

# Thread Synchronization

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**Caution!**

# A Simple Example

---

```
1 void echo()  
2 {  
3     chin = getchar();  
4     chout = chin;  
5     putchar(chout);  
6 }
```

---

- shared method among multiple threads
- what can happen?

## A Simple Example

### Thread 1

---

```
1 void echo()  
2 {  
3     chin = getchar();  
4     chout = chin;  
5     putchar(chout);  
6 }
```

---

### Thread 2

---

```
1 void echo()  
2 {  
3     chin = getchar();  
4     chout = chin;  
5     putchar(chout);  
6 }
```

---

- Thread1 executes line 3, then interrupted
  - Thread1 chin = 'x'
- Thread2 executes completely through the procedure
  - Thread2 chin = 'y', chout = 'y'
- Thread1 starts again
  - Thread1 chin = 'y'!

# Example Code

- see example code `problem.cc`

► [GitHub](#)

# Concurrency Problems

- can't predict the speed with which threads will execute and therefore when a resource will be accessed
- if synchronization is not used, errors will be rare but they will occur
- errors are hard to duplicate and debug since they are nondeterministic

# Mutual Exclusion

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- need to protect shared resources (e.g. global variable, shared data structures) among multiple processes or threads
- may involve processes or threads interleaved in time on a single processor or running in parallel on a multiprocessor machine
- result of process or thread must be independent of the speed of execution of other concurrent processes



# Mutual Exclusion

- **critical section**: shared portion of code that must be executed by one thread at a time
  - thread must mark the critical section because OS doesn't know where it is
- **starvation**: one or more threads are prevented from ever executing critical section
- **deadlock**: situation in which no thread can make progress because they are all waiting for a critical section
- must ensure data coherence, e.g. atomic access to a database

# Mutual Exclusion Requirements

- only one thread has access to critical section at a time
- halting in non-critical section must not interfere with other threads
- no indefinite wait for critical section, i.e. no starvation or deadlock
- if no thread in critical section, then no wait to enter
- no assumptions about process speeds or number of processors
- thread may only spend finite time within critical section

# Solutions

- software
  - assume no support from OS, hardware, or language
  - historic algorithms: Dekker, Peterson, Lamport
  - difficult to get right, to generalize
- hardware
  - disable interrupts: single processor machines
    - no other process can run until they are re-enabled
    - limits flexibility of OS to schedule threads, doesn't work for multiprocessors
  - atomic machine instructions: compare-and-swap
- operating system support

# Operating System Support

- mutexes and condition variables
  - mutex: lock that allows only one thread into a critical section
  - condition variable: signal conditions between threads
- semaphores
  - when one thread is in the critical section, others may **wait** by sleeping
  - when thread is done with critical section, it wakes one other thread with a **signal**
- monitors and thread-safe classes
  - monitor: programming language construct that makes it easier to declare and use a critical section
  - thread-safe class: construct a class with private variables, use a lock on each thread so that only one caller is active at a time
- message passing
  - synchronization by explicitly exchanging messages