Welcome to OS @ UNSW
COMP3231/9201/3891/9283
(Extended) Operating Systems
Dr. Kevin Elphinstone

Q & A

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Learning Outcomes
• High-level understand what is an operating system and the role it plays
• A high-level understanding of the structure of operating systems, applications, and the relationship between them.

What is an Operating System?

What is a traffic light?
• A signalling device that controls the flow of traffic
  • Defined in terms of the role it plays
• A signalling device consisting of three lights mounted at an intersection
  • Defined in terms of what it is
Role 1: The Operating System is an Abstract Machine
- Extends the basic hardware with added functionality
- Provides high-level abstractions
  - More programmer friendly
  - Common core for all applications
- E.g., filesystem instead of just registers on a disk controller
- It hides the details of the hardware
- Makes application code portable

Role 2: The Operating System is a Resource Manager
- Responsible for allocating resources to users and processes
- Must ensure
  - No Starvation
  - Progress
  - Allocation is according to some desired policy
    - First-come, first-served; Fair share; Weighted fair share; limits (quotas), etc...
  - Overall, that the system is efficiently used

Structural (Implementation) View: the Operating System is the software Privileged mode.

Operating System Kernel
- Portion of the operating system that is running in privileged mode
- Usually resident (stays) in main memory
- Contains fundamental functionality
  - Whatever is required to implement other services
  - Whatever is required to provide security
- Contains most-frequently used functions
- Also called the nucleus or supervisor
The Operating System is Privileged
- Applications should not be able to interfere or bypass the operating system
- OS can enforce the "extended machine"
- OS can enforce its resource allocation policies
- Prevent applications from interfering with each other

The Structure of a Computer System
- OS interacts via load and store instructions to all memory, CPU and device registers, and interrupts
- Applications interact with themselves and via function calls to library procedures
- Privilege-less OS
  - Some Embedded OSs have no privileged component
  - E.g. PalmOS, Mac OS 9, RTEMS
  - Can implement OS functionality, but cannot enforce it
    - All software runs together
    - No isolation
    - One fault potentially brings down entire system
A Note on System Libraries

System libraries are just that, libraries of support functions (procedures, subroutines)
- Only a subset of library functions are actually system calls
  - strcmp(), memcpy(), are pure library functions
  - manipulate memory within the application, or perform computation
- open(), close(), read(), write() are system calls
  - they cross the user-kernel boundary, e.g. to read from disk device
- Implementation mainly focused on passing request to OS and returning result to application
- System call functions are in the library for convenience
  - try man syscall on Linux

Operating System Software

- Fundamentally, OS functions the same way as ordinary computer software
- It is machine code that is executed (same machine instructions as application)
- It has more privileges (extra instructions and access)
- Operating system relinquishes control of the processor to execute other programs
  - Restarts after
- System call functions are in the library for convenience
  - try man syscalls on Linux

Operating System Internal Structure?

- The Monolithic Operating System Structure
  - Also called the “spaghetti nest” approach
  - Everything is tangled up with everything else.
  - Linux, Windows, ...

The Monolithic Operating System Structure

- However, some reasonable structure usually prevails
The end