

# Concurrency and Synchronisation

# Learning Outcomes

- Understand concurrency is an issue in operating systems and multithreaded applications within a single process
- Know the concept of a critical region.
- Understand how mutual exclusion of critical regions can be used to solve concurrency issues
  - Including how mutual exclusion can be implemented correctly and efficiently.
- Be able to identify and solve a producer consumer bounded buffer problem.
- Understand and apply standard synchronisation primitives to solve synchronisation problems.

# Textbook

- Sections 2.3 - 2.3.7 & 2.5

# Concurrency Example

count is a global variable shared between two threads, t is a local variable.  
After increment and decrement complete, what is the value of count?

```
void increment ()
```

```
{
```

```
    int t;
```

```
    t = count;
```

```
    t = t + 1;
```

```
    count = t;
```

```
}
```

```
void decrement ()
```

```
{
```

```
    int t;
```

```
    t = count;
```

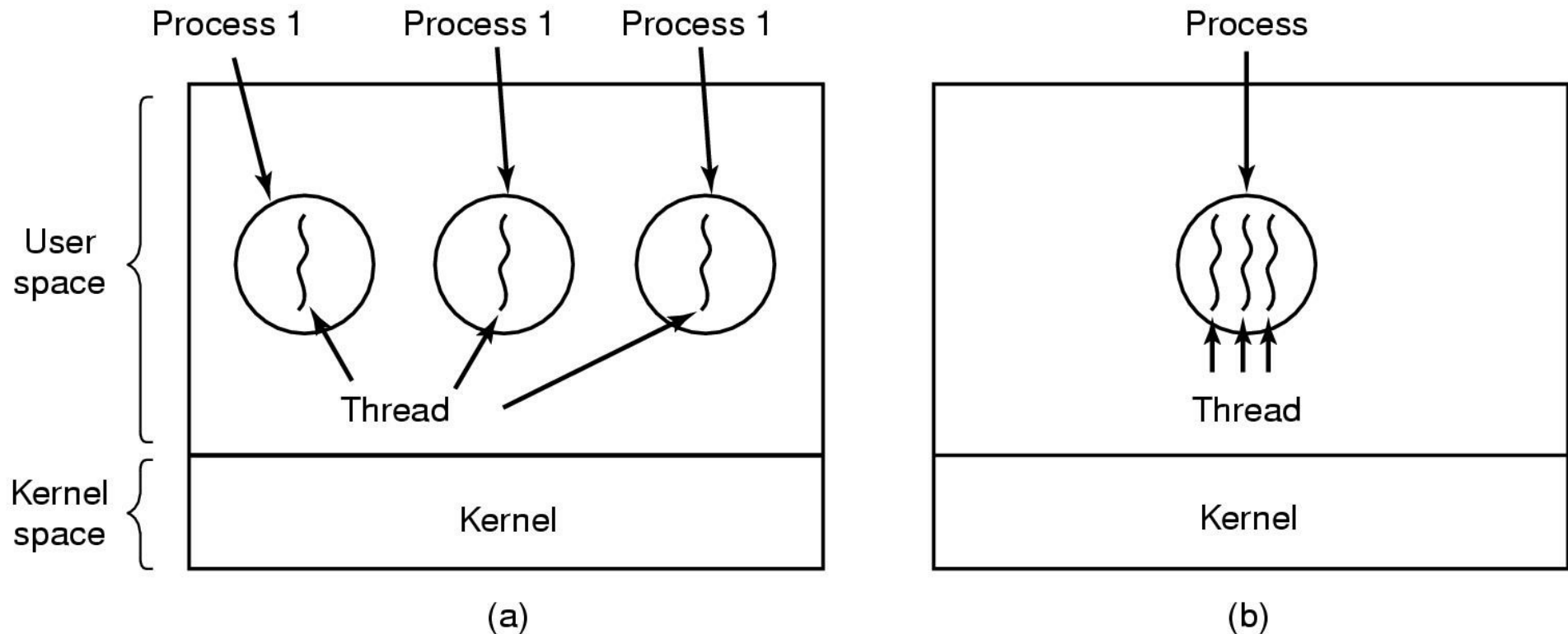
```
    t = t - 1;
```

```
    count = t;
```

```
}
```

We have a  
race  
condition

# Where is the concurrency?

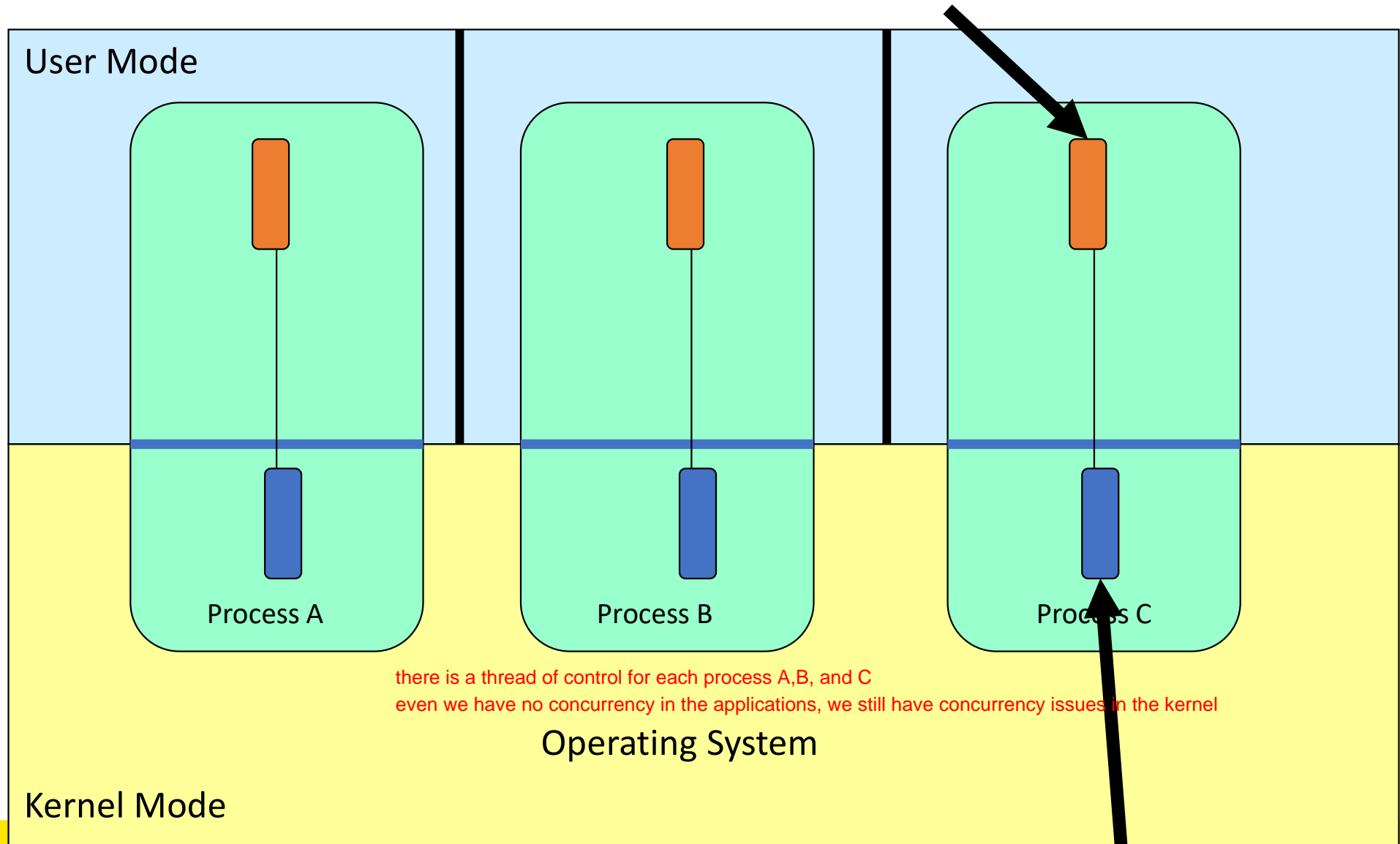


- (a) Three processes each with one thread
- (b) One process with three threads

# There is in-kernel concurrency even for single-threaded processes

single threaded OS still has to deal with some concurrency issues

Process's user-level stack and execution state



there is a thread of control for each process A,B, and C  
even we have no concurrency in the applications, we still have concurrency issues in the kernel

Operating System

Process's in-kernel stack and execution state

# Critical Region critical section

- We can control access to the shared resource by controlling access to the code that accesses the resource.

⇒ A *critical region* is a region of code where shared resources are accessed.

- Variables, memory, files, etc...
- Uncoordinated entry to the critical region results in a race condition

⇒ Incorrect behaviour, deadlock, lost work,...

# Identifying critical regions 2

- Critical regions are regions of code that:
  - Access a shared resource, ✓
  - and correctness relies on the shared resource not being concurrently modified by another thread/process/entity.

```
void increment ()
{
    int t;
    t = count;
    t = t + 1;
    count = t;
}
```

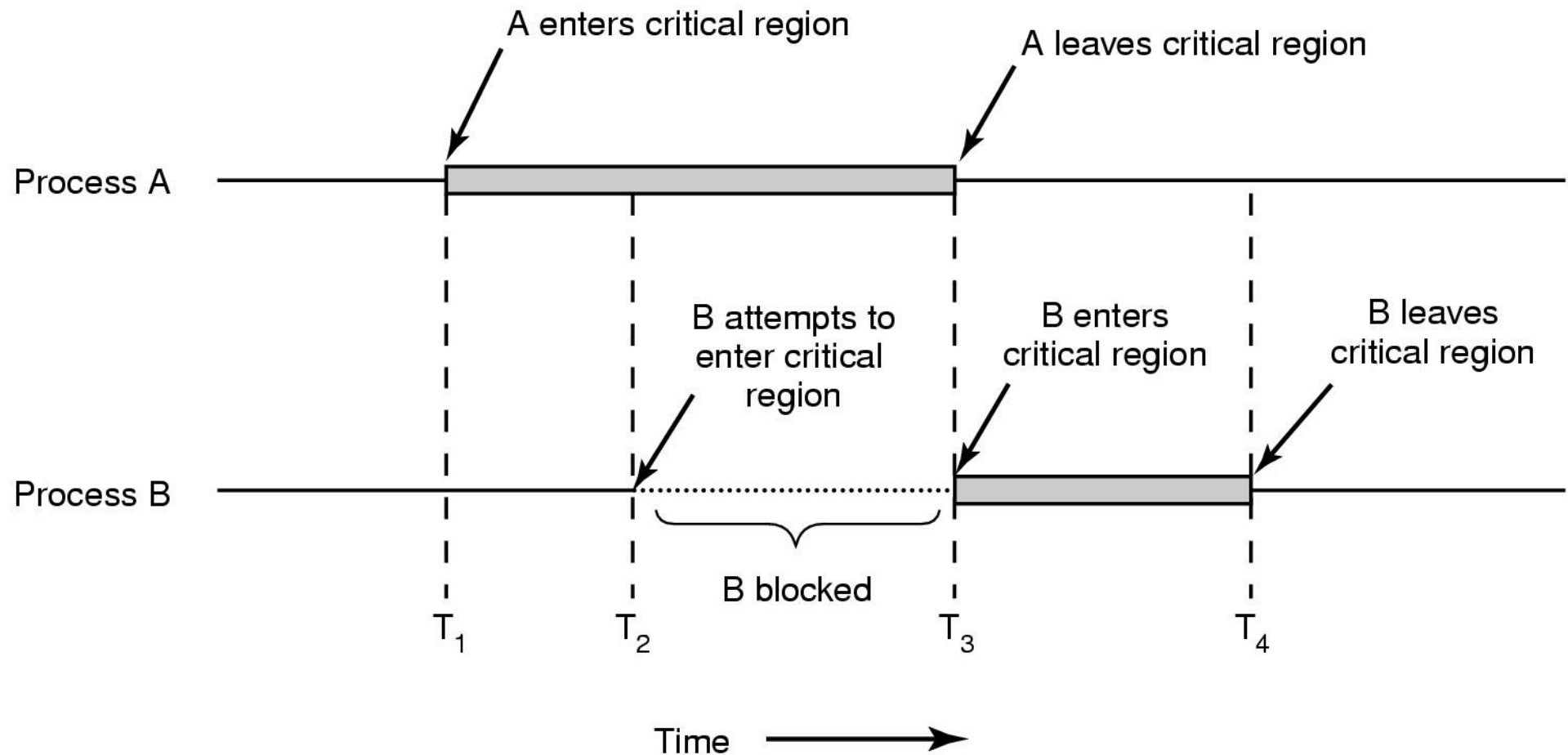
start of reading

end of writing

```
void decrement ()
{
    int t;
    t = count;
    t = t - 1;
    count = t;
}
```



# Accessing Critical Regions



Mutual exclusion using critical regions

# Example critical regions

```
struct node {  
    int data;  
    struct node *next;  
};  
struct node *head;
```

```
void init(void)  
{  
    head = NULL;  
}
```

- Simple last-in-first-out queue implemented as a linked list.

```
void insert(struct *item)  
{  
    item->next = head;  
    head = item;  
}
```

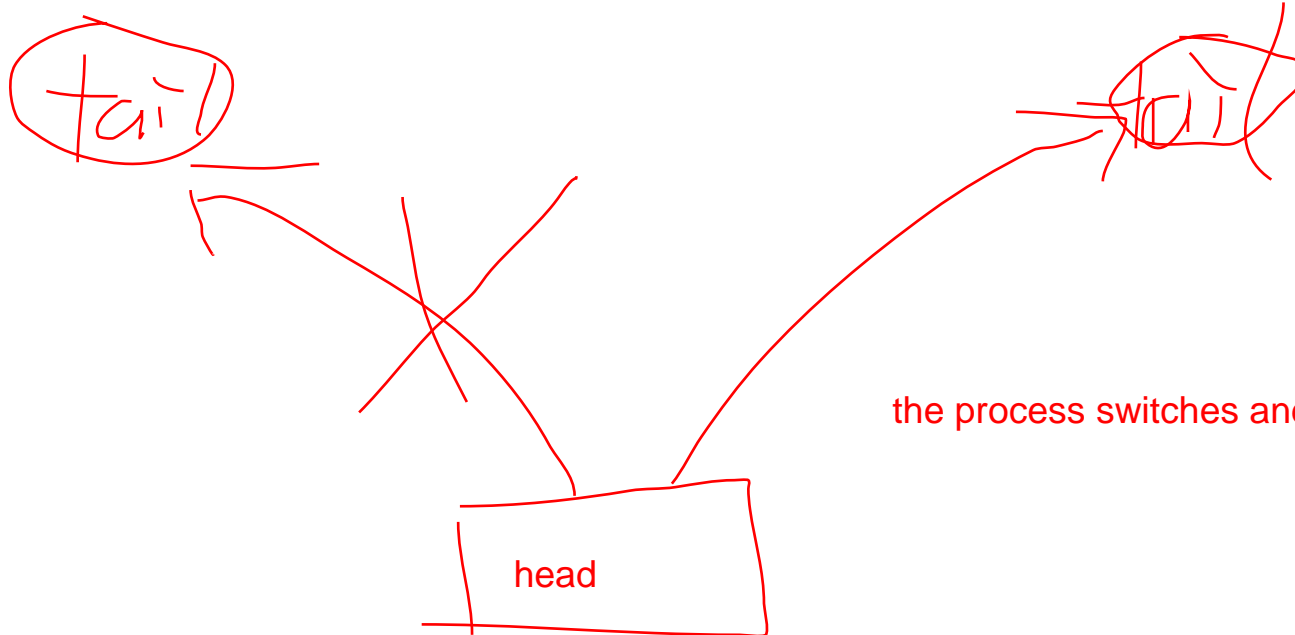
```
struct node *remove(void)  
{  
    struct node *t;  
    t = head;  
    if (t != NULL) {  
        head = head->next;  
    }  
    return t;  
}
```

# Example Race

```
void insert(struct *item)
{
    item->next = head;
    head = item;
}
```

```
void insert(struct *item)
{
    item->next = head;
    head = item;
}
```

we have a memory leak here



# Example critical regions

```
struct node {  
    int data;  
    struct node *next;  
};  
struct node *head;
```

```
void init(void)  
{  
    head = NULL;  
}
```

- Critical sections

```
void insert(struct *item)  
{  
    item->next = head;  
    head = item;  
}
```

```
struct node *remove(void)  
{  
    struct node *t;  
    t = head;  
    if (t != NULL) {  
        head = head->next;  
    }  
    return t;  
}
```

# Critical Regions Solutions

- We seek a solution to coordinate access to critical regions.
  - Also called critical sections
- Conditions required of any solution to the critical region problem
  1. Mutual Exclusion:
    - No two processes simultaneously in critical region
  2. No assumptions made about speeds or numbers of CPUs
  3. Progress
    - No process running outside its critical region may block another process
  4. Bounded
    - No process waits forever to enter its critical region


# A solution?

- A lock variable room, open the lock can go in
  - If lock == 1,
    - somebody is in the critical section and we must wait
  - If lock == 0,
    - nobody is in the critical section and we are free to enter


Suppose that one process reads the lock and sees that it is 0. Before it can set the lock to 1, another process is scheduled, runs, and sets the lock to 1. When the first process runs again, it will also set the lock to 1, and two processes will be in their critical regions at the same time.

# A solution?

```
while(TRUE) {  
    while(lock == 1);  
    lock = 1;  
    critical();  
    lock = 0;  
    non_critical();  
}
```



```
while(TRUE) {  
    while(lock == 1);  
    lock = 1;  
    critical();  
    lock = 0;  
    non_critical();  
}
```



# A problematic execution sequence

```
while(TRUE) {
```

```
    while(lock == 1);
```

```
    lock = 1;
```

```
    critical();
```

```
    lock = 0
```

```
    non_critical();
```

```
}
```

```
while(TRUE) {
```

```
    while(lock == 1);
```

```
    lock = 1;
```

```
    critical();
```

```
    lock = 0
```

```
    non_critical();
```

```
}
```

both threads enter before lock is set to 1





# Observation

- Unfortunately, it is usually easier to show something does not work, than it is to prove that it does work.
  - Easier to provide a counter example
  - Ideally, we'd like to prove, or at least informally demonstrate, that our solutions work.

# Mutual Exclusion by Taking Turns

```
while (TRUE) {  
    while (turn != 0)      /* loop */ ;  
    critical_region( );  
    turn = 1;  
    noncritical_region( );  
}
```

(a)

```
while (TRUE) {  
    while (turn != 1)      /* loop */ ;  
    critical_region( );  
    turn = 0;  
    noncritical_region( );  
}
```

(b)

Proposed solution to critical region problem

(a) Process 0.      (b) Process 1.

# Mutual Exclusion by Taking Turns

- Works due to *strict alternation*
  - Each process takes turns
- Cons
  - Busy waiting spinning lock
  - Process must wait its turn even while the other process is doing something else.
    - With many processes, must wait for everyone to have a turn
      - Does not guarantee progress if a process no longer needs a turn.
    - Poor solution when processes require the critical section at differing rates

# Mutual Exclusion by Disabling Interrupts

this works for uniprocessor operating system using disabling interrupts

it doesn't work on multiprocessor operating system

this is because interrupts are not global variables in the machine, they are per CPU base

- Before entering a critical region, disable interrupts
- After leaving the critical region, enable interrupts

- Pros

- simple

this solution is only available in the OS using interrupts

- Cons

you can't have interrupt application.

- Only available in the kernel
  - Delays everybody else, even with no contention
    - Slows interrupt response time
  - Does not work on a multiprocessor

it slows when for IO intensive application

# Hardware Support for mutual exclusion

- Test and set instruction

- Can be used to implement lock variables correctly

- It loads the value of the lock
    - If lock == 0,
      - set the lock to 1
      - return the result 0 – we acquire the lock
    - If lock == 1
      - return 1 – another thread/process has the lock

load the value of the lock variable, observe a 0, meaning lock is free  
this avoids the problem we had, so that the lock is single indivisible  
instruction

- Hardware guarantees that the instruction executes atomically.

- Atomically: As an indivisible unit.

# Mutual Exclusion with Test-and-Set

enter\_region:

TSL REGISTER,LOCK

| copy lock to register and set lock to 1

CMP REGISTER,#0

| was lock zero?

JNE enter\_region

| if it was non zero, lock was set, so loop

RET | return to caller; critical region entered

leave\_region:

MOVE LOCK,#0

| store a 0 in lock

RET | return to caller

Entering and leaving a critical region using the  
TSL instruction

# Test-and-Set

- Pros

- Simple (easy to show it's correct)
- Available at user-level
  - To any number of processors
  - To implement any number of lock variables

- Cons

- Busy waits (also termed a *spin lock*)
  - Consumes CPU
  - Starvation is possible when a process leaves its critical section and more than one process is waiting.

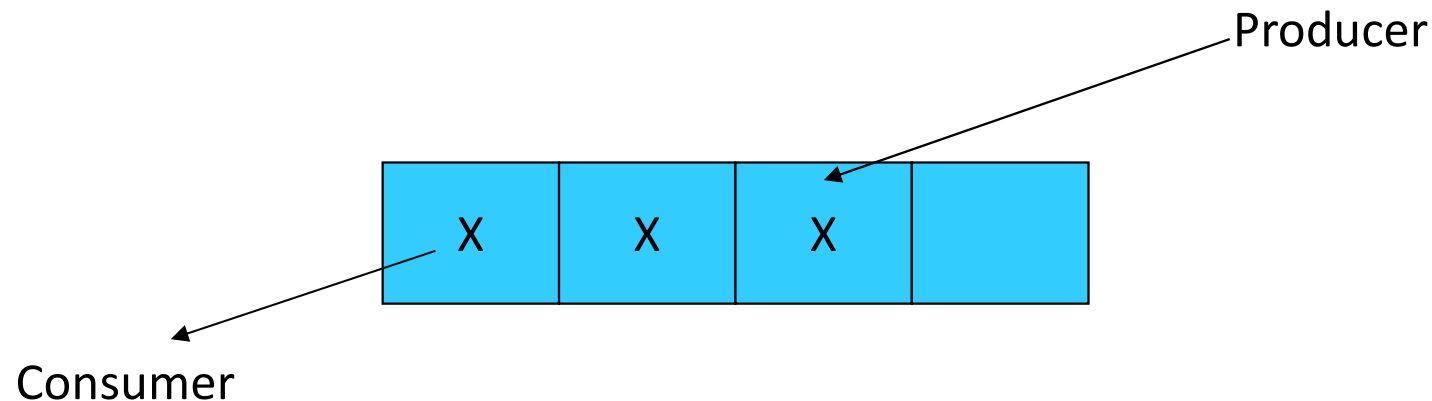
# Tackling the Busy-Wait Problem

- Sleep / Wakeup the cv variables are used to sleep and wakeup the thread
  - The idea
    - When process is waiting for an event, it calls sleep to block, instead of busy waiting.
    - The event happens, the event generator (another process) calls wakeup to unblock the sleeping process.
    - Waking a ready/running process has no effect.



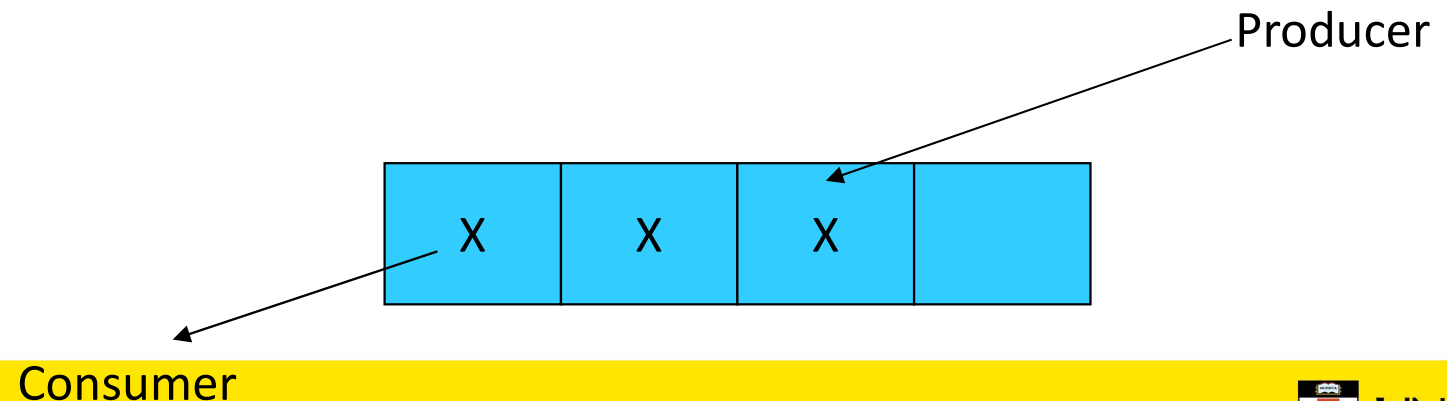
# The Producer-Consumer Problem

- Also called the *bounded buffer* problem
- A producer produces data items and stores the items in a buffer
- A consumer takes the items out of the buffer and consumes them.



# Issues

- We must keep an accurate count of items in buffer
  - Producer
    - should sleep when the buffer is full,
    - and wakeup when there is empty space in the buffer
      - The consumer can call wakeup when it consumes the first entry of the full buffer
  - Consumer
    - should sleep when the buffer is empty
    - and wake up when there are items available
      - Producer can call wakeup when it adds the first item to the buffer



# Pseudo-code for producer and consumer

```
int count = 0;
#define N 4 /* buf size */
prod() {
    while(TRUE) {
        item = produce()
        if (count == N)
            sleep(prod);
        insert_item();
        count++;
        if (count == 1)
            wakeup(con);
    }
}

con() {
    while(TRUE) {
        if (count == 0)
            sleep(con);
        remove_item();
        count--;
        if (count == N-1)
            wakeup(prod);
    }
}
```

# Problems

2 race

```
int count = 0;
#define N 4 /* buf size */
prod() {
    while(TRUE) {
        item = produce()
        if (count == N)
            sleep(prod);
        insert_item();
        count++;
        if (count == 1)
            wakeup(con);
    }
}

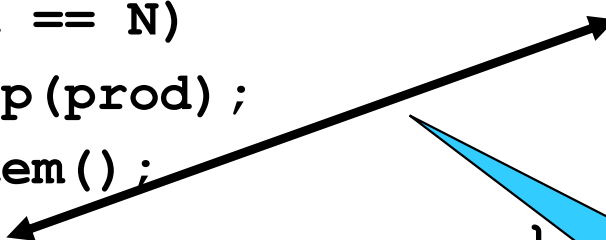
con() {
    while(TRUE) {
        if (count == 0)
            sleep(con);
        remove_item();
        count--;
        if (count == N-1)
            wakeup(prod);
    }
}
```

Concurrent uncontrolled access to the buffer

# Problems

```
int count = 0;
#define N 4 /* buf size */
prod() {
    while(TRUE) {
        item = produce()
        if (count == N)
            sleep(prod);
        insert_item();
        count++;
        if (count == 1)
            wakeup(con);
    }
}

con() {
    while(TRUE) {
        if (count == 0)
            sleep(con);
        remove_item();
        count--;
        if (count == N-1)
            wakeup(prod);
    }
}
```



Concurrent uncontrolled access to the counter

# Proposed Solution

- Lets use a locking primitive based on test-and-set to protect the concurrent access

# Proposed solution?

`int count = 0;` however this solution still doesn't work because count is out of concurrency's control

`lock_t buf_lock;`

`#define N 4 /* buf size */`

`prod() {`

`while(TRUE) {`

`item = produce()`

`if (count == N)`

`sleep(prod);`

→ `acquire_lock(buf_lock)`

`insert_item();`

`count++;`

→ `release_lock(buf_lock)`

`if (count == 1)`

`wakeup(con);`

`}`

`}`

`con() {`

`while(TRUE) {`

`if (count == 0)`

`sleep(con);`

`acquire_lock(buf_lock)`

`remove_item();`

`count--;`

`release_lock(buf_lock);`

`if (count == N-1)`

`wakeup(prod);`

`}`

`}`

we assume we have mutual exclusion of these two functions

mutual exclusion zone

# Problematic execution sequence

```
prod() {  
    while(TRUE) {  
        item = produce()  
        if (count == N)  
            sleep(prod);  
        acquire_lock(buf_lock)  
        insert_item();  
        count++;  
        release_lock(buf_lock)  
        if (count == 1)  
            wakeup(con);  
    }  
}
```

```
con() {  
    while(TRUE) {  
        if (count == 0)
```

wakeup without a  
matching sleep is lost

```
        sleep(con);  
        acquire_lock(buf_lock)  
        remove_item();  
        count--;  
        release_lock(buf_lock);  
        if (count == N-1)  
            wakeup(prod);  
    }  
}
```



# Problem

- The test for *some condition* and actually going to sleep needs to be atomic
- The following does not work:

```
acquire_lock(buf_lock)
if (count == N)
    sleep();
release_lock(buf_lock)
```

The lock is held while asleep  
 $\Rightarrow$  count will never change

```
acquire_lock(buf_lock)
if (count == 1)
    wakeup();
release_lock(buf_lock)
```

# Semaphores

solution: count the missed wakeups

- Dijkstra (1965) introduced two primitives that are more powerful than simple sleep and wakeup alone.
  - P(): *proberen*, from Dutch to *test*.
  - V(): *verhogen*, from Dutch to *increment*.
  - Also called *wait & signal*, *down & up*.

# How do they work

- If a resource is not available, the corresponding semaphore blocks any process **waiting** for the resource
- Blocked processes are put into a process queue maintained by the semaphore (avoids busy waiting!)
- When a process releases a resource, it **signals** this by means of the semaphore
- Signalling resumes a blocked process if there is any
- Wait (P) and signal (V) operations cannot be interrupted
- Complex coordination can be implemented by multiple semaphores

# Semaphore Implementation

- Define a semaphore as a record

```
typedef struct {  
    int count;  
    struct process *L;  
} semaphore;
```

- Assume two simple operations:
  - **sleep** suspends the process that invokes it.
  - **wakeup(*P*)** resumes the execution of a blocked process **P**.

- Semaphore operations now defined as

*wait(S):*

we are counting signals

```
S.count--;  
if (S.count < 0) {  
    add this process to S.L;  
    sleep;  
}
```

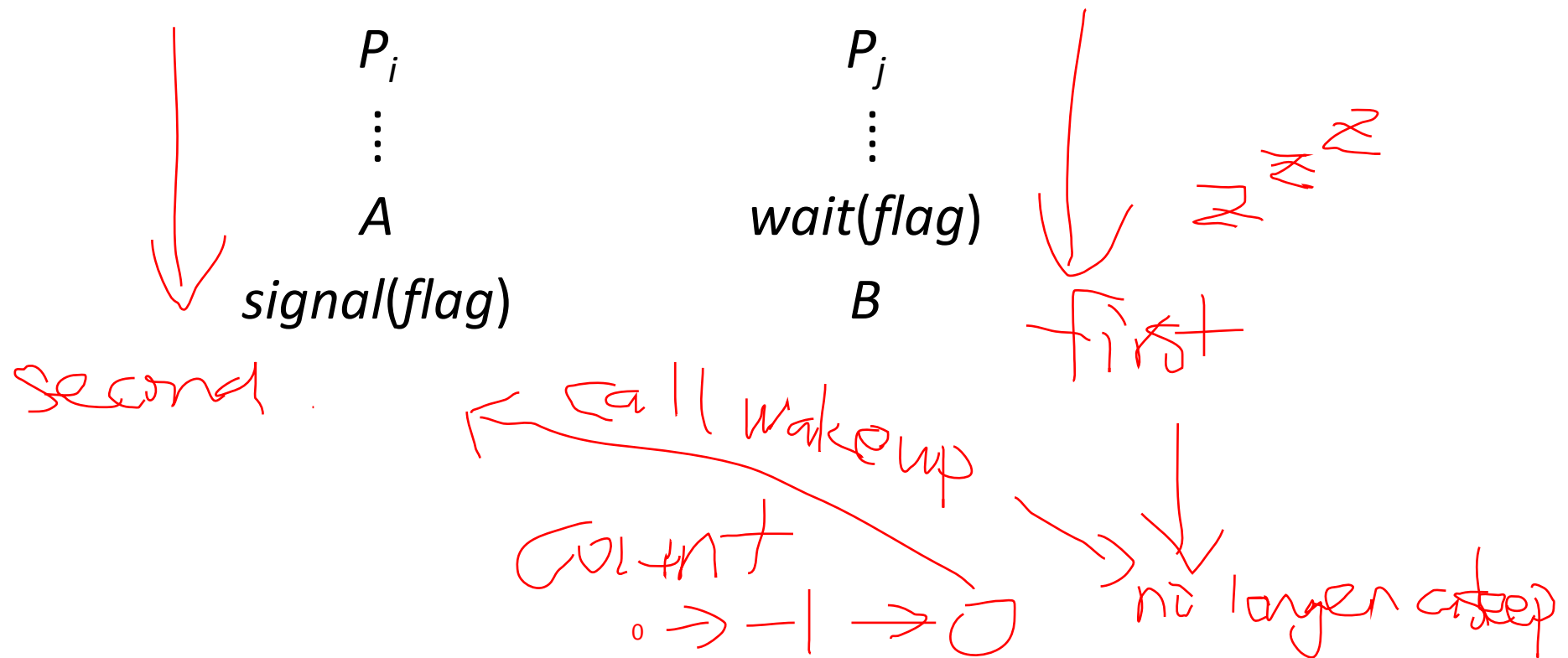
*signal(S):*

```
S.count++;  
if (S.count <= 0) {  
    remove a process P from S.L;  
    wakeup(P);  
}
```

- Each primitive is atomic
  - E.g. interrupts are disabled for each

# Semaphore as a General Synchronization Tool

- Execute  $B$  in  $P_j$  only after  $A$  executed in  $P_i$
- Use semaphore *count* initialized to 0
- Code:



# Semaphore Implementation of a Mutex

- Mutex is short for Mutual Exclusion
  - Can also be called a lock

```
semaphore mutex;
```

```
mutex.count = 1; /* initialise mutex */
```

acquire

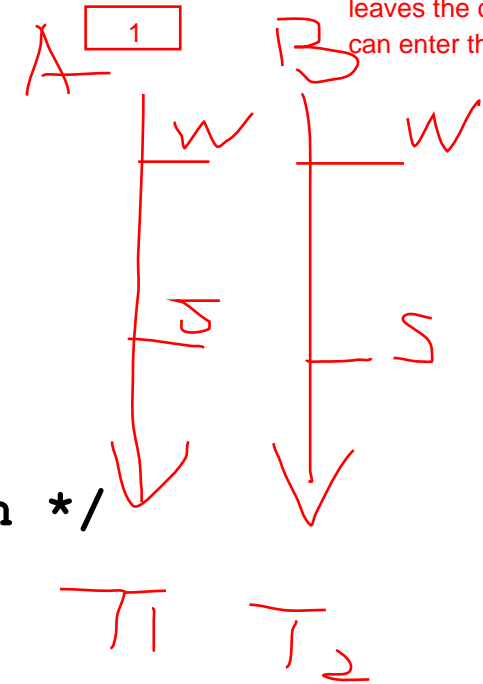
```
wait(mutex); /* enter the critical region */
```

```
Blahblah();
```

release lock

```
signal(mutex); /* exit the critical region */
```

Notice that the initial count determines how many waits can progress before blocking and requiring a signal  $\Rightarrow$  mutex.count initialised as 1



if A goes first, decrement 1 to 0, enters critical section, B calls it, decrement 0 to -1, now B is sleep, at the end of critical section, signal is called, A will increment the value to 0, which will wake up B, now A leaves the critical section and B can enter the critical section

# Solving the producer-consumer problem with semaphores

```
#define N = 4
```

```
semaphore mutex = 1;
```

```
/* count empty slots */
```

```
semaphore empty = N;
```

```
/* count full slots */
```

```
semaphore full = 0;
```

empty and full are semaphores to control the buffer





# Solving the producer-consumer problem with semaphores

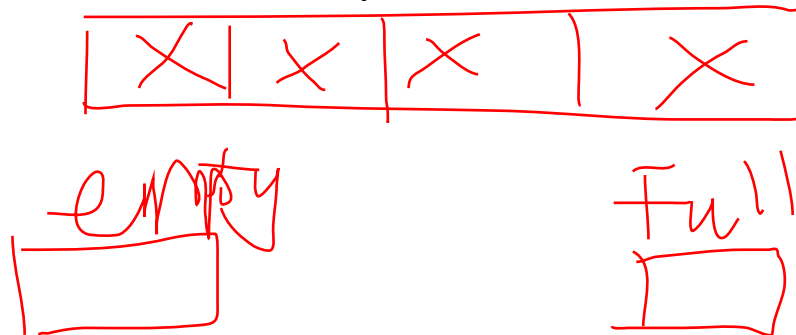
```
prod() {  
    while(TRUE) {  
        item = produce()  
        wait(empty);  
        wait(mutex)  
        insert_item();  
        signal(mutex);  
        signal(full);  
    }  
}
```

this is passed 4 times  
before producer is put to sleep

sync insert and remove

```
con() {  
    while(TRUE) {  
        wait(full);  
        wait(mutex);  
        remove_item();  
        signal(mutex);  
        signal(empty);  
    }  
}
```

sync insert and remove



# Summarising Semaphores

- Semaphores can be used to solve a variety of concurrency problems
- However, programming with them can be error-prone
  - E.g. must *signal* for every *wait* for mutexes
    - Too many, or too few signals or waits, or signals and waits in the wrong order, can have catastrophic results

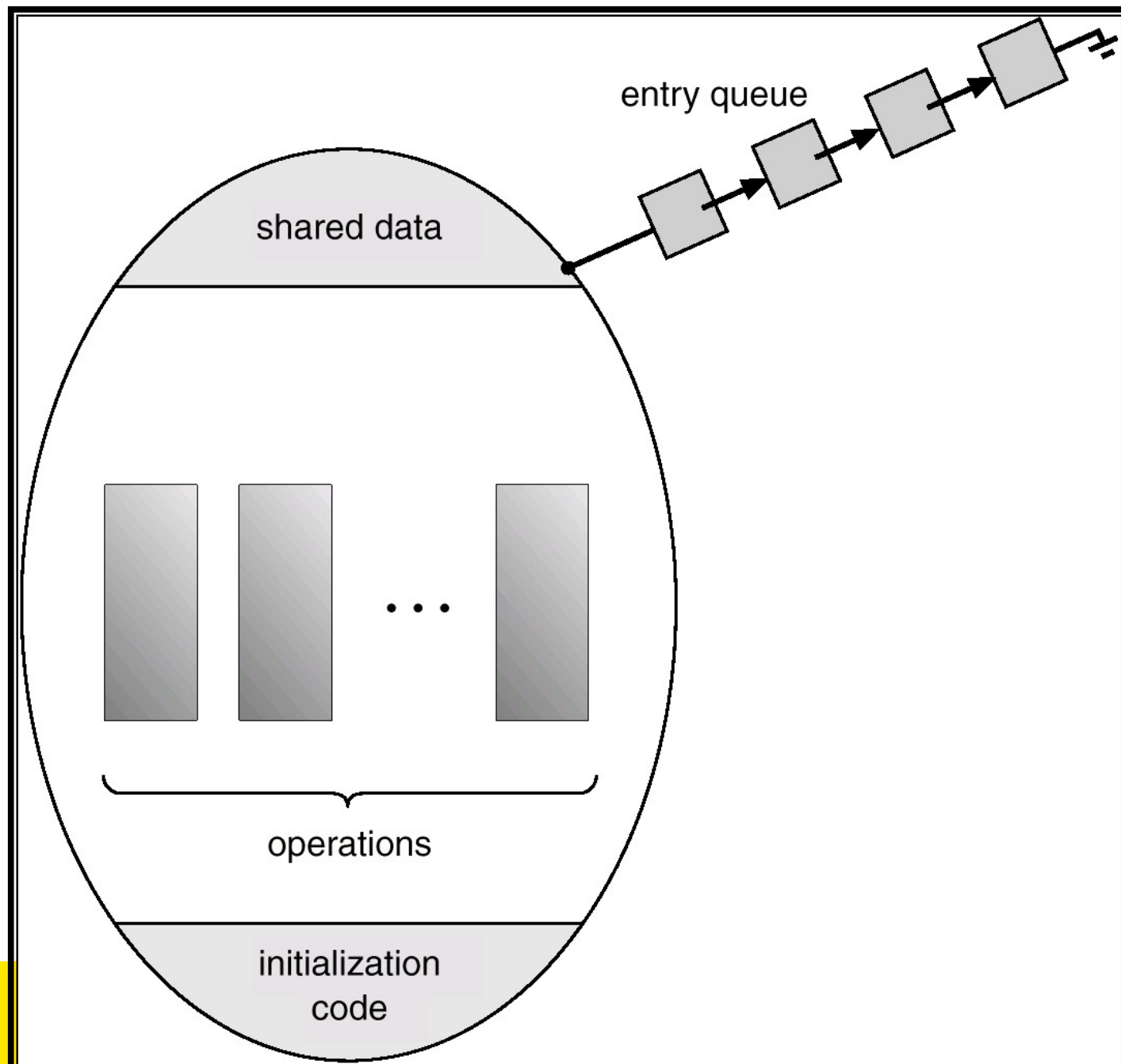
# Monitors

- To ease concurrent programming, Hoare (1974) proposed *monitors*.
  - A higher level synchronisation primitive
  - Programming language construct
- Idea
  - A set of procedures, variables, data types are grouped in a special kind of module, a *monitor*.
    - Variables and data types only accessed from within the monitor
  - Only one process/thread can be in the monitor at any one time
    - Mutual exclusion is implemented by the compiler (which should be less error prone)

# Monitor

- When a thread calls a monitor procedure that has a thread already inside, it is queued and it sleeps until the current thread exits the monitor.

only one thread inside at a time



# Monitors

race free variant. ignoring sleeping and waking

**monitor** *example*

**integer** *i*;

**condition** *c*;

private in the monitor, shared resources

**procedure** *producer*( );

.

.

.

**end**;

**procedure** *consumer*( );

.

.

.

**end**;

**end monitor**;

## Example of a monitor

# Simple example

```
monitor counter {  
    int count;  
    procedure inc() {  
        count = count + 1;  
    }  
    procedure dec() {  
        count = count - 1;  
    }  
}
```

this is like class instance, there is only one instance running at one time, you can have multiple monitor to do different things

Note: “paper” language

- Compiler guarantees only one thread can be active in the monitor at any one time
- Easy to see this provides mutual exclusion
  - No race condition on **count**.

# How do we block waiting for an event?

- We need a mechanism to block waiting for an event (in addition to ensuring mutual exclusion)
  - e.g., for producer consumer problem when buffer is empty or full
- *Condition Variables* waiting for a particular thing to happen

# Condition Variable

- To allow a process to wait within the monitor, a **condition** variable must be declared, as

**condition x, y;**

- Condition variable can only be used with the operations **wait** and **signal**.

- The operation

**x.wait();**

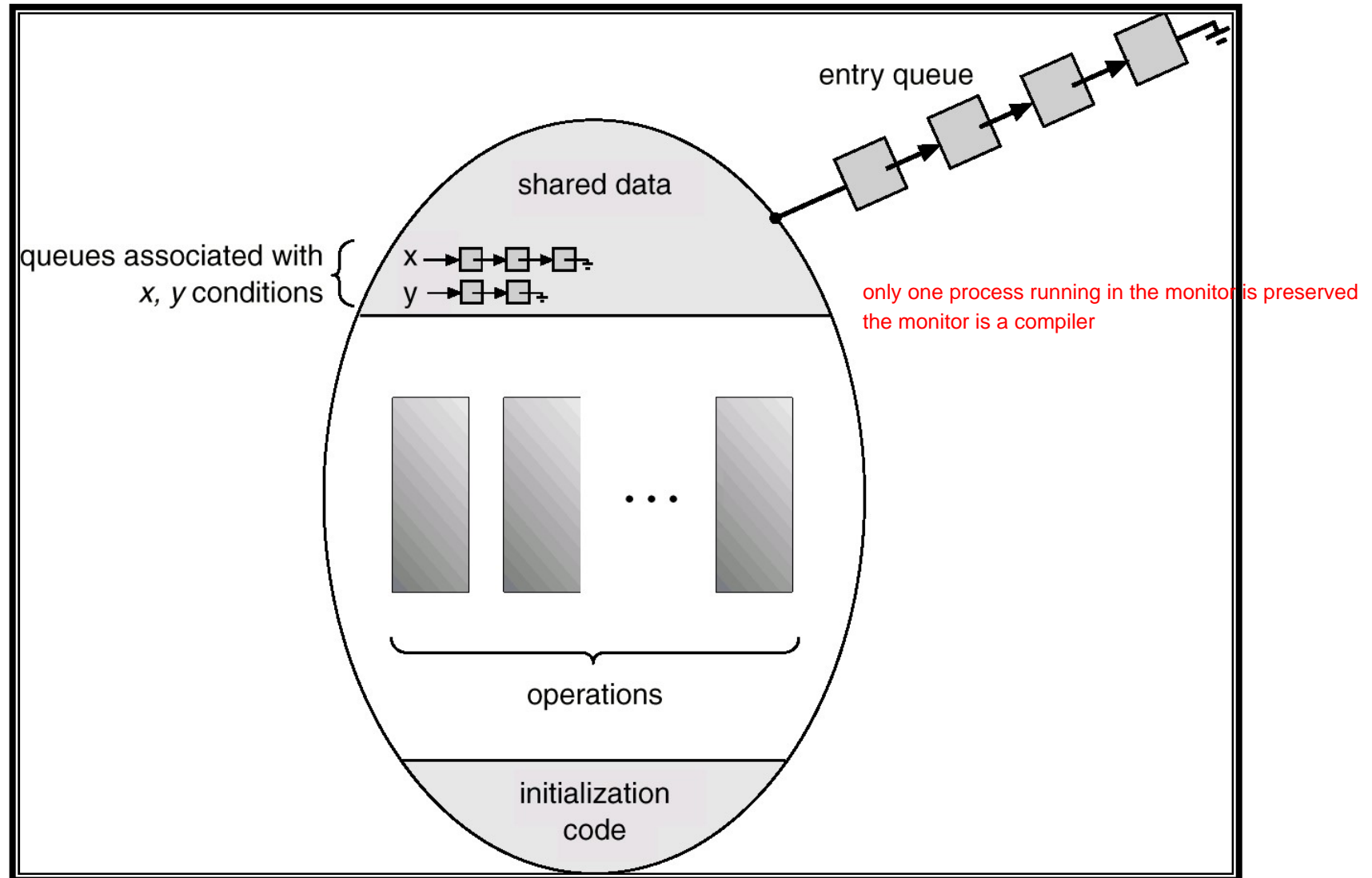
- means that the process invoking this operation is suspended until another process invokes
- Another thread can enter the monitor while original is suspended

**x.signal();**

- The x.signal operation resumes exactly one suspended process. If no process is suspended, then the **signal** operation has no effect.



# Condition Variables



# Monitors

if there is something in the queue, wakes up the head of the queue

only one of these inserts or removes can be active in the monitor at a time

```
monitor ProducerConsumer
  condition full, empty;
  integer count;
  procedure insert(item: integer);
  begin
    if count = N then wait(full);
    insert_item(item);
    count := count + 1;
    if count = 1 then signal(empty)
  end;
  function remove: integer;
  begin
    if count = 0 then wait(empty);
    remove = remove_item;
    count := count - 1;
    if count = N - 1 then signal(full)
  end;
  count := 0;
end monitor;
```

```
procedure producer;
begin
  while true do
    begin
      item = produce_item;
      ProducerConsumer.insert(item)
    end
  end;
procedure consumer;
begin
  while true do
    begin
      item = ProducerConsumer.remove;
      consume_item(item)
    end
  end;
end;
```

- Outline of producer-consumer problem with monitors
  - only one monitor procedure active at one time
  - buffer has  $N$  slots

# OS/161 Provided Synchronisation Primitives

- Locks
- Semaphores
- Condition Variables going to sleep until something happens

# Locks

- Functions to create and destroy locks

```
struct lock *lock_create(const char *name); debugging  
void          lock_destroy(struct lock *);
```

- Functions to acquire and release them

```
void          lock_acquire(struct lock *);  
void          lock_release(struct lock *);
```

# Example use of locks

```
int count;
struct lock *count_lock

main() {
    count = 0;
    count_lock =
        lock_create("count
        lock");
    if (count_lock == NULL)
        panic("I'm dead");
    stuff();
}
```

```
procedure inc() {
    lock_acquire(count_lock);
    count = count + 1;
    lock_release(count_lock);
}
```

```
procedure dec() {
    lock_acquire(count_lock);
    count = count - 1;
    lock_release(count_lock);
}
```

# Semaphores

the number defines the number of Ps that can go pass before P puts a thread into sleep

```
struct semaphore *sem_create(const char *name, int  
                             initial_count);
```

```
void sem_destroy(struct semaphore *);
```

```
void P(struct semaphore *); wait
```

linux kernel uses down and up for wait and signal

```
void V(struct semaphore *); signal
```

os161 naming

# Example use of Semaphores

```
int count;  
struct semaphore  
    *count_mutex;
```

```
main() {  
    count = 0;  
    count_mutex =  
        sem_create("count",  
                    1);  
    if (count_mutex == NULL)  
        panic("I'm dead");  
    stuff();  
}
```

only allowed 1 P

check

```
procedure inc() {  
    P(count_mutex);  
    count = count + 1;  
    V(count_mutex);  
}  
  
procedure dec() {  
    P(count_mutex);  
    count = count - 1;  
    V(count_mutex);  
}
```

# Condition Variables

```
struct cv *cv_create(const char *name);  
void      cv_destroy(struct cv *);
```

```
void      cv_wait(struct cv *cv, struct lock *lock);
```

- Releases the lock and blocks
  - Upon resumption, it re-acquires the lock
    - Note: we must recheck the condition we slept on
- puts the current thread to sleep, and release the current lock  
once woken up, the thread regains the lock

```
void      cv_signal(struct cv *cv, struct lock *lock);  
void      cv_broadcast(struct cv *cv, struct lock *lock);
```

- Wakes one/all, does not release the lock
- First “waiter” scheduled after signaller releases the lock will re-acquire the lock

Note: All three variants must hold the lock passed in.



# Condition Variables and Bounded Buffers

## Non-solution

```
lock_acquire(c_lock)
if (count == 0)
    sleep();
remove_item();
count--;
lock_release(c_lock)
;
```

## Solution

monitor like construct

```
lock_acquire(c_lock)
while (count == 0)
    cv_wait(c_cv, c_lock);
remove_item();
count--;
lock_release(c_lock);
```

# Alternative Producer-Consumer Solution Using OS/161 CVs

lock variables basically will stop any code from running until they obtain a lock variable

semaphores can be used to keep track of bounded buffer size, or mutual excl, we call semaphore variables mutex.

```
int count = 0;
#define N 4 /* buf size */
prod() {
    while(TRUE) {
        item = produce()
        lock_acquire(l)
        while (count == N)
            cv_wait(full, l);
        insert_item(item);
        count++;
        cv_signal(empty, l);
        lock_release(l)
    }
}
```

lock is for  
mutual excl

two arguments here

```
con() {
    while(TRUE) {
        lock_acquire(l)
        while (count == 0)
            cv_wait(empty, l);
        item = remove_item();
        count--;
        cv_signal(full, l);
        lock_release(l);
        consume(item);
    }
}
```

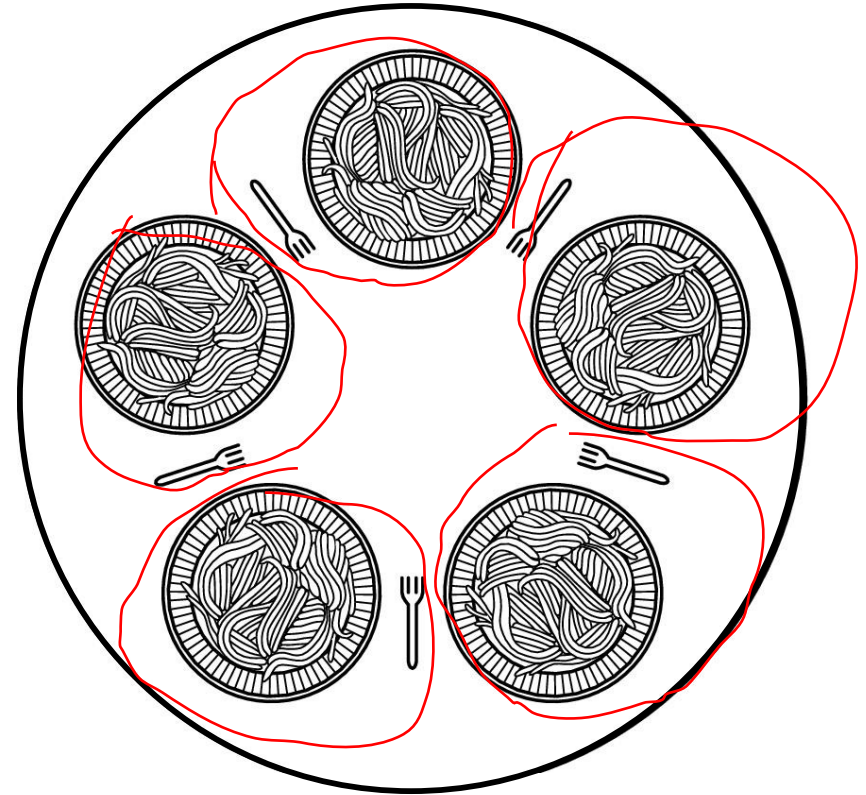
condition variables are used to make mutexes work better, which let you sleep threads.

Semaphores will do the same thing, but can also do other tasks (like letting max 2 threads work)

if the semaphore is capacity 1, it is virtually identical to lock acquire

# Dining Philosophers

- Philosophers eat/think
- Eating needs 2 forks
- Pick one fork at a time
- How to prevent deadlock



# Dining Philosophers

```
#define N          5          /* number of philosophers */
#define LEFT      (i+N-1)%N   /* number of i's left neighbor */
#define RIGHT     (i+1)%N     /* number of i's right neighbor */
#define THINKING  0          /* philosopher is thinking */
#define HUNGRY    1          /* philosopher is trying to get forks */
#define EATING    2          /* philosopher is eating */
typedef int semaphore;        /* semaphores are a special kind of int */
int state[N];                /* array to keep track of everyone's state */
semaphore mutex = 1;         /* mutual exclusion for critical regions */
semaphore s[N];              /* one semaphore per philosopher */

void philosopher(int i)      /* i: philosopher number, from 0 to N-1 */
{
    while (TRUE) {           /* repeat forever */
        think( );            /* philosopher is thinking */
        take_forks(i);        /* acquire two forks or block */
        eat( );               /* yum-yum, spaghetti */
        put_forks(i);         /* put both forks back on table */
    }
}
```

# Dining Philosophers

```
#define N 5

void philosopher(int i)
{
    while (TRUE) {
        think();
        take_fork(i);
        take_fork((i+1) % N);
        eat();
        put_fork(i);
        put_fork((i+1) % N);
    }
}
```

/\* number of philosophers \*/

/\* i: philosopher number, from 0 to 4 \*/

/\* philosopher is thinking \*/

/\* take left fork \*/

/\* take right fork; % is modulo operator \*/

/\* yum-yum, spaghetti \*/

/\* put left fork back on the table \*/

/\* put right fork back on the table \*/

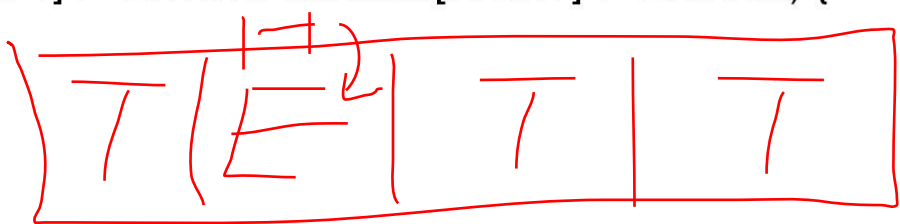
A nonsolution to the dining philosophers problem

# Dining Philosophers

```
void take_forks(int i)                                /* i: philosopher number, from 0 to N-1 */
{
    down(&mutex);                                     /* enter critical region */
    state[i] = HUNGRY;                                /* record fact that philosopher i is hungry */
    test(i);                                           /* try to acquire 2 forks */
    up(&mutex);                                        /* exit critical region */
    down(&s[i]);                                       /* block if forks were not acquired */
}

void put_forks(i)                                     /* i: philosopher number, from 0 to N-1 */
{
    down(&mutex);                                     /* enter critical region */
    state[i] = THINKING;                              /* philosopher has finished eating */
    test(LEFT);                                       /* see if left neighbor can now eat */
    test(RIGHT);                                     /* see if right neighbor can now eat */
    up(&mutex);                                       /* exit critical region */
}

void test(i)                                          /* i: philosopher number, from 0 to N-1 */
{
    if (state[i] == HUNGRY && state[LEFT] != EATING && state[RIGHT] != EATING) {
        state[i] = EATING;
        up(&s[i]);
    }
}
```



Solution to dining philosophers problem (part 2)



# The Readers and Writers Problem

check in the textbook

- Models access to a database
  - E.g. airline reservation system
- Can have more than one concurrent reader
  - To check schedules and reservations
- Writers must have exclusive access
  - To book a ticket or update a schedule



# The Readers and Writers Problem

```
typedef int semaphore;          /* use your imagination */
semaphore mutex = 1;           /* controls access to 'rc' */
semaphore db = 1;              /* controls access to the database */
int rc = 0;                    /* # of processes reading or wanting to */

void reader(void)
{
    while (TRUE) {              /* repeat forever */
        down(&mutex);           /* get exclusive access to 'rc' */
        rc = rc + 1;            /* one reader more now */
        if (rc == 1) down(&db); /* if this is the first reader ... */
        up(&mutex);             /* release exclusive access to 'rc' */
        read_data_base();       /* access the data */
        down(&mutex);           /* get exclusive access to 'rc' */
        rc = rc - 1;            /* one reader fewer now */
        if (rc == 0) up(&db);   /* if this is the last reader ... */
        up(&mutex);             /* release exclusive access to 'rc' */
        use_data_read();        /* noncritical region */
    }
}

void writer(void)
{
    while (TRUE) {              /* repeat forever */
        think_up_data();        /* noncritical region */
        down(&db);              /* get exclusive access */
        write_data_base();      /* update the data */
        up(&db);                /* release exclusive access */
    }
}
```

A solution to the readers and writers problem