ECE326

PROGRAMMING LANGUAGES

Lecture 34 : Concurrent Programming

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Concurrent Programming

- Multiple tasks execute simultaneously
- Thread
  - Independent sequence of execution
    - Has its own stack, but shares the heap with other threads
- Parallel computing
  - Threads executing at same physical time instant
    - Only possible if each thread runs on its own processor

Time, dual processor

- Concurrency
  - Threads may *interleave* on the same processor

Time, uniprocessor

Purpose

- Speed up program
  - Usually with more people, a job can get done faster
- Criteria for speed up
  - Threads can work relatively independently
    - Seldom need to wait for other threads
      - E.g. to access shared data
      - E.g. to wait for input produced by another thread
  - Threads are often waiting for IO (e.g. read from disk, network)
    - Only important if threads are sharing a processor
    - While one thread waits, other threads can still do work on processor

Concurrent Programming

- Most programming languages provide *library support*
  - Creating and managing threads done through function calls

```
use std::thread;
use std::time::Duration;

thread::spawn(|| {
    for i in 1..10 {
        println!("hi number {} from thread!", i);
        thread::sleep(Duration::from_millis(1));
    }
});
```

spawn can take a *closure* as argument

- Go has language support for creating threads

```
go f(x, y, z);  // starts a new thread (aka goroutine)
```

Basics

- A program always starts with one thread: main
- main creates new threads, and those can create more
- Creator *should* wait for the threads it created to end

```
fn main() {
    let handle = thread::spawn(|| {
        for i in 1..10 {
                println!("hi number {} from thread!", i);
        }
    });
    for i in 1..5 {
         println!("hi number {} from main!", i);
    }
    handle.join().unwrap();   // wait for created thread to finish
}
```

Ownership

- A thread can potentially live longer than its creator
  - E.g. the creator chooses not to call join before exiting
- Problem arises if closure references outer variable
  - Therefore, all outer variables must be “moved” into closure

```
fn main() {
        let v = vec![1, 2, 3];
        let handle = thread::spawn(move || {
                println!("Here's a vector: {:?}", v);
        });
        // you may no longer use ‘v’ here.
        // main may exit before thread does!
}
```

By default, closures borrow outer variables

Must specify move to make closure move outer variables into it.

Challenge

- Sharing data
  - Ownership
    - Threads need to jointly own an object
  - Updates to same data can result in *race condition*
    - Caused by problematic interleaving of threads
      - Depending on timing of thread execution, which is difficult to control
    - Race condition can lead to unexpected and often incorrect results
- Synchronization
  - Threads may need to communicate with each others
  - One thread may need to wait for another thread to advance

Reference Counting

- A commonly used technique to share an object
- Analogy
  - First person to walk into living room turns on TV
  - Subsequent people entering can sit down immediately
  - Last person to leave will turn off the TV
- Reference Counting
  - Creator of object sets reference count to 1
    - Others will increment count before use
  - Everyone decrements count after use
    - If count is 0, free the object

Smart Pointer

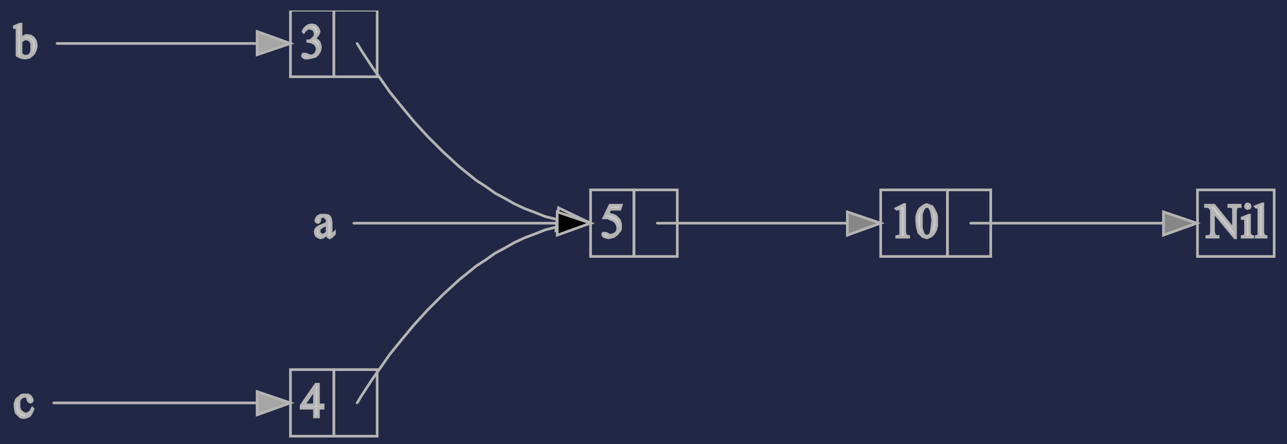
- A wrapper class over a pointer, and acts like a pointer
- C++ Example
  - unique_ptr
    - Automatically frees pointed-to object when it goes out of scope
- shared_ptr
  - A reference counting smart pointer
  - Allows multiple threads to share pointed-to object
  - Last reference holder will delete the object
    - May not be the original creator of the object

Rc<T>

- Allows sharing data in single-threaded setting

```
enum List { Cons(i32, Rc<List>), Nil, }
use crate::List::{Cons, Nil};
use std::rc::Rc;

fn main() {
        let a = Rc::new(Cons(5, Rc::new(Cons(10, Rc::new(Nil)))));
        let b = Cons(3, Rc::clone(&a));
        let c = Cons(4, Rc::clone(&a));
}
```



Each time Rc::clone is called, reference count of a increases by 1.

Lost Update

- One potential problem caused by race condition
  - Assume both threads are running on same processor

Thread 1		Thread 2
`get(x)`		
`5`	thread switch →	
		`get(x)`
		`5`
	← thread switch	`x = x + 1`
		`(x is now 6)`
`x = x + 1`		
`(x is still 6)`		

- Solution: atomic instructions

Arc<T>

- Allows sharing data across different threads
  - A in Arc stands for *atomic*
- Atomic instruction
  - A single, interruptible instruction on processor
  - Can complete without interference from other threads
  - Generally not used because it takes longer than if split
  - E.g. fetch-and-add

```
function FetchAndAdd(address location, int inc) {
      int value := *location
      *location := value + inc
      return value
}
```

Arc<T>

- Arc<T> uses atomic instructions to update counter
  - Unlike regular Rc<T>, which is not *thread safe*
- Thread safety
  - Function that behaves correctly during simultaneous execution by multiple threads
    - E.g. freedom from race condition

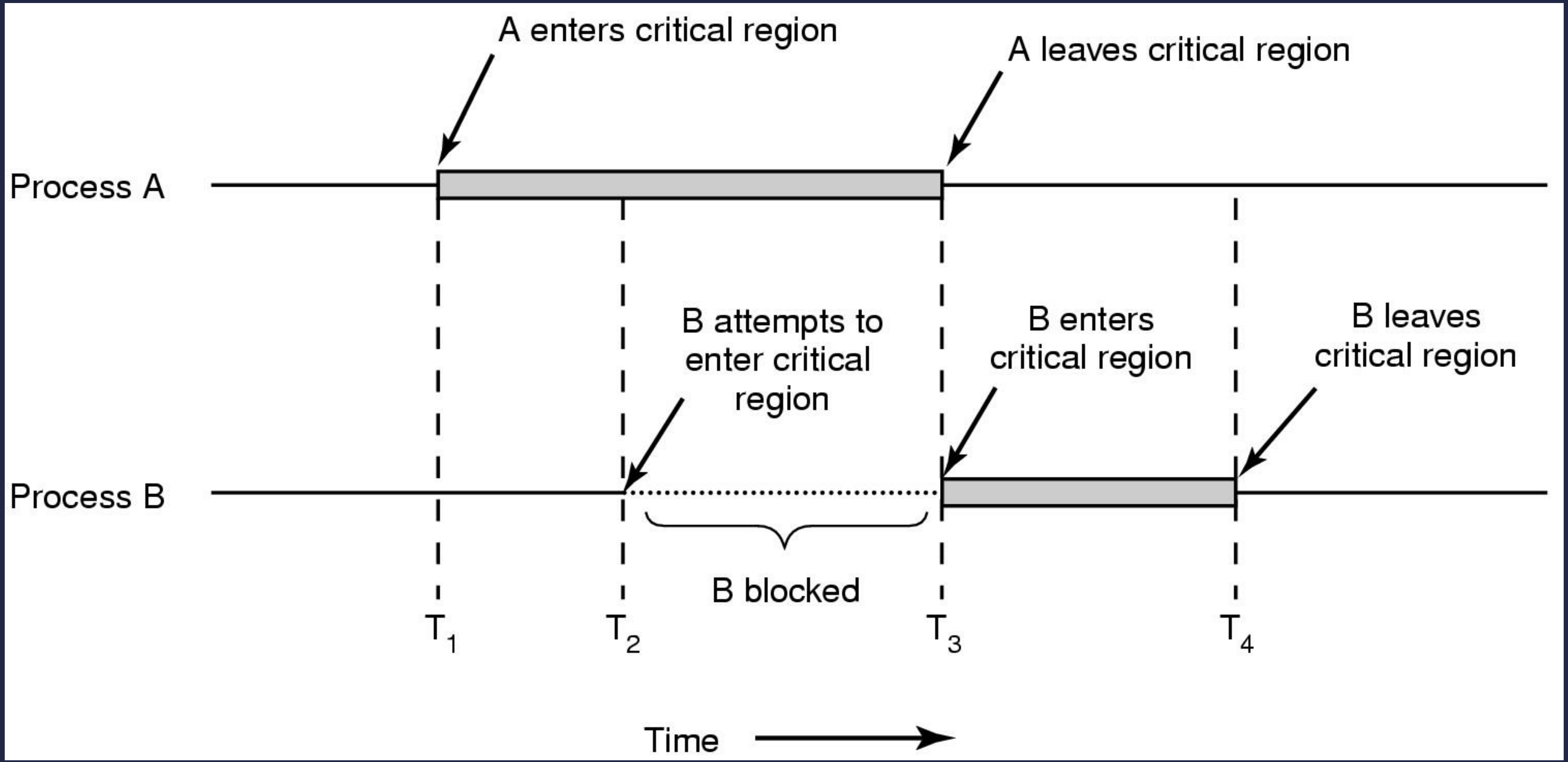
```
use std::sync::Arc;
let foo = Arc::new(vec![1.0, 2.0, 3.0]);
// The two syntaxes below are equivalent.
let a = foo.clone();
let b = Arc::clone(&foo);
// a, b, and foo all point to the same shared memory location
```

Arc<T>

- Limitations
  - Arc<T> makes sharing objects thread safe
  - However, it does *not* make using the objects thread safe
    - E.g. methods of the object may be thread unsafe
  - Object within Arc<T> is *immutable*
- Need
  - A construct that allows shared mutable object
  - A construct that makes using objects thread safe

Mutual Exclusion

- Ensures only one thread can access shared data at once



Mutex<T>

- Provides mutual exclusion
- When mutex is locked, no other thread can use object
  - Locking mutex creates a MutexGuard

```rust
use std::sync::Mutex;

fn main() {
      let m = Mutex::new(5);
      {     // num is a MutexGuard around the data
            let mut num = m.lock().unwrap();
            *num = 6;
      }     // num goes out of scope and unlocks m

      println!("m = {:?}", m);
}
```

Mutex<T>

- Provides *interior mutability*
  - The mutex is immutable, but the data it contains is mutable
- Caveat
  - Mutex is not sharable (one ownership rule)
- Must be combined with Arc<T>

```
let counter = Arc::new(Mutex::new(0));
for _ in 0..10 {
        let counter = Arc::clone(&counter);
        let handle = thread::spawn(move || {
                let mut num = counter.lock().unwrap();
                *num += 1;
        });
}
```

synchronized

- Language support in Java for mutual exclusion

```
class ThreadedSend extends Thread {
      private String msg;
      Sender sender;      // shared among different threads

      ThreadedSend(String m, Sender obj) {
            msg = m; sender = obj;
      }

      public void run() {
            // Only one thread can send message at a time.
            synchronized(sender) {
                  // synchronizing the send object
                  sender.send(msg);
            }
      }
}
```

synchronized

- Alternatively, can make an entire method critical region

```
class Sender {
    // Same effect as previous slide, only one thread can send
    public synchronized void send(String msg) {
        System.out.println("Sending\t" + msg );
        try {
            Thread.sleep(1000);
        }
        catch (Exception e) {
            System.out.println("Thread interrupted.");
        }
        System.out.println("\n" + msg + "Sent");
    }
}
```

Message Passing

- Threads communicate by sending message with data
- Allows threads to *synchronize*
  - i.e. thread waits for condition to satisfy before continuing
- Thread sleeps while waiting for message
- Another thread can wake it up by sending a message
- Bad alternative: Polling (or busy looping)
  - Continuously lock shared data to check on condition in a loop
  - Reduces performance of entire system

channel<T>

- Creates a sender and a receiver end, thread safe
- Must send/receive same data type

```
use std::thread;
use std::sync::mpsc;

fn main() {
      let (tx, rx) = mpsc::channel();
      thread::spawn(move || {
            let val = String::from("hi");
            tx.send(val).unwrap();   // val moves into send()
      });
      let received = rx.recv().unwrap();
      println!("Got: {}", received);
}
```

mpsc::channel

- Multiple producer, single consumer
- iteration on rx finishes when channel is closed
  - i.e. when all senders close their end

```
let (tx, rx) = mpsc::channel();
for i in 1..10 {
        let tx = mpsc::Sender::clone(&tx);
        thread::spawn(move || {
                tx.send(String::from("hello")).unwrap();
        });
}
for received in rx {
        println!("Got: {}", received);
}
```

Can clone tx to allow for multiple producers. rx cannot be cloned!