CS 3410 Spring 2026

Lab 11 Worksheet: Concurrent Hash Tables

1. Atomic Increment

Part 1A

Study the function below, which atomically adds 1 to an integer variable in memory and returns its original value.

```
# atomic_increment(volatile int* var)
# a0: var
atomic_increment:
    lr.w.aqrl a1, (a0)
    addi      a2, a1, 1
    sc.w.aqrl a3, a2, (a0)
    bne       a3, zero, atomic_increment
    mv        a0, a1
    ret
```

Under what conditions will store-conditional (`sc`) fail? When will it succeed?

Part 1B

Using "ordinary" loads and stores cannot guarantee that memory updates will be visible to other threads in order. Study the function below.

```
# simple_increment(volatile int* var)
# a0: var
simple_increment:
    lw   a1, 0(a0)
    addi a1, a1, 1
    sw   a1, 0(a0)
    mv   a0, a1
    ret
```

Two processors, A and B, are running this program concurrently.
Give an example execution order that results in an incorrect result (i.e. The result is not `prev + 2`.)

2. Locks

Part 2A

What is the purpose of a lock in a multithreaded program?

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Part 2B

Study the function below which adds 1 to the `counter`.

```
int counter = 0;
int lock = 0;

void simple() {
  if (!lock) { lock = 1; counter++; lock = 0; }
}
```

Describe a situation in which the function, which uses an if statement, leads to two threads entering the critical section at the same time. How can this be avoided?

Part 2C

When a thread is "spinning," what is it actually doing?

A. Sleeping until the lock is free
B. Checking again and again in a loop
C. Sending a signal to the OS

3. Spinlocks Reasoning

Suppose we have two threads, A and B, sharing this code:

```
spin_lock(&lock);
counter = counter + 1;
spin_unlock(&lock);
```

What could go wrong if we remove the spinlock?

What does the spinlock guarantee about the variable `counter`?

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4. Condition Variables

Study the function below, which attempts to block until `counter >= threshold`.
Note: you are not allowed to use `pthread.h` *in A11. Instead, you will build your own implementation of spinlocks and condition variables.*

```c
#include <pthread.h>
pthread_mutex_t lock = PTHREAD_MUTEX_INITIALIZER;
pthread_cond_t cond = PTHREAD_COND_INITIALIZER;
int counter = 0;
int threshold = 5;

void wait_for_condition() {
  pthread_mutex_lock(&lock);
  int before = counter;
  if (counter < threshold) { pthread_cond_wait(&cond, &lock); }
  int after = counter;
  printf("Before wait: %d, After wait: %d\n", before, after);
  pthread_mutex_unlock(&lock);
}
```

Now, another thread sets `counter` *to 5:*

```c
void increment() {
  pthread_mutex_lock(&lock);
  counter = 5;
  pthread_cond_signal(&cond);
  pthread_mutex_unlock(&lock);
}
```

Part 4A

Assume no other threads call `pthread_cond_signal`.
Is it necessarily true that `wait_for_condition` *blocks until* `counter >= threshold`*? Explain briefly.*

Part 4B

Regarding the print statement, are the values of `before` *and* `after` *necessarily different? Explain briefly.*

Part 4C

If you answered no to previous parts, suggest how `wait_for_condition` *could be modified to ensure* `before` *and* `after` *are different.*