Lecture 15: Semaphores

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What is a semaphore?

- Synchronization primitive like condition variables
- Semaphore is a variable with an underlying counter
- Two functions on a semaphore variable
  - Up/post increments the counter
  - Down/wait decrements the counter and blocks the calling thread if the resulting value is negative
- A semaphore with init value 1 acts as a simple lock (binary semaphore = mutex)

```
sem_t m;
sem_init(&m, 0, X); // initialize semaphore to X; what should X be?

sem_wait(&m);
// critical section here
sem_post(&m);
```

Figure 31.3: **A Binary Semaphore (That Is, A Lock)**

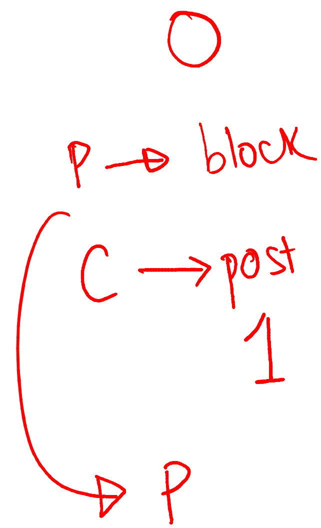
Semaphores for ordering

- Can be used to set order of execution between threads like CV
- Example: parent waiting for child (init = 0)

```
sem_t s;

void *
child(void *arg) {
    printf("child\n");
    sem_post(&s); // signal here: child is done
    return NULL;
}

int
main(int argc, char *argv[]) {
    sem_init(&s, 0, X); // what should X be?
    printf("parent: begin\n");
    pthread_t c;
    Pthread_create(&c, NULL, child, NULL);
    sem_wait(&s); // wait here for child
    printf("parent: end\n");
    return 0;
}
```



Example: Producer/Consumer (1)

- Need two semaphores for signaling
  - One to track empty slots, and make producer wait if no more empty slots
  - One to track full slots, and make consumer wait if no more full slots
- One semaphore to act as mutex for buffer

```
int main(int argc, char *argv[]) {
    // ...
    sem_init(&empty, 0, MAX); // MAX buffers are empty to begin with...
    sem_init(&full, 0, 0);    // ... and 0 are full
    sem_init(&mutex, 0, 1);   // mutex=1 because it is a lock
    // ...
}
```

Example: Producer/Consumer (2)

```
sem_t empty;
sem_t full;
sem_t mutex;

void *producer(void *arg) {
    int i;
    for (i = 0; i < loops; i++) {
        sem_wait(&empty);
        sem_wait(&mutex);
        put(i);
        sem_post(&mutex);
        sem_post(&full);
    }
}

void *consumer(void *arg) {
    int i;
    for (i = 0; i < loops; i++) {
        sem_wait(&full);
        sem_wait(&mutex);
        int tmp = get();
        sem_post(&mutex);
        sem_post(&empty);
        printf("%d\n", tmp);
    }
}
```

Incorrect solution with deadlock

- What if lock is acquired before signaling?
- Waiting thread sleeps with mutex and the signaling thread can never wake it up

```
void *producer(void *arg) {
    int i;
    for (i = 0; i < loops; i++) {
        sem_wait(&mutex);
        sem_wait(&empty);
        put(i);
        sem_post(&full);
        sem_post(&mutex);
    }
}

void *consumer(void *arg) {
    int i;
    for (i = 0; i < loops; i++) {
        sem_wait(&mutex);
        sem_wait(&full);
        int tmp = get();
        sem_post(&empty);
        sem_post(&mutex);
        printf("%d\n", tmp);
    }
}
```