EECS 570

Lecture 4

Synchronization

Winter 2025

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http://www.eecs.umich.edu/courses/eecs570/

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Synchronization objectives

- Low overhead
  - Synchronization can limit scalability (E.g., single-lock OS kernels)
- Correctness (and ease of programmability)
  - Synchronization failures are extremely difficult to debug
- Coordination of HW and SW
  - SW semantics must be tightly specified to prove correctness
  - HW can often improve efficiency

Synchronization Forms

- Mutual exclusion (critical sections)
  - Lock & Unlock
- Event Notification
  - Point-to-point (producer-consumer, flags)
  - I/O, interrupts, exceptions
- Barrier Synchronization

- Higher-level constructs
  - Queues, software pipelines, (virtual) time, counters

- Next lecture: optimistic concurrency control
  - Transactional Memory

Anatomy of a Synchronization Op

- Acquire Method
  - Way to obtain the lock or proceed past the barrier
- Waiting Algorithm
  - Spin (aka busy wait)
    - Waiting process repeatedly tests a location until it changes
    - Releasing process sets the location
    - Lower overhead, but wastes CPU resources
    - Can cause interconnect traffic
  - Block (aka suspend)
    - Waiting process is descheduled
    - High overhead, but frees CPU to do other things
  - Hybrids (e.g., spin, then block)
- Release Method
  - Way to allow other processes to proceed

HW/SW Implementation Trade-offs

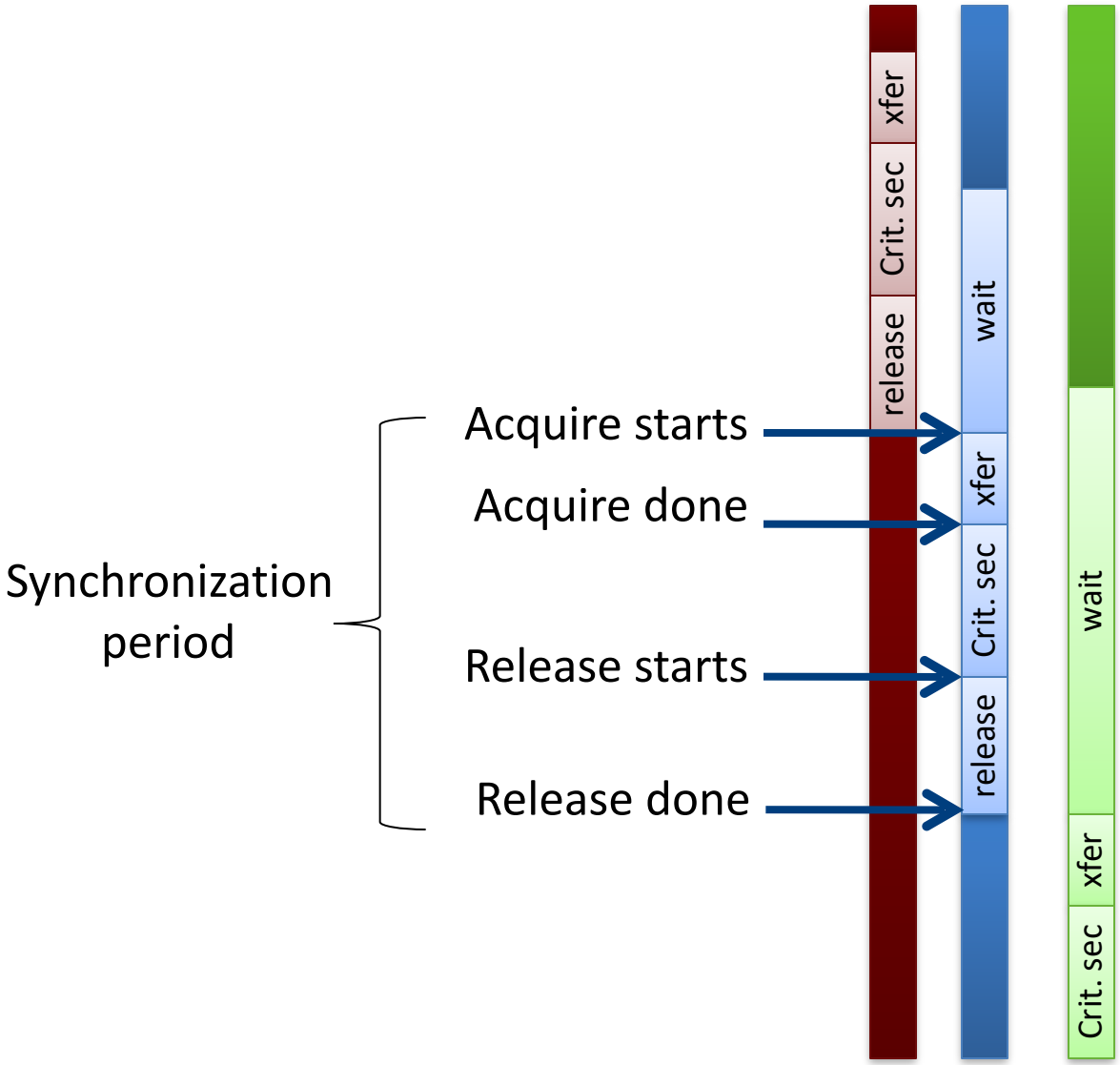
- User wants high-level (ease of programming)
  - LOCK(lock_variable); UNLOCK(lock_variable)
  - BARRIER(barrier_variable, numprocs)
- SW advantages: flexibility, portability
- HW advantages: speed
- Design objectives:
  - Low latency
  - Low traffic
  - Low storage
  - Scalability (“wait-free”-ness)
  - Fairness

Challenges

- Same sync may have different behavior at different times
  - Lock accessed with low or high contention
  - Different performance needs: low latency vs. high throughput
  - Different algorithms best for each, need different primitives
- Multiprogramming can change sync behavior
  - Process scheduling or other resource interactions
  - May need algorithms that are worse in dedicated case
- Rich area of SW/HW interactions
  - Which primitives are available?
  - What communication patterns cost more/less?

Locks

Lock-based Mutual Exclusion



No contention:
- Want low latency

Contention:
- Want low period
- Low traffic
- Fairness

How Not to Implement Locks

- **LOCK**

```
while (lock_variable == 1);
```

Context switch!

```
lock_variable = 1;
```

- **UNLOCK**

```
lock_variable = 0;
```

Solution: Atomic Read-Modify-Write

- Test&Set(r,x)

```
{r=m[x]; m[x]=1;}
```

- r is register
- m[x] is memory location x

- Fetch&Op(r1,r2,x,op)

```
{r1=m[x]; m[x]=op(r1,r2);}
```

- Swap(r,x)

```
{temp=m[x]; m[x]=r; r=temp;}
```

- Compare&Swap(r1,r2,x)

```
{temp=r2; r2=m[x]; if r1==r2 then m[x]=temp;}
```

Implementing RMWs

- Bus-based systems:
  - Hold bus and issue load/store operations without any intervening accesses by other processors
- Perform operation at shared point in the memory hierarchy
  - E.g., if L1s are private and L2 is shared, perform sync ops at L2
    - Need to invalidate lines for the address in the private L1s!
- Scalable systems
  - Acquire exclusive ownership via cache coherence
  - Perform load/store operations without allowing external coherence requests

Load-Locked Store-Conditional

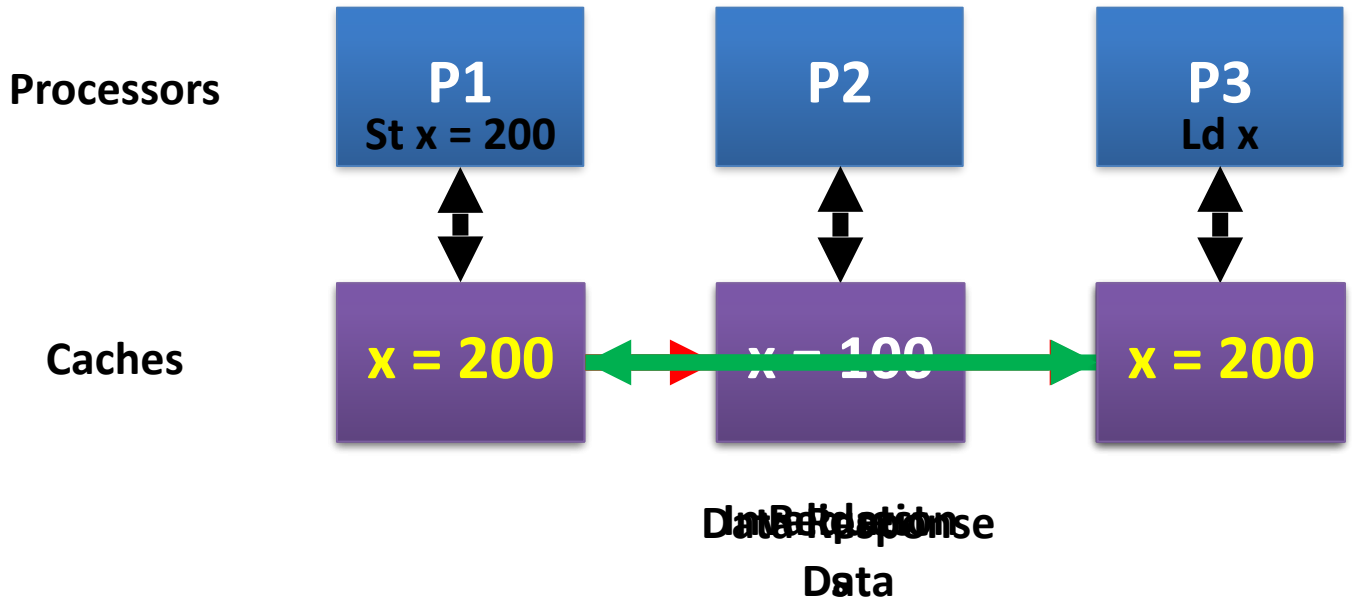
- Load-locked
  - Issues a normal load…
  - …and sets a flag and address field
- Store-conditional
  - Checks that flag is set and address matches…
  - …only then performs store
- Flag is cleared by
  - Invalidation
  - Cache eviction
  - Context switch

```
lock:  while (1) {
           load-locked r1, lock_variable
           if (r1 == 0) {
               mov r2 = 1
               if (SC r2, lock_variable) break;
           }
       }
```

unlock:st lock_variable, #0

Coherence Protocol Example

- If P1 updates the value of x to 200, the stale value of x in other processors must be **invalidated**
- If P3 wants to subsequently read/write x, it must request the new value
- **SWMR** = Single-Writer Multiple Readers, **DVI** = Data Value Invariant



Test-and-Set Spin Lock (T&S)

- Lock is "acquire", Unlock is "release"
- `acquire(lock_ptr):`

```
while (true):
    // Perform "test-and-set"
    // UNLOCKED = 0, LOCKED = 1
    test_and_set(old, lock_ptr)
    if (old == UNLOCKED):
        break   // lock acquired!
    // keep spinning, back to top of while loop
```

- `release(lock_ptr):`

```
store[lock_ptr] <- UNLOCKED
```

- Performance problem
  - T&S is both a read and write; spinning causes lots of coherence traffic

Test-and-Test-and-Set Spin Lock (TTS)

- acquire(lock_ptr):

```
while (true):
    // Perform "test"
    load [lock_ptr] -> original_value
    if (original_value == UNLOCKED):
    // Perform "test-and-set"
        test_and_set(old, lock_ptr)
        if (old == UNLOCKED):
            break   // lock acquired!
    // keep spinning, back to top of while loop
```

- release(lock_ptr):

```
store[lock_ptr] <- UNLOCKED
```

- **Now "spinning" is read-only, on local cached copy**

TTS Lock Performance Issues

- **Performance issues remain**
  - Every time the lock is released…
    - All spinning cores get invalidated -> lots of coherence traffic
    - All spinning cores would then load the lock addr to keep spinning, and likely try to T&S the block
      - More coherence traffic!
  - Causes a storm of coherence traffic, clogs things up badly
- **One solution: backoff**
  - Instead of spinning constantly, check less frequently
  - Exponential backoff works well in practice
- **Another problem with spinning**
  - Processors can spin really fast, starve threads on the same core!
  - Solution: x86 adds a "PAUSE" instruction
    - Tells processor to suspend the thread for a short time
- **(Un)fairness**

Ticket Locks

- **To ensure fairness and reduce coherence storms**
- Locks have two counters: `next_ticket, now_serving`
  - Deli counter
- `acquire(lock_ptr):`
  - `my_ticket = fetch_and_increment(lock_ptr->next_ticket)`
  - `while(lock_ptr->now_serving != my_ticket); // spin`
- `release(lock_ptr):`
  - `lock_ptr->now_serving = lock_ptr->now_serving + 1`
    - (Just a normal store, not an atomic operation, why?)
- Summary of operation
  - To "get in line" to acquire the lock, CAS on next_ticket
  - Spin on now_serving

Ticket Locks

- **Properties**
  - Less of a "thundering herd" coherence storm problem
    - To acquire, only need to read new value of now_serving
  - No CAS on critical path of lock handoff
    - Just a non-atomic store
  - FIFO order (fair)
    - Good, but only if the O.S. hasn't swapped out any threads!
- **Padding**
  - Allocate now_serving and next_ticket on different cache blocks
    - struct { int now_serving; char pad[60]; int next_ticket; } …
  - Two locations reduces interference
- **Proportional backoff**
  - Estimate of wait time: (my_ticket - now_serving) * average hold time

Array-Based Queue Locks

- **Why not give each waiter its own location to spin on?**
  - Avoid coherence storms altogether!
- **Idea: "slot" array of size N: "go ahead" or "must wait"**
  - Initialize first slot to "go ahead", all others to "must wait"
  - Padded one slot per cache block,
  - Keep a "next slot" counter (similar to "next_ticket" counter)
- Acquire: "get in line"
  - my_slot = (atomic increment of "next slot" counter) mod N
  - Spin while slots[my_slot] contains "must_wait"
  - Reset slots[my_slot] to "must wait"
- Release: "unblock next in line"
  - Set slots[my_slot+1 mod N] to "go ahead"

Array-Based Queue Locks

- Variants: Anderson 1990, Graunke and Thakkar 1990
- Desirable properties
  - Threads spin on dedicated location
    - Just two coherence misses per handoff
    - Traffic independent of number of waiters
  - FIFO & fair (same as ticket lock)
- Undesirable properties
  - Higher uncontended overhead than a TTS lock
  - Storage O(N) for each lock
    - 128 threads at 64B padding: 8KBs per lock!
    - What if N isn't known at start?
- List-based locks address the O(N) storage problem
  - Several variants of list-based locks: MCS 1991, CLH 1993/1994

List-Based Queue Lock (MCS)

- A "lock" is a pointer to a linked list node
  - next node pointer
  - boolean must_wait
  - Each thread has its own local pointer to a node "I"

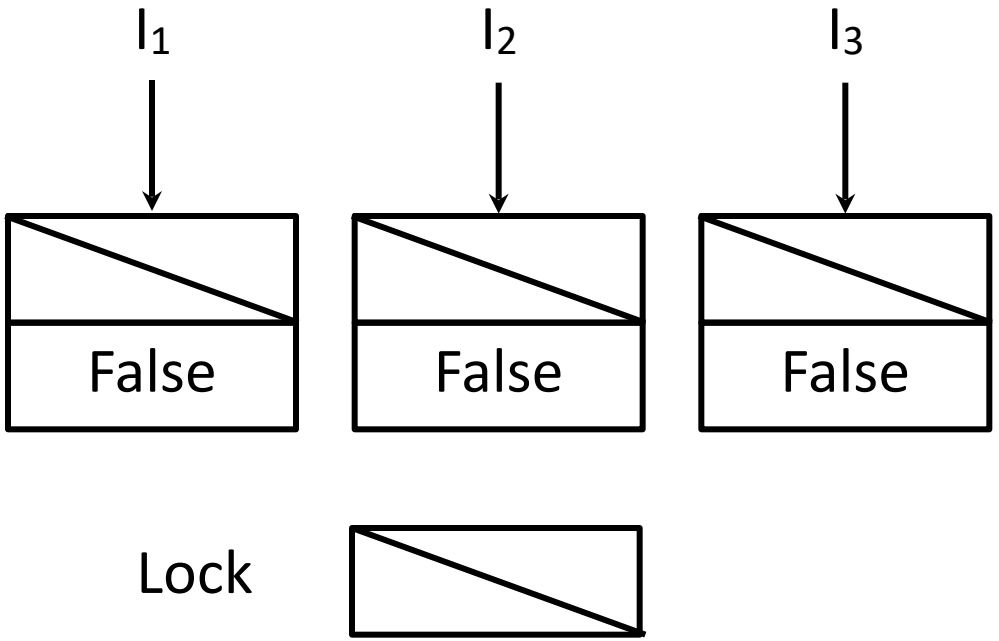
- **acquire(lock):**

```
I->next = null;
predecessor = fetch_and_store(lock,I)
if predecessor != nil                    //some node holds lock
    I->must_wait = true
    predecessor->next = I                //predecessor must wake us
    repeat while I->must_wait            //spin till lock is free
```

- **release(lock):**

```
if (I->next == null)                     //no known successor
    if compare_and_swap(lock,I,nil) //make sure…
            return                                //CAS succeeded; lock
   freed
    repeat while I->next = nil      //spin to learn successor
I->next->must_wait = false //wake successor
```

MCS Lock Example: Time 0



- acquire(lock):

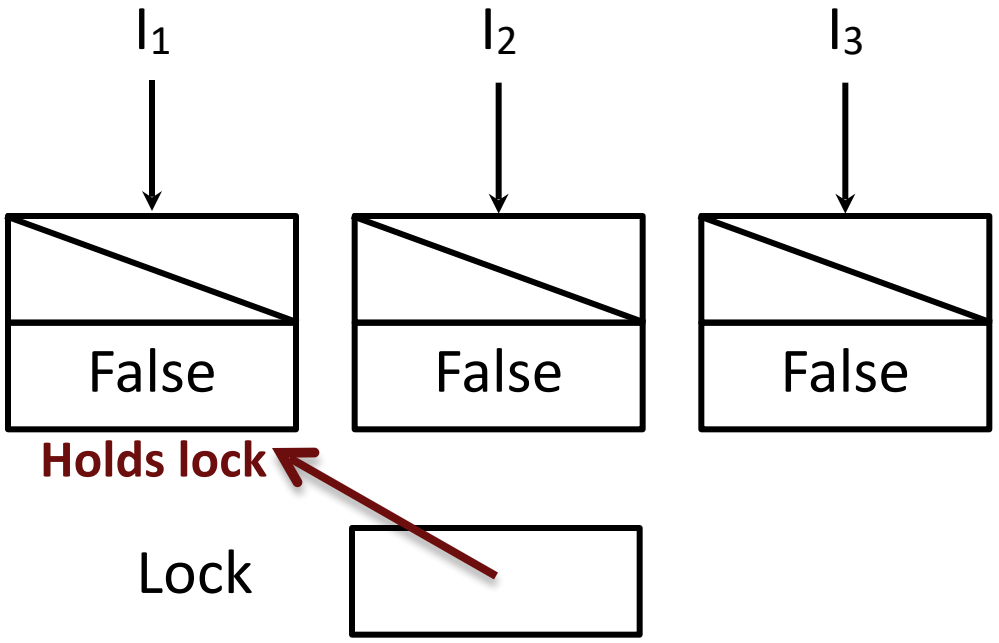
```
I->next = null;
pred = FAS(lock,I)
if pred != nil
 I->must_wait = true
 pred->next = I
 repeat while I->must_wait
```

- release(lock):

```
if (I->next == null)
        if CAS(lock,I,nil)
  return
        repeat while I->next == nil
I->next->must_wait = false
```

MCS Lock Example: Time 1

- t_1: Acquire(L)

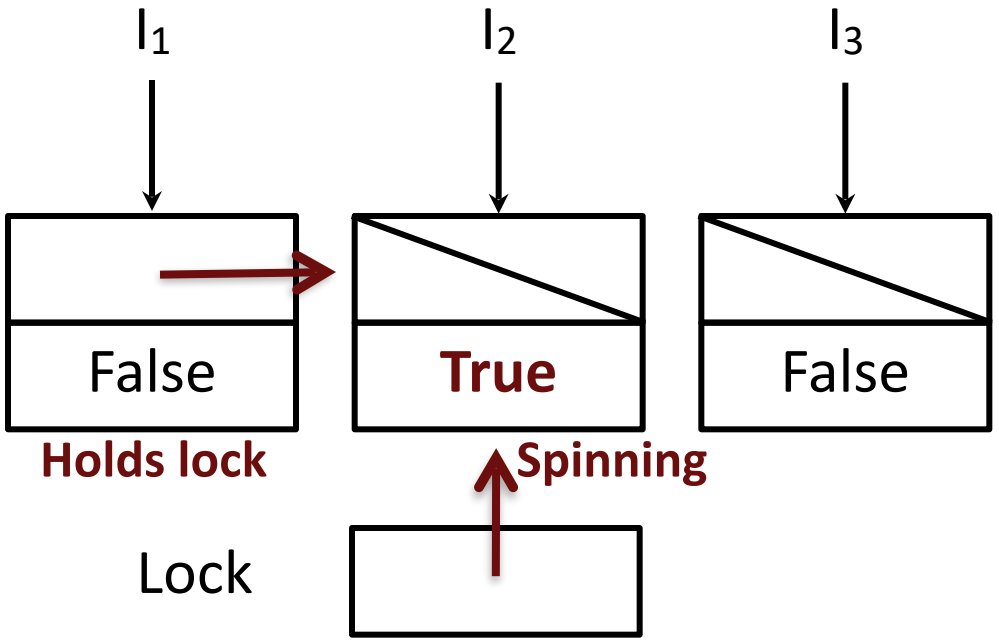



```
• acquire(lock):
  I->next = null;
  pred = FAS(lock,I)
  if pred != nil
   I->must_wait = true
   pred->next = I
   repeat while I->must_wait
```

```
• release(lock):
  if (I->next == null)
        if CAS(lock,I,nil)
    return
        repeat while I->next ==
    nil
  I->next->must_wait = false
```

MCS Lock Example: Time 2

- t_1: Acquire(L)
- t_2: Acquire(L)

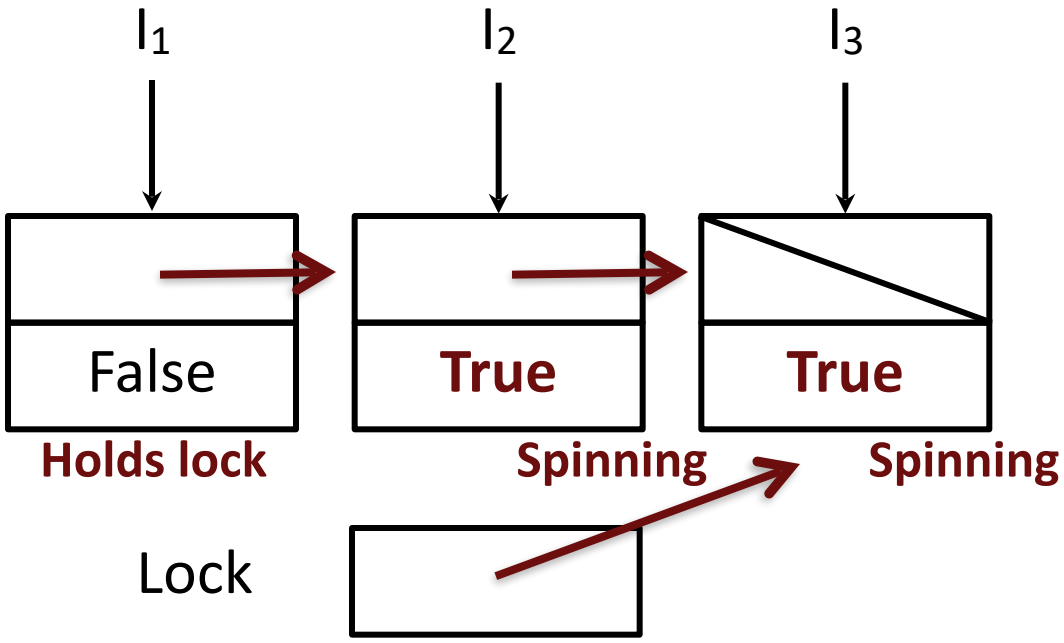



```
• acquire(lock):
  I->next = null;
  pred = FAS(lock,I)
  if pred != nil
   I->must_wait = true
   pred->next = I
   repeat while I->must_wait
```

```
• release(lock):
  if (I->next == null)
        if CAS(lock,I,nil)
    return
        repeat while I->next ==
    nil
  I->next->must_wait = false
```

MCS Lock Example: Time 3

- t_1: Acquire(L)
- t_2: Acquire(L)
- t_3: Acquire(L)

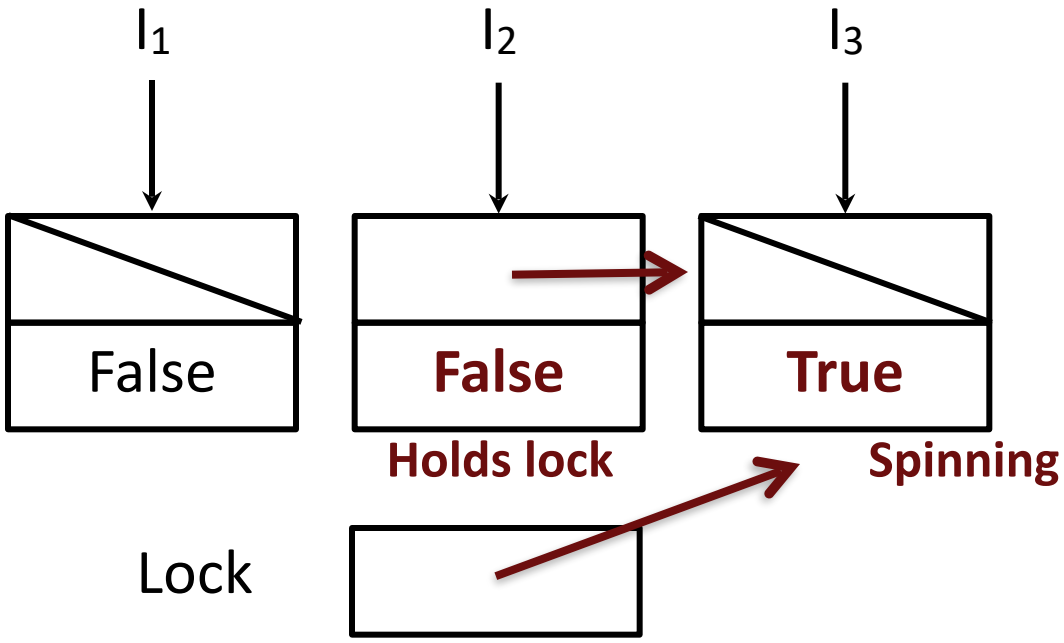



```
• acquire(lock):
  I->next = null;
  pred = FAS(lock,I)
  if pred != nil
   I->must_wait = true
   pred->next = I
   repeat while I->must_wait
```

```
• release(lock):
  if (I->next == null)
        if CAS(lock,I,nil)
    return
        repeat while I->next ==
    nil
  I->next->must_wait = false
```

MCS Lock Example: Time 4

- t_1: Acquire(L)
- t_2: Acquire(L)
- t_3: Acquire(L)
- t_1: Release(L)

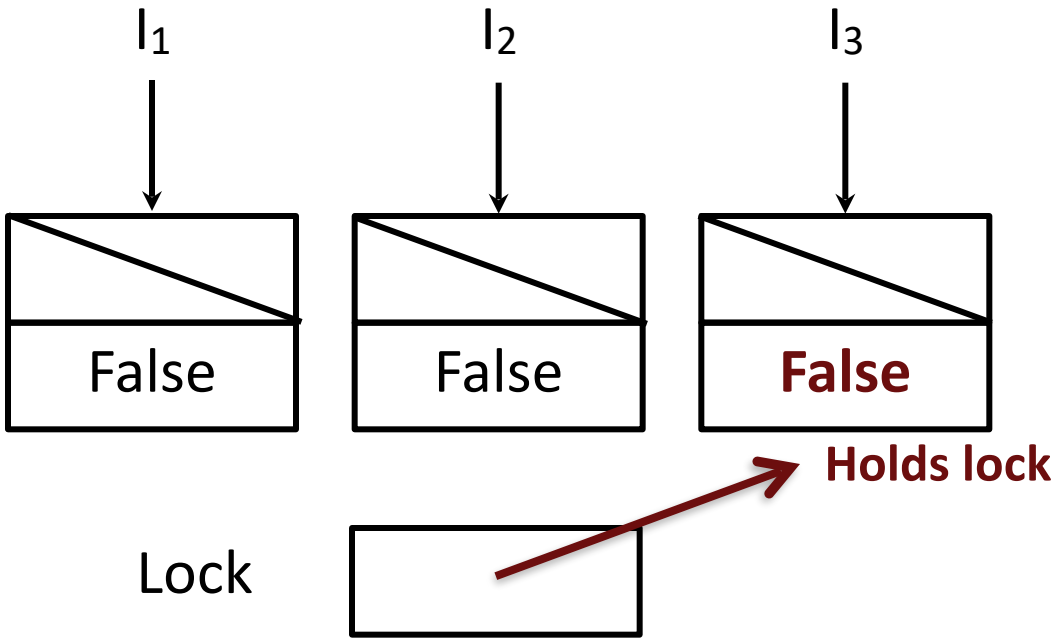



```
• acquire(lock):
  I->next = null;
  pred = FAS(lock,I)
  if pred != nil
   I->must_wait = true
   pred->next = I
   repeat while I->must_wait
```

```
• release(lock):
  if (I->next == null)
        if CAS(lock,I,nil)
    return
        repeat while I->next ==
    nil
  I->next->must_wait = false
```

MCS Lock Example: Time 5

- t_1: Acquire(L)
- t_2: Acquire(L)
- t_3: Acquire(L)
- t_1: Release(L)
- t_2: Release(L)

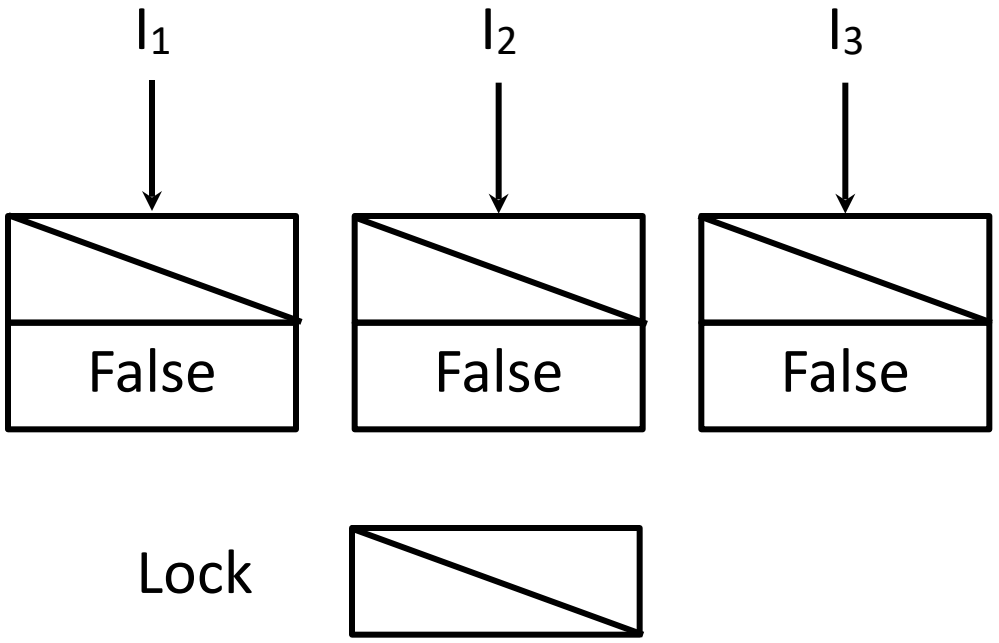



```
• acquire(lock):
  I->next = null;
  pred = FAS(lock,I)
  if pred != nil
   I->must_wait = true
   pred->next = I
   repeat while I->must_wait
```

```
• release(lock):
   if (I->next == null)
        if CAS(lock,I,nil)
    return
   repeat while I->next == nil
  I->next->must_wait = false
```

MCS Lock Example: Time 6

- t_1: Acquire(L)
- t_2: Acquire(L)
- t_3: Acquire(L)
- t_1: Release(L)
- t_2: Release(L)
- t_3: Release(L)



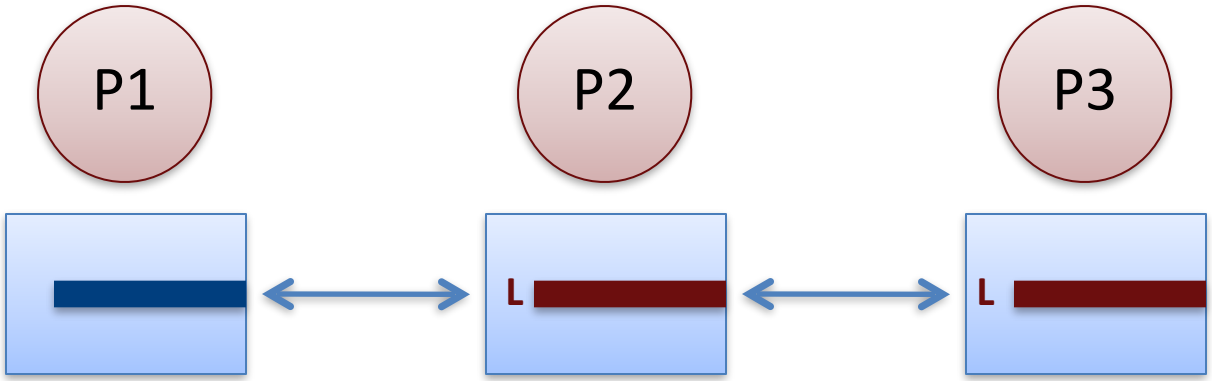

```
• acquire(lock):
  I->next = null;
  pred = FAS(lock,I)
  if pred != nil
   I->must_wait = true
   pred->next = I
   repeat while I->must_wait
```

```
• release(lock):
  if (I->next == null)
        if CAS(lock,I,nil)
    return
        repeat while I->next ==
    nil
  I->next->must_wait = false
```

release() w/o CAS is more complex; see paper

Queue-based locks in HW: QOLB

- **Queue On Lock Bit**
  - HW maintains doubly-linked list between requesters
    - This is a key idea of "Scalable Coherence Interface", see Unit 2
  - Augment cache with "locked" bit
    - Waiting caches spin on local "locked" cache line
  - Upon release, lock holder sends line to 1st requester
    - Only requires one message on interconnect

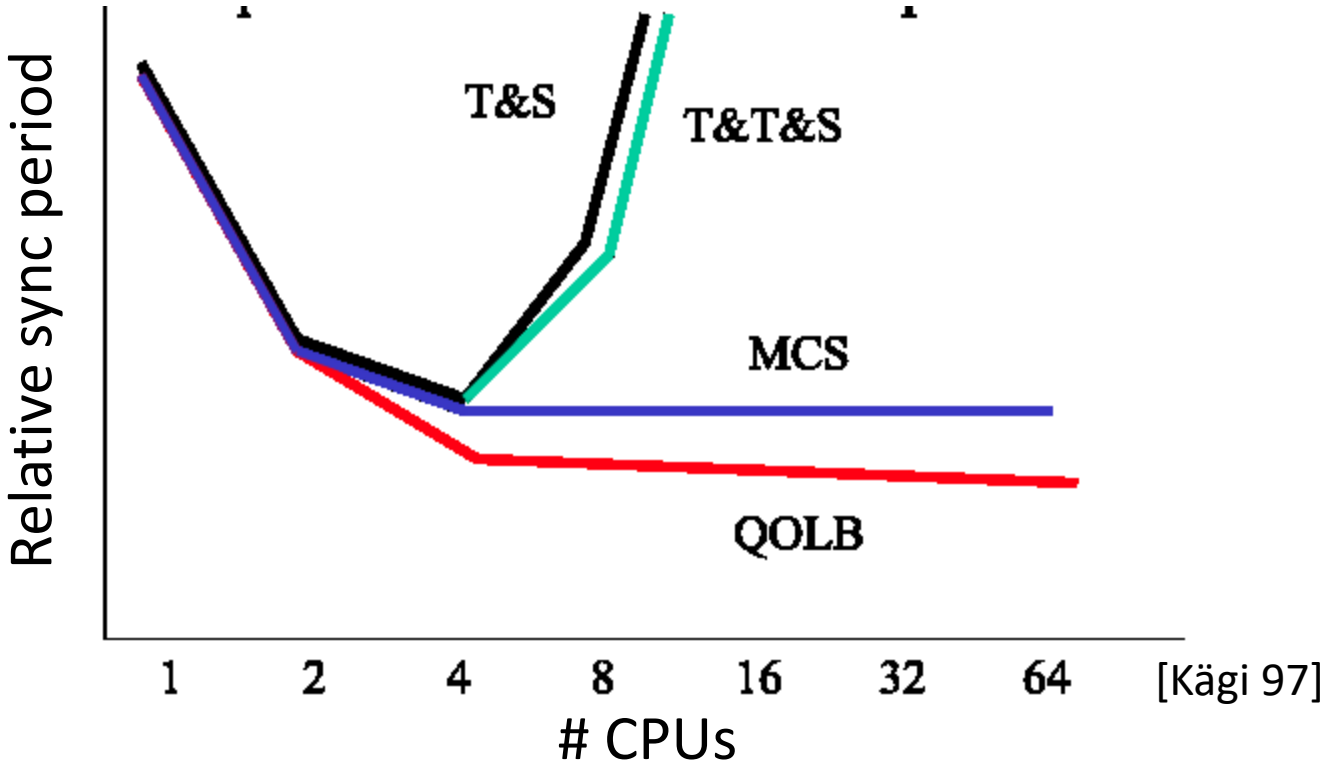


Fundamental Mechanisms to Reduce Overheads
[Kägi, Burger, Goodman ASPLOS 97]

- **Basic mechanisms**
  - Local Spinning
  - Queue-based locking
  - Collocation
  - Synchronous Prefetch

	Local Spin	Queue	Collocation	Prefetch
T&S	No	No	Optional	No
T&T&S	Yes	No	Optional	No
MCS	Yes	Yes	Partial	No
QOLB	yes	Yes	Optional	Yes

Microbenchmark Analysis



[Kägi 97]

Performance of Locks

- **Contention vs. No Contention**
  - Test-and-Set best when no contention
  - Queue-based is best with medium contention
  - Idea: switch implementation based on lock behavior
    - Reactive Synchronization – Lim & Agarwal 1994
    - SmartLocks – Eastep et al 2009
- **High-contention indicates poorly written program**
  - Need better algorithm or data structures

Point-to-Point Event Synchronization

- Can use normal variables as flags

```
a = f(x);                    while (flag == 0);
flag = 1;                    b = g(a);
```

- **Assumes Sequential Consistency!**
- Full/Empty Bits
  - Set on write
  - Cleared on read
  - Can't write if set, can't read if clear

Barriers

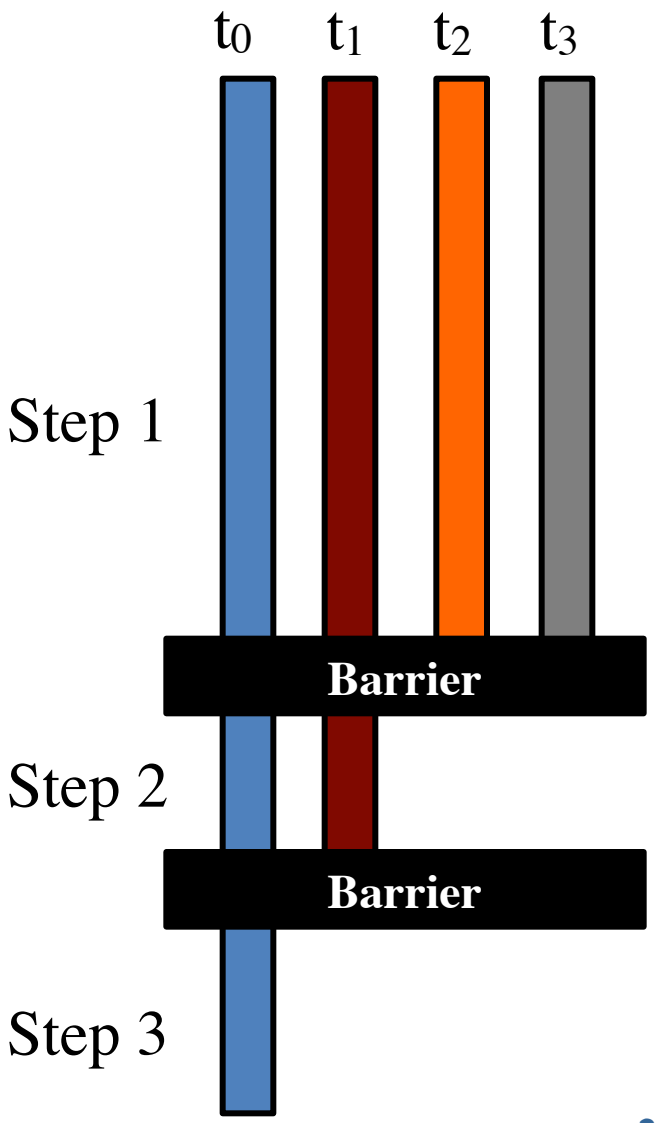
Barriers

- Physics simulation computation
  - Divide up each timestep computation into N independent pieces
  - Each timestep: compute independently, synchronize
- Example: each thread executes:

```
segment_size = total_particles / number_of_threads
my_start_particle = thread_id * segment_size
my_end_particle =  my_start_particle + segment_size - 1
for (timestep = 0; timestep += delta; timestep < stop_time):
    calculate_forces(t, my_start_particle, my_end_particle)
    barrier()
    update_locations(t, my_start_particle, my_end_particle)
    barrier()
```

- Barrier? All threads wait until all threads have reached it

Example: Barrier-Based Merge Sort



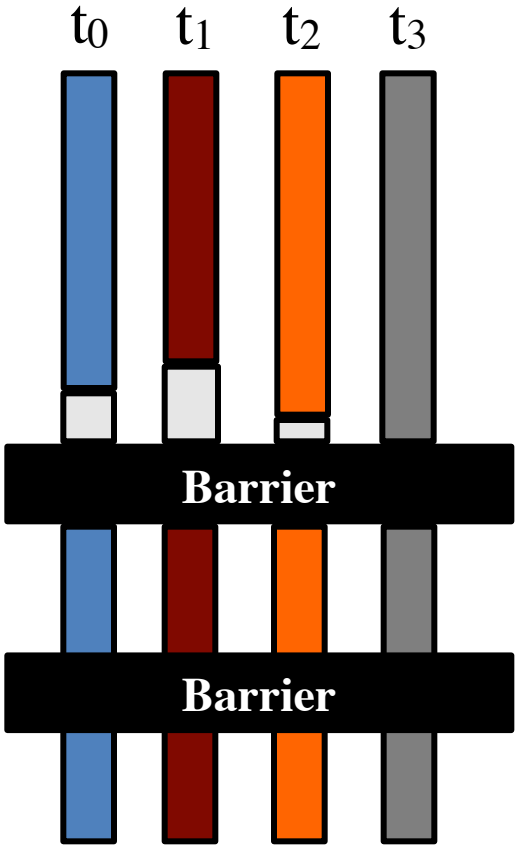
Global Synchronization Barrier

- At a barrier
  - All threads wait until all other threads have reached it
- Strawman implementation (**wrong!**)

```
global (shared) count : integer := P

procedure central_barrier
  if fetch_and_decrement(&count) == 1
    count := P
  else
    repeat until count == P
```

- What is wrong with the above code?



Sense-Reversing Barrier

- Correct barrier implementation:

```
global (shared) count : integer := P
global (shared) sense : Boolean := true
local (private) local_sense : Boolean := true

procedure central_barrier
  // each processor toggles its own sense
  local_sense := !local_sense
  if fetch_and_decrement(&count) == 1
    count := P
    // last processor toggles global sense
    sense := local_sense
  else
    repeat until sense == local_sense
```

- Single counter makes this a "centralized" barrier

Other Barrier Implementations

- Problem with centralized barrier
  - All processors must increment each counter
  - Each read/modify/write is a serialized coherence action
    - Each one is a cache miss
  - O(n) if threads arrive simultaneously, slow for lots of processors
- Combining Tree Barrier
  - Build a $\log_k(n)$ height tree of counters (one per cache block)
  - Each thread coordinates with **k** other threads (by thread id)
  - Last of the **k** processors, coordinates with next higher node in tree
  - As many coordination address are used, misses are not serialized
  - O(log n) in best case
- Static and more dynamic variants
  - Tree-based arrival, tree-based or centralized release