Cache Coherence Protocols
Conditions for Cache Coherence

- **Program Order.** A read by processor P to location A that follows a write by P to A, with no writes to A by another processor in between, should always return the value of A written by P.

- **Coherent View of Memory.** A read by processor P1 to location A that follows a write by another processor P2 to location A should return the written value by P2 if:
  - The read and write are sufficiently separated in time
  - No other writes to A by another processor occur between the read and the write

- **Write Serialization.** Writes to the same location are serialized: Two writes to the same location by any two processors are seen in the same order by *all* processors.
Cache Coherence

- Cache coherence defines behavior of reads and writes to the same memory location.

- Cache coherence is mainly a problem for shared, read-write data structures:
  - Read only structures can be safely replicated.
  - Private read-write structures can have coherence problems if they migrate from one processor to another.

- Two main types of cache coherence protocols:
  - Snooping: Caches keep track of the sharing status of all blocks, no centralized state is kept.
  - Directory: Sharing status of any block in memory is kept in one location, the directory.
Example Codes that May Cause Coherence Problems

- Finite-buffer producer/consumer, paper figure 3
  - Producer generates an item unless buffer is full
  - Consumer removes an item unless buffer is empty
  - Read-write sharing for buffer size and buffer elements

- Solving a linear system of equations, paper figure 4
  - Both array $A$ and vector $b$ are read-shared, can be safely replicated
  - Vector $x$ is computed every cycle, is read-write shared
Invalidate vs. Update Protocols

- **Write-invalidate protocols**
  - Guarantees only one writer has a valid copy of a block
  - When a processor wants to write to a cache block, it issues a “Get Exclusive” request to other processors, forcing them to invalidate any copies of the block
  - Subsequent writes from the same processor are done locally in the cache

- **Write-update protocols**
  - When a processor writes to a block, it sends data to all other processors with valid copies

- Paper figure 5
- Pros and cons?
Write-Once Invalidate Protocol

States
- Invalid
- Valid: Copy is consistent with memory
- Reserved: Data has been written exactly once, and copy is consistent with memory (the only other copy)
- Dirty: Data modified more than once, only valid copy

Copy-back memory update policy: Block is written back to memory when replaced if the block is dirty

Events:
- Processor read (P-Read) and Processor write (P-Write)
- Memory read block (Read-Blk) and write block (Write-Blk)
- Write-Inv: Invalidate all other copies of block
- Read-Inv: Read a block and invalidate all other copies

Paper figure 6
Firefly Update Protocol

- **States**
  - Valid-exclusive: Only copy, consistent with memory copy
  - Shared: One of many valid copies
  - Dirty: Only valid copy, memory is inconsistent

- Protocol uses copy-back update policy for private blocks
- Protocol uses write-through for shared blocks
- Paper figure 7
- Used in the Firefly multiprocessor workstation from DEC
- Another update protocol: Dragon protocol proposed for the Dragon MP workstation from Xerox
  - Avoids updating memory until a block is replaced
Implementation Issues for Snoopy Coherence Protocols

- Easier to implement compared to directory protocols
  - Directory protocols discussed next time
- Cache Controller: A finite state machine that implements coherence protocol state transition diagram
- Cache Directory: Stores state for each block
- Bus Controller: Implements bus snooping, monitors every bus operation and takes action if needed
- Contention for directory between local and bus requests
- Impact of block size
- Write-through vs. write-back
- Write-allocate vs. write no-allocate
Software Coherence Protocols

- Compiler limits which blocks can be cached
- Types of data accesses
  1. Shared read-only
  2. One writer, multiple readers
  3. One process read/write
  4. Shared read-write
- Trivial solution: All shared read-write blocks are marked as uncachable (types 2 and 4 above)
- Optimization: some shared read-write variables can be used by one processor for a long time, so may be cached
- Disadvantages vs. hardware protocols?
More Hardware Protocols

- Hardware protocol variations:
  - MSI
  - MESI
  - MOSI
  - MOESI

- Discuss intermediate states
Multi-Level Protocols

- Inclusion/Exclusion policy for multi-level caches:
  - Inclusive caches
  - Exclusive caches
  - Non-inclusive (non-exclusive) caches

- Which caches need to snoop?

- CMP private vs. shared caches
  - Private caches maintain coherence state
  - Shared caches may store state of all L1 caches
Reading & Homework

- No Class on Thursday

- Next Tuesday
  - James Laudon and Daniel Lenoski, "The SGI Origin: A ccNUMA Highly Scalable Server," ISCA 1997 (Read)

- Homework 2 due today

- Homework 3 out today, due Thursday 10/24

- Project proposals due this Thursday
  - Send pdf or text files by email