OS07: MX Challenges

Based on Chapter 4 of [Hai17]

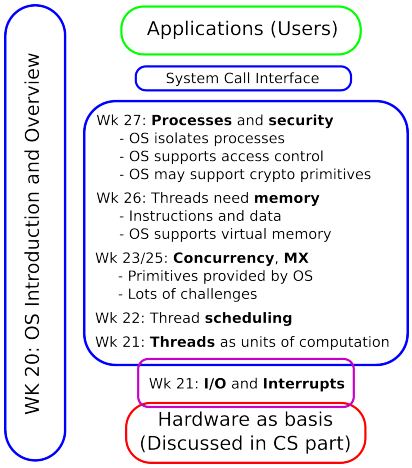
Jens Lechtenbörger

Computer Structures and Operating Systems 2019

1 Introduction

1.1 OS Plan

- OS Motivation (Wk 20)
- OS Introduction (Wk 20)
- Interrupts and I/O (Wk 21)
- Threads (Wk 21)
- Thread Scheduling (Wk 22)
- Mutual Exclusion (MX) (Wk 23)
- MX in Java (Wk 23)
- MX Challenges (Wk 25)
- Virtual Memory I (Wk 26)
- Virtual Memory II (Wk 26)
- Processes (Wk 27)
- Security (Wk 27)
- Wrap-up (Wk 28)



1.2 Today's Core Question

- Am I fine if I lock all shared resources before use?

1.3 Learning Objectives

- Explain priority inversion and counter measures
- Explain and apply deadlock prevention and detection
- Explain convoys and starvation as MX challenges

1.4 Previously on OS ...

- Mutexes may be based either on busy waiting (spinlocks) or on blocking (e.g., lock, mutex, semaphore, monitor)
- Threads may have different **priorities**
  - Lower priority threads are **preempted** for those with higher priority (e.g., with round robin scheduling), which may lead to starvation

1.4.1 Threads, again

1.5 Different Learning Styles

- In previous years, some students reported that Section 4.8.1 (pp. 135 – 137) of [Hai17] on Priority Inversion is quite easy to understand, while they perceived that section in this presentation to be confusing.
- Note that [Hai17] discusses Priority Inversion resulting from locks/mutexes with blocking, while the slides also contain a variant with spinlocks.

Contents

2 Priority Inversion

In general, if threads with different priorities exist, the OS should run those with high priority in preference to those with lower priority.

The technical term "priority inversion" denotes phenomena, where low-priority threads hinder the progress of high-priority threads, which intuitively should not happen. The next slides demonstrate such phenomena, first a weaker variant where MX is enforced with spinlocks, then the more usual variant with MX based on blocking.

2.1 Priority Inversion with Spinlocks

- Example; single CPU core (visualization on next slide)
  1. Thread T_0 with low priority enters CS
  2. T_0 preempted by OS for T_1 with high priority
     - E.g., an important event occurs, to be handled by T_1
     - Note that T_0 is still inside CS, holds lock

3. T_1 tries to enter same CS and **spins** on lock held by T_0

- This is a variant of **priority inversion**
  - High-priority thread T_1 cannot continue due to actions by low-priority thread
    - If just one CPU core exists: Low-priority thread T_0 cannot continue
      - As CPU occupied by T_1
      - Deadlock (discussed subsequently)
    - If multiple cores exist: Low-priority thread T_0 runs although thread with higher priority does not make progress

2.1.1 Single Core

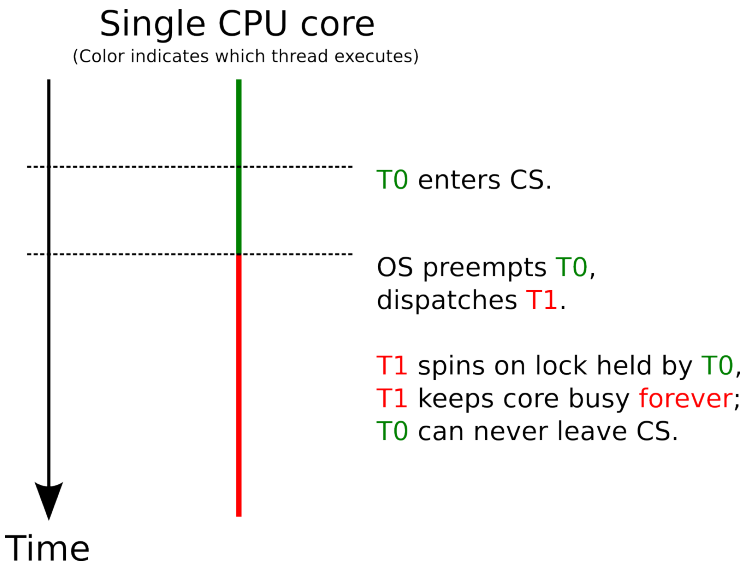


Figure 1: Figure under CC0 1.0

2.1.2 Two Cores

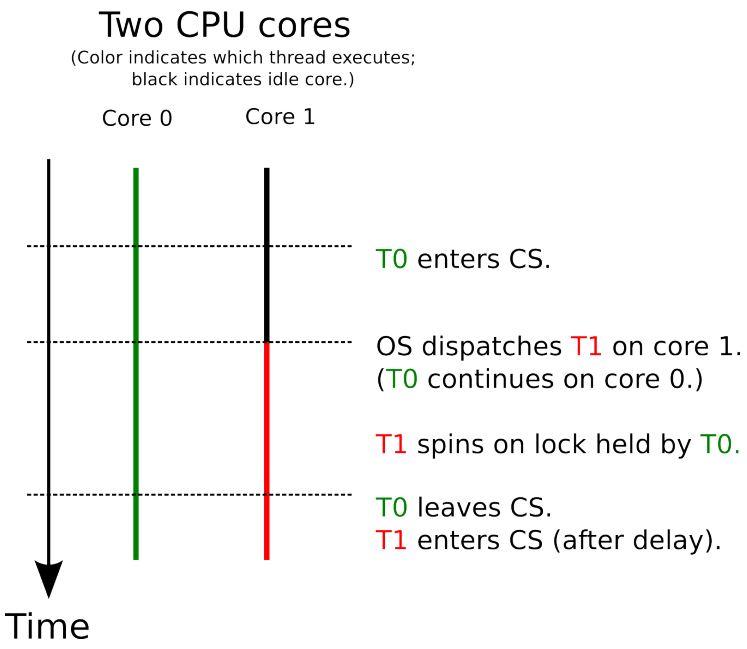


Figure 2: Figure under CC0 1.0

2.2 Priority Inversion with Blocking

- (Visualization on next slide)
- T_0 with low, T_M with medium, T_1 with high priority
  1. T_0 in CS
  2. An important event occurs, OS preempts T_0 for T_1
     - T_1 attempts entry into same CS, T_1 gets blocked
     - T_0 could continue if no higher priority thread existed
  3. Another, less important, event occurs, to be handled by T_M
     - Based on priority, OS favors T_M over T_0
     - T_M runs instead of more highly prioritized T_1 → **Priority inversion**
       - (T_M does unrelated work, without need to enter the CS)
     - T_0 cannot leave CS as long as T_M exists
- With long running or many threads of medium priority, T_1 (and important event) need to wait for a long time

2.2.1 Blocking CS

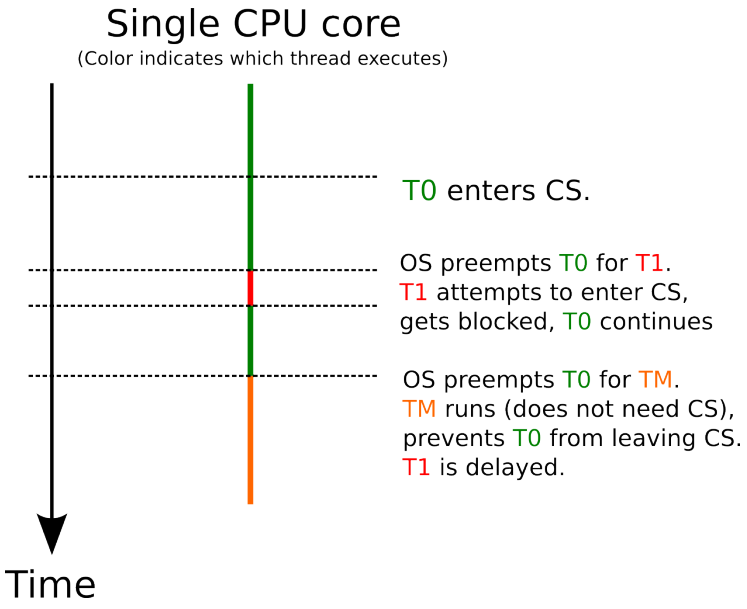


Figure 3: Figure under CC0 1.0

2.3 Priority Inversion Example

- Mars Pathfinder, 1997; see Wikipedia for details
  - Robotic spacecraft named Pathfinder

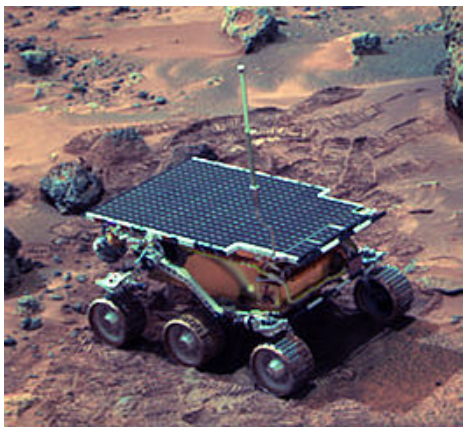


Figure 4: "Sojourner Rover" by NASA under Public domain; from Wikimedia Commons

    - With rover named Sojourner (shown to right)
  - A "low-cost" mission at $280 million

- Bug caused repeated resets
  - "found in preflight testing but was deemed a **glitch** and therefore given a low priority as it only occurred in certain **unanticipated** heavy-load conditions"
- Priority inversion had been known for a long time
  - E.g.: [LR80]

2.4 Priority Inversion Solutions

- **Priority Inheritance (PI)**
  - Thread of low priority inherits priority of waiting thread
    - E.g., PI-futex in Linux
    - E.g., remote update for Mars Pathfinder
      - Mutex of Pathfinder OS had flag to activate PI
      - Initially, PI was off ...
- **Priority Ceiling (PC)**
  - Every resource has priority (new concept; so far only threads had priorities)
    - (Highest priority that "normal" threads can have) + 1
  - Accessing thread runs with that priority
- In both cases: Restore old priority after access

An intuitive explanation of Priority Inheritance is that if an important task, i.e., a thread with high priority, needs to wait for "something else", then this "something else" immediately gains in importance, as the success of the important task depends on it.

Thus, with Priority Inheritance a thread of low priority holding some lock, mutex, semaphore, or monitor, for which a high priority threads waits, inherits the priority of the high priority waiting thread.

If you think again about the negative effects of medium priority threads for priority inversion, those negative effects do no longer occur, as the thread with inherited priority is now scheduled before medium priority threads. Thus, it finishes fast, allowing the high priority thread to continue quickly.

For Priority Ceiling, each resource is assigned a priority. The priority of a thread accessing that resource is then increased to the resource's priority. Usually, the priority for resources is set to be slightly higher than that of ordinary threads. Thus, for the duration of resource accesses, threads run with highest priority and finish quickly.

In both cases, Priority Inheritance and Priority Ceiling, priorities are restored after resource access.

To conclude, you should think twice whether you want to create threads with different priorities that share resources. If yes, priority inversion may happen. Then, you need to check the documentation for whatever MX mechanism you are about to apply whether it supports PI or PC. If neither is documented, do not use that mechanism.

2.5 JiTT Task, Ticket-to-Exam - Task 1

- This task is a variant of Exercise 4.10 of [Hai17]. Submit part (1) of your solution as JiTT assignment in Learnweb, part (2) as Ticket-to-Exam.

- Suppose a computer with only one processor runs a program that creates three threads, which are assigned high, medium, and low fixed priorities. (Assume that no other threads are competing for the same processor.) The threads of high and medium priority are currently blocked, waiting for different events, while the thread with low priority is runnable. The threads share access to a single mutex. Pseudocode for each of the threads is shown subsequently.
  1. Suppose that the mutex does not provide priority inheritance. How soon would you expect the program to terminate? Why?
  2. Suppose that the mutex provides priority inheritance. How soon would you expect the program to terminate? Why?

```
High-priority thread:
  "initially blocked; unblocked to handle event after 1 second"
  lock the mutex
  terminate execution of the whole program

Medium-priority thread:
  "initially blocked; unblocked to handle event after 1 second"
  run for 10 seconds on CPU

Low-priority thread:
  "initially runnable"
  lock the mutex
  perform I/O operation which (in this run) leads to blocking for 3 seconds
  unlock the mutex
```

3 Deadlocks

3.1 Deadlock

- Permanent blocking of thread set
  - Reason
    - **Cyclic waiting** for resources/locks/messages of other threads
- No generally accepted solution
  - Deadlocks can be perceived as programming bugs
    - Dealing with deadlocks causes overhead
      - Acceptable to deal with (hopefully rare) bugs?
  - Solutions depend on
    - Properties of resources
    - Properties of threads (transactions?)

3.2 Deadlock Example

- Money transfers between bank accounts
  - Transfer from `myAccount` to `yourAccount` by thread 1; transfer in other direction by thread 2
- **Race conditions** on account balances
- Need **mutex** per account
  - Lock both accounts involved in transfer. What order?
- "Natural" lock order: First, lock source account; then, lock destination account
  - Thread 1 locks `myAccount`, while thread 2 locks `yourAccount`
    - Each thread gets blocked once it attempts to acquire the second lock
      - Neither can continue
    - **Deadlock**

3.3 Defining Conditions for Deadlocks

Deadlock if and only if (1) – (4) hold [CES71]:

1. **Mutual exclusion**
   - Exclusive resource usage
2. **Hold and wait**
   - Threads hold some resources while waiting for others
3. **No preemption**
   - OS does not forcibly remove allocated resources
4. **Circular wait**
   - Circular chain of threads such that each thread holds resources that are requested by next thread in chain

3.4 Resource Allocation Graphs

- Visualization of resource allocation as **directed graph**
  - Nodes
    - Threads (squares on next slide)
    - Resources (circles on next slide)
  - Edges
    - From thread T to resource R if T is waiting for R
    - From resource R to thread T if R is allocated to T
- **Fact**: System in deadlock if and only if graph contains cycle

3.5 Resource Allocated Graph Example

Visualization of deadlock: cyclic resource allocation graph for previous example

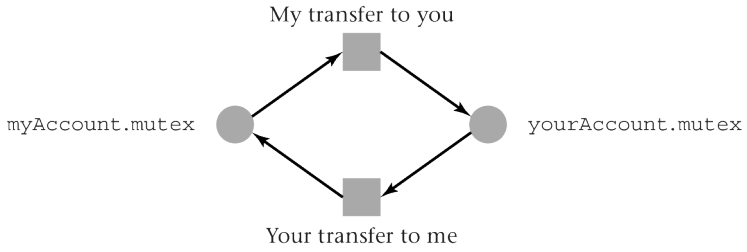


Figure 5: "Figure 4.22 of [Hai17]" by Max Hailperin under CC BY-SA 3.0; converted from GitHub

4 Deadlock Strategies

4.1 Deadlock Strategies

- (Ostrich algorithm)
- Deadlock Prevention
- Deadlock Avoidance
- Deadlock Detection

These strategies are covered in subsequent slides.

4.2 Ostrich "Algorithm"

- A joke about missing deadlock handling
  - "Implemented" in most systems
    - Pretend nothing special is happening
    - (E.g., Java VMs act like ostriches)
  - Reasoning
    - Proper deadlock handling is complex
    - Deadlocks are rare, result from buggy programs

Figure 6: Drawing created by Adrian Lison for bonus task in summer term 2017; released into Public Domain; other excellent drawings.

4.3 Deadlock Prevention

- Prevent a defining condition for deadlocks from becoming true
- Practical options
  - Prevent condition (2), "hold and wait": Request all necessary resources at once
    - Only possible in special cases, e.g., conservative/static 2PL in DBMS
    - Threads either have no incoming or no outgoing edges in resource allocation graph → Cycles cannot occur
  - Prevent condition (4), "circular wait": Number resources, request resources according to **linear resource ordering**
    - Requests for resources in ascending order → Cycles cannot occur
    - In other words: A thread cannot request a resource R_k if it is holding a resource R_h with $k < h$

A strategy for deadlocks is called prevention strategy if it prevents deadlocks from happening by making sure that one of the four defining deadlock conditions can never become true. Although there are four conditions, only two of them are used for practical purposes, and they are explained in the subsequent bullet points. Please think about those bullet points on your own.

4.3.1 Linear Resource Ordering Example

- Money transfers between bank accounts revisited
- Locks acquired in **order of account numbers**
  - A programming contract, not known by OS
  - Suppose `myAccount` has number 42, `yourAccount` is 4711
    - Both threads try to lock `myAccount` first (as $42 < 4711$)
      - Only one succeeds, can also lock `yourAccount`
      - The other thread gets blocked
  - **No deadlock**
- (See Fig 4.21 in [Hai17] for an example of linear ordering in the context of the Linux scheduler)

4.4 Deadlock Avoidance

- (See stackexchange for difference between prevent and avoid)
- Dynamic decision whether allocation may lead to deadlock
  - If a deadlock cannot be ruled out easily: Do not perform that allocation but **block** the requesting thread (or return error code or raise exception)
  - Consequently, deadlocks do never occur; they are **avoided**

- Classical technique
  - Banker's algorithm by Dijkstra
    - Deny incremental allocation if "unsafe" state would arise
    - Not used in practice
      - Resources and threads' requirements need to be declared ahead of time

A strategy for deadlocks is called avoidance strategy if it avoids deadlocks. Personally, I don't see much difference between the words "prevent" and "avoid", but this terminology is accepted in the literature on deadlocks.

Avoidance does not rule out any specific of the four defining deadlock conditions, but it still makes sure that deadlocks will not happen. The typical approach is to analyze resource requests by threads. If some deadlock avoidance algorithm is able to rule out a deadlock for the resulting state, the request will be granted. If the algorithm is not able to rule out deadlocks, the request will not be granted. Note that such algorithms generally err on the safe side. Thus, some requests might not be granted although they would not cause any deadlock; the OS might be unable to detect this, though.

A famous deadlock avoidance technique is Dijkstra's banker's algorithm, which has quite restrictive preconditions and is therefore not used in practice.

4.5 Deadlock Detection

- Idea
  - Let deadlocks happen
  - Detect deadlocks, e.g., via cycle-check on resource allocation graph
    - Periodically or
    - After "unreasonably long" waiting time for lock or
    - Immediately when thread tries to acquire a locked mutex
  - Resolve deadlocks: typically, terminate some thread(s)
- Prerequisite to build graph
  - Mutex records by which thread it is locked (if any)
  - OS records for what mutex a thread is waiting

The final strategy for dealing with deadlocks is deadlock detection. Here, the system does not take special precautions to avoid or prevent deadlocks but lets them happen. To deal with deadlocks, they are detected, for example based on cycle checks on resource allocation graphs, and then resolved. Detection may take place periodically or after waiting times or even immediately upon resource requests; the latter actually prevents cyclic wait conditions, moving from deadlock detection to deadlock prevention. To resolve deadlocks, the OS typically terminates some threads until no cycle exists any longer, and various strategies exist to select victim threads.

Clearly, the OS needs to build suitable data structures for deadlock detection, in case of resource allocation graphs, each mutex can easily record by which thread it is locked, while the OS also keeps track of what threads are waiting for what mutexes.

4.6 JiTT Assignments

Answer the following questions in Learnweb.

4.6.1 Ticket to Exam - Task 2

Extend the deadlock example concerning bank accounts in such a way that four accounts are involved in a deadlock. Draw the corresponding resource allocation graph and explain how the cycle would be avoided if accounts were locked according to a linear ordering.

4.6.2 Questions, Feedback, and Improvements

- What did you find difficult or confusing about the **contents** of the presentation? Please be as specific as possible. For example, you could describe your current understanding (which might allow us to identify misunderstandings), ask questions that allow us to help you, or suggest improvements (maybe on GitLab). You may submit individual questions as response to this task or ask questions in our Riot room and the Learnweb forum. Most questions turn out to be of general interest; please do not hesitate to ask and answer in forum and Riot room. If you created additional original content that might help others (e.g., a new exercise, an experiment, explanations concerning relationships with different courses, ...), please share.

5 In-Class Meeting

5.1 Convoy Problem

- Suppose a central shared resource exists
  - **Frequently accessed** by lots of threads
  - Protected by **mutex M**
- Preemption of thread T1 holding that mutex is likely
  - Other threads wind up in wait queue of mutex, the **convoy**
    - Thread switches **without much progress**
- Suppose T1 continues
  - T1 releases lock, which is reassigned to T2
  - During its time slice, T1 wants M again, which is now held by T2
    - T1 gets blocked **without much progress**
- The same happens to the other threads
  - The convoy **persists** for a long time

5.1.1 Convoy Solution

- Change mutex behavior
  - Do no immediately reassign mutex upon `unlock()`
  - Instead, make **all** waiting threads runnable
    - Without reassigning mutex
- Effect: T1 can `lock()` M repeatedly during its time slice

5.2 Starvation

- A thread **starves** if its resource requests are repeatedly denied
- Examples in previous presentations
  - Interrupt livelock
  - Thread with low priority in presence of high priority threads
  - Thread which cannot enter CS
    - Famous illustration: Dining philosophers (next slide)
    - No simple solutions

5.2.1 Dining Philosophers

- MX problem proposed by Dijkstra
- Philosophers sit in circle; **eat** and think repeatedly
  - Two **forks** required for eating
    - **MX** for forks

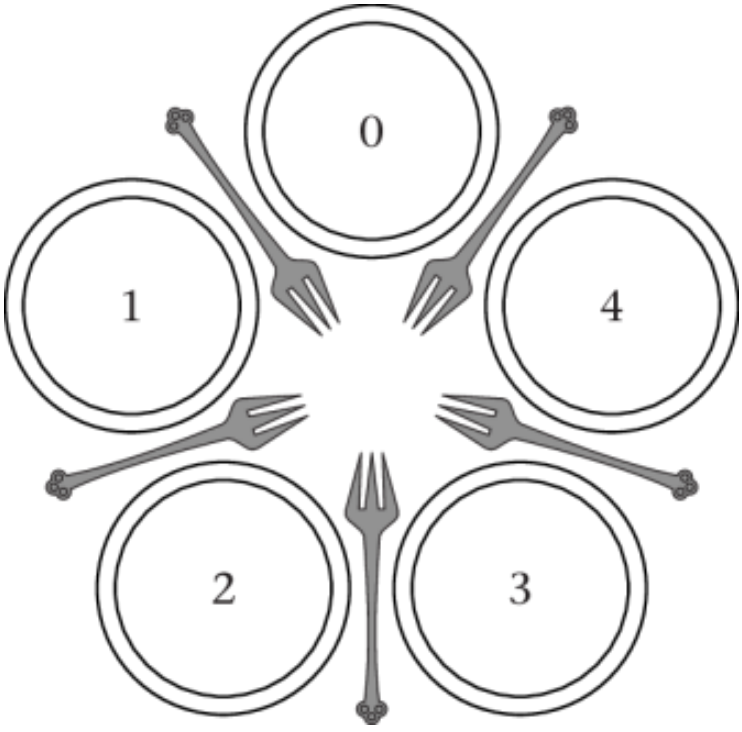


Figure 7: Dining Philosophers ("Figure 4.20 of [Hai17]" by Max Hailperin under CC BY-SA 3.0; converted from GitHub)

5.2.2 Starving Philosophers

- Starvation of P0

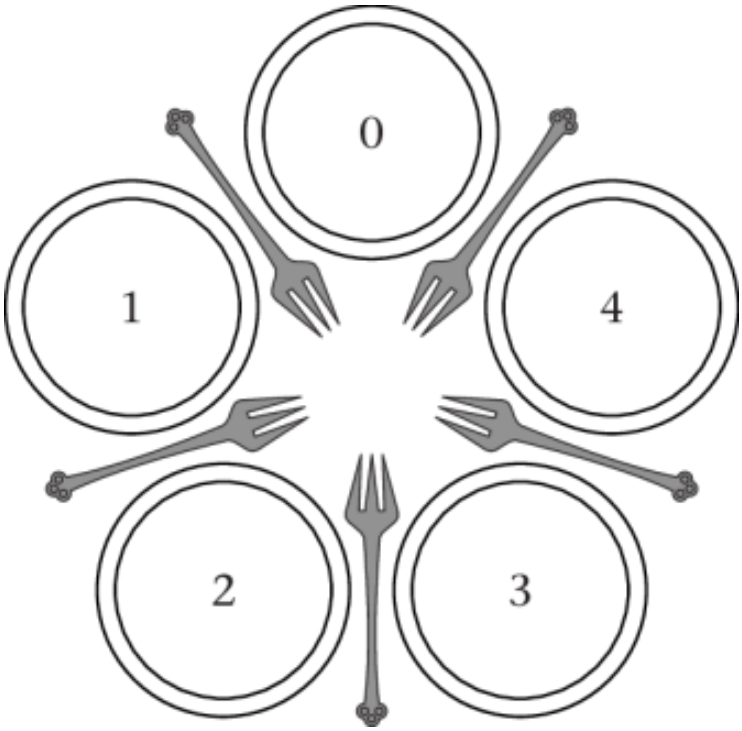


Figure 8: "Figure 4.20 of [Hai17]" by Max Hailperin under CC BY-SA 3.0; converted from GitHub

  - P1 and P3 or P2 and P4 eat in parallel
  - Then they wake the other pair
    - P1 wakes P2; P3 wakes P4
    - P2 wakes P1; P4 wakes P3
  - Iterate

6 Conclusions

6.1 Summary

- MX to avoid race conditions
- Challenges
  - Priority inversion
  - Deadlocks
  - Convoys
  - Starvation

Bibliography

[CES71] E. G. Coffman, M. Elphick, and A. Shoshani. "System Deadlocks". In: *ACM Comput. Surv.* 3.2 (June 1971), pp. 67–78. ISSN: 0360-0300. DOI: 10.1145/356586.356588. URL: https://dl.acm.org/citation.cfm?doid=356586.356588.356588.

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[LR80] Butler W. Lampson and David D. Redell. "Experience with Processes and Monitors in Mesa". In: *Commun. ACM* 23.2 (Feb. 1980), pp. 105–117. ISSN: 0001-0782. DOI: 10.1145/358818.358824. URL: https://dl.acm.org/citation.cfm?doid=358818.358824.

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