

Portland State University  
ECE 587/687

# Caches and Memory-Level Parallelism

# Revisiting Processor Performance

- Program Execution Time =  
(CPU clock cycles + Memory stall cycles)  
x clock cycle time
- For each instruction:  
CPI = CPI(Perfect Memory)  
+ Memory stall cycles per instruction
- With no caches, all memory requests require accessing main memory
  - ◆ Very long latency (discuss)
- Caches filter out many memory accesses
  - ◆ Reduce execution time
  - ◆ Reduce memory bandwidth

# Cache Performance

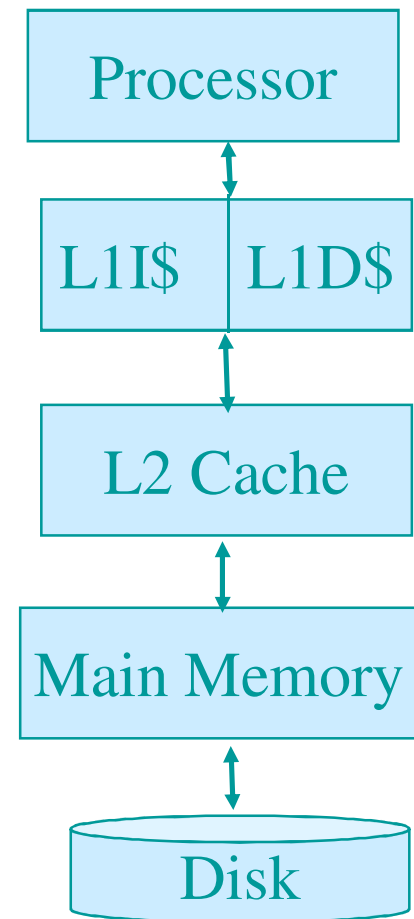
- Memory stall cycles Per Instruction =  
Cache Misses per instruction x miss penalty
- Processor Performance:  
$$\text{CPI} = \text{CPI}(\text{Perfect Memory}) + \text{miss rate} \times \text{miss penalty}$$
- Average memory access time =  
Hit ratio x Hit latency + Miss ratio x Miss penalty
- Cache hierarchies attempt to reduce average memory access time

# Cache Performance Metrics

- Hit ratio:  $\#hits / \#accesses$
- Miss ratio:  $\#misses / \#accesses$
- Miss rate: Misses per instruction (or 1000 instructions)
  - ◆ Miss rate = miss ratio x memory accesses per inst
- Hit time: time from request issued to cache until data is returned to the processor
  - ◆ Depends on cache design parameters
  - ◆ Bigger caches, larger associativity, more ports increase hit time
- Miss penalty: depends on memory hierarchy parameters

# Memory Hierarchy

- First-level caches
  - ◆ Usually Split I & D caches
  - ◆ Small and fast
- Second-level caches
  - ◆ Usually on-die
  - ◆ SRAM cells
- Main memory
  - ◆ DRAM cells
  - ◆ focus on density
- Disk
  - ◆ Usually magnetic device
  - ◆ Non volatile
  - ◆ Slow access time



# Basic Cache Structure

- Array of blocks (lines)
  - ◆ Each block is usually 32-128 bytes
- Finding a block in cache:



- Offset: byte offset in block
- Index: Which set in the cache is the block located
- Tag: Need to match address tag in cache

# Associativity

- Set associativity
  - ◆ Set: Group of blocks corresponding to same index
  - ◆ Each block in the set is called a *Way*
  - ◆ 2-way set associative cache: each set contains two blocks
  - ◆ Direct-mapped cache: each set contains one block
  - ◆ Fully-associative cache: the whole cache is one set
- Need to check all tags in a set to determine hit/miss status

# Example: Cache Block Placement

- Consider a 4-way, 32KB cache with 64-byte lines
- Where is 48-bit address 0x0000FFFFAB64?
  - ◆ Number of lines = cache size / line size = 32K / 64 = 512
  - ◆ Each set contains 4 lines  $\Rightarrow$  Number of sets = 512/4 = 128 sets
  - ◆ Offset bits =  $\log_2(64) = 6$ : 0x24
  - ◆ Index bits =  $\log_2(128) = 7$ : 0x2D
  - ◆ Tag bits = 48-(6+7) = 35: 0x00007FFFD

# Types of Cache Misses

- Compulsory (cold) misses: First access to a block
  - ◆ Prefetching can reduce these misses
- Capacity misses: A cache cannot contain all blocks needed in a program - some blocks are discarded then accessed
  - ◆ Replacement policies should target blocks that won't be used later
- Conflict misses: Blocks mapping to the same set may be discarded (in direct-mapped and set-associative caches)
  - ◆ Increasing associativity can reduce these misses
- For multiprocessors, coherence misses can also happen

# Non-Blocking Cache Hierarchy

- Superscalar processors require parallel execution units
  - ◆ Multiple pipelined functional units
  - ◆ Cache hierarchies capable of simultaneously servicing multiple memory requests
    - Do not block cache references that do not need the miss data
    - Service multiple miss requests to memory concurrently
  - ◆ Revisit miss penalty with memory-level parallelism

# Miss Status Holding (Handling) Registers

- MSHRs facilitate non-blocking memory level parallelism
- Used to track address, data, and status for multiple outstanding cache misses
- Need to provide correct memory ordering, respond to CPU requests, and maintain cache coherence
- Design details vary widely between different processors
  - ◆ But basic functions are similar

# Cache & MSHR Organization

- Paper Fig 1: block diagram of cache organization
- Main Components:
  - ◆ MSHR: One register for each miss to be handled concurrently
  - ◆ N-way comparator: Compares an address to all block addresses in MSHRs ( $N = \text{\#MSHRs}$ )
  - ◆ Input Stack: Buffer space for all misses corresponding to MSHR entries
    - Size =  $\text{\#MSHRs} \times \text{block size}$
  - ◆ Status update and collecting networks
- Current implementations combine the MSHR and input stack

# MSHR Structure

- Each MSHR contains the following information
  - ◆ Data address
  - ◆ PC of requesting instruction
  - ◆ Input identification tags & Sent-to-CPU flags: Allows forwarding requested word(s) to the CPU
  - ◆ Input stack indicators (flags): Allows reading data directly from input stack
  - ◆ Partial write codes: Indicates which bytes in a word has been written to the cache
  - ◆ Valid flag
  - ◆ Obsolete flag: either info is not valid or MSHR hit on data in transit

# MSHR Operation

- On a cache miss, one MSHR is assigned
  - ◆ Valid flag set
  - ◆ Obsolete flag cleared
  - ◆ Data address saved
  - ◆ PC of requesting instruction saved
  - ◆ Appropriate send-to-CPU flags set and others cleared
  - ◆ Input identification tag saved in correct position
  - ◆ Partial write codes cleared
  - ◆ All MSHRs pointing to the same data address purged
- Optimal number of MSHRs: paper figure 2

# Reducing Cache Misses

- Cache misses are very costly
- Need multiple cache levels with
  - ◆ High associativity or/and victim caches to reduce conflict misses
  - ◆ Effective replacement algorithms
  - ◆ Data and instruction prefetch
    - Preferably with multiple stream buffers
- More details in Wed class

# Reading Assignment

- N. Jouppi, “Improving Direct-Mapped Cache Performance by the Addition of a Small Fully-Associative Cache and Prefetch Buffers,” ISCA 1990 (Review)
- T.F. Chen and J.L Baer, “Effective Hardware-Based Data Prefetching for High-Performance Processors,” IEEE Transactions on Computers, 1995 (Skim)