Distributed Systems and Security: An Introduction

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CS GZ03 / M030
30th September 2013
Today’s Lecture

- Administrivia
- Overview of Distributed Systems
  - What are they?
  - Why build them?
  - Why are they hard to build well?
- Operating Systems Background
- Questionnaire
Course Staff and Office Hours

- Instructor:
  - Brad Karp, MPEB 7.20, Mon 5 – 6 PM, ext. 30406
- Teaching Assistant:
  - Jon Gjengset, MPEB 7th floor lab, Wed 4 – 5 PM, ext. 30393
- Office hours begin this Wednesday
- Time reserved for answering your questions
- Outside office hours, email to schedule appointment
Meeting Times and Locations

• Mondays 11 AM – 1 PM, Med. Sciences, H.O. Schild Pharmacology LT
• Wednesdays 9 AM – 11 AM, MPEB, Room 1.02
• Lecture will run 90 minutes
  – Monday lectures will usually end at 12:30 PM
  – Wednesday lectures will usually begin at 9:30 AM
• Occasionally lecture will be followed by a 30-minute discussion of an additional topic (e.g., Q&A on a coursework); on these dates, full two hours!
• No lecture 25th, 27th November
• Reading week: 4th – 8th November, no lecture!
Class Communication

- Class web page
  - [http://www.cs.ucl.ac.uk/staff/B.Karp/gz03/f2013/](http://www.cs.ucl.ac.uk/staff/B.Karp/gz03/f2013/)
  - Detailed calendar, coursework, class policies
  - Your responsibility: check page daily!

- M030/GZ03 Piazza Page
  - [https://piazza.com/class#fall2013/computersciencem030gz03/home](https://piazza.com/class#fall2013/computersciencem030gz03/home)
  - Important announcements from class staff (also forwarded to you by email)
  - Postings from course staff and students
  - Subscribe using enrollment key
  - You must subscribe (class policy)
  - Your responsibility: check email daily!
Using Piazza

• Please post questions on class material on Piazza, rather than emailing course staff.
• Whole class benefits from seeing your question and its answer.
• Students are encouraged to answer one another’s questions!
• When discussing something private (e.g., your marks, or details of your specific solution to a coursework), mark your post as private, so only course staff see it!
Readings, Lectures, and Lecture Notes

• Readings must be read before lecture; lectures **assume you have done so**
• Lecture notes will be posted to the class web site just after lecture
• Class calendar shows all reading assignments day by day...
Readings

• No textbook
• Classic and recent research papers on real, built distributed and secure systems
• Available on class web page; print these yourselves
• All readings examinable
• Research papers are dense and complex; they are often challenging
  – Be prepared to read and re-read the papers
  – Come to lecture with questions, and/or use office hours
Grading

• Final grade components:
  – One programming coursework: 15%
  – One problem set coursework: 15%
  – Final exam: 70%
Late Work Policy

- N.B. that **M030/GZ03 policy differs from that for other CS classes**!
- For every day late or fraction thereof, **including weekend days**, 10% of marks deducted
- Each student receives budget of **3 late days** for entire term
  - Each late day “cancels” one day of lateness
  - Goal: give you flexibility, e.g., in case you can’t find a bug, or encounter unexpected other snag
  - You declare how many late days to use when turning in a coursework late; **cannot declare or change later**!
  - Must use whole late days—cannot use fractional ones!
Late Days (cont’d)

• If submission more than 2 days late after taking late days into account, zero marks

• Programming courseworks turned in online; may be submitted 24/7

• Problem set courseworks turned in on paper in lecture; can be submitted M – F only
  – Weekend days after deadline still count as elapsed days
Late Days (cont’d)

- If submission more than 2 days late after taking late days into account, zero marks

Late days give you flexibility. No other extensions given on coursework, unless for unforeseeable, severely extenuating circumstances!

- Programming coursework turned in online; may be submitted 24/7
- Problem set coursework turned in on paper in lecture; can be submitted M – F only
  - Weekend days after deadline still count as elapsed days
Academic Honesty

• All courseworks must be completed individually
• May discuss understanding of problem statement, general sketch of approach
• May not discuss details of solution
• May not show your solution to others (this year or in future years)
• May not look at others’ solutions (this year or from past years)
Academic Honesty (cont’d)

• We use code comparison software
  – Compares parse trees; immune to obfuscation
  – Produces color-coded all-student-pairs code comparisons

• Don’t copy code—you **will** be caught!

• Penalty for copying: automatic zero marks, referral for disciplinary action by UCL (usually leads to exclusion from all exams at UCL)
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• Questionnaire
What Is a Distributed System?

• Multiple computers ("machines," "hosts," "boxes," &c.)
  – Each with CPU, memory, disk, network interface
  – Interconnected by LAN or WAN (e.g., Internet)

• Application runs across this dispersed collection of networked hardware

• But user sees single, unified system
What Is a Distributed System? (Alternate Take)

“A distributed system is a system in which I can’t do my work because some computer that I’ve never even heard of has failed.”

– Leslie Lamport, Microsoft Research (ex DEC)
Start Simple: Centralized System

- Suppose you run Gmail
- Workload:
  - Inbound email arrives; store on disk
  - Users retrieve, delete their email
- You run Gmail on one server with disk
Start Simple: Centralized System

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• Workload:
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What are shortcomings of this design?
Why Distribute?
For Availability

• Suppose Gmail server goes down, or network between client and it goes down
• No incoming mail delivered, no users can read their inboxes
• Fix: replicate the data on several servers
  – Increased chance some server will be reachable
  – Consistency? One server down when delete message, then comes back up; message returns in inbox
  – Latency? Replicas should be far apart, so they fail independently
  – Partition resilience? e.g., airline seat database splits, one seat remains, bought twice, once in each half!
Why Distribute?  
For Scalable Capacity

• What if Gmail a huge success?  
• Workload exceeds capacity of one server  
• Fix: spread users across several servers
  – Best case: linear scaling—if $U$ users per box, $N$ boxes support $NU$ users  
  – Bottlenecks? If each user’s inbox on one server, how to route inbound mail to right server?  
  – Scaling? How close to linear?  
  – Load balance? Some users get more mail than others!
Performance Can Be Subtle

• Goal: predictable performance under high load

• 2 employees run a Starbucks
  – Employee 1: takes orders from customers, calls them out to Employee 2
  – Employee 2:
    • writes down drink orders (5 seconds per order)
    • makes drinks (10 seconds per order)

• What is throughput under increasing load?
• Peak system performance: 4 drinks / min
• What happens when load > 4 orders / min?
• What happens to efficiency as load increases?
Starbucks Throughput

- Peak system performance: 4 drinks / min
- What happens when load > 4 orders / min?
- What happens to efficiency as load increases?
- What would preferable curve be?
- What design achieves that goal?

What would preferable curve be? What design achieves that goal?
Why Are Distributed Systems Hard to Design?

- **Failure:** of hosts, of network
  - Remember Lamport’s lament
- **Heterogeneity**
  - Hosts may have different data representations
- **Need consistency (many specific definitions)**
  - Users expect familiar “centralized” behavior
- **Need concurrency for performance**
  - Avoid waiting synchronously, leaving resources idle
  - Overlap requests concurrently whenever possible
Security

• Before Internet:
  – Encryption and authentication using cryptography
  – Between parties known to each other (e.g., diplomatic wire)

• Today:
  – Entire Internet of potential attackers
  – Legitimate correspondents often have no prior relationship
    – Online shopping: how do you know you gave credit card number to amazon.com? How does amazon.com know you are authorized credit card user?
    – Software download: backdoor in your new browser?
    – Software vulnerabilities: remote infection by worms!
  – Crypto not enough alone to solve these problems!