



# Synchronization: Basics

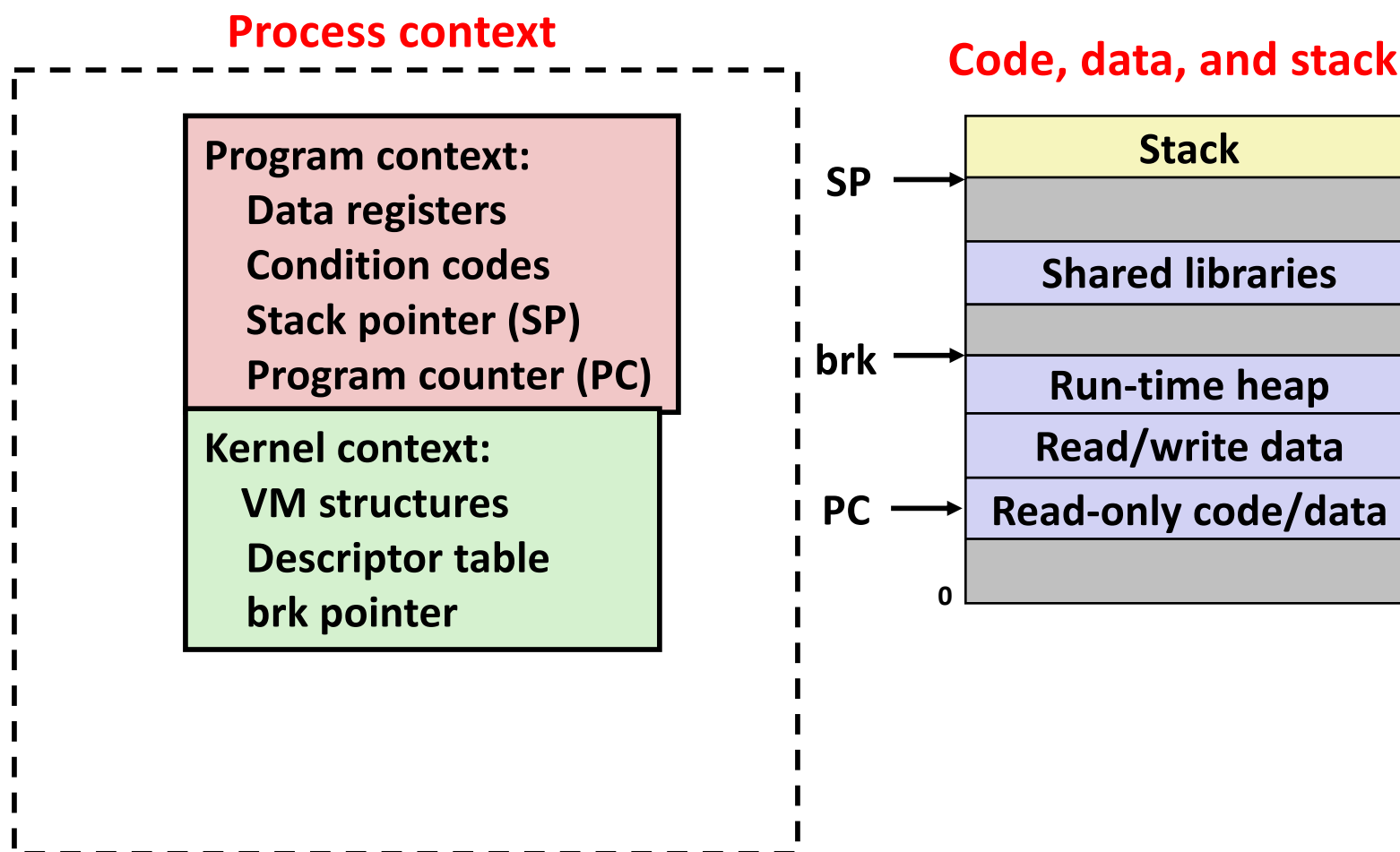
15-213: Introduction to Computer Systems  
24<sup>th</sup> Lecture, November 15, 2018

# Today

- **Threads review**
- Sharing
- Mutual exclusion
- Semaphores

# Traditional View of a Process

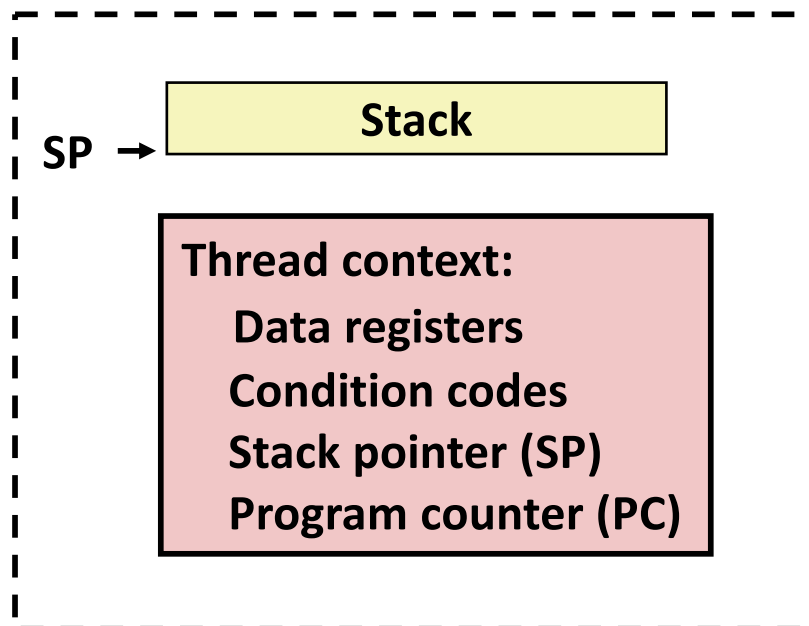
- Process = process context + code, data, and stack



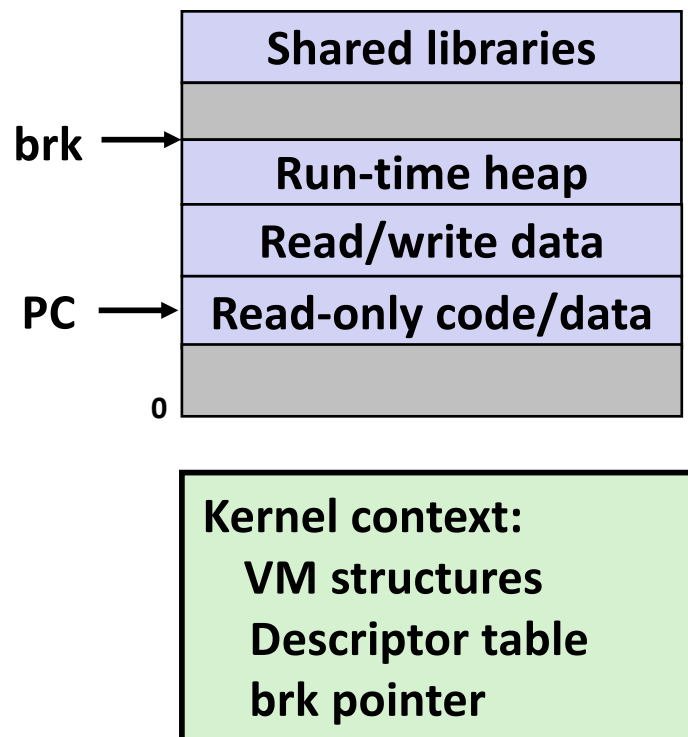
# Alternate View of a Process

- Process = thread + code, data, and kernel context

## Thread (main thread)



## Code, data, and kernel context



# A Process With Multiple Threads

- **Multiple threads can be associated with a process**
  - Each thread has its own logical control flow
  - Each thread shares the same code, data, and kernel context
  - Each thread has its own stack for local variables
    - but not protected from other threads
  - Each thread has its own thread id (TID)

**Thread 1 (main thread) Thread 2 (peer thread)**

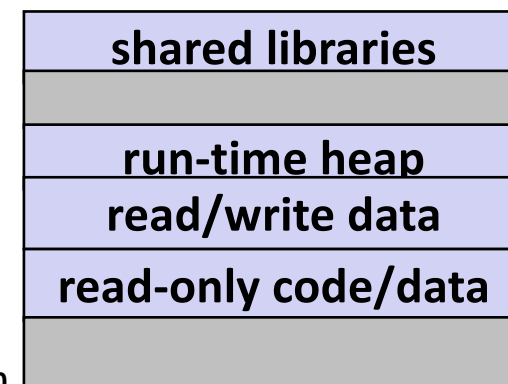
**stack 1**

**Thread 1 context:**  
Data registers  
Condition codes  
 $SP_1$   
 $PC_1$

**stack 2**

**Thread 2 context:**  
Data registers  
Condition codes  
 $SP_2$   
 $PC_2$

**Shared code and data**



**Kernel context:**  
VM structures  
Descriptor table  
brk pointer

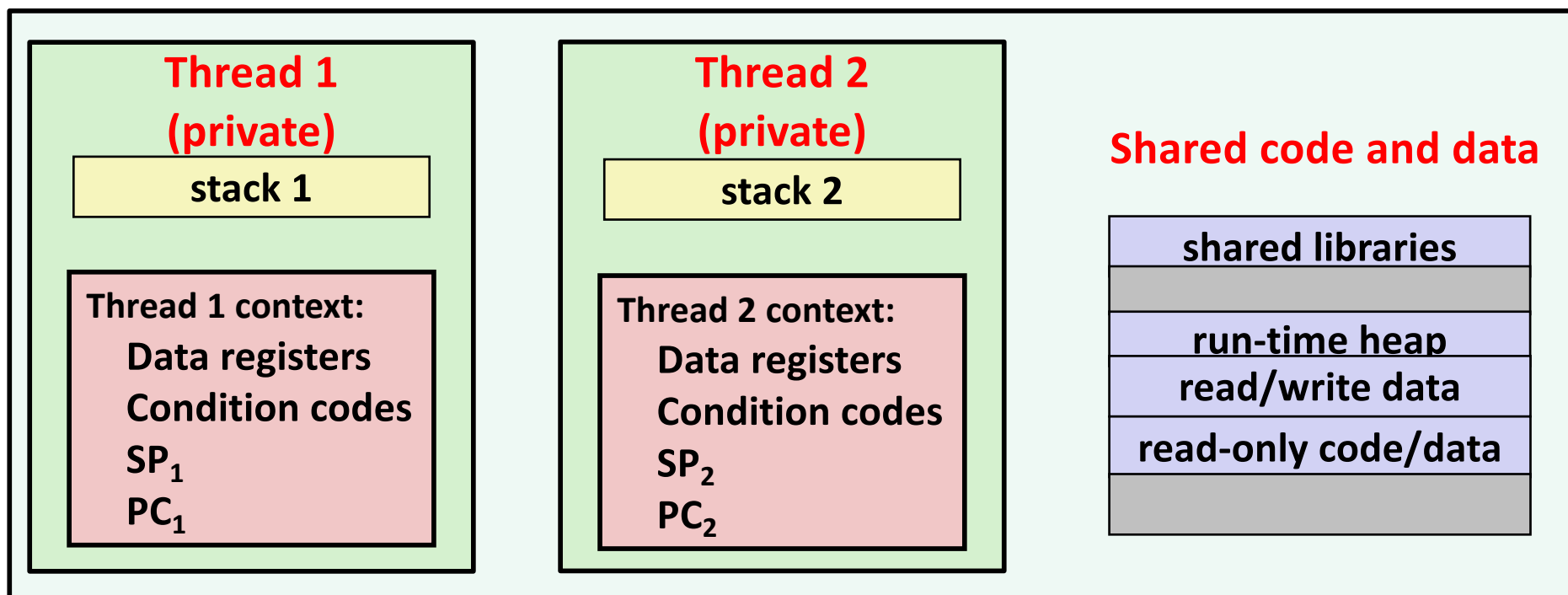


# Shared Variables in Threaded C Programs

- **Question: Which variables in a threaded C program are shared?**
  - The answer is not as simple as “*global variables are shared*” and “*stack variables are private*”
- **Def: A variable  $x$  is *shared* if and only if multiple threads reference some instance of  $x$ .**
- **Requires answers to the following questions:**
  - What is the memory model for threads?
  - How are instances of variables mapped to memory?
  - How many threads might reference each of these instances?

# Threads Memory Model: Conceptual

- Multiple threads run within the context of a single process
- Each thread has its own separate thread context
  - Thread ID, stack, stack pointer, PC, condition codes, and GP registers
- All threads share the remaining process context
  - Code, data, heap, and shared library segments of the process virtual address space
  - Open files and installed handlers

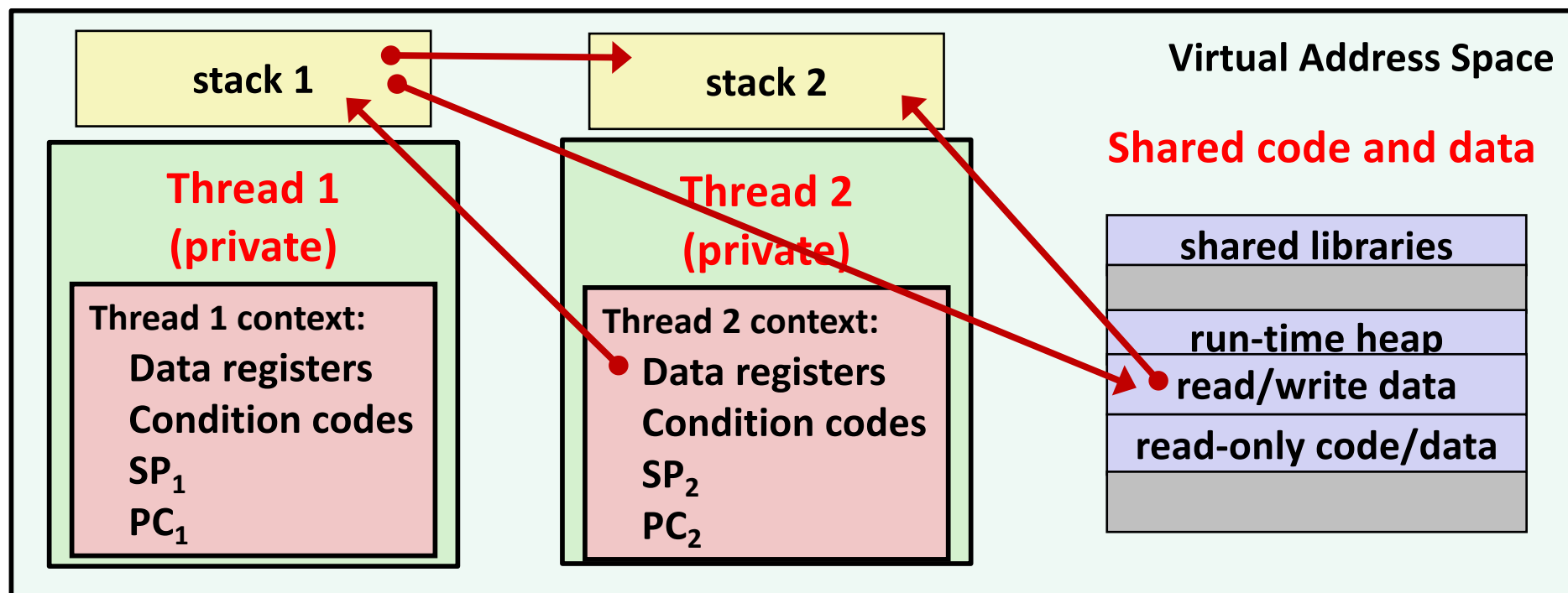




# Threads Memory Model: Actual

## ■ Separation of data is not strictly enforced:

- Register values are truly separate and protected, but...
- Any thread can read and write the stack of any other thread



*The mismatch between the conceptual and operation model  
is a source of confusion and errors*

# Example Program to Illustrate Sharing

```
char **ptr; /* global var */

int main(int argc, char *argv[])
{
    long i;
    pthread_t tid;
    char *msgs[2] = {
        "Hello from foo",
        "Hello from bar"
    };

    ptr = msgs;
    for (i = 0; i < 2; i++)
        Pthread_create(&tid,
            NULL,
            thread,
            (void *)i);
    Pthread_exit(NULL);
}
```

sharing.c

```
void *thread(void *vargp)
{
    long myid = (long)vargp;
    static int cnt = 0;

    printf("[%ld]: %s (cnt=%d)\n",
        myid, ptr[myid], ++cnt);
    return NULL;
}
```

*Peer threads reference main thread's stack indirectly through global ptr variable*

*A common, but inelegant way to pass a single argument to a thread routine*

# Mapping Variable Instances to Memory

## ■ Global variables

- *Def:* Variable declared outside of a function
- **Virtual memory contains exactly one instance of any global variable**

## ■ Local variables

- *Def:* Variable declared inside function without `static` attribute
- **Each thread stack contains one instance of each local variable**

## ■ Local static variables

- *Def:* Variable declared inside function with the `static` attribute
- **Virtual memory contains exactly one instance of any local static variable.**

# Mapping Variable Instances to Memory

**Global var:** 1 instance (ptr [data])

```
char **ptr; /* global var */

int main(int main, char *argv[])
{
    long i;
    pthread_t tid;
    char *msgs[2] = {
        "Hello from foo",
        "Hello from bar"
    };

    ptr = msgs;
    for (i = 0; i < 2; i++)
        Pthread_create(&tid,
            NULL,
            thread,
            (void *)i);
    Pthread_exit(NULL);
}
```

sharing.c

**Local vars:** 1 instance (i.m, msgs.m)

**Local var:** 2 instances (  
myid.p0 [peer thread 0's stack],  
myid.p1 [peer thread 1's stack]  
)

```
void *thread(void *vargp)
{
    long myid = (long)vargp;
    static int cnt = 0;

    printf("[%ld]: %s (cnt=%d)\n",
        myid, ptr[myid], ++cnt);
    return NULL;
}
```

**Local static var:** 1 instance (cnt [data])

# Shared Variable Analysis

## ■ Which variables are shared?

| <i>Variable instance</i> | <i>Referenced by main thread?</i> | <i>Referenced by peer thread 0?</i> | <i>Referenced by peer thread 1?</i> |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| ptr                      | yes                               | yes                                 | yes                                 |
| cnt                      | no                                | yes                                 | yes                                 |
| i.m                      | yes                               | no                                  | no                                  |
| msgs.m                   | yes                               | yes                                 | yes                                 |
| myid.p0                  | no                                | yes                                 | no                                  |
| myid.p1                  | no                                | no                                  | yes                                 |

```
char **ptr; /* global var */
int main(int main, char *argv[]) {
    long i; pthread_t tid;
    char *msgs[2] = {"Hello from foo",
                    "Hello from bar" };

    ptr = msgs;
    for (i = 0; i < 2; i++)
        Pthread_create(&tid,
                       NULL, thread, (void *)i);
    Pthread_exit(NULL);
}
```

```
void *thread(void *vargp)
{
    long myid = (long)vargp;
    static int cnt = 0;

    printf("[%ld]: %s (cnt=%d)\n",
           myid, ptr[myid], ++cnt);
    return NULL;
}
```

# Shared Variable Analysis

## ■ Which variables are shared?

| <i>Variable instance</i> | <i>Referenced by main thread?</i> | <i>Referenced by peer thread 0?</i> | <i>Referenced by peer thread 1?</i> |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <code>ptr</code>         | yes                               | yes                                 | yes                                 |
| <code>cnt</code>         | no                                | yes                                 | yes                                 |
| <code>i.m</code>         | yes                               | no                                  | no                                  |
| <code>msgs.m</code>      | yes                               | yes                                 | yes                                 |
| <code>myid.p0</code>     | no                                | yes                                 | no                                  |
| <code>myid.p1</code>     | no                                | no                                  | yes                                 |

## ■ Answer: A variable **x** is shared iff multiple threads reference at least one instance of **x**. Thus:

- `ptr`, `cnt`, and `msgs` are shared
- `i` and `myid` are *not* shared

# Synchronizing Threads

- Shared variables are handy...
- ...but introduce the possibility of nasty *synchronization* errors.



# badcnt.c: Improper Synchronization

```

/* Global shared variable */
volatile long cnt = 0; /* Counter */

int main(int argc, char **argv)
{
    long niters;
    pthread_t tid1, tid2;

    niters = atoi(argv[1]);
    Pthread_create(&tid1, NULL,
        thread, &niters);
    Pthread_create(&tid2, NULL,
        thread, &niters);
    Pthread_join(tid1, NULL);
    Pthread_join(tid2, NULL);

    /* Check result */
    if (cnt != (2 * niters))
        printf("BOOM! cnt=%ld\n", cnt);
    else
        printf("OK cnt=%ld\n", cnt);
    exit(0);
}

```

badcnt.c

```

/* Thread routine */
void *thread(void *vargp)
{
    long i, niters =
        *((long *)vargp);

    for (i = 0; i < niters; i++)
        cnt++;

    return NULL;
}

```

```

linux> ./badcnt 10000
OK cnt=20000
linux> ./badcnt 10000
BOOM! cnt=13051
linux>

```

cnt should equal 20,000.

What went wrong?

# Assembly Code for Counter Loop

C code for counter loop in thread  $i$

```
for (i = 0; i < niters; i++)
    cnt++;
```

## *Asm code for thread $i$*

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <pre> movq    (%rdi), %rcx testq   %rcx,%rcx jle     .L2 movl     \$0, %eax </pre>     | } $H_i$ : Head  |
| <pre> .L3: movq     cnt(%rip), %rdx addq     \$1, %rdx movq     %rdx, cnt(%rip) </pre> | } $L_i$ : Load cnt<br>$U_i$ : Update cnt<br>$S_i$ : Store cnt |
| <pre> addq     \$1, %rax cmpq     %rcx, %rax jne     .L3 .L2: </pre>                   | } $T_i$ : Tail  |

# Concurrent Execution

- **Key idea:** In general, any sequentially consistent interleaving is possible, but some give an unexpected result!
  - $I_i$  denotes that thread  $i$  executes instruction  $I$
  - $\%rdx_i$  is the content of  $\%rdx$  in thread  $i$ 's context

| $i$ (thread) | $instr_i$ | $\%rdx_1$ | $\%rdx_2$ | cnt |
|--------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----|
| 1            | $H_1$     | -         | -         | 0   |
| 1            | $L_1$     | 0         | -         | 0   |
| 1            | $U_1$     | 1         | -         | 0   |
| 1            | $S_1$     | 1         | -         | 1   |
| 2            | $H_2$     | -         | -         | 1   |
| 2            | $L_2$     | -         | 1         | 1   |
| 2            | $U_2$     | -         | 2         | 1   |
| 2            | $S_2$     | -         | 2         | 2   |
| 2            | $T_2$     | -         | 2         | 2   |
| 1            | $T_1$     | 1         | -         | 2   |

**OK**

# Concurrent Execution

- **Key idea:** In general, any sequentially consistent interleaving is possible, but some give an unexpected result!
  - $I_i$  denotes that thread  $i$  executes instruction  $I$
  - $\%rdx_i$  is the content of  $\%rdx$  in thread  $i$ 's context

| $i$ (thread) | $instr_i$ | $\%rdx_1$ | $\%rdx_2$ | cnt |
|--------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----|
| 1            | $H_1$     | -         | -         | 0   |
| 1            | $L_1$     | 0         | -         | 0   |
| 1            | $U_1$     | 1         | -         | 0   |
| 1            | $S_1$     | 1         | -         | 1   |
| 2            | $H_2$     | -         | -         | 1   |
| 2            | $L_2$     | -         | 1         | 1   |
| 2            | $U_2$     | -         | 2         | 1   |
| 2            | $S_2$     | -         | 2         | 2   |
| 2            | $T_2$     | -         | 2         | 2   |
| 1            | $T_1$     | 1         | -         | 2   |



Thread 1  
critical section



Thread 2  
critical section

**OK**

# Concurrent Execution (cont)

- Incorrect ordering: two threads increment the counter, but the result is 1 instead of 2

| i (thread) | instr <sub>i</sub> | %rdx <sub>1</sub> | %rdx <sub>2</sub> | cnt |
|------------|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-----|
| 1          | H <sub>1</sub>     | -                 | -                 | 0   |
| 1          | L <sub>1</sub>     | 0                 | -                 | 0   |
| 1          | U <sub>1</sub>     | 1                 | -                 | 0   |
| 2          | H <sub>2</sub>     | -                 | -                 | 0   |
| 2          | L <sub>2</sub>     | -                 | 0                 | 0   |
| 1          | S <sub>1</sub>     | 1                 | -                 | 1   |
| 1          | T <sub>1</sub>     | 1                 | -                 | 1   |
| 2          | U <sub>2</sub>     | -                 | 1                 | 1   |
| 2          | S <sub>2</sub>     | -                 | 1                 | 1   |
| 2          | T <sub>2</sub>     | -                 | 1                 | 1   |

*Oops!*

# Concurrent Execution (cont)

## ■ How about this ordering?

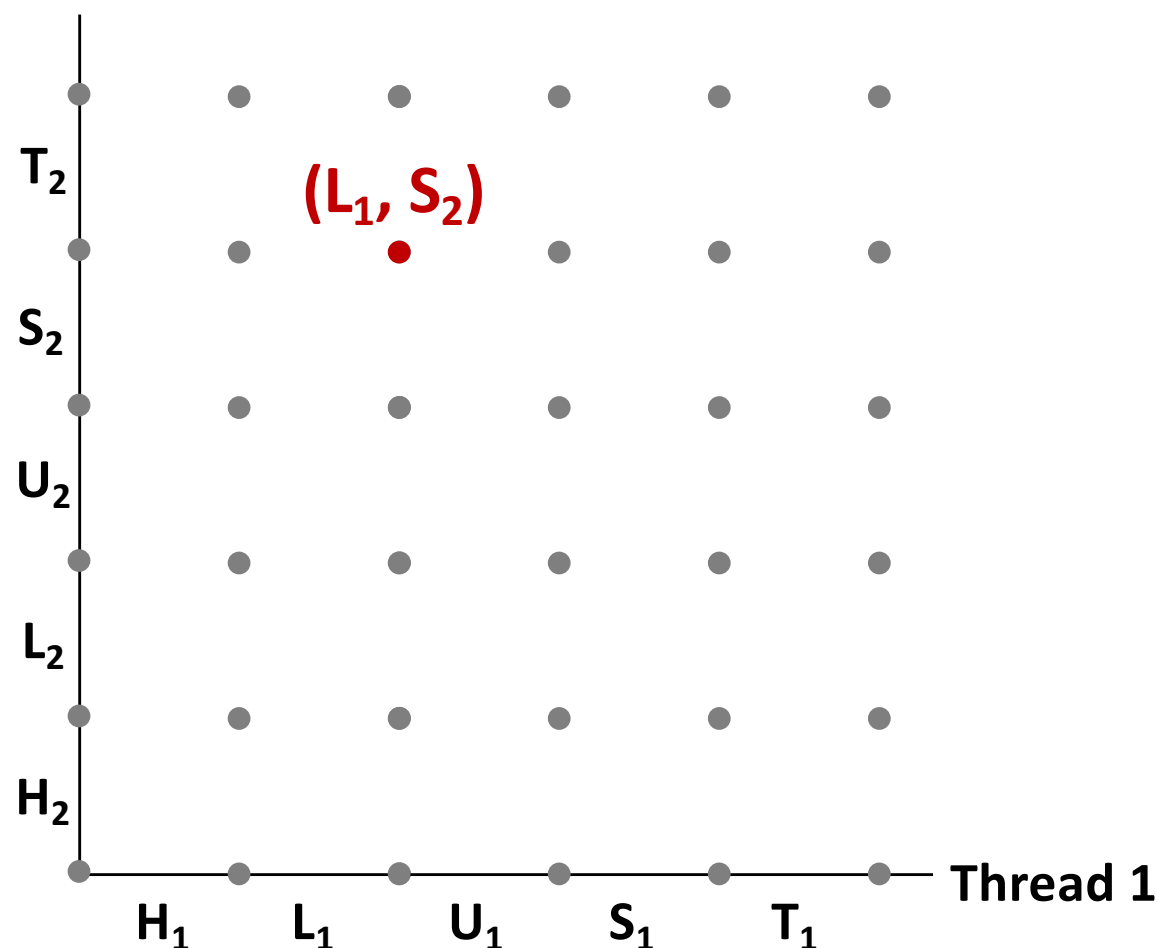
| i (thread) | instr <sub>i</sub> | %rdx <sub>1</sub> | %rdx <sub>2</sub> | cnt |
|------------|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-----|
| 1          | H <sub>1</sub>     |                   |                   | 0   |
| 1          | L <sub>1</sub>     | 0                 |                   |     |
| 2          | H <sub>2</sub>     |                   |                   |     |
| 2          | L <sub>2</sub>     |                   | 0                 |     |
| 2          | U <sub>2</sub>     |                   | 1                 |     |
| 2          | S <sub>2</sub>     |                   | 1                 | 1   |
| 1          | U <sub>1</sub>     | 1                 |                   |     |
| 1          | S <sub>1</sub>     | 1                 |                   | 1   |
| 1          | T <sub>1</sub>     |                   |                   | 1   |
| 2          | T <sub>2</sub>     |                   |                   | 1   |

*Oops!*

## ■ We can analyze the behavior using a *progress graph*

# Progress Graphs

Thread 2



A *progress graph* depicts the discrete *execution state space* of concurrent threads.

Each axis corresponds to the sequential order of instructions in a thread.

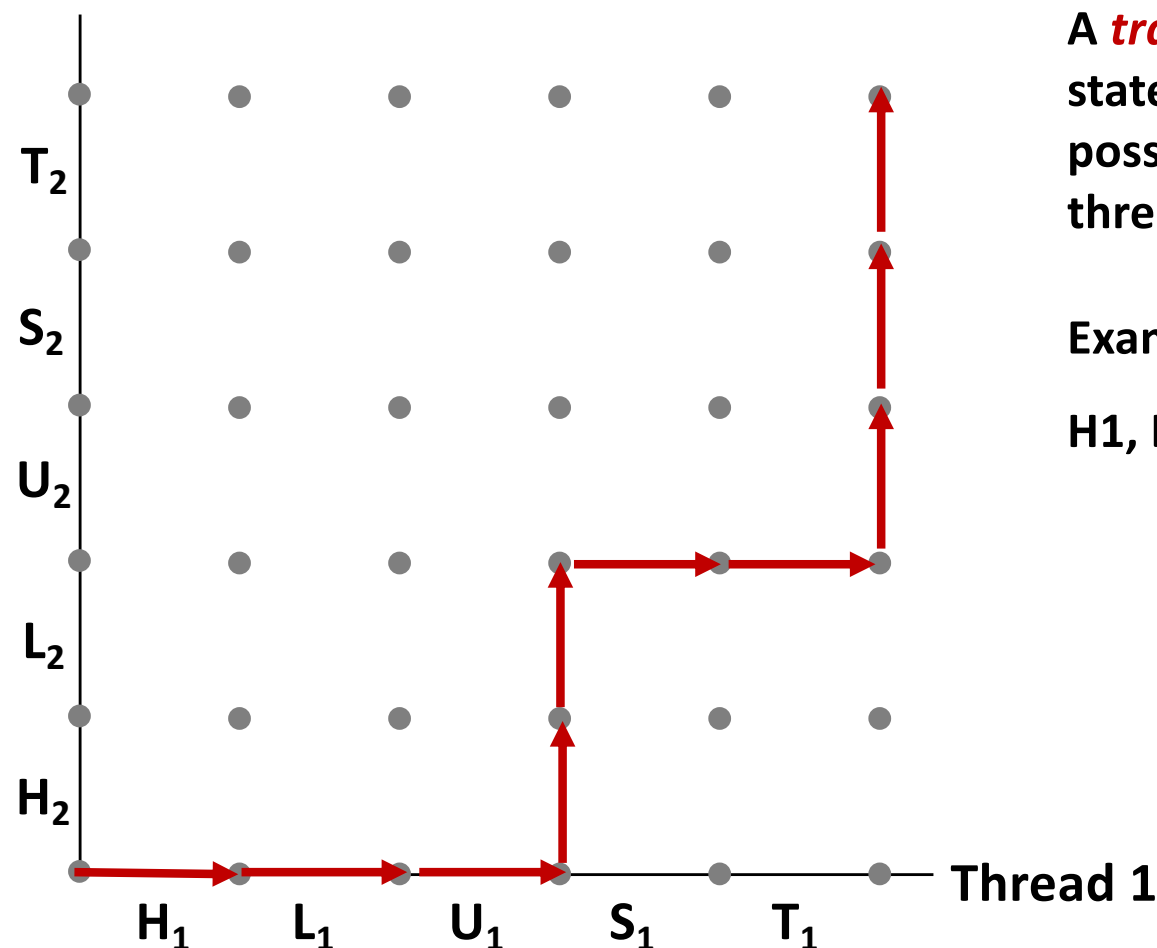
Each point corresponds to a possible *execution state* (Inst<sub>1</sub>, Inst<sub>2</sub>).

E.g., (L<sub>1</sub>, S<sub>2</sub>) denotes state where thread 1 has completed L<sub>1</sub> and thread 2 has completed S<sub>2</sub>.



# Trajectories in Progress Graphs

Thread 2

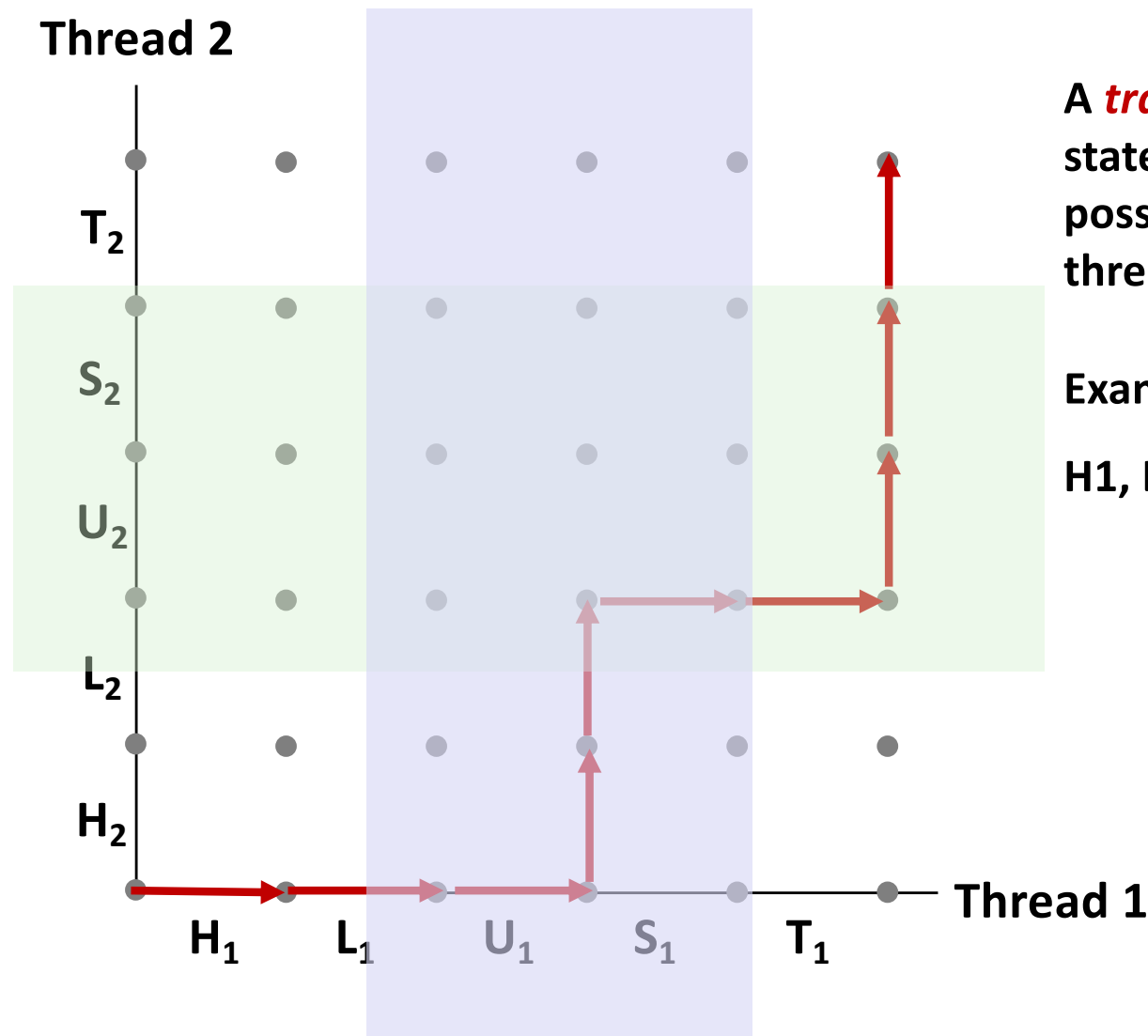


A *trajectory* is a sequence of legal state transitions that describes one possible concurrent execution of the threads.

Example:

$H_1, L_1, U_1, H_2, L_2, S_1, T_1, U_2, S_2, T_2$

# Trajectories in Progress Graphs

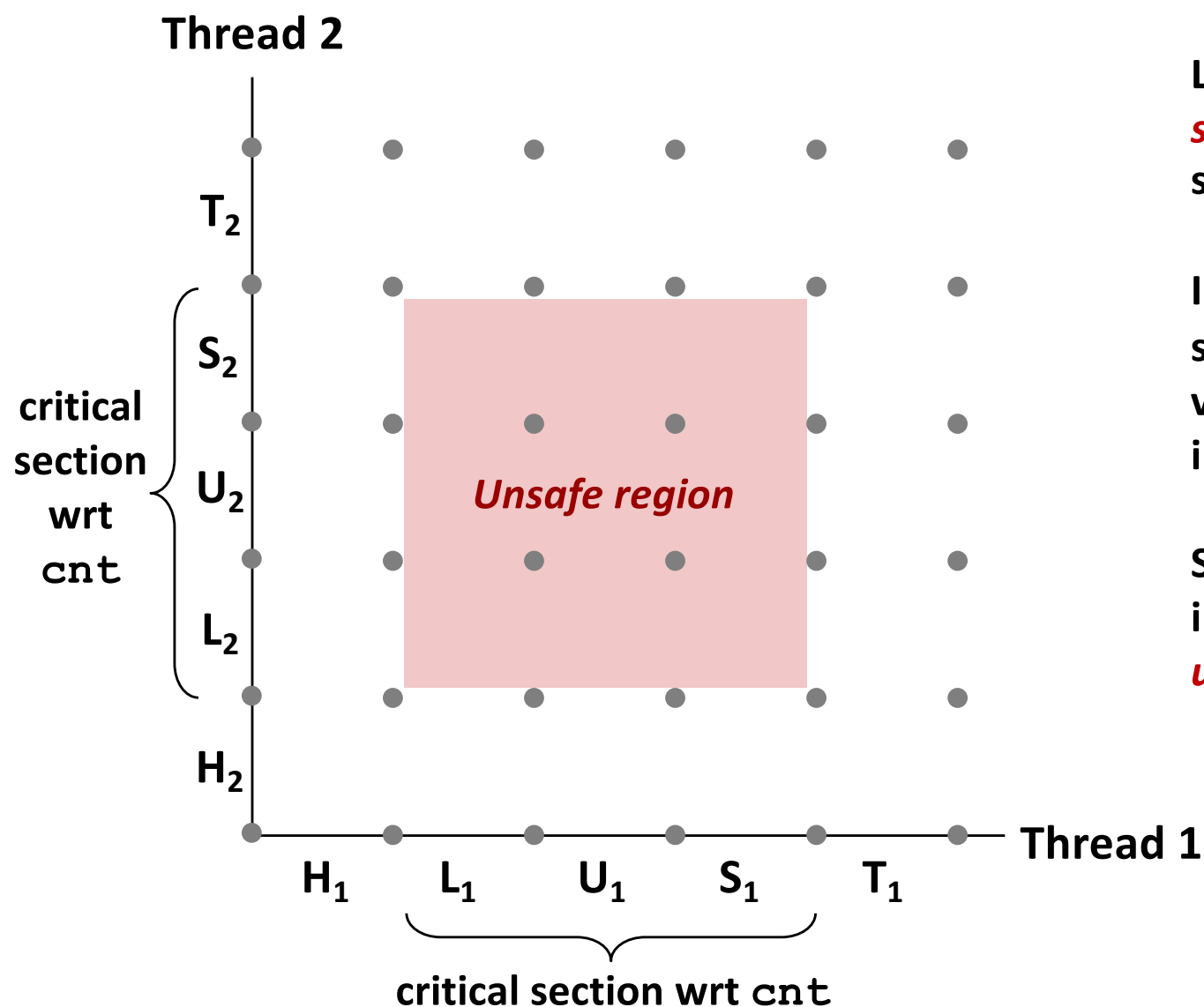


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Example:

$H_1, L_1, U_1, H_2, L_2, S_1, T_1, U_2, S_2, T_2$

# Critical Sections and Unsafe Regions

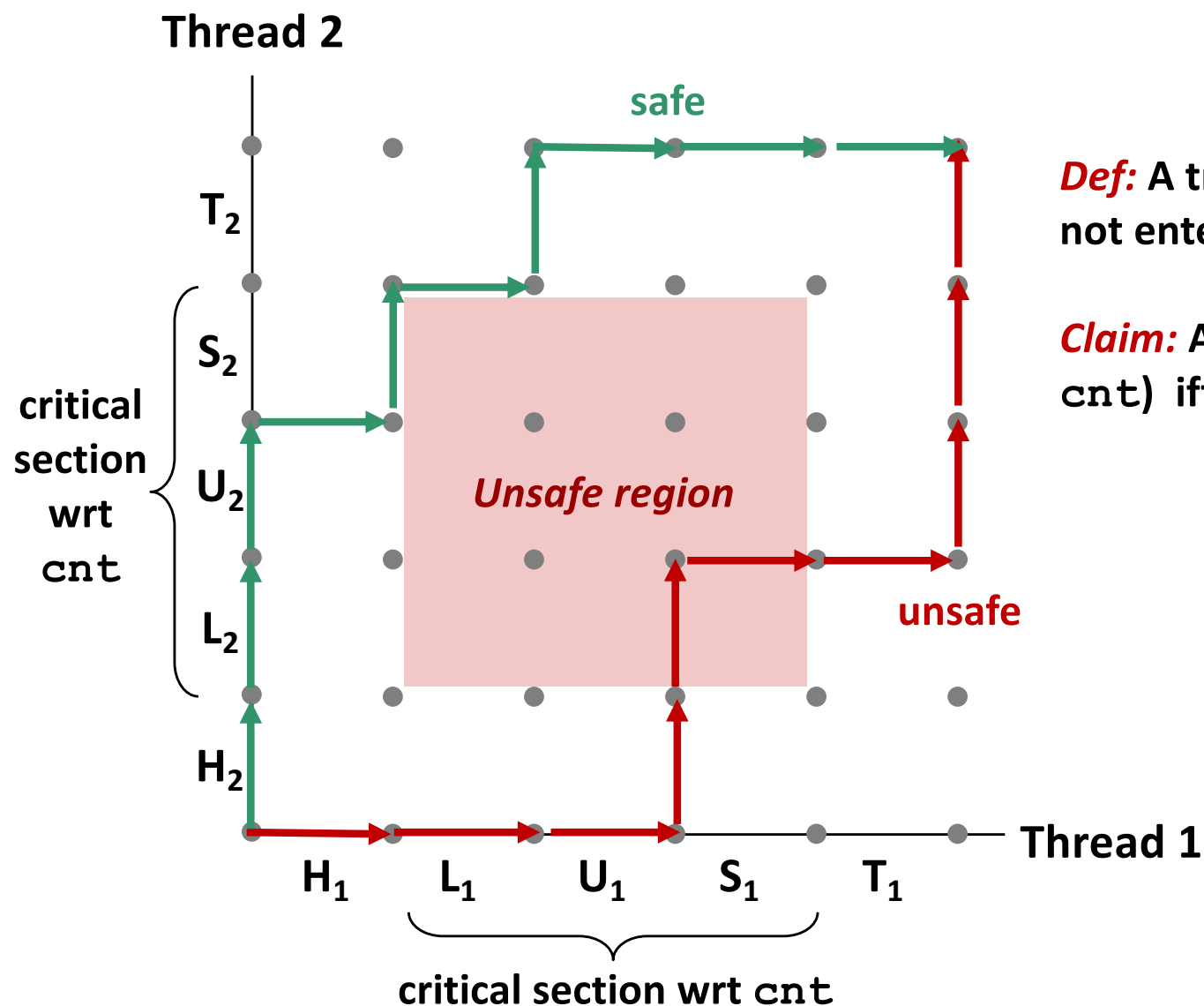


$L$ ,  $U$ , and  $S$  form a **critical section** with respect to the shared variable `cnt`

Instructions in critical sections (wrt some shared variable) should not be interleaved

Sets of states where such interleaving occurs form **unsafe regions**

# Critical Sections and Unsafe Regions



*Def:* A trajectory is *safe* iff it does not enter any unsafe region

*Claim:* A trajectory is correct (wrt cnt) iff it is safe

# badcnt.c: Improper Synchronization

```

/* Global shared variable */
volatile long cnt = 0; /* Counter */

int main(int argc, char **argv)
{
    long niters;
    pthread_t tid1, tid2;

    niters = atoi(argv[1]);
    Pthread_create(&tid1, NULL,
        thread, &niters);
    Pthread_create(&tid2, NULL,
        thread, &niters);
    Pthread_join(tid1, NULL);
    Pthread_join(tid2, NULL);

    /* Check result */
    if (cnt != (2 * niters))
        printf("BOOM! cnt=%ld\n", cnt);
    else
        printf("OK cnt=%ld\n", cnt);
    exit(0);
}

```

badcnt.c

```

/* Thread routine */
void *thread(void *vargp)
{
    long i, niters =
        *((long *)vargp);

    for (i = 0; i < niters; i++)
        cnt++;

    return NULL;
}

```

| Variable | main | thread1 | thread2 |
|----------|------|---------|---------|
| cnt      | yes* | yes     | yes     |
| niters.m | yes  | no      | no      |
| tid1.m   | yes  | no      | no      |
| i.1      | no   | yes     | no      |
| i.2      | no   | no      | yes     |
| niters.1 | no   | yes     | no      |
| niters.2 | no   | no      | yes     |

# Quiz Time!

Check out:

<https://canvas.cmu.edu/courses/1221>

# Enforcing Mutual Exclusion

- **Question:** How can we guarantee a safe trajectory?
- **Answer:** We must *synchronize* the execution of the threads so that they can never have an unsafe trajectory.
  - i.e., need to guarantee *mutually exclusive access* for each critical section.
- **Classic solution:**
  - Semaphores (Edsger Dijkstra)



# Semaphores

- **Semaphore:** non-negative global integer synchronization variable. Manipulated by  $P$  and  $V$  operations.
- $P(s)$ 
  - If  $s$  is nonzero, then decrement  $s$  by 1 and return immediately.
    - Test and decrement operations occur atomically (indivisibly)
  - If  $s$  is zero, then suspend thread until  $s$  becomes nonzero and the thread is restarted by a  $V$  operation.
  - After restarting, the  $P$  operation decrements  $s$  and returns control to the caller.
- $V(s)$ :
  - Increment  $s$  by 1.
    - Increment operation occurs atomically
  - If there are any threads blocked in a  $P$  operation waiting for  $s$  to become non-zero, then restart exactly one of those threads, which then completes its  $P$  operation by decrementing  $s$ .
- **Semaphore invariant:**  $(s \geq 0)$

# Semaphores

- ***Semaphore***: non-negative global integer synchronization variable
- **Manipulated by  $P$  and  $V$  operations:**
  - $P(s)$ : [ `while (s == 0) wait(); s--;` ]
    - Dutch for “Proberen” (test)
  - $V(s)$ : [ `s++;` ]
    - Dutch for “Verhogen” (increment)
- **OS kernel guarantees that operations between brackets [ ] are executed indivisibly**
  - Only one  $P$  or  $V$  operation at a time can modify  $s$ .
  - When **while** loop in  $P$  terminates, only that  $P$  can decrement  $s$
- **Semaphore invariant:  $(s \geq 0)$**

# C Semaphore Operations

## Pthreads functions:

```
#include <semaphore.h>

int sem_init(sem_t *s, 0, unsigned int val); /* s = val */

int sem_wait(sem_t *s); /* P(s) */
int sem_post(sem_t *s); /* V(s) */
```

## CS:APP wrapper functions:

```
#include "csapp.h"

void P(sem_t *s); /* Wrapper function for sem_wait */
void V(sem_t *s); /* Wrapper function for sem_post */
```

# badcnt.c: Improper Synchronization

```
/* Global shared variable */
volatile long cnt = 0; /* Counter */

int main(int argc, char **argv)
{
    long niters;
    pthread_t tid1, tid2;

    niters = atoi(argv[1]);
    Pthread_create(&tid1, NULL,
                  thread, &niters);
    Pthread_create(&tid2, NULL,
                  thread, &niters);
    Pthread_join(tid1, NULL);
    Pthread_join(tid2, NULL);

    /* Check result */
    if (cnt != (2 * niters))
        printf("BOOM! cnt=%ld\n", cnt);
    else
        printf("OK cnt=%ld\n", cnt);
    exit(0);
}
```

badcnt.c

```
/* Thread routine */
void *thread(void *vargp)
{
    long i, niters =
        *((long *)vargp);

    for (i = 0; i < niters; i++)
        cnt++;

    return NULL;
}
```

How can we fix this using semaphores?

# Using Semaphores for Mutual Exclusion

## ■ Basic idea:

- Associate a unique semaphore *mutex*, initially 1, with each shared variable (or related set of shared variables).
- Surround corresponding critical sections with  $P(mutex)$  and  $V(mutex)$  operations.

## ■ Terminology:

- *Binary semaphore*: semaphore whose value is always 0 or 1
- *Mutex*: binary semaphore used for mutual exclusion
  - P operation: “locking” the mutex
  - V operation: “unlocking” or “releasing” the mutex
  - “Holding” a mutex: locked and not yet unlocked.
- *Counting semaphore*: used as a counter for set of available resources.

# goodcnt.c: Proper Synchronization

- Define and initialize a mutex for the shared variable cnt:

```
volatile long cnt = 0; /* Counter */
sem_t mutex;          /* Semaphore that protects cnt */

sem_init(&mutex, 0, 1); /* mutex = 1 */
```

- Surround critical section with P and V:

```
for (i = 0; i < niters; i++) {
    P(&mutex);
    cnt++;
    V(&mutex);
}
```

goodcnt.c

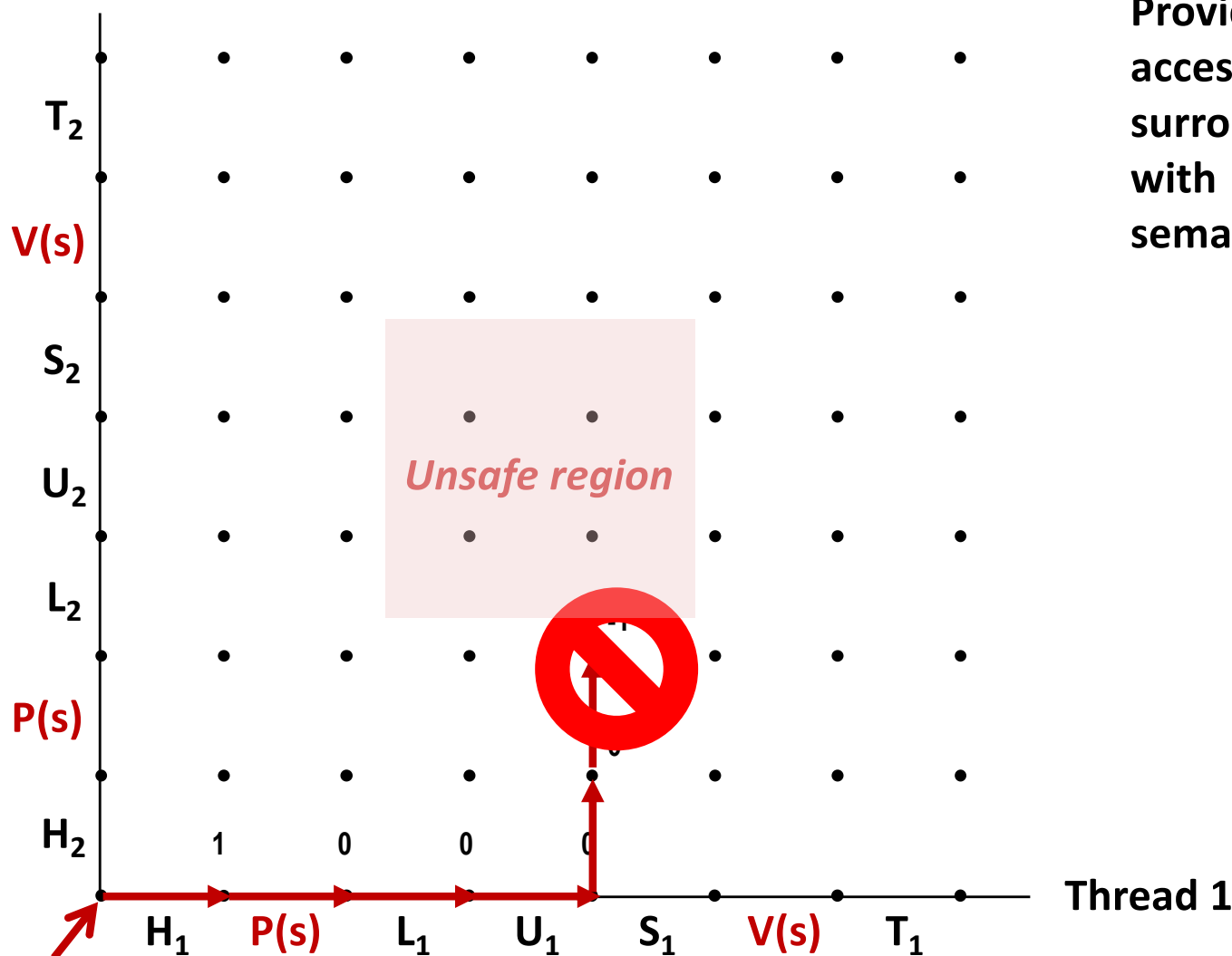
```
linux> ./goodcnt 10000
OK cnt=20000
linux> ./goodcnt 10000
OK cnt=20000
linux>
```

Warr

| Function                              | badcnt | goodcnt |
|---------------------------------------|--------|---------|
| Time (ms)<br>niters = 10 <sup>6</sup> | 12     | 450     |
| Slowdown                              | 1.0    | 37.5    |

# Why Mutexes Work

Thread 2



Provide mutually exclusive access to shared variable by surrounding critical section with  $P$  and  $V$  operations on semaphore  $s$  (initially set to 1)

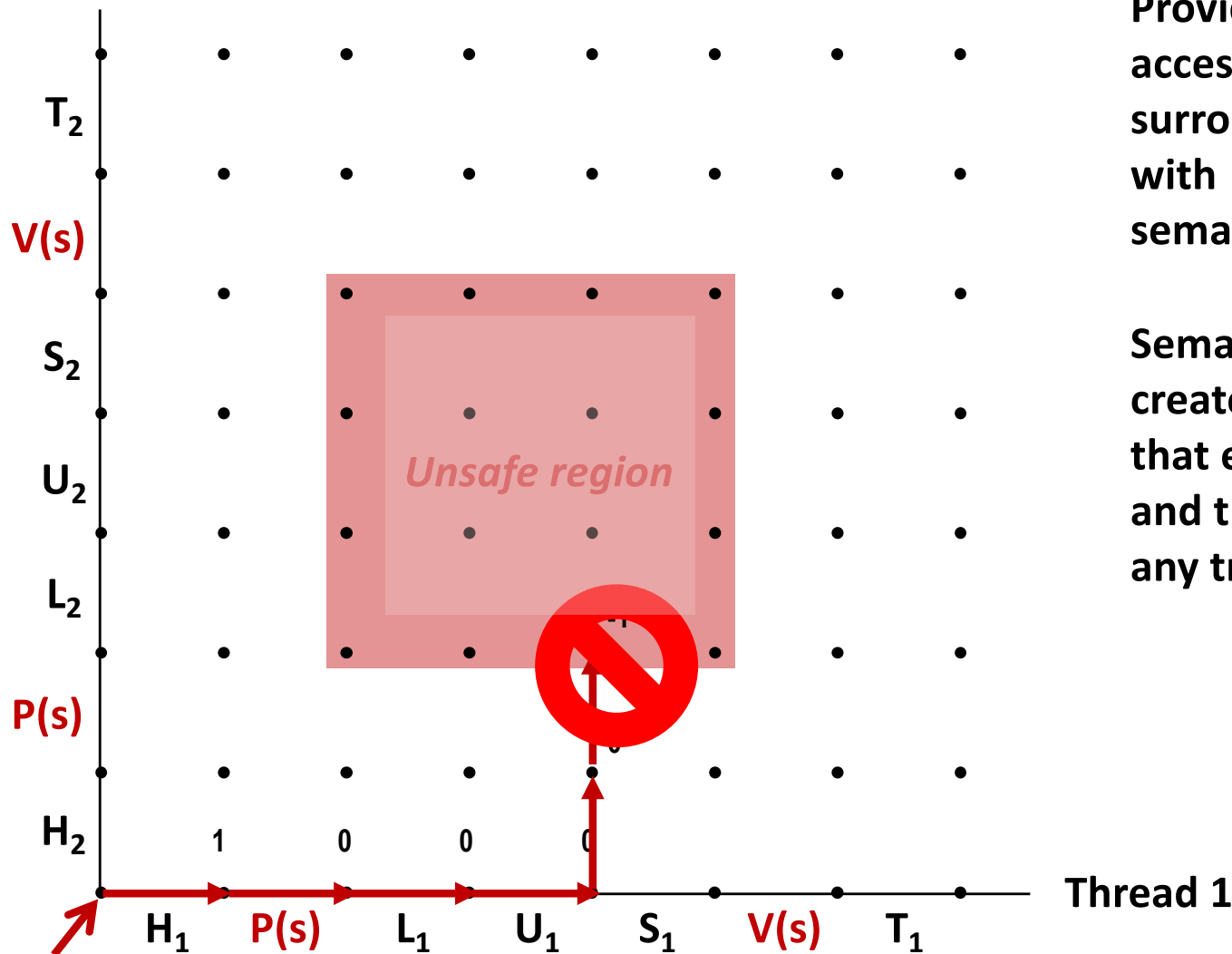
Initially

$s = 1$



# Why Mutexes Work

Thread 2



Provide mutually exclusive access to shared variable by surrounding critical section with  $P$  and  $V$  operations on semaphore  $s$  (initially set to 1)

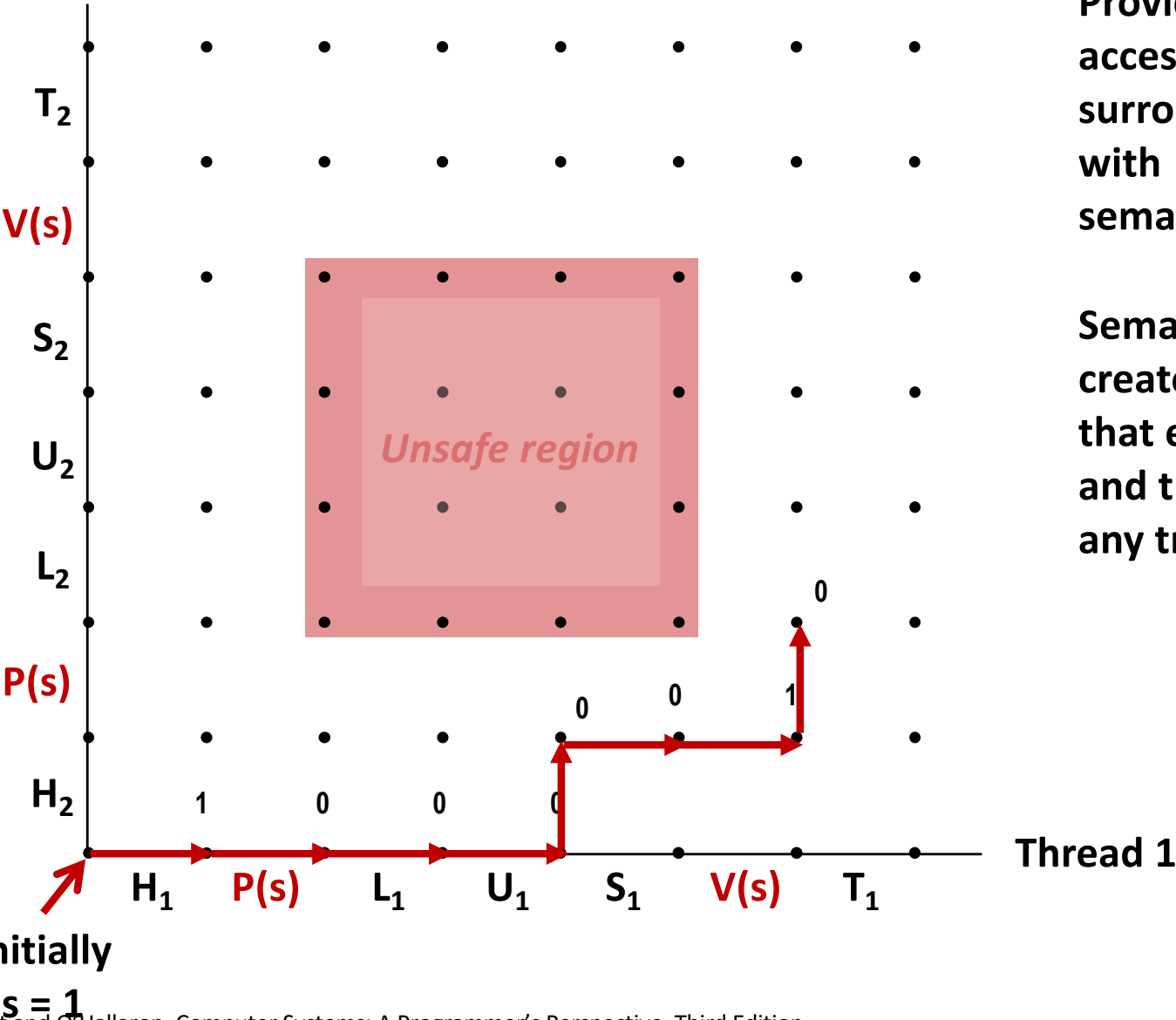
Semaphore invariant creates a *forbidden region* that encloses unsafe region and that cannot be entered by any trajectory.

Initially

$s = 1$

# Why Mutexes Work

## Thread 2

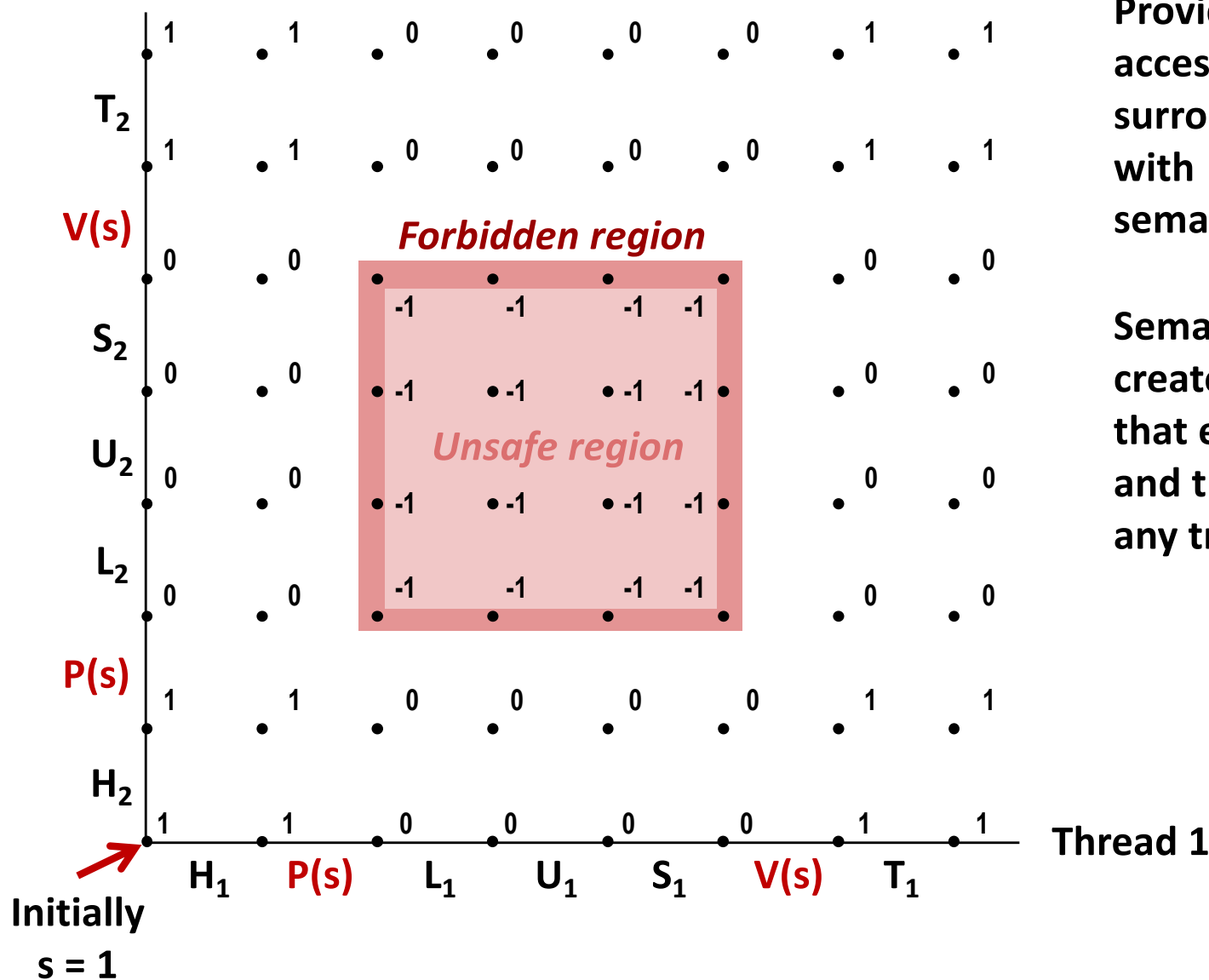


**Provide mutually exclusive access to shared variable by surrounding critical section with  $P$  and  $V$  operations on semaphore  $s$  (initially set to 1)**

**Semaphore invariant  
creates a *forbidden region*  
that encloses unsafe region  
and that cannot be entered by  
any trajectory.**

# Why Mutexes Work

Thread 2



Provide mutually exclusive access to shared variable by surrounding critical section with  $P$  and  $V$  operations on semaphore  $s$  (initially set to 1)

Semaphore invariant creates a **forbidden region** that encloses unsafe region and that cannot be entered by any trajectory.

# Binary Semaphores

- **Mutex is special case of semaphore**
  - Value either 0 or 1
- **Pthreads provides `pthread_mutex_t`**
  - Operations: lock, unlock
- **Recommended over general semaphores when appropriate**

# goodmct.c: Mutex Synchronization

- Define and initialize a mutex for the shared variable cnt:

```
volatile long cnt = 0;  /* Counter */
pthread_mutex_t mutex;
pthread_mutex_init(&mutex, NULL); // No special attributes
```

- Surround critical section with *lock* and *unlock*:

```
for (i = 0; i < niters; i++) {
    pthread_mutex_lock(&mutex);
    cnt++;
    pthread_mutex_unlock(&mutex);
}
```

goodmct.c

```
linux> ./goodmct 10000
OK cnt=20000
linux> ./goodmct 10000
OK cnt=20000
linux>
```

| Function                              | badcnt | goodcnt | goodmct |
|---------------------------------------|--------|---------|---------|
| Time (ms)<br>niters = 10 <sup>6</sup> | 12     | 450     | 214     |
| Slowdown                              | 1.0    | 37.5    | 17.8    |

# Summary

- **Programmers need a clear model of how variables are shared by threads.**
- **Variables shared by multiple threads must be protected to ensure mutually exclusive access.**
- **Semaphores are a fundamental mechanism for enforcing mutual exclusion.**