

TCSS 422: OPERATING SYSTEMS

Processes & The Process API



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School of Engineering and Technology
University of Washington - Tacoma

January 15, 2026

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OBJECTIVES – 1/15

- **Questions from 1/13**
- C Review Survey – Closes Jan 17 AOE
- Student Background Survey
- Virtual Machine Survey: VM requests to be sent to SET IT
- Assignment 0
- Chapter 4: Processes
 - Process states, context switches
 - Kernel data structures for processes and threads
- Chapter 5: Process API
 - `fork()`, `wait()`, `exec()`

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VIRTUAL MACHINE SUPPORT ON APPLE M1

- Installing a Ubuntu Virtual Machine on Apple M1 MacBooks:
- FREE
- <https://mac.getutm.app/>
- MACs use Apple Silicon ARM-based CPUs
 - Motivation: faster, less expensive than Intel-based CPUs



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TEXT BOOK COUPON

- 15% off textbook code: AAC72SAVE15
- <https://www.lulu.com/shop/andrea-arpaci-dusseau-and-remzi-arpaci-dusseau/operating-systems-three-easy-pieces-hardcover-version-110/hardcover/product-15geeky.html?q=three+easy+pieces+operating+systems&page=1&pageSize=4>
- With coupon textbook is only ~ \$33.79 + tax & shipping

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FEEDBACK SURVEYS

- Feedback Survey in Class and on Canvas
- All Quarter: 1-point Extra Credit for completing online
- Weeks 1-6: 2-points Extra Credit completing in class
- Weeks 7-9: 3-points Extra Credit, 4-points (week 10)
- 46 points possible
- 2.5% added to final course grade for (46/46)
- There will be other opportunities (seminars, etc.) to earn survey pts

TCSS 422 A > Assignments

Spring 2021

Home

Announcements

Zoom

Syllabus

Assignments

Discussions

Upcoming Assignments

TCSS 422 - Online Daily Feedback Survey - 4/1

Available until Apr 5 at 11:59pm | Due Apr 5 at 10pm | -1 pts

Quiz 0 - Computer Operating Systems

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MATERIAL / PACE

- Please classify your perspective on material covered in today's class:
 - 45 of 46 respondents – 97.83%!!
 - 36 in-person, 9 online
- 1-mostly review, 5-equal new/review, 10-mostly new
- Average – 6.34 (↑ - previous 5.83)

- Please rate the pace of today's class:
 - 1-slow, 5-just right, 10-fast
 - Average – 5.13 (↓ - previous 5.21)

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FEEDBACK FROM 1/13

- **What does the OS do to prevent the corruptions of multiple-threads?**

- The term for “preventing corruption” of memory shared among multiple threads is called “**thread-safe**”
- **PROMPT GenAI:**
- #1: “list all known thread-safe operating systems”
- #2: “are there any operating systems that automatically guarantee thread safety for the programmer?”

- **What synchronization methods (tools) are available?**

- **PROMPT GenAI:**
- #1: “what thread synchronization methods are available in Linux?”
- Mutexes
- Condition Variables
- Semaphores

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FEEDBACK - 2

-  **Key takeaway (exam-ready)**

- **Linux provides thread synchronization through POSIX primitives (mutexes, condition variables, semaphores, RW locks), kernel-assisted futexes, and low-level atomic operations. Higher-level constructs are built on futexes for performance and scalability.**

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FEEDBACK - 3

- If two programs see some virtual addresses, how does the OS ensure that it does touch its physical memory?
- Interpretation: ‘how does the OS enable you to use variables stored in physical memory?’
- You can print the address of anything with %p and ‘&’ the address of operator:


```
int x = 1;
printf("x = %d addr=%p\n", x, &x);
```
- When you modify or print ‘int x’, the OS automatically translates the virtual addr to the physical addr behind the scenes to support working with the variable
- int x virtual addr can be 0x7fffffffdf54
- x is a local variables stored on the program’s stack
- notice the stack is near the end of the address range

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VIRTUAL ADDRESS SPACE 64-BIT LINUX OS

- 48-bit Virtual Address Space (Standard)
- This is the most common configuration, providing a total usable space of 256 TB.

Region	Start Address	End Address	Size
User Space	0x0000000000000000	0x00007FFFFFFFFF	128 TB
Unused Gap	0x0000800000000000	0xFFFFF7FFFFFFFFF	~16 EB
Kernel Space	0xFFFF800000000000	0xFFFFFFFFFFFFFF	128 TB

- A true 64-bit virtual address space can address 16,384,000 tera-bytes, which is 16,384 peta-bytes, which is 16.384 exabytes
- This much is not needed, so only 48-bits (3/4) of the address space is typically used
 - Larger servers may use a 57-bit address space (128 PB)

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FEEDBACK - 4

- I didn't really understand the 5 levels of abstraction or how pages works
 - This is called multi-level page tables, and will be discussed in the future
- Is there a way to access the slides themselves instead of the AI summary?
 - From the 'Schedule' tab, of the course website

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FEEDBACK - 5

- Why not put 100 hyperthreads In a CPU?
What's the limitation of virtual cores?
 - Physical CPUs consist of multiple execution units, that decode and execute the various stages of program code
 - Instruction Fetch Unit (IFU), Instruction Decode Unit (IDU), Execution Units (for example Arithmetic Logic Unit (ALU) + others), Write-Back Unit (WBU)
 - These units make up the CPU's instruction pipeline:
CPU pipeline: IFU → IDU → ALU → WBU
 - Hyperthreading shares a pipeline with 2 processes/threads simultaneously to provide 2 'logical' cores from 1 physical core
 - Presumably sharing a pipeline with >2 threads, would induce too much waiting for individual units

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MOTIVATION FOR LINUX

- It is worth noting the importance of Linux for today's developers and computer scientists.
- The CLOUD runs many virtual machines, recently in 2019 a key milestone was reached.
- Even on Microsoft Azure (the Microsoft Cloud), there were more Linux Virtual Machines (> 50%) than Windows.
- <https://www.zdnet.com/article/microsoft-developer-reveals-linux-is-now-more-used-on-azure-than-windows-server/>
- <https://www.zdnet.com/article/it-runs-on-the-cloud-and-the-cloud-runs-on-linux-any-questions/>
- The majority of application back-ends (server-side), cloud or not, run on Linux.
- This is due to licensing costs, example:

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MOTIVATION FOR LINUX - 2

- Consider a pricing example where you're asked to develop a web services backend that requires 10 x 8-CPU-core virtual servers
- Your organization investigates hosting costs on Amazon cloud
- 8-core VM is "c5d.2xlarge"

Name	Instance type	Memory	vCPUs	Linux On Demand cost	Windows On Demand cost
C5 High-CPU Extra Large	c5d.xlarge	8.0 GiB	4 vCPUs	\$0.192000 hourly	\$0.376000 hourly
C5 High-CPU 18xlarge	c5d.18xlarge	144.0 GiB	72 vCPUs	\$3.456000 hourly	\$6.768000 hourly
C5 High-CPU Large	c5d.large	4.0 GiB	2 vCPUs	\$0.096000 hourly	\$0.188000 hourly
C5 High-CPU 24xlarge	c5d.24xlarge	192.0 GiB	96 vCPUs	\$4.608000 hourly	\$9.024000 hourly
C5 High-CPU Quadruple Extra Large	c5d.4xlarge	32.0 GiB	16 vCPUs	\$0.768000 hourly	\$1.504000 hourly
C5 High-CPU Metal	c5d.metal	102.0 GiB	64 vCPUs	\$4.609000 hourly	\$9.024000 hourly
C5 High-CPU Double Extra Large	c5d.2xlarge	16.0 GiB	8 vCPUs	\$0.384000 hourly	\$0.752000 hourly
C5 High-CPU 12xlarge	c5d.12xlarge	96.0 GiB	48 vCPUs	\$2.304000 hourly	\$4.512000 hourly
C5 High-CPU 9xlarge	c5d.9xlarge	72.0 GiB	36 vCPUs	\$1.728000 hourly	\$3.384000 hourly

- Windows hourly price 75.2\$
- Linux hourly price 38.4\$
- See: <https://instances.vantage.sh/>

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MOTIVATION FOR LINUX - 2

- C
- S
- Y
- 8

WINDOWS

10 VMs x 8,760 hours x \$.752 = \$65,875.20

Linux

10 VMs x 8,760 hours x \$.384 = \$33,638.40

Windows comes at a 95.8% price premium

- W
- L

▪ See: <https://www.ec2instances.info/>

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C REVIEW SURVEY - AVAILABLE THRU 1/17

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STUDENT BACKGROUND SURVEY

■ **32 of 46 Responses** as of 1/15 @ ~8am

■ **Please complete the Student Background Survey**

- Please complete the survey by Monday

- Office Hours will be based on the survey

■ **<https://forms.gle/TBZMRUavzhihdUdb8>**

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OBJECTIVES – 1/15

■ Questions from 1/13

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■ Student Background Survey

■ **Virtual Machine Survey: VM requests to be sent to SET IT**

■ Assignment 0

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VIRTUAL MACHINE SURVEY

- Please complete the Virtual Machine Survey to request a “School of Engineering and Technology” remote hosted Ubuntu VM
- <https://forms.gle/G679XUXxXcHAffl6>
- **31 of 46 Responses as of 1/15 @ ~8am**
- VM requests will be sent to SET IT
- Survey response not required if no VM desired

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WE WILL RETURN AT
5:00PM

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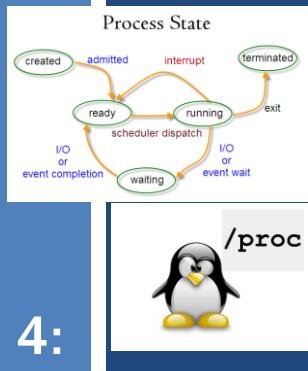
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CHAPTER 4: PROCESSES



The diagram illustrates the state transitions of a process. It shows a cycle of states: created, admitted, ready, running, waiting, and terminated. Transitions are labeled with events: admitted (from created to ready), scheduler dispatch (from ready to running), interrupt (from running to terminated), exit (from running to terminated), I/O or event completion (from running to waiting), and I/O or event wait (from waiting to running). A penguin icon is positioned next to the /proc directory icon.

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VIRTUALIZING THE CPU



- How should the CPU be shared?
- Time Sharing:
Run one process, pause it, run another
- The act of swapping process A out of the CPU to run process B is called a:
 - **CONTEXT SWITCH**
- How do we SWAP processes in and out of the CPU efficiently?
 - Goal is to minimize **overhead** of the swap
- **OVERHEAD** is time spent performing OS management activities that don't help accomplish real work

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PROCESS

A process is a running program.

- Process comprises of:

- Memory
 - Instructions (“the code”)
 - Data (heap)

- Registers

- PC: Program counter
 - Stack pointer

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PROCESS API

- Modern OSes provide a Process API for process support
- Create
 - Create a new process
- Destroy
 - Terminate a process (ctrl-c)
- Wait
 - Wait for a process to complete/stop
- Miscellaneous Control
 - Suspend process (ctrl-z)
 - Resume process (fg, bg)
- Status
 - Obtain process statistics: (top)

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PROCESS API: CREATE

1. Load program code (and static data) into memory
 - Program executable code (binary): loaded from disk
 - Static data: also loaded/created in address space
2. Run-time stack creation
 - Stack: local variables, function params, return address(es)
3. Create program's heap memory
 - For dynamically allocated data
4. Other initialization
 - I/O Setup
 - Each process has three open file descriptors: Standard Input, Standard Output, Standard Error
5. Start program running at the entry point: `main()`
 - OS transfers CPU control to the new process

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PROCESS API: CREATE

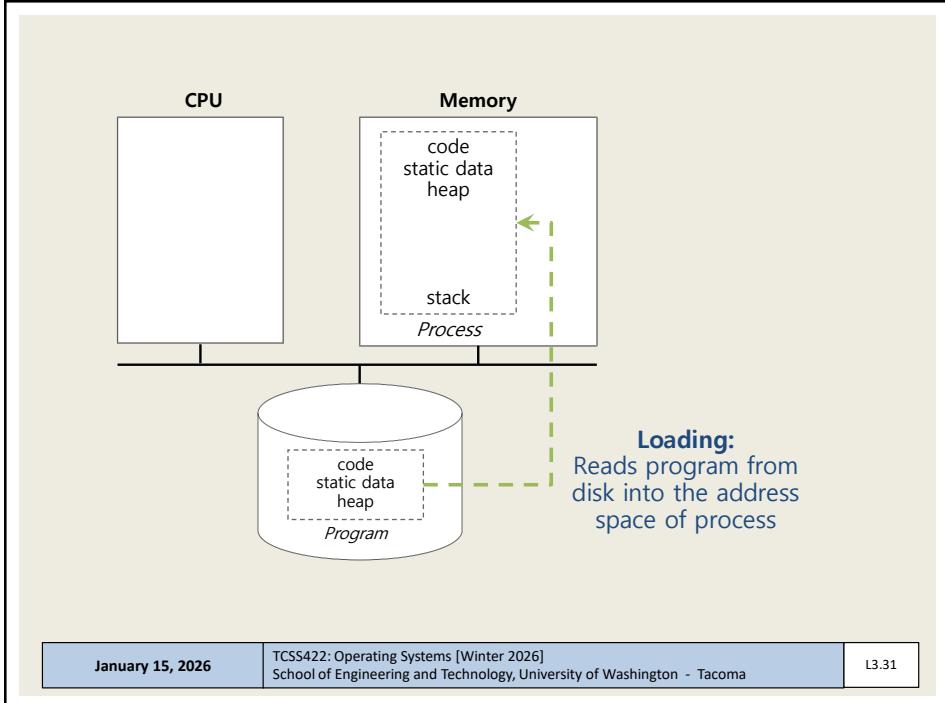
1. Load program code (and static data) into memory
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PROCESS STATES



■ RUNNING

- Currently executing instructions

■ READY

- Process is ready to run, but has been preempted
- CPU is presently allocated for other tasks

■ BLOCKED

- Process is **not** ready to run. It is waiting for another event to complete:
 - Process has already been initialized and run for awhile
 - Is now waiting on I/O from disk(s) or other devices

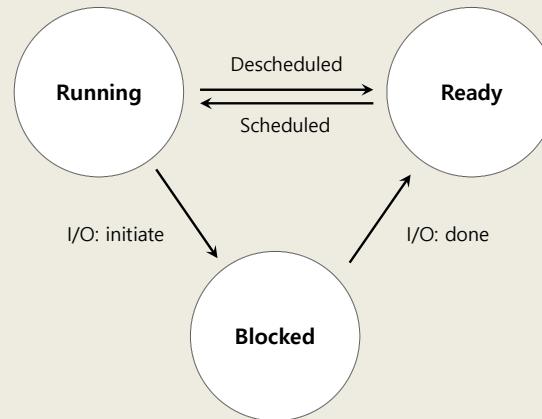
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PROCESS STATE TRANSITIONS



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OBSERVING PROCESS META-DATA

- Can inspect the number of **CONTEXT SWITCHES** made by a process
- Let's run `mem.c` (from chapter 2)
- `cat /proc/{process-id}/status`

```
Speculation_Store_Bypass:          thread vulnerable
Cpus_allowed: ff
Cpus_allowed_list: 0-7
Mems_allowed: 00000000,00000001
Mems_allowed_list: 0
voluntary_ctxt_switches: 1372
nonvoluntary_ctxt_switches: 18
wllloyd@utacme:~/
```

- proc "status" is a virtual file generated by Linux
- Provides a report with process related meta-data
- **What appears to happen to the number of context switches the longer a process runs? (mem.c)**

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OBSERVING PROCESS META-DATA

- Can inspect the number of **CONTEXT SWITCHES** made by a process

- Let's run `mem.c` (from chapter 2)

What is the difference between a voluntary and a non-voluntary context switch ?

- **What appears to happen to the number of context switches the longer a process runs? (mem.c)**

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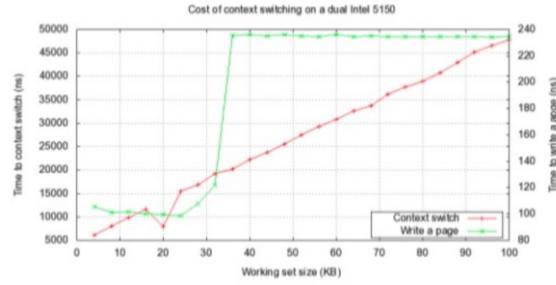
CONTEXT SWITCH

- **How long does a context switch take?**

- 10,000 to 50,000 ns (.01 to .05 ms)

- 2,000 context switches is near 100ms

Without CPU affinity



(source: <http://blog.tuananet.net/2010/11/how-long-does-it-take-to-make-context-switch/>)

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When a process is in this state, it is advantageous for the Operating System to perform a CONTEXT SWITCH to perform other work

READY ✓ 0

RUNNING

BLOCKED

SEE MORE

Current responses

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QUESTION: WHEN TO CONTEXT SWITCH

- When a process is about to go into this state, it is advantageous for the Operating System to perform a CONTEXT SWITCH to perform other work:
 - (a) RUNNING
 - (b) READY
 - (c) BLOCKED
 - (d) All of the above
 - (e) None of the above

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PROCESS DATA STRUCTURES

- OS provides data structures to track process information
 - Process list
 - Process Data
 - State of process: Ready, Blocked, Running
 - Register context
- PCB (Process Control Block)
 - A C-structure that contains information about each process

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STRUCT TASK_STRUCT PROCESS CONTROL BLOCK

- Process Control Block (PCB)
- Key data regarding a process



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XV6 KERNEL DATA STRUCTURES

- xv6: pedagogical implementation of Linux
- Simplified structures shown in book

```
// the registers xv6 will save and restore
// to stop and subsequently restart a process
struct context {
    int eip; // Index pointer register
    int esp; // Stack pointer register
    int ebx; // Called the base register
    int ecx; // Called the counter register
    int edx; // Called the data register
    int esi; // Source index register
    int edi; // Destination index register
    int ebp; // Stack base pointer register
};

// the different states a process can be in
enum proc_state { UNUSED, EMBRYO, SLEEPING,
    RUNNABLE, RUNNING, ZOMBIE },
```

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XV6 KERNEL DATA STRUCTURES - 2

```
// the information xv6 tracks about each process
// including its register context and state
struct proc {
    char *mem; // Start of process memory
    uint sz; // Size of process memory
    char *kstack; // Bottom of kernel stack
    // for this process
    enum proc_state state; // Process state
    int pid; // Process ID
    struct proc *parent; // Parent process
    void *chan; // If non-zero, sleeping on chan
    int killed; // If non-zero, have been killed
    struct file *ofile[NOFILE]; // Open files
    struct inode *cwd; // Current directory
    struct context context; // Switch here to run process
    struct trapframe *tf; // Trap frame for the
    // current interrupt
};
```

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LINUX: STRUCTURES

- **struct task_struct**, equivalent to **struct proc**
 - The Linux process data structure
 - Kernel data type (i.e. record) that describes individual Linux processes
 - Structure is **VERY LARGE**: **10,000+ bytes**
 - Defined in:
`/usr/src/linux-headers-{kernel version}/include/linux/sched.h`
 - Ubuntu kernel version 6.11, **LOC 758 – 1588**
 - Ubuntu kernel version 5.15, **LOC: 721 - 1507**
 - Ubuntu kernel version 5.11, **LOC: 657 – 1394**
 - Ubuntu kernel version 4.4, **LOC: 1391 – 1852**

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STRUCT TASK_STRUCT

- Key elements (e.g. PCB) in Linux are captured in **struct task_struct**: (LOC from Linux kernel v 6.11)
- **Process ID**
- **pid_t pid;** LOC #995
- **Process State**
- **/* -1 unrunnable, 0 runnable, >0 stopped: */**
- **unsigned int __state;** LOC #766
- **Process time slice**
 how long the process will run before context switching
- **Struct sched_rt_entity used in task_struct contains timeslice:**
 - **struct sched_rt_entity rt;** LOC #812
 - **unsigned int time_slice;** LOC #583

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STRUCT TASK_STRUCT - 2

- Address space of the process:
- “mm” is short for “memory map”
- `struct mm_struct *mm;` LOC #898
- Parent process, that launched this one
- `struct task_struct __rcu *parent;` LOC #1009
- Child processes (as a list)
- `struct list_head children;` LOC #1017
- Open files
- `struct files_struct *files;` LOC #1121

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LINUX STRUCTURES - 2

- List of Linux data structures:
<http://www.tldp.org/LDP/tlk/ds/ds.html>
- Description of process data structures:
<https://learning.oreilly.com/library/view/linux-kernel-development/9780768696974/cover.html>
3rd edition is online (dated from 2010):
See chapter 3 on Process Management
- Safari online – accessible using UW ID SSO login
Linux Kernel Development, 3rd edition
Robert Love
Addison-Wesley

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- Questions from 1/13
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- Student Background Survey
- Virtual Machine Survey: VM requests to be sent to SET IT
- Assignment 0
- Chapter 4: Processes
 - Process states, context switches
 - Kernel data structures for processes and threads
- Chapter 5: Process API
 - fork(), wait(), exec()

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CHAPTER 5: C PROCESS API



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OBJECTIVES – 1/15

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 - **fork()**, **wait()**, **exec()**

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fork()



- Creates a new process - think of “a fork in the road”
- “Parent” process is the original
- Creates “child” process of the program from the current execution point
- Book says “pretty odd”
- Creates a duplicate program instance (these are processes!)
- **Copy of**
 - Address space (memory)
 - Register
 - Program Counter (PC)
- **Fork returns**
 - child PID to parent
 - 0 to child



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FORK EXAMPLE

- p1.c

```
#include <stdio.h>
#include <stdlib.h>
#include <unistd.h>

int main(int argc, char *argv[]){
    printf("hello world (pid:%d)\n", (int) getpid());
    int rc = fork();
    if (rc < 0) {
        // fork failed; exit
        fprintf(stderr, "fork failed\n");
        exit(1);
    } else if (rc == 0) { // child (new process)
        printf("hello, I am child (pid:%d)\n", (int) getpid());
    } else { // parent goes down this path (main)
        printf("hello, I am parent of %d (pid:%d)\n",
               rc, (int) getpid());
    }
    return 0;
}
```

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FORK EXAMPLE - 2

- Non deterministic ordering of execution

```
prompt> ./p1
hello world (pid:29146)
hello, I am parent of 29147 (pid:29146)
hello, I am child (pid:29147)
prompt>
```

or

```
prompt> ./p1
hello world (pid:29146)
hello, I am child (pid:29147)
hello, I am parent of 29147 (pid:29146)
prompt>
```

- CPU scheduler determines which to run first

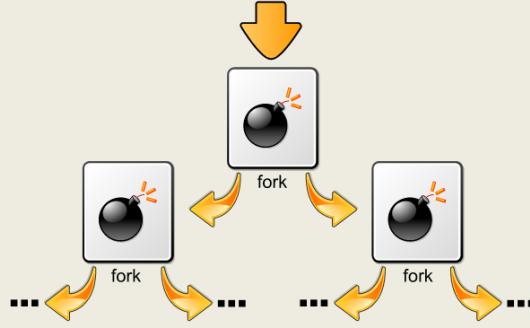
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:((){ :|: & };:



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wait()



- **wait(), waitpid()**
- **Called by parent process**
- **Waits for a child process to finish executing**
- **Not a sleep() function**
- **Provides some ordering to multi-process execution**



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FORK WITH WAIT

```
#include <stdio.h>
#include <stdlib.h>
#include <unistd.h>
#include <sys/wait.h>

int main(int argc, char *argv[]){
    printf("hello world (pid:%d)\n", (int) getpid());
    int rc = fork();
    if (rc < 0) {           // fork failed; exit
        fprintf(stderr, "fork failed\n");
        exit(1);
    } else if (rc == 0) {    // child (new process)
        printf("hello, I am child (pid:%d)\n", (int) getpid());
    } else {                // parent goes down this path (main)
        int wc = wait(NULL);
        printf("hello, I am parent of %d (wc:%d) (pid:%d)\n",
               rc, wc, (int) getpid());
    }
    return 0;
}
```

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FORK WITH WAIT - 2

- Deterministic ordering of execution

```
prompt> ./p2
hello world (pid:29266)
hello, I am child (pid:29267)
hello, I am parent of 29267 (wc:29267) (pid:29266)
prompt>
```

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FORK EXAMPLE

- Linux example

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exec()



- Supports running an external program by “transferring control”
- 6 types: execl(), execlp(), execle(), execv(), execvp(), execvpe()
- execl(), execlp(), execle(): const char *arg (example: execl.c)
 - Provide cmd and args as individual params to the function
 - Each arg is a pointer to a null-terminated string
 - ODD: pass a variable number of args: (arg0, arg1, .. argn)
- Execv(), execvp(), execvpe() (example: exec.c)
 - Provide cmd and args as an Array of pointers to strings
 - Strings are null-terminated
 - First argument is name of command being executed
 - Fixed number of args passed in

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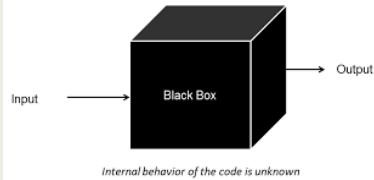
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EXEC() - 2

- Common use case:
- Write a new program which wraps a legacy one
- Provide a new interface to an old system: Web services
- Legacy program thought of as a “black box”
- We don’t want to know what is inside... 😊



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EXEC EXAMPLE

```
#include <stdio.h>
#include <stdlib.h>
#include <unistd.h>
#include <string.h>
#include <sys/wait.h>

int main(int argc, char *argv[]){
    printf("hello world (pid:%d)\n", (int) getpid());
    int rc = fork();
    if (rc < 0) { // fork failed; exit
        fprintf(stderr, "fork failed\n");
        exit(1);
    } else if (rc == 0) { // child (new process)
        printf("hello, I am child (pid:%d)\n", (int) getpid());
        char *myargs[3];
        myargs[0] = strdup("wc"); // program: "wc" (word count)
        myargs[1] = strdup("p3.c"); // argument: file to count
        myargs[2] = NULL; // marks end of array
        ...
    }
}
```



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EXEC EXAMPLE - 2

```
... → execvp(myargs[0], myargs); // runs word count
    printf("this shouldn't print out");
} else {                                // parent goes down this path (main)
    int wc = wait(NULL);
    printf("hello, I am parent of %d (wc:%d) (pid:%d)\n",
           rc, wc, (int) getpid());
}
return 0;
}
```

```
prompt> ./p3
hello world (pid:29383)
hello, I am child (pid:29384)
29 107 1030 p3.c
hello, I am parent of 29384 (wc:29384) (pid:29383)
prompt>
```

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EXEC WITH FILE REDIRECTION (OUTPUT)

```
#include <stdio.h>
#include <stdlib.h>
#include <unistd.h>
#include <string.h>
#include <fcntl.h>
#include <sys/wait.h>

int
main(int argc, char *argv[]){
    int rc = fork();
    if (rc < 0) {           // fork failed; exit
        fprintf(stderr, "fork failed\n");
        exit(1);
    } else if (rc == 0) {    // child: redirect standard output to a file
        close(STDOUT_FILENO);
        open("./p4.output", O_CREAT|O_WRONLY|O_TRUNC, S_IRWXU);
        ...
    }
}
```

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FILE MODE BITS

```

S_IRWXU
read, write, execute/search by owner
S_IUSR
read permission, owner
S_IWUSR
write permission, owner
S_IXUSR
execute/search permission, owner
S_IRWXG
read, write, execute/search by group
S_IRGRP
read permission, group
S_IWGRP
write permission, group
S_IXGRP
execute/search permission, group
S_IRWXO
read, write, execute/search by others
S_IROTH
read permission, others
S_IWOTH
write permission, others

```

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EXEC W/ FILE REDIRECTION (OUTPUT) - 2

```

...
// now exec "wc"...
char *myargs[3];
myargs[0] = strdup("wc");           // program: "wc" (word count)
myargs[1] = strdup("p4.c");         // argument: file to count
myargs[2] = NULL;                  // marks end of array
execvp(myargs[0], myargs);         // runs word count
} else {                           // parent goes down this path (main)
    int wc = wait(NULL);
}
return 0;
}

```

```

prompt> ./p4
prompt> cat p4.output
32 109 846 p4.c
prompt>

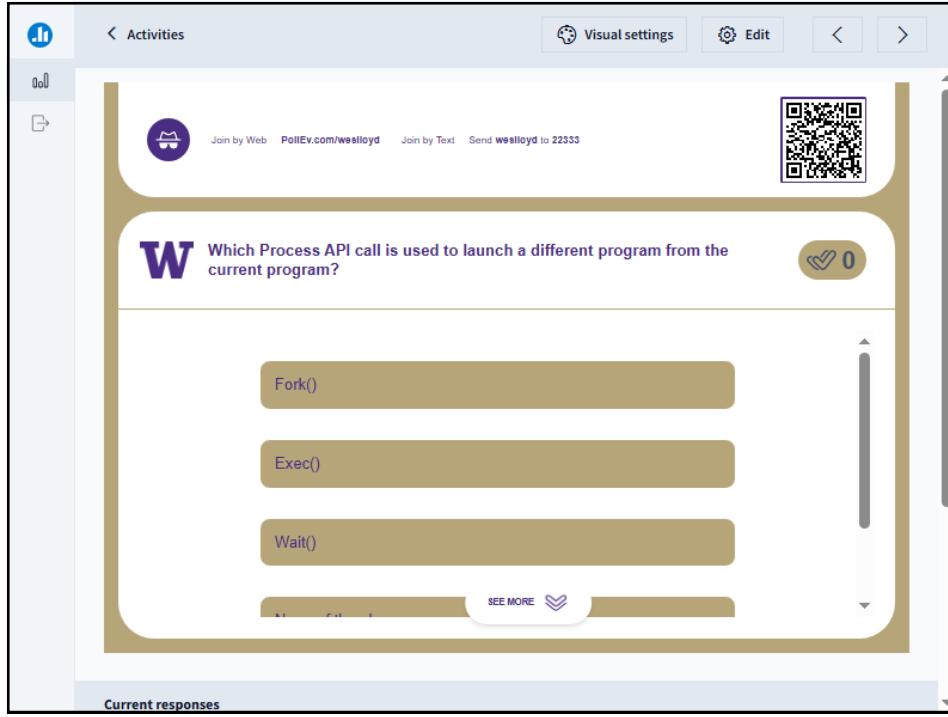
```

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The screenshot shows a poll from PollEvery. The question is: "Which Process API call is used to launch a different program from the current program?". The options are: Fork(), Exec(), and Wait(). There is a "SEE MORE" button with a downward arrow. The poll has 0 responses. The poll ID is waslloyd and the URL is PollEvery.com/waslloyd. There are buttons for "Join by Web", "Join by Text", and "Send waslloyd to 22533". A QR code is also present.

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QUESTION: PROCESS API

■ Which Process API call is used to launch a different program from the current program?

■ (a) Fork()
■ (b) Exec()
■ (c) Wait()
■ (d) None of the above
■ (e) All of the above

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