



Synchronization: Advanced

18-213/18-613: Introduction to Computer Systems
24th Lecture, April 15, 2025

Review: Semaphores

- **Semaphore:** non-negative global integer synchronization variable
- **Manipulated by P and V operations:**
 - $P(s)$: [**while** ($s == 0$) **wait()**; $s--$;]
 - Dutch for “Proberen” (test)
 - $V(s)$: [$s++$;]
 - Dutch for “Verhogen” (increment)
- **OS kernel guarantees that operations between brackets [] are executed indivisibly/atomically**
 - Only one P or V operation at a time can modify s .
 - When **while** loop in P terminates, only that P can decrement s
- **Semaphore invariant: $s \geq 0$**

Review: Using Semaphores to Protect Shared Resources via Mutual Exclusion

■ Basic idea:

- Associate a unique semaphore *mutex*, initially 1, with each shared variable (or related set of shared variables)
- Surround each access to the shared variable(s) with $P(mutex)$ and $V(mutex)$ operations

```
mutex = 1
```

```
P(mutex)
```

```
cnt++
```

```
V(mutex)
```

Review: Using Lock for Mutual Exclusion

■ Basic idea:

- Mutex is special case of semaphore that only has value 0 (locked) or 1 (unlocked)
- *Lock(m)*: [**while** (m == 0) ; m=0;]
- *Unlock(m)*: [m=1]
- **~2x faster than using semaphore for this purpose**
- And, more clearly indicates programmer's intention

```
mutex = 1
```

```
lock (mutex)  
cnt++  
unlock (mutex)
```

vs.

```
mutex = 1
```

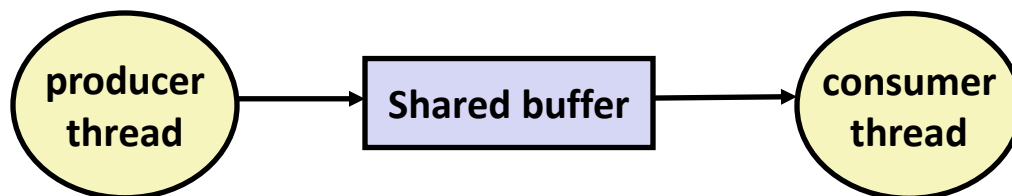
```
P (mutex)  
cnt++  
V (mutex)
```

Note about Examples

- **Lecture examples will use semaphores for both counting and mutual exclusion**
 - Code is much shorter than using `pthread_mutex`

Review: Using Semaphores to Coordinate Access to Shared Resources

- **Basic idea: Thread uses a semaphore operation to notify another thread that some condition has become true**
 - Use *counting semaphores* to keep track of resource state.
 - Use *binary semaphores* to notify other threads.
- **The Producer-Consumer Problem**

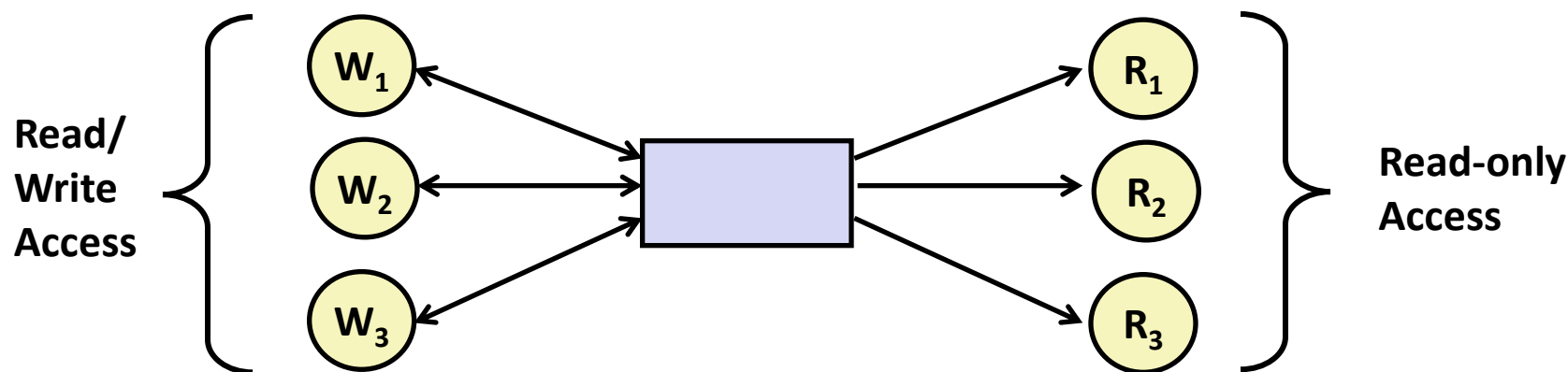


- Mediating interactions between processes that generate information and that then make use of that information
- *Single entry* buffer implemented with two binary semaphores
 - One to control access by producer(s)
 - One to control access by consumer(s)
- *N-entry* buffer implemented with semaphores + circular buffer

Today

- **Using semaphores to schedule shared resources** **CSAPP 12.5.4**
 - Readers-writers problem
- **Other concurrency issues** **CSAPP 12.7**
 - Races
 - Deadlocks
 - Thread safety
 - Interactions between threads and signal handling

Readers-Writers Problem



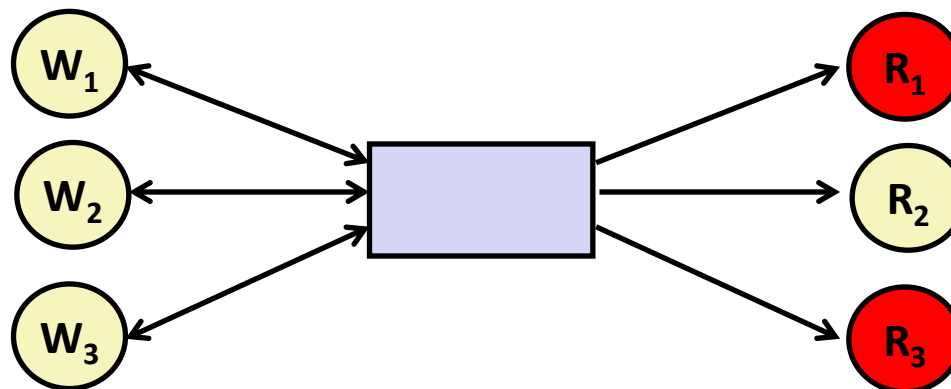
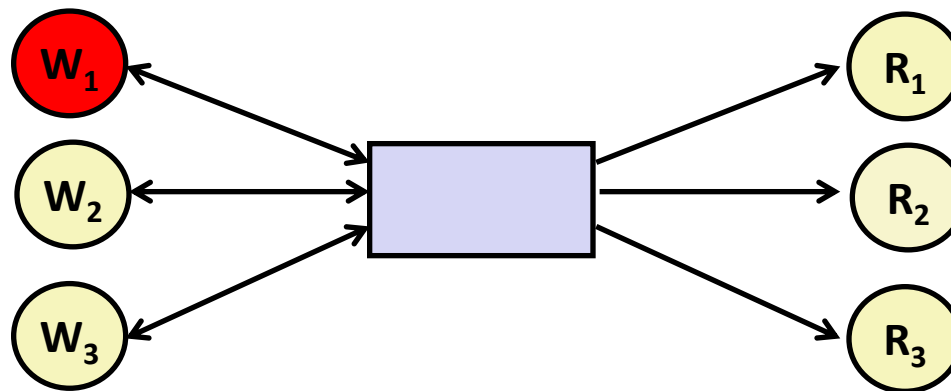
■ Problem statement:

- *Reader* threads only read the object
- *Writer* threads modify the object (read/write access)
- Writers must have exclusive access to the object
- Unlimited number of readers can access the object concurrently

■ Occurs frequently in real systems, e.g.,

- Online airline reservation system
- Multithreaded caching Web proxy

Readers/Writers Examples



Variants of Readers-Writers

■ ***First readers-writers problem (favors readers)***

- No reader should be kept waiting unless a writer has already been granted permission to use the object.
- A reader that arrives after a waiting writer gets priority over the writer.

■ ***Second readers-writers problem (favors writers)***

- Once a writer is ready to write, it performs its write as soon as possible
- A reader that arrives after a writer must wait, even if the writer is also waiting.

■ ***Starvation (where a thread waits indefinitely) is possible in both cases.***

Solution to First Readers-Writers Problem

Readers:

```
int readcnt;      /* Initially 0 */
sem_t mutex, w; /* Both initially 1 */

void reader(void)
{
    while (1) {
        P(&mutex);
        readcnt++;
        if (readcnt == 1) /* First in */
            P(&w);
        V(&mutex);

        /* Reading happens here */

        P(&mutex);
        readcnt--;
        if (readcnt == 0) /* Last out */
            V(&w);
        V(&mutex);
    }
}
```

Writers:

```
void writer(void)
{
    while (1) {
        P(&w);

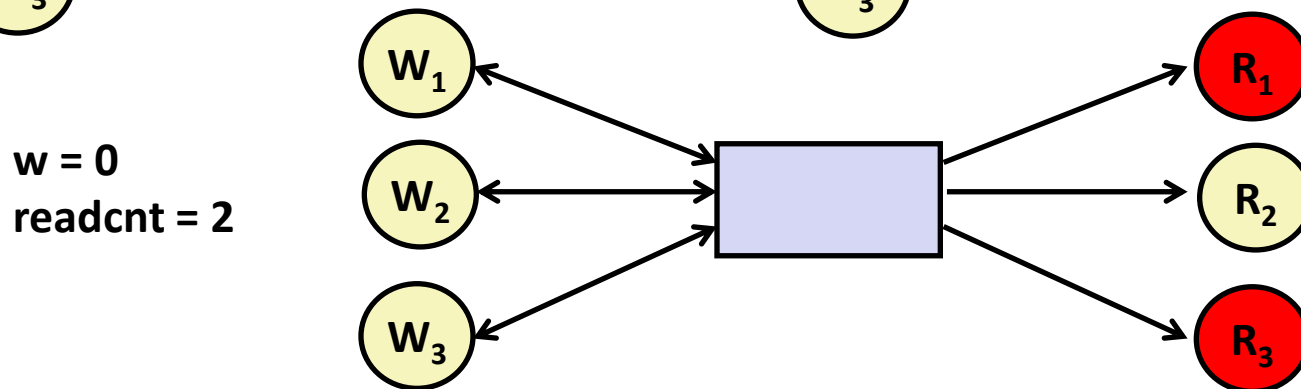
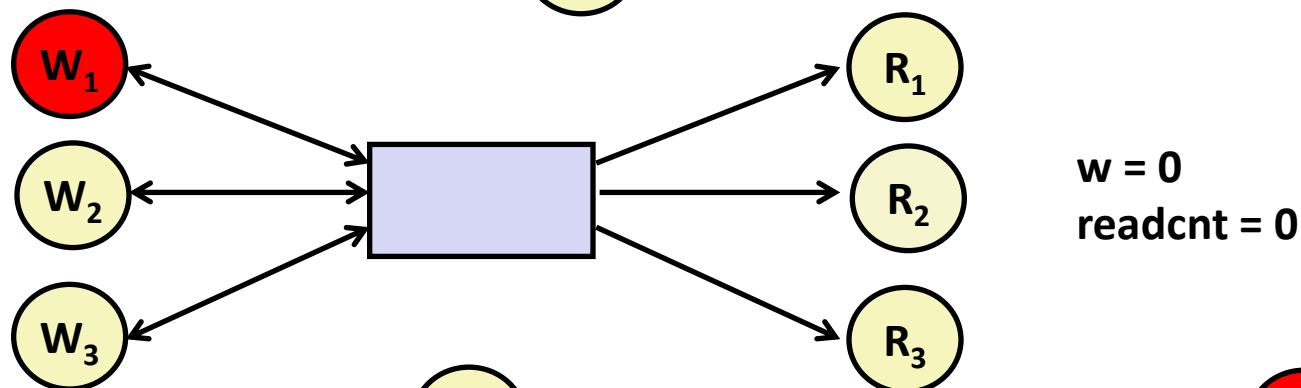
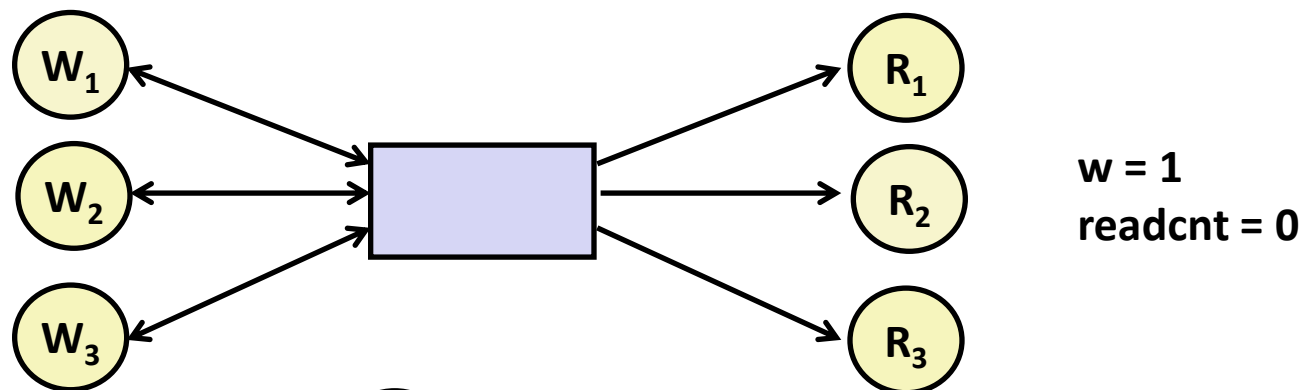
        /* Writing here */

        V(&w);
    }
}
```

rw1.c

**A reader that arrives
after a waiting writer
gets priority over the writer**

Readers/Writers Examples



Solution to First Readers-Writers Problem

Readers:

```
int readcnt;      /* Initially 0 */
sem_t mutex, w; /* Both initially 1 */

void reader(void)
{
    while (1) {
        P(&mutex);
        readcnt++;
        if (readcnt == 1) /* First in */
            P(&w);
        V(&mutex);

        /* Reading happens here */

        P(&mutex);
        readcnt--;
        if (readcnt == 0) /* Last out */
            V(&w);
        V(&mutex);
    }
}
```

Writers:

```
void writer(void)
{
    while (1) {
        P(&w);

        /* Writing here */

        V(&w);
    }
}
```

rw1.c

Arrivals: R1 R2 W1 R3

Solution to First Readers-Writers Problem

Readers:

```

int readcnt;      /* Initially 0 */
sem_t mutex, w; /* Both initially 1 */

void reader(void)
{
    while (1) {
        P(&mutex);
        readcnt++;
        if (readcnt == 1) /* First in */
            P(&w);
        V(&mutex);

R1 → /* Reading happens here */

        P(&mutex);
        readcnt--;
        if (readcnt == 0) /* Last out */
            V(&w);
        V(&mutex);
    }
}

```

Writers:

```

void writer(void)
{
    while (1) {
        P(&w);

        /* Writing here */

        V(&w);
    }
}

```

rw1.c

Arrivals: R1 R2 W1 R3

readcnt == 1
w == 0

Solution to First Readers-Writers Problem

Readers:

```

int readcnt;      /* Initially 0 */
sem_t mutex, w; /* Both initially 1 */

void reader(void)
{
    while (1) {
        P(&mutex);
        readcnt++;
R2 → if (readcnt == 1) /* First in */
        P(&w);
        V(&mutex);

R1 → /* Reading happens here */

        P(&mutex);
        readcnt--;
        if (readcnt == 0) /* Last out */
            V(&w);
        V(&mutex);
    }
}

```

Writers:

```

void writer(void)
{
    while (1) {
        P(&w);

        /* Writing here */

        V(&w);
    }
}

```

rw1.c

Arrivals: R1 R2 W1 R3

readcnt == 2
w == 0

Solution to First Readers-Writers Problem

Readers:

```

int readcnt;      /* Initially 0 */
sem_t mutex, w; /* Both initially 1 */

void reader(void)
{
    while (1) {
        P(&mutex);
        readcnt++;
        if (readcnt == 1) /* First in */
            P(&w);
        V(&mutex);

        /* Reading happens here */

        P(&mutex);
        readcnt--;
        if (readcnt == 0) /* Last out */
            V(&w);
        V(&mutex);
    }
}

```

R2  **R1** 

Writers:

```

void writer(void)
{
    while (1) {
        P(&w);  W1

        /* Writing here */

        V(&w);
    }
}

```

rw1.c

Arrivals: R1 R2 W1 R3

readcnt == 2
w == 0

Solution to First Readers-Writers Problem

Readers:

```

int readcnt;      /* Initially 0 */
sem_t mutex, w; /* Both initially 1 */

void reader(void)
{
    while (1) {
        P(&mutex);
        readcnt++;
        if (readcnt == 1) /* First in */
            P(&w);
        V(&mutex);

        /* Reading happens here */

        P(&mutex);
        readcnt--;
        if (readcnt == 0) /* Last out */
            V(&w);
        V(&mutex);
    }
}

```

R2 →

R1 →

Writers:

```

void writer(void)
{
    while (1) {
        P(&w); ← W1

        /* Writing here */

        V(&w);
    }
}

```

rw1.c

Arrivals: R1 R2 W1 R3

readcnt == 1
w == 0

Solution to First Readers-Writers Problem

Readers:

```

int readcnt;      /* Initially 0 */
sem_t mutex, w; /* Both initially 1 */

void reader(void)
{
    while (1) {
        P(&mutex);
        readcnt++;
R3 → if (readcnt == 1) /* First in */
        P(&w);
        V(&mutex);

        /* Reading happens here */

R2 → P(&mutex);
        readcnt--;
        if (readcnt == 0) /* Last out */
            V(&w);
        V(&mutex);
R1 → }
    }

```

Writers:

```

void writer(void)
{
    while (1) { ← W1
        P(&w);

        /* Writing here */

        V(&w);
    }
}

```

rw1.c

Arrivals: R1 R2 W1 R3

readcnt == 2
w == 0

Solution to First Readers-Writers Problem

Readers:

```

int readcnt;      /* Initially 0 */
sem_t mutex, w; /* Both initially 1 */

void reader(void)
{
    while (1) {
        P(&mutex);
        readcnt++;
        if (readcnt == 1) /* First in */
            P(&w);
        V(&mutex);

        /* Reading happens here */

        P(&mutex);
        readcnt--;
        if (readcnt == 0) /* Last out */
            V(&w);
        V(&mutex);
    }
}

```

R3 →

R2 →

Writers:

```

void writer(void)
{
    while (1) {
        P(&w); ← W1

        /* Writing here */

        V(&w);
    }
}

```

rw1.c

Arrivals: R1 R2 W1 R3

readcnt == 1
w == 0

Solution to First Readers-Writers Problem

Readers:

```

int readcnt;      /* Initially 0 */
sem_t mutex, w; /* Both initially 1 */

void reader(void)
{
    while (1) {
        P(&mutex);
        readcnt++;
        if (readcnt == 1) /* First in */
            P(&w);
        V(&mutex);

        /* Reading happens here */

        P(&mutex);
        readcnt--;
        if (readcnt == 0) /* Last out */
            V(&w);
        V(&mutex);
    }
}

```

R3 →

Writers:

```

void writer(void)
{
    while (1) {
        P(&w); ← W1

        /* Writing here */

        V(&w);
    }
}

```

rw1.c

Arrivals: R1 R2 W1 R3

readcnt == 0
w == 1

Other Versions of Readers-Writers

■ Shortcoming of first solution

- Continuous stream of readers will block writers indefinitely

■ Second version

- Once writer comes along, blocks access to later readers
- Series of writes could block all reads

■ FIFO implementation

- See rwqueue code in code directory
- Service requests in order received
- Threads kept in FIFO
- Each has semaphore that enables its access to critical section

Solution to Second Readers-Writers Problem

```

int readcnt, writecnt;           // Initially 0
sem_t rmutex, wmutex, r, w;    // Initially 1
void reader(void)
{
    while (1) {
        P(&r);
        P(&rmutex);
        readcnt++;
        if (readcnt == 1) /* First in */
            P(&w);
        V(&rmutex);
        V(&r)

        /* Reading happens here */

        P(&rmutex);
        readcnt--;
        if (readcnt == 0) /* Last out */
            V(&w);
        V(&rmutex);
    }
}

```

```

void writer(void)
{
    while (1) {
        P(&wmutex);
        writecnt++;
        if (writecnt == 1)
            P(&r);
        V(&wmutex);

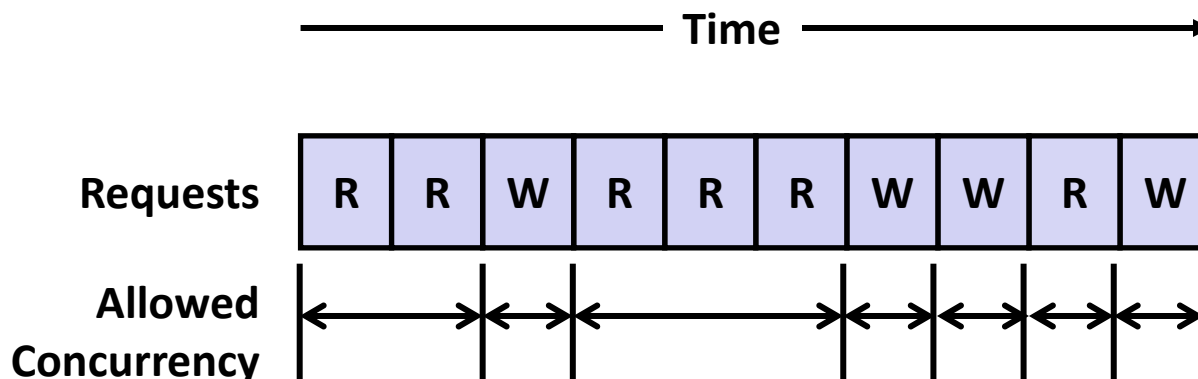
        P(&w);
        /* Writing here */
        V(&w);

        P(&wmutex);
        writecnt--;
        if (writecnt == 0);
            V(&r);
        V(&wmutex);
    }
}

```

A reader that arrives after a writer must wait, even if the writer is also waiting

Managing Readers/Writers with FIFO



■ Idea

- Read & Write requests are inserted into FIFO
- Requests handled as remove from FIFO
 - Read allowed to proceed if currently idle or processing read
 - Write allowed to proceed only when idle
- Requests inform controller when they have completed

■ Fairness

- Guarantee every request is eventually handled

Readers Writers FIFO Implementation

■ Full code in rwqueue.{h,c}

```
/* Queue data structure */
typedef struct {
    sem_t mutex;           // Mutual exclusion
    int reading_count;     // Number of active readers
    int writing_count;      // Number of active writers
    // FIFO queue implemented as linked list with tail
    rw_token_t *head;
    rw_token_t *tail;
} rw_queue_t;
```

```
/* Represents individual thread's position in queue */
typedef struct TOK {
    bool is_reader;
    sem_t enable;          // Enables access
    struct TOK *next;      // Allows chaining as linked list
} rw_token_t;
```

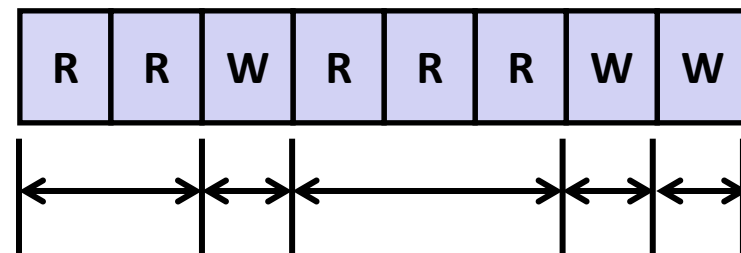
Readers Writers FIFO Use

■ In rwqueue-test.c

```

/* Get write access to data and write */
void iwriter(int *buf, int v)
{
    rw_token_t tok;
    rw_queue_request_write(&q, &tok);
    /* Critical section */
    *buf = v;
    /* End of Critical Section */
    rw_queue_release(&q);
}

```



Enqueue write request.
Blocked until its your turn.
(One writer per turn)

Enqueue read request.
Blocked until its your turn.
(Multiple readers OK in same turn)

```

/* Get read access to data and read */
int ireader(int *buf)
{
    rw_token_t tok;
    rw_queue_request_read(&q, &tok);
    /* Critical section */
    int v = *buf;
    /* End of Critical section */
    rw_queue_release(&q);
    return v;
}

```

Library Reader/Writer Lock

■ Data type `pthread_rwlock_t`

■ Operations

- Acquire read lock

```
pthread_rwlock_rdlock(pthread_rwlock_t *rwlock)
```

- Acquire write lock

```
pthread_rwlock_wrlock(pthread_rwlock_t *rwlock)
```

- Release (either) lock

```
pthread_rwlock_unlock(pthread_rwlock_t *rwlock)
```

■ Observation

- Library must be used correctly!
 - Up to programmer to decide what requires read access and what requires write access

Today

- **Using semaphores to schedule shared resources**
 - Readers-writers problem
- **Other concurrency issues**
 - **Races**
 - Deadlocks
 - Thread safety
 - Interactions between threads and signal handling

Recall: One Worry: Races

- A *race* occurs when correctness of the program depends on one thread reaching point x before another thread reaches point y

```
/* a threaded program with a race */
int main(int argc, char** argv) {
    pthread_t tid[N];
    int i;
    for (i = 0; i < N; i++)
        Pthread_create(&tid[i], NULL, thread, &i);
    for (i = 0; i < N; i++)
        Pthread_join(tid[i], NULL);
    return 0;
}

/* thread routine */
void *thread(void *vargp) {
    int myid = *((int *)vargp);
    printf("Hello from thread %d\n", myid);
    return NULL;
}
```

Race Elimination

- **Don't share state**

- E.g., use malloc to generate separate copy of argument for each thread

- **Use synchronization primitives to control access to shared state**

- Different shared state can use different primitives

Today

- **Using semaphores to schedule shared resources**
 - Producer-consumer problem
- **Other concurrency issues**
 - Races
 - **Deadlocks**
 - Thread safety
 - Interactions between threads and signal handling

Another Worry: Deadlock

- **Def:** A process is *deadlocked* iff it is waiting for a condition that will never be true.
- **Typical Scenario**
 - Processes 1 and 2 needs two resources (A and B) to proceed
 - Process 1 acquires A, waits for B
 - Process 2 acquires B, waits for A
 - Both will wait forever!
- **More fully (and beyond the scope of this course), a deadlock has four requirements**
 - Mutual exclusion
 - Circular waiting
 - Hold and wait
 - No pre-emption

Deadlocking With Semaphores

```
int main(int argc, char** argv)
{
    pthread_t tid[2];
    Sem_init(&mutex[0], 0, 1);  /* mutex[0] = 1 */
    Sem_init(&mutex[1], 0, 1);  /* mutex[1] = 1 */
    Pthread_create(&tid[0], NULL, count, (void*) 0);
    Pthread_create(&tid[1], NULL, count, (void*) 1);
    Pthread_join(tid[0], NULL);
    Pthread_join(tid[1], NULL);
    printf("cnt=%d\n", cnt);
    return 0;
}
```

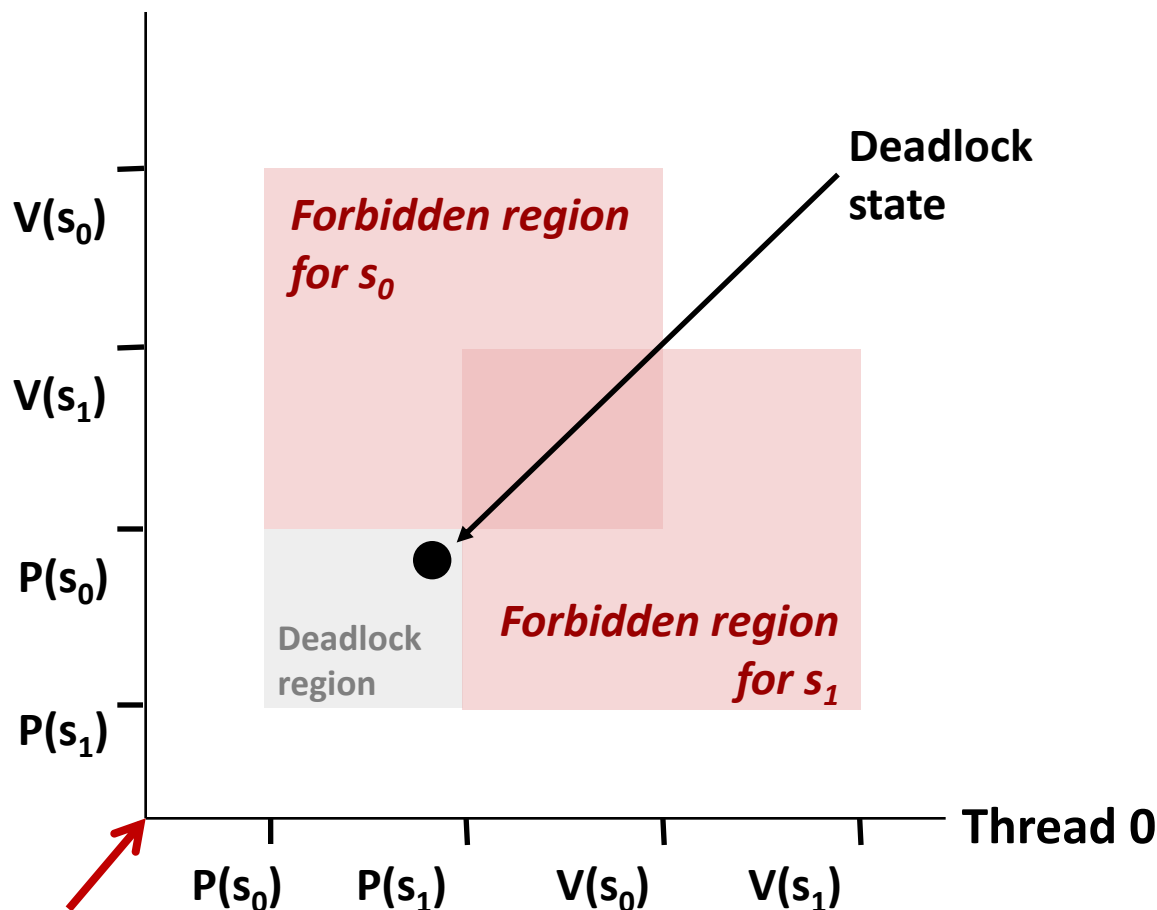
```
void *count(void *vargp)
{
    int i;
    int id = (int) vargp;
    for (i = 0; i < NITERS; i++) {
        P(&mutex[id]); P(&mutex[1-id]);
        cnt++;
        V(&mutex[id]); V(&mutex[1-id]);
    }
    return NULL;
}
```

Tid[0]:
P(s₀);
P(s₁);
cnt++;
V(s₀);
V(s₁);

Tid[1]:
P(s₁);
P(s₀);
cnt++;
V(s₁);
V(s₀);

Deadlock Visualized in Progress Graph

Thread 1



Locking introduces the potential for **deadlock**: waiting for a condition that will never be true

Any trajectory that enters the **deadlock region** will eventually reach the **deadlock state**, waiting for either S_0 or S_1 to become nonzero

Other trajectories luck out and skirt the deadlock region

Unfortunate fact: deadlock is often nondeterministic (race)

Avoiding Deadlock

Acquire shared resources in same order

```
int main(int argc, char** argv)
{
    pthread_t tid[2];
    Sem_init(&mutex[0], 0, 1);  /* mutex[0] = 1 */
    Sem_init(&mutex[1], 0, 1);  /* mutex[1] = 1 */
    Pthread_create(&tid[0], NULL, count, (void*) 0);
    Pthread_create(&tid[1], NULL, count, (void*) 1);
    Pthread_join(tid[0], NULL);
    Pthread_join(tid[1], NULL);
    printf("cnt=%d\n", cnt);
    return 0;
}
```

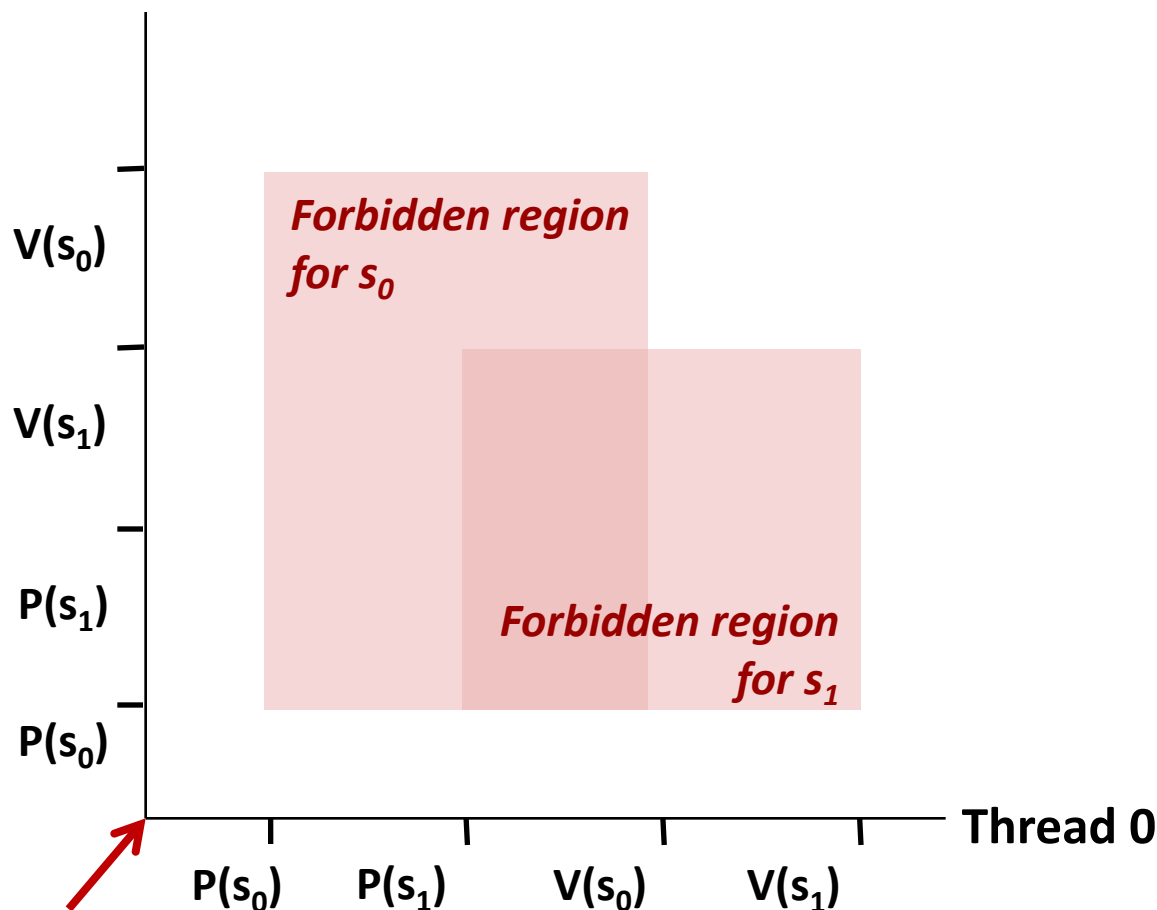
```
void *count(void *vargp)
{
    int i;
    int id = (int) vargp;
    for (i = 0; i < NITERS; i++) {
        P(&mutex[0]); P(&mutex[1]);
        cnt++;
        V(&mutex[id]); V(&mutex[1-id]);
    }
    return NULL;
}
```

Tid[0]:
P(s_0);
P(s_1);
cnt++;
V(s_0);
V(s_1);

Tid[1]:
P(s_0);
P(s_1);
cnt++;
V(s_1);
V(s_0);

Avoided Deadlock in Progress Graph

Thread 1



No way for trajectory to get stuck

Processes acquire locks in same order

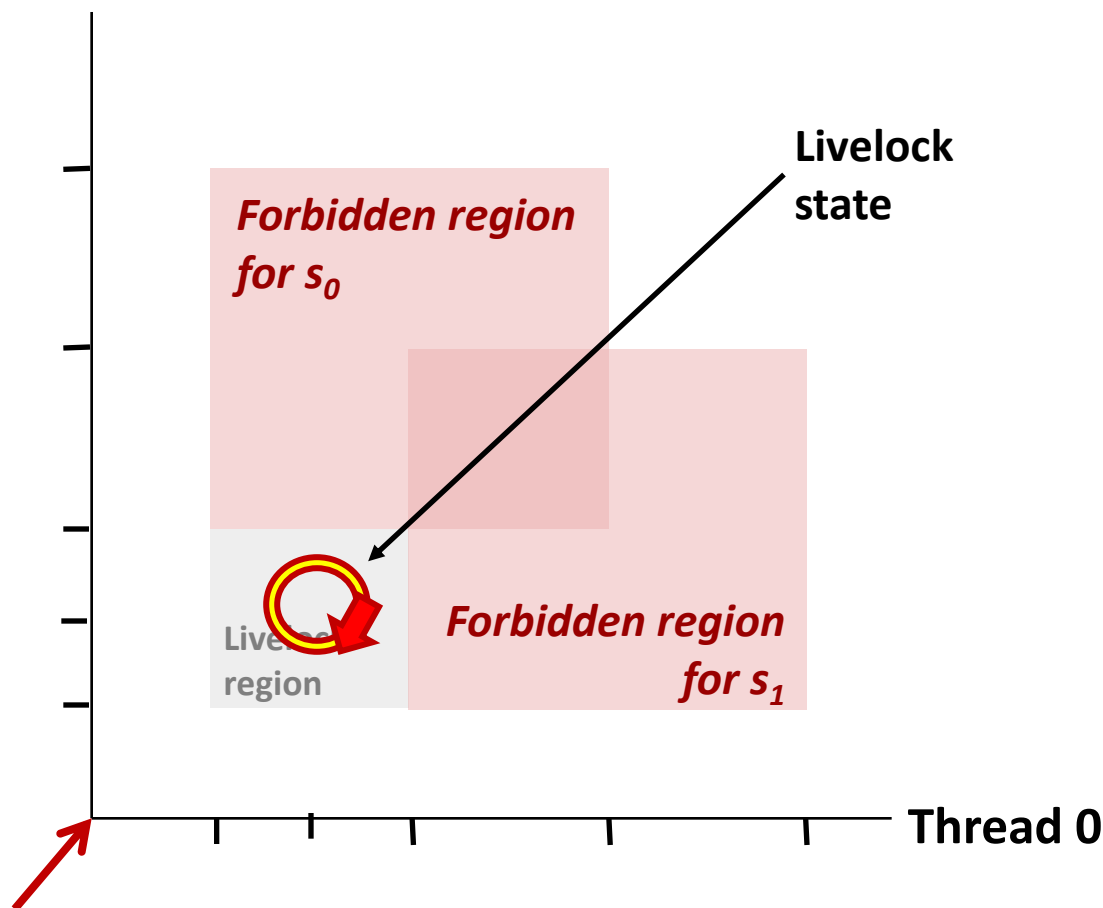
Order in which locks released is immaterial

Demonstration

- See program `deadlock.c`
- 100 threads, each acquiring same two locks
- Risky mode
 - Even numbered threads request locks in opposite order of odd-numbered ones
- Safe mode
 - All threads acquire locks in same order

Livelock Visualized in Progress Graph

Thread 1



Livelock is similar to a deadlock, except the threads change state, but remain in a deadlock trajectory.

Deadlock, Livelock, Starvation

■ Deadlock

- One or more threads is waiting on a condition that will never be true

■ Livelock

- One or more threads is changing state, but will never leave a deadlock / livelock trajectory

■ Starvation

- One or more threads is temporarily unable to make progress

Quiz Time!

Canvas Quiz: Day 24 – Synchronization Advanced

Today

- Using semaphores to schedule shared resources
 - Readers-writers problem
- **Other concurrency issues**
 - Races
 - Deadlocks
 - **Thread safety**
 - Interactions between threads and signal handling

Crucial concept: Thread Safety

- Functions called from a thread must be *thread-safe*
- *Def:* A function is *thread-safe* iff it will always produce correct results when called repeatedly from multiple concurrent threads.
- **Classes of thread-unsafe functions:**
 - Class 1: Functions that do not protect shared variables
 - Class 2: Functions that keep state across multiple invocations
 - Class 3: Functions that return a pointer to a static variable
 - Class 4: Functions that call thread-unsafe functions

Thread-Unsafe Functions (Class 1)

■ Failing to protect shared variables

- Fix: Use P and V semaphore operations (or mutex)
- Example: `goodcnt.c`
- Issue: Synchronization operations will slow down code

Thread-Unsafe Functions (Class 2)

- **Relying on persistent state across multiple function invocations**
 - Example: Random number generator that relies on static state

```
static unsigned int next = 1;

/* rand: return pseudo-random integer on 0..32767 */
int rand(void)
{
    next = next*1103515245 + 12345;
    return (unsigned int)(next/65536) % 32768;
}

/* srand: set seed for rand() */
void srand(unsigned int seed)
{
    next = seed;
}
```

Thread-Safe Random Number Generator

- Pass state as part of argument
 - and, thereby, eliminate static state

```
/* rand_r - return pseudo-random integer on 0..32767 */  
  
int rand_r(int *nextp)  
{  
    *nextp = *nextp*1103515245 + 12345;  
    return (unsigned int)(*nextp/65536) % 32768;  
}
```

- Consequence: programmer using `rand_r` must maintain seed

Thread-Unsafe Functions (Class 3)

- **Returning a pointer to a static variable**
- **Fix 1. Rewrite function so caller passes address of variable to store result**
 - Requires changes in caller and callee
- **Fix 2. Lock-and-copy**
 - Requires simple changes in caller (and none in callee)
 - However, caller must free memory.

```
/* Convert integer to string */
char *itoa(int x)
{
    static char buf[11];
    sprintf(buf, "%d", x);
    return buf;
}
```

```
char *lc_itoa(int x, char *dest)
{
    P(&mutex);
    strcpy(dest, itoa(x));
    V(&mutex);
    return dest;
}
```

Thread-Unsafe Functions (Class 4)

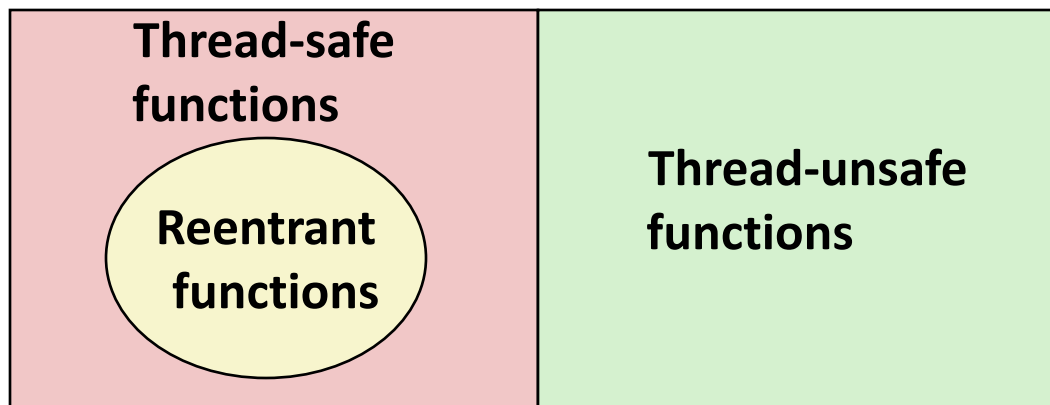
■ Calling thread-unsafe functions

- Calling one thread-unsafe function makes the entire function that calls it thread-unsafe
- Fix: Modify the function so it calls only thread-safe functions 😊

Reentrant Functions

- Def: A function is **reentrant** iff it accesses no shared variables when called by multiple threads.
 - Important subset of thread-safe functions
 - Require no synchronization operations
 - Only way to make a Class 2 function thread-safe is to make it reentrant (e.g., `rand_r`)

All functions



Thread-Safe Library Functions

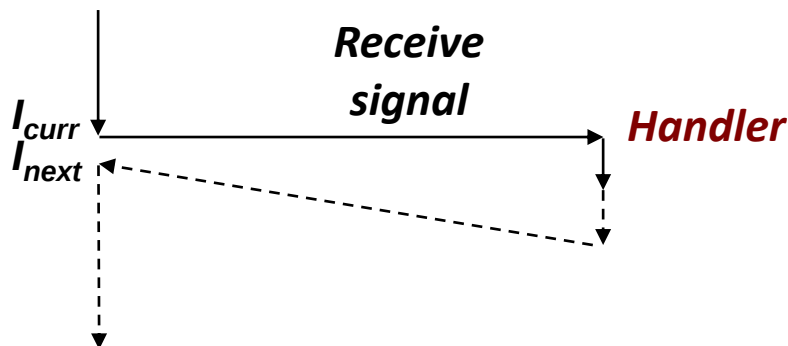
- All functions in the Standard C Library (at the back of your K&R text) are thread-safe
 - Examples: `malloc`, `free`, `printf`, `scanf`
- Most Unix system calls are thread-safe, with a few exceptions:

Thread-unsafe function	Class	Reentrant version
<code>asctime</code>	3	<code>asctime_r</code>
<code>ctime</code>	3	<code>ctime_r</code>
<code>gethostbyaddr</code>	3	<code>gethostbyaddr_r</code>
<code>gethostbyname</code>	3	<code>gethostbyname_r</code>
<code>inet_ntoa</code>	3	(none)
<code>localtime</code>	3	<code>localtime_r</code>
<code>rand</code>	2	<code>rand_r</code>

Today

- Using semaphores to schedule shared resources
 - Readers-writers problem
- **Other concurrency issues**
 - Races
 - Deadlocks
 - Thread safety
 - **Interactions between threads and signal handling**

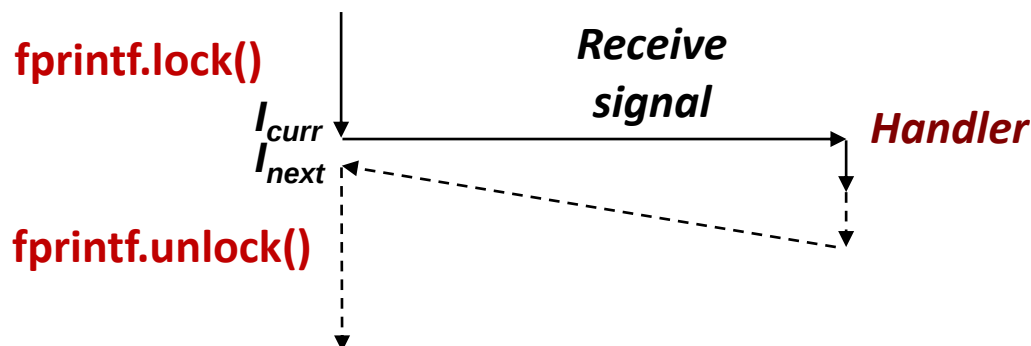
Review: Signal Handling



■ Action

- Signal can occur at any point in program execution
 - Unless signal is blocked
- Signal handler runs within same thread
- Must run to completion and then return to regular program execution

Threads / Signals Interactions

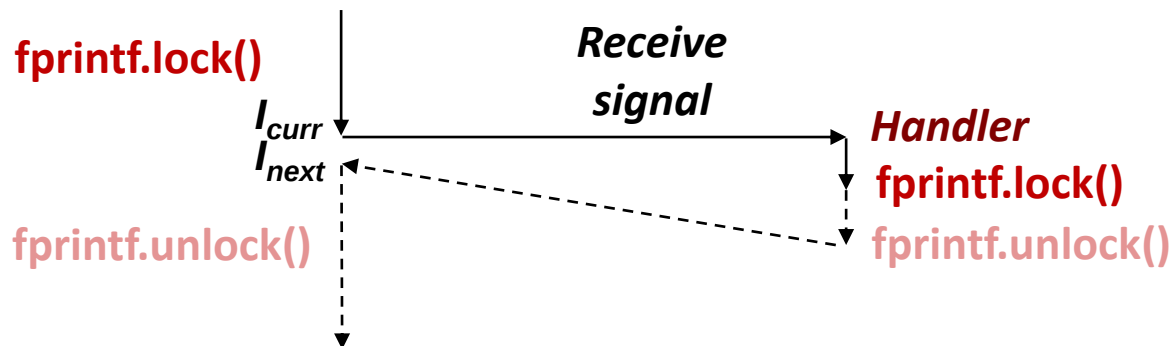


■ Many library functions use lock-and-copy for thread safety

- Because they have hidden state
- malloc
 - Free lists
- fprintf, printf, puts
 - So that outputs from multiple threads don't interleave
- sprintf
 - Not officially asynch-signal-safe, but seems to be OK

■ OK for handler that doesn't use these library functions

Bad Thread / Signal Interactions



■ What if:

- Signal received while library function holds lock
- Handler calls same (or related) library function

■ Deadlock!

- Signal handler cannot proceed until it gets lock
- Main program cannot proceed until handler completes

■ Key Point

- Threads employ symmetric concurrency
- Signal handling is asymmetric

Threads Summary

- **Threads provide another mechanism for writing concurrent programs**
- **Threads are growing in popularity**
 - Somewhat cheaper than processes
 - Easy to share data between threads
- **However, the ease of sharing has a cost:**
 - Easy to introduce subtle synchronization errors
 - Tread carefully with threads!
- **For more info:**
 - D. Butenhof, “Programming with Posix Threads”, Addison-Wesley, 1997