Administrivia

- Last project due Friday
- **Final Exam**
  - Thursday, March 19, 12:15-3:15pm
  - Open notes, covers all 16 lectures
    (including topics already on the midterm)
- **Final review session Friday (recorded)**
  - Bring questions on lecture material
- **Extra office hours next week**
  - Reload class home page for details
Outline

1. Confining code with legacy OSes
2. Virtual machines
3. Implementing virtual machines
4. Binary translation
5. Hardware-assisted virtualization
6. Memory management optimizations
7. Final remarks
Confining code with legacy OSes

- Often want to confine code on legacy OSes
- Analogy: Firewalls

  - Your machine runs hopelessly insecure software
  - Can’t fix it—no source or too complicated
  - Can reason about network traffic

- Can we similarly block untrusted code within a machine
  - Have OS limit what the code can interact with
Using chroot

- chroot (char *dir) "changes root directory"
  - Kernel stores root directory of each process
  - File name "/" now refers to dir
  - Accessing ".." in dir now returns dir

- Need root privs to call chroot
  - But subsequently can drop privileges

- Ideally "Chrooted process" wouldn’t affect parts of the system outside of dir
  - Even process still running as root shouldn’t escape chroot

- In reality, many ways to cause damage outside dir
Escaping chroot

- Re-chroot to a lower directory, then chroot
  - Each process has one root directory, so chrooting to a new directory can put you above your new root
- Create devices that let you access raw disk
- Send signals to or ptrace non-chrooted processes
- Create setuid program for non-chrooted proc. to run
- Bind privileged ports, mess with clock, reboot, etc.
- Problem: chroot was not originally intended for security
  - FreeBSD jail, Linux vserver have tried to address problems
System call interposition

• Why not use *ptrace* or other debugging facilities to control untrusted programs?

• Almost any “damage” must result from system call
  - delete files → unlink
  - overwrite files → open/write
  - attack over network → socket/bind/connect/send/recv
  - leak private data → open/read/socket/connect/write . . .

• So enforce policy by allowing/disallowing each syscall
  - Theoretically much more fine-grained than chroot
  - Plus don’t need to be root to do it

• Q: Why is this not a panacea?
Limitations of syscall interposition

- Hard to know exact implications of a system call
  - Too much context not available outside of kernel (e.g., what does this file descriptor number mean?)
  - Context-dependent (e.g., /proc/self/cwd)

- Indirect paths to resources
  - File descriptor passing, core dumps, “unhelpful processes”

- Race conditions
  - Remember difficulty of eliminating TOCCTOU bugs?
  - Now imagine malicious application deliberately doing this
  - Symlinks, directory renames (so “..” changes), …

- See [Garfinkel] for a more detailed discussion
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Review: What is an OS

- OS is software between applications and reality
  - Abstracts hardware to make applications portable
  - Makes finite resources (memory, # CPU cores) appear much larger
  - Protects processes and users from one another
What if...

- The process abstraction looked just like hardware?
### How do process abstraction & HW differ?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process</th>
<th>Hardware</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-privileged registers and instructions</td>
<td>All registers and instructions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virtual memory</td>
<td>Both virtual and physical memory, MMU functions, TLB/page tables, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Errors, signals</td>
<td>Trap architecture, interrupts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>File system, directories, files, raw devices</td>
<td>I/O devices accessed using programmed I/O, DMA, interrupts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Virtual Machine Monitor

- Thin layer of software that virtualizes the hardware
  - Exports a virtual machine abstraction that looks like the hardware
Old idea from the 1960s

- See [Goldberg] from 1974
- IBM VM/370 – A VMM for IBM mainframe
  - Multiplex multiple OS environments on expensive hardware
  - Desirable when few machines around
- Interest died out in the 1980s and 1990s
  - Hardware got cheap
  - Compare Windows NT vs. N DOS machines
- Today, VMs are used everywhere
  - Used to solve different problems (software management)
  - But VMM attributes more relevant now than ever
VMM benefits

- **Software compatibility**
  - VMMs can run pretty much all software

- **Can get low overheads/high performance**
  - Near “raw” machine performance for many workloads
  - With tricks can have direct execution on CPU/MMU

- **Isolation**
  - Seemingly total data isolation between virtual machines
  - Leverage hardware memory protection mechanisms

- **Encapsulation**
  - Virtual machines are not tied to physical machines
  - Checkpoint/migration
OS backwards compatibility

- Backward compatibility is bane of new OSes
  - Huge effort require to innovate but not break

- Security considerations may make it impossible
  - Choice: Close security hole and break apps or be insecure

- Example: Windows XP is end of life
  - Eventually hardware running WinXP will die
  - What to do with legacy WinXP applications?
  - Not all applications will run on later Windows
  - Given the number of WinXP applications, practically any OS change will break something
    if (OS == WinXP) ...

- Solution: Use a VMM to run both WinXP and Win8
  - Obvious for OS migration as well: Windows → Linux
Logical partitioning of servers

- **Run multiple servers on same box (e.g., Amazon EC2)**
  - Ability to give away less than one machine
    - Modern CPUs more powerful than most services need
  - 0.10U rack space machine – less power, cooling, space, etc.
  - Server consolidation trend: $N$ machines $\rightarrow$ 1 real machine

- **Isolation of environments**
  - Printer server doesn’t take down Exchange server
  - Compromise of one VM can’t get at data of others\(^1\)

- **Resource management**
  - Provide service-level agreements

- **Heterogeneous environments**
  - Linux, FreeBSD, Windows, etc.

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\(^1\) though in practice not so simple because of side-channel attacks [Ristenpart]
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Complete Machine Simulation

- Simplest VMM approach, used by bochs
- Build a simulation of all the hardware
  - CPU – A loop that fetches each instruction, decodes it, simulates its effect on the machine state
  - Memory – Physical memory is just an array, simulate the MMU on all memory accesses
  - I/O – Simulate I/O devices, programmed I/O, DMA, interrupts
- Problem: Too slow!
  - CPU/Memory – 100× CPU/MMU simulation
  - I/O Device – < 2× slowdown.
  - 100× slowdown makes it not too useful
- Need faster ways of emulating CPU/MMU
Virtualizing the CPU

- **Observations: Most instructions are the same regardless of processor privileged level**
  - Example: `incl %eax`

- **Why not just give instructions to CPU to execute?**
  - One issue: Safety – How to get the CPU back? Or stop it from stepping on us? How about `cli/halt`?
  - Solution: Use protection mechanisms already in CPU

- **Run virtual machine’s OS directly on CPU in unprivileged user mode**
  - “Trap and emulate” approach
  - Most instructions just work
  - Privileged instructions trap into monitor and run simulator on instruction
  - Makes some assumptions about architecture
Virtualizing traps

- What happens when an interrupt or trap occurs
  - Like normal kernels: we trap into the monitor

- What if the interrupt or trap should go to guest OS?
  - Example: Page fault, illegal instruction, system call, interrupt
  - Re-start the guest OS simulating the trap

- x86 example:
  - Give CPU an IDT that vectors back to VMM
  - Look up trap vector in VM’s “virtual” IDT
  - Push virtualized %cs, %eip, %eflags, on stack
  - Switch to virtualized privileged mode
Virtualizing memory

• Basic MMU functionality:
  - OS manages physical memory (0…MAX_MEM)
  - OS sets up page tables mapping VA → PA
  - CPU accesses to VA should go to PA (if paging off, PA = VA)
  - Used for every instruction fetch, load, or store

• Need to implement a virtual “physical memory”
  - Logically need additional level of indirection
  - VM’s Guest VA → VM’s Guest PA → Host PA
  - Note “Guest physical” memory no longer mans hardware bits
  - Hardware is host physical memory (a.k.a. machine memory)

• Trick: Use hardware MMU to simulate virtual MMU
  - Point hardware at shadow page table
  - Directly maps Guest VA → Host PA
Memory mapping summary

physical machine
virtual machine

Guest Virtual Address → Guest PT → Guest Physical Address → VMM map → Host Physical Address

Guest Virtual Address → Shadow Page Table → Host Physical Address
Shadow page tables

- VMM responsible for maintaining *shadow* PT
  - And for maintaining its consistency (including TLB flushes)
- Shadow page tables are a cache
  - Have *true page faults* when page not in VM’s guest page table
  - Have *hidden page faults* when just misses in shadow page table
- On a page fault, VMM must:
  - Lookup guest VPN ➔ guest PPN in guest’s page table
  - Determine where guest PPN is in host physical memory
  - Insert guest VPN ➔ host PPN mapping in shadow page table
  - Note: Monitor can demand-page the virtual machine
- Uses hardware protection
Shadow PT issues

- Hardware only ever sees shadow page table
  - Guest OS only sees it’s own VM page table, never shadow PT

- Consider the following
  - Guest OS has a page table $T$ mapping $V_U \rightarrow P_U$
  - $T$ itself resides at guest physical address $P_T$
  - Another guest page table entry maps $V_T \rightarrow P_T$
  - VMM stores $P_U$ in host physical address $M_U$ and $P_T$ in $M_T$

- What can VMM put in shadow page table?
  - Safe to map $V_T \rightarrow M_T$ or $V_U \rightarrow M_U$

- Not safe to map both simultaneously!
  - If OS writes to $P_T$, may make $V_U \rightarrow M_U$ in shadow PT incorrect
  - If OS reads/writes $V_U$, may require accessed/dirty bits to be changed in $P_T$ (hardware can only change shadow PT)
• **Option 1:** Page table accessible at $V_T$, but changes won’t be reflected in shadow PT or TLB; access to $V_U$ dangerous

• **Option 2:** $V_U$ accessible, but hardware sets accessed/dirty bits only in shadow PT, not in guest PT at $P_T/M_T$
Tracing

- VMM needs to get control on some memory accesses
- Guest OS changes previously used mapping in VM PT
  - Must intercept to invalidate stale mappings in shadow PT, TLB
  - Note: OS should use invlpg instruction, which would trap to VMM – but in practice many/most OSes are sloppy about this
- Guest OS accesses page when its VM PT is accessible
  - Accessed/dirty bits in VM PT may no longer be correct
  - Must intercept to fix up VM PT (or make VM PT inaccessible)
- Solution: Tracing
  - To track page access, make VPN(s) invalid in shadow PT
  - If guest OS accesses page, will trap to VMM w. page fault
  - VMM can emulate the result of memory access & restart guest OS, just as an OS restarts a process after a page fault
Tracing vs. hidden faults

• Suppose VMM never allowed access to VM PTs?
  - Every PTE access would incur the cost of a tracing fault
  - Very expensive when OS changes lots of PTEs

• Suppose OS allowed access to most page tables (except very recently accessed regions)
  - Now lots of hidden faults when accessing new region
  - Plus overhead to pre-compute accessed/dirty bits from shadow PT as page tables preemptively made valid in shadow PT

• Makes for complex trade-offs
  - But adaptive binary translation (later) can make this better
I/O device virtualization

• Types of communication
  - Special instruction – in/out
  - Memory-mapped I/O (PIO)
  - Interrupts
  - DMA

• Virtualization
  - Make in/out and PIO trap into monitor
  - Use tracing for memory-mapped I/O
  - Run simulation of I/O device

• Simulation
  - Interrupt – Tell CPU simulator to generate interrupt
  - DMA – Copy data to/from physical memory of virtual machine
CPU virtualization requirements

- Need protection levels to run VMs and monitors
- All unsafe/privileged operations should trap
  - Example: disable interrupt, access I/O dev, …
  - x86 problem: popfl (different semantics in different rings)
- Privilege level should not be visible to software
  - Software shouldn’t be able to query and find out it’s in a VM
  - x86 problem: movw %cs, %ax
- Trap should be transparent to software in VM
  - Software in VM shouldn’t be able to tell if instruction trapped
  - x86 problem: traps can destroy machine state
    (E.g., if internal segment register was out of sync with GDT)
- See [Goldberg] for a discussion
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Binary translation

- Cannot directly execute guest OS kernel code on x86
  - Can maybe execute most user code directly
  - But how to get good performance on kernel code?

- Original VMware solution: binary translation
  - Don’t run slow instruction-by-instruction emulator
  - Instead, translate guest kernel code into code that runs in fully-privileged monitor mode\(^2\)

- Challenges:
  - Don’t know the difference between code and data (guest OS might include self-modifying code)
  - Translated code may not be the same size as original
  - Prevent translated code from messing with VMM memory
  - Performance, performance, performance, …

\(^2\) actually CPL 1, so that the VMM has its own exception stack
VMware binary translator

- **VMware translates kernel dynamically (like a JIT)**
  - Start at guest eip
  - Accumulate up to 12 instructions until next control transfer
  - Translate into binary code that can run in VMM context

- **Most instructions translated identically**
  - E.g., regular movl instructions

- **Use segmentation to protect VMM memory**
  - VMM located in high virtual addresses
  - Segment registers “truncated” to block access to high VAs
  - gs segment not truncated; use it to access VMM data
  - Any guest use of gs (rare) can’t be identically translated

Details/examples from [Adams & Agesen]
Control transfer

- All branches/jumps require indirection

- Original:

```assembly
isPrime: mov %edi, %ecx # %ecx = %edi (a)
        mov $2, %esi    # i = 2
        cmp %ecx, %esi # is i >= a?
        jge prime      # jump if yes
...```

- C source:

```c
int
isPrime (int a)
{
    for (int i = 2; i < a; i++) {
        if (a % i == 0)
            return 0;
    }
    return 1;
}
```
Control transfer

- All branches/jumps require indirection

**Original:**  
isPrime: mov %edi, %ecx  # %ecx = %edi (a)  
          mov $2, %esi  # i = 2  
          cmp %ecx, %esi  # is i >= a?  
          jge prime  # jump if yes  
          ...

**Translated:**  
isPrime’: mov %edi, %ecx  # IDENT  
          mov $2, %esi  
          cmp %ecx, %esi  
          jge [takenAddr]  # JCC  
          jmp [fallthrAddr]

**Brackets ([. . .]) indicate continuations**  
- First time jumped to, target untranslated; translate on demand  
- Then fix up continuation to branch to translated code  
- Can elide [fallthrAddr] if fallthrough next translated
Non-identically translated code

- **PC-relative branches & Direct control flow**
  - Just compensate for output address of translator on target
  - Insignificant overhead

- **Indirect control flow**
  - E.g., jump though register (function pointer) or `ret`
  - Can’t assume code is “normal” (e.g., must faithfully `ret` even if stack doesn’t have return address)
  - Look up target address in hash table to see if already translated
  - “Single-digit percentage” overhead

- **Privileged instructions**
  - Appropriately modify VMM state
  - E.g., `cli` $\rightarrow$ `vcpu.flags.IF = 0`
  - Can be faster than original!
Adaptive binary translation

• One remaining source of overhead is tracing faults
  - E.g., when modifying page table or descriptor table

• Idea: Use binary translation to speed up
  - E.g., translate write of PTE into write of guest & shadow PTE
  - Translate PTE read to get accessed & dirty bits from shadow

• Problem: Which instructions to translate?

• Solution: “innocent until proven guilty” model
  - Initially always translate as much code identically as possible
  - Track number of tracing faults caused by an instruction
  - If high number, re-translate to non-identical code
  - May call out to interpreter, or just jump to new code
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Hardware-assisted virtualization

- Both Intel and AMD now have hardware support
  - Different mechanisms, similar concepts
  - This lecture covers AMD (see [AMD Vol 2], Ch. 15)
  - For Intel details, see [Intel Vol 3c]

- VM-enabled CPUs support new guest mode
  - This is separate from kernel/user modes in bits 0–1 of %cs
  - Less privileged than host mode (where VMM runs)
  - Some sensitive instructions trap in guest mode (e.g., load %cr3)
  - Hardware keeps shadow state for many things (e.g., %eflags)

- Enter guest mode with vmrun instruction
  - Loads state from hardware-defined 1-KiB VMCB data structure

- Various events cause EXIT back to host mode
  - On EXIT, hardware saves state back to VMCB
VMCB control bits

- **Intercept vector** specifies what ops should cause EXIT
  - One bit for each of %cr0–%cr15 to say trap on read
  - One bit for each of %cr0–%cr15 to say trap on write
  - 32 analogous bits for the debug registers (%dr0–%dr15)
  - 32 bits for whether to intercept exception vectors 0–31
  - Bits for various other events (e.g., NMI, SMI, ...)
  - Bit to intercept writes to sensitive bits of %cr0
  - 8 bits to intercept reads and writes of IDTR, GDTR, LDTR, TR
  - Bits to intercept rdtsc, rdpmc, pushf, popf, vmrun, hlt, invlpg, int, iret, in/out (to selected ports), ...

- **EXIT code and reason** (e.g., which inst. caused EXIT)

- **Other control values**
  - Pending virtual interrupt, event/exception injection
Guest state saved in VMCB

- **Saved guest state**
  - Full segment registers (i.e., base, lim, attr, not just selectors)
  - Full GDTR, LDTR, IDTR, TR
  - Guest %cr3, %cr2, and other cr/dr registers
  - Guest %eip and %eflags (%rip & %rflags for 64-bit processors)
  - Guest %rax register

- **Entering/Exiting VMM more expensive than syscall**
  - Have to save and restore large VM-state structure
Hardware vs. Software virtualization

- HW VM makes implementing VMM much easier
  - Avoids implementing binary translation (BT)

- Hardware VM is better at entering/exiting kernel
  - E.g., Apache on Windows benchmark: one address space, lots of syscalls, hardware VM does better [Adams]
  - Apache on Linux w. many address spaces: lots of context switches, tracing faults, etc., Software faster [Adams]

- Fork with copy-on-write bad for both HW & BT
  - [Adams] reports fork benchmark where BT-based virtualization 37× and HW-based 106× slower than native!

- Newer CPUs support nested paging
  - Eliminates shadow PT & tracing faults, simplifies VMM
  - Guests can now manipulate %cr3 w/o VM EXIT
  - But dramatically increases cost of TLB misses
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ESX mem. mgmt. [Waldspurger]

• Virtual machines see virtualized physical memory
  - Can let VMs use more “physical” memory than in machine

• How to apportion memory between machines?

• VMware ESX has three parameters per VM:
  - min – Don’t bother running w/o this much machine memory
  - max – Amount of “physical” memory VM OS thinks exists
  - share – How much mem. to give VM relative to other VMs

• Straw man: Allocate based on share, use LRU paging
  - OS already uses LRU $\implies$ double paging
  - OS will re-cycle whatever “physical” page VMM just paged out
  - So better to do random eviction

• Next: 3 cool memory management tricks
Reclaiming pages

- **Idea: Have guest OS return memory to VMM**
  - Then VMM doesn’t have to page memory to disk

- **Normally OS just uses all available memory**
  - But some memory much more important than other memory
  - E.g., buffer cache may contain old, clean buffers; OS won’t discard if doesn’t need memory... but VMM may need memory

- **ESX trick: Balloon driver**
  - Special pseudo-device driver in supported guest OS kernels
  - Communicates with VMM through special interface
  - When VMM needs memory, allocates many pages in guest OS
  - Balloon driver tells VMM to re-cycle its private pages
Sharing pages across VMs

• Often run many VMs with same OS, programs
  - Will result in many machine pages containing same data

• Idea: Use 1 host physical page for all copies of guest physical page (in any virtual machine)

• Keep big hash table mapping: Hash(contents) → info
  - If machine page mapped once, info is VM/PPN where mapped. In that case, Hash is only a hint, as page may have changed
  - If machine page mapped copy-on-write as multiple physical pages, info is just reference count

• Scan OS pages randomly to populate hash table

• Always try sharing a page before paging it out
Idle memory tax

- Need machine page? What VM to take it from?
- Normal proportional share scheme
  - Reclaim from VM with lowest “shares-to-pages” \((S/P)\) ratio
  - If \(A\) & \(B\) both have \(S = 1\), reclaim from larger VM
  - If \(A\) has twice \(B\)‘s share, can use twice the machine memory
- High-priority VMs might get more mem. than needed
- Solution: Idle-memory tax
  - Use statistical sampling to determine a VM’s % idle memory
    (randomly invalidate pages & count the number faulted back)
  - Instead of \(S/P\), reclaim from VM w. lowest \(S / (P(f + k(1 − f)))\).
    \(f = \text{fraction of non-idle pages}; k = \text{“idle page cost” paremeter.}\)
  - Be conservative & overestimate \(f\) to respect priorities
    \((f \text{ is max of slow, fast, and recent memory usage samples})\)
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Final thoughts

- You are all now operating systems experts
- Use this knowledge to build better applications
  - Sometimes need to coax right behavior out of kernel
  - Should be much easier now that you know what’s going on
- Syscall interface can be an innovation barrier
  - Much harder to change kernel than user code
  - Other barriers include standardized net. protocols, servers
  - Get these wrong and many people will suffer
- Some of you will go on to design interfaces that many people are later subjected to
  - Strive to achieve both simplicity and flexibility for users
How to learn more about OSes

• Take CS240 – Advanced Topics in Operating Systems
  - Class will bring you up to speed on OS research
  - Read & discuss 18–25 research papers
  - By the end, should be ready to do OS research

• Get involved in research!

• Lot’s of interesting OS work at Stanford
  - Rosenblum – launched the virtual machine resurgence
  - Lam – collective system, software for mobile devices
  - Levis – seminal work on sensor nets & power management
  - Engler – tools to find OS bugs automatically
  - Boneh/Mitchell – lots of practical OS security work
  - Mazières – done multiple new OSes, FSes, and distributed systems. Applying OS ideas to browser, language security.