in which the threads will attempt to access the shared data.



Theres gonna  
be a  
snowstorm on  
Friday.





It is time for  
some shopping  
and then a nap  
at home.





Let me help  
you.











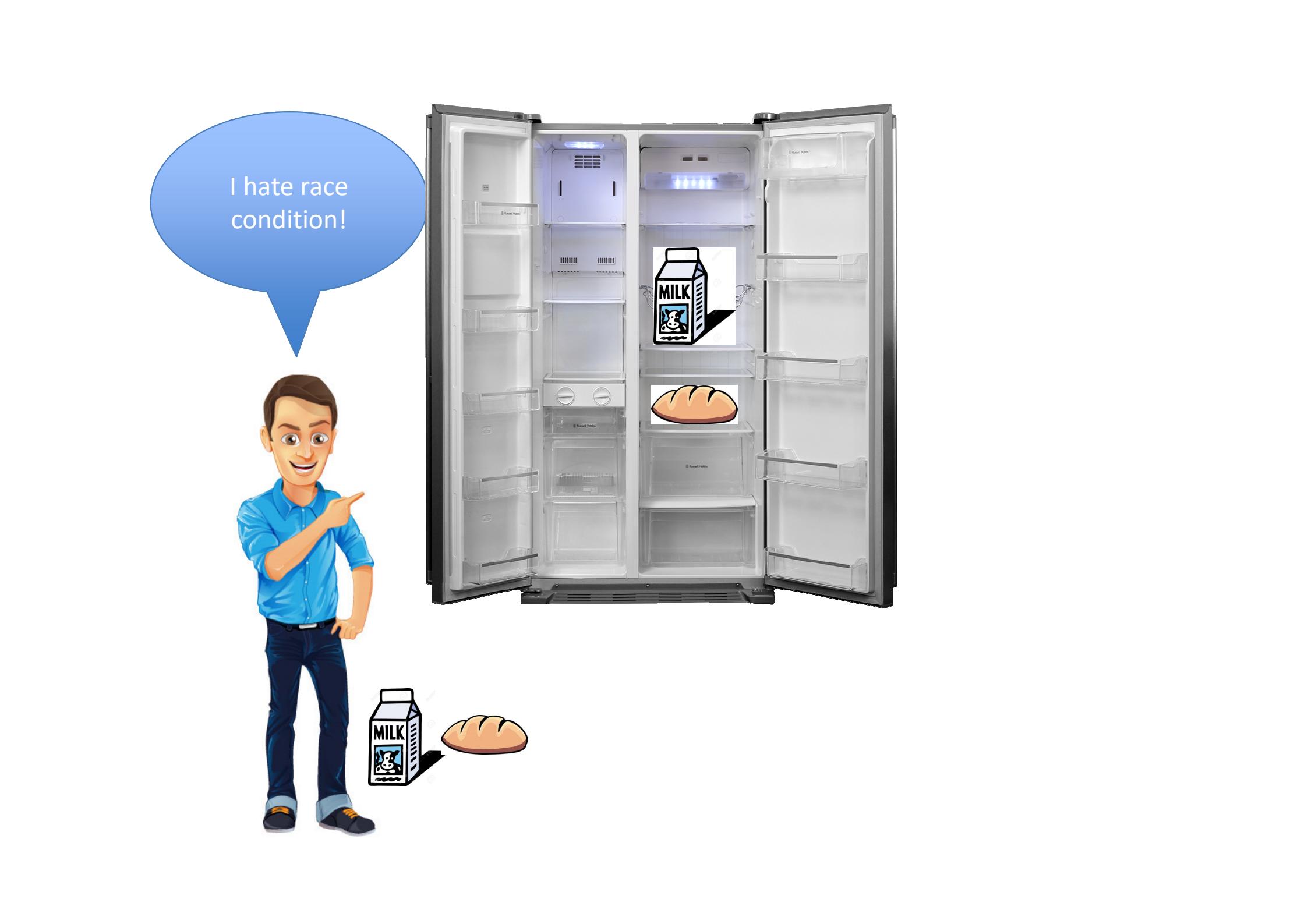


Got my  
shopping  
done.









I hate race  
condition!



















Do I need to  
buy yogurt?







