Lecture 12:

Fine-grained Synchronization & Lock-free Programming

Parallel Computing
Stanford CS149, Fall 2020

Today

- Finishing up discussion of lock implementations
- Using locks
  - Fine-grained locking examples
  - Lock-free data structure designs

Preliminaries: some terminology

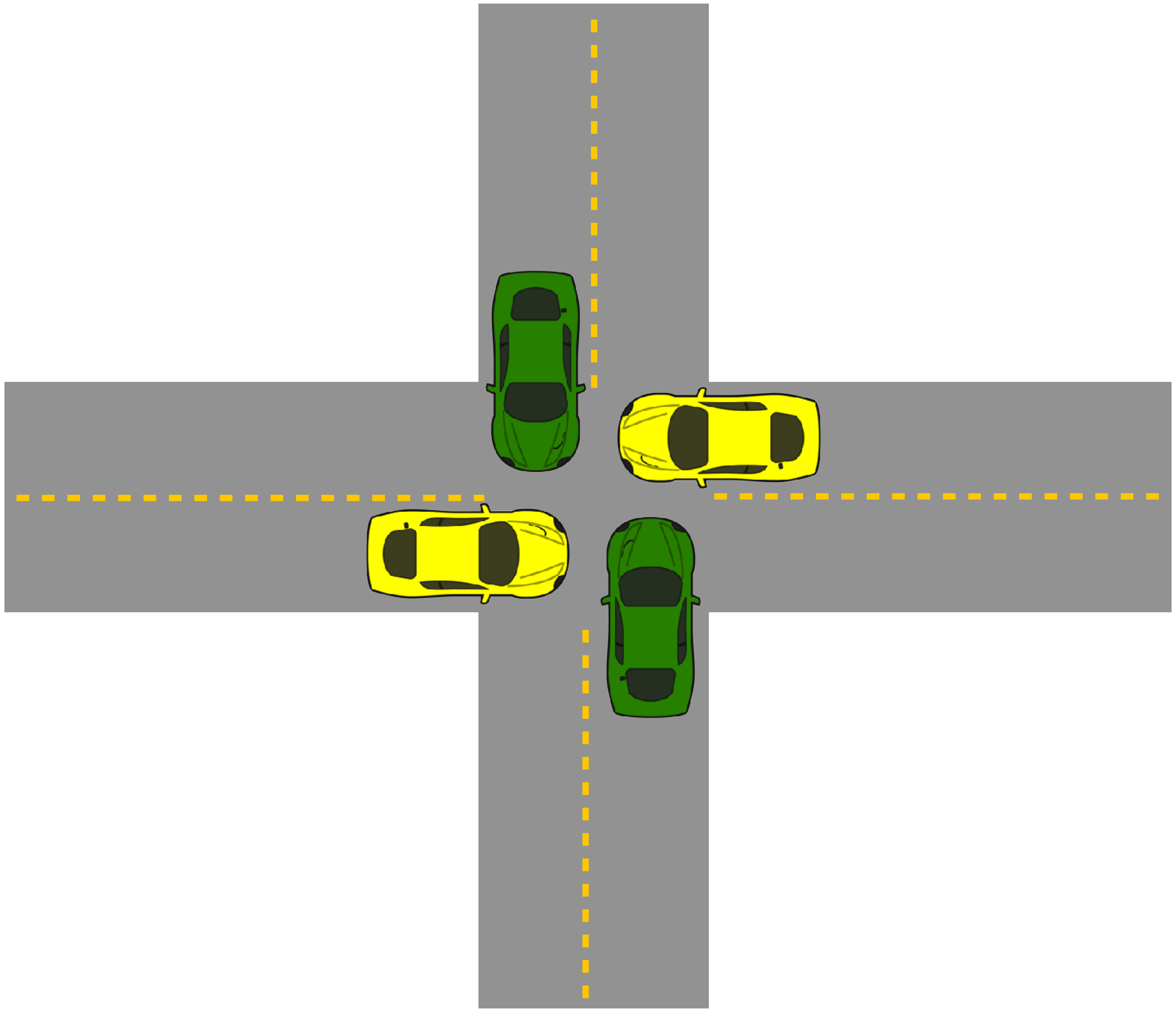
Deadlock

Livelock

Starvation

(Deadlock and livelock concern program correctness. Starvation is really an issue of fairness.)

Deadlock



Deadlock is a state where a system has outstanding operations to complete, but no operation can make progress.

Deadlock can arise when each operation has acquired a shared resource that another operation needs.

In a deadlock situations, there is no way for any thread (or, in this illustration, a car) to make progress unless some thread relinquishes a resource ("backs up")

Traffic deadlock

Non-technical side note for car-owning students: Deadlock happens all the %$* time in SF.**

(However, deadlock can be amusing when a bus driver decides to let another driver know they have caused deadlock... "go take cs149 you fool!")

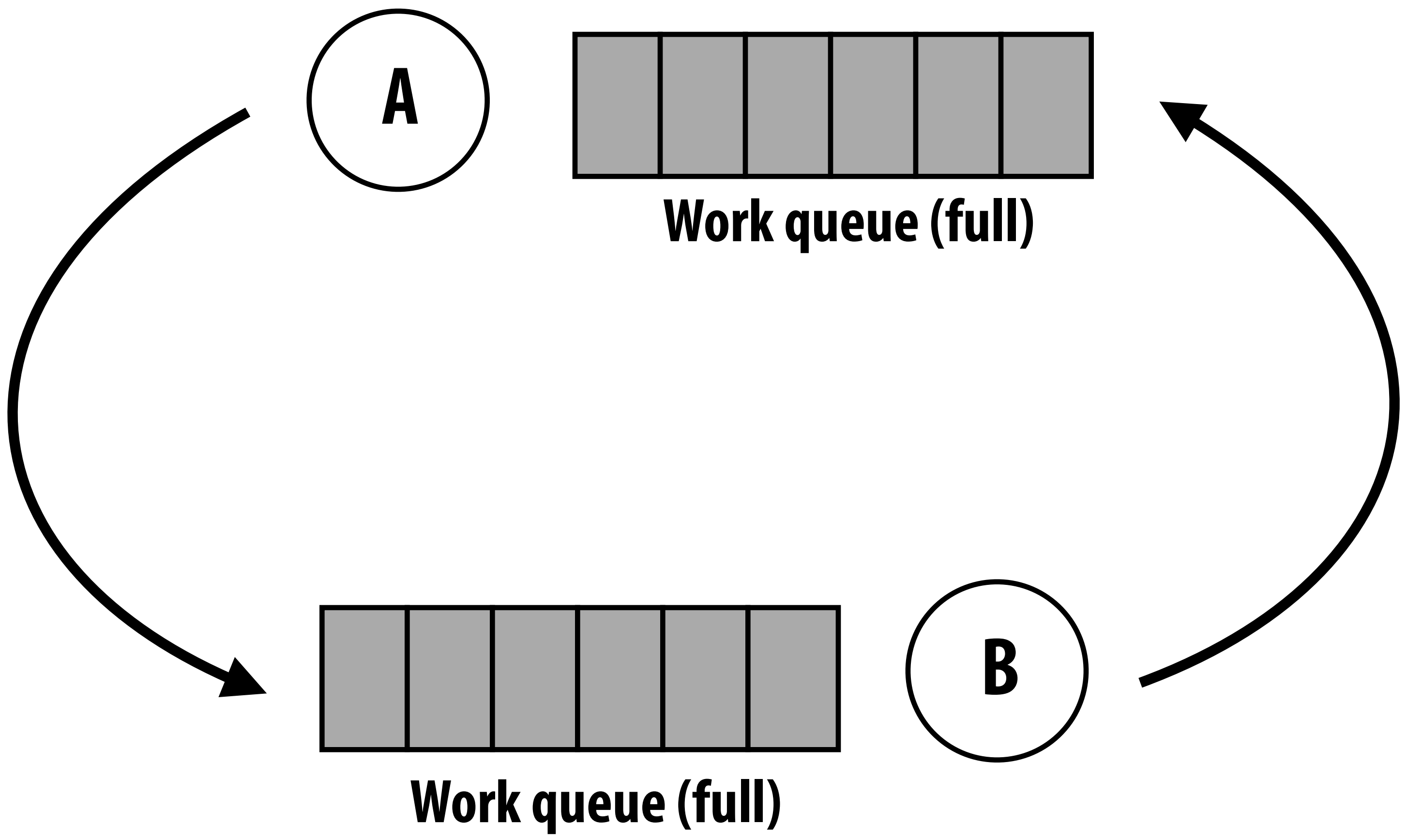
More illustrations of deadlock

Credit: David Maitland, National Geographic

Why are these examples of deadlock?

Deadlock in computer systems

Example 1:



Thread A produces work for B's work queue

Thread B produces work for A's work queue

Queues are finite and workers wait if no output space is available

Example 2:

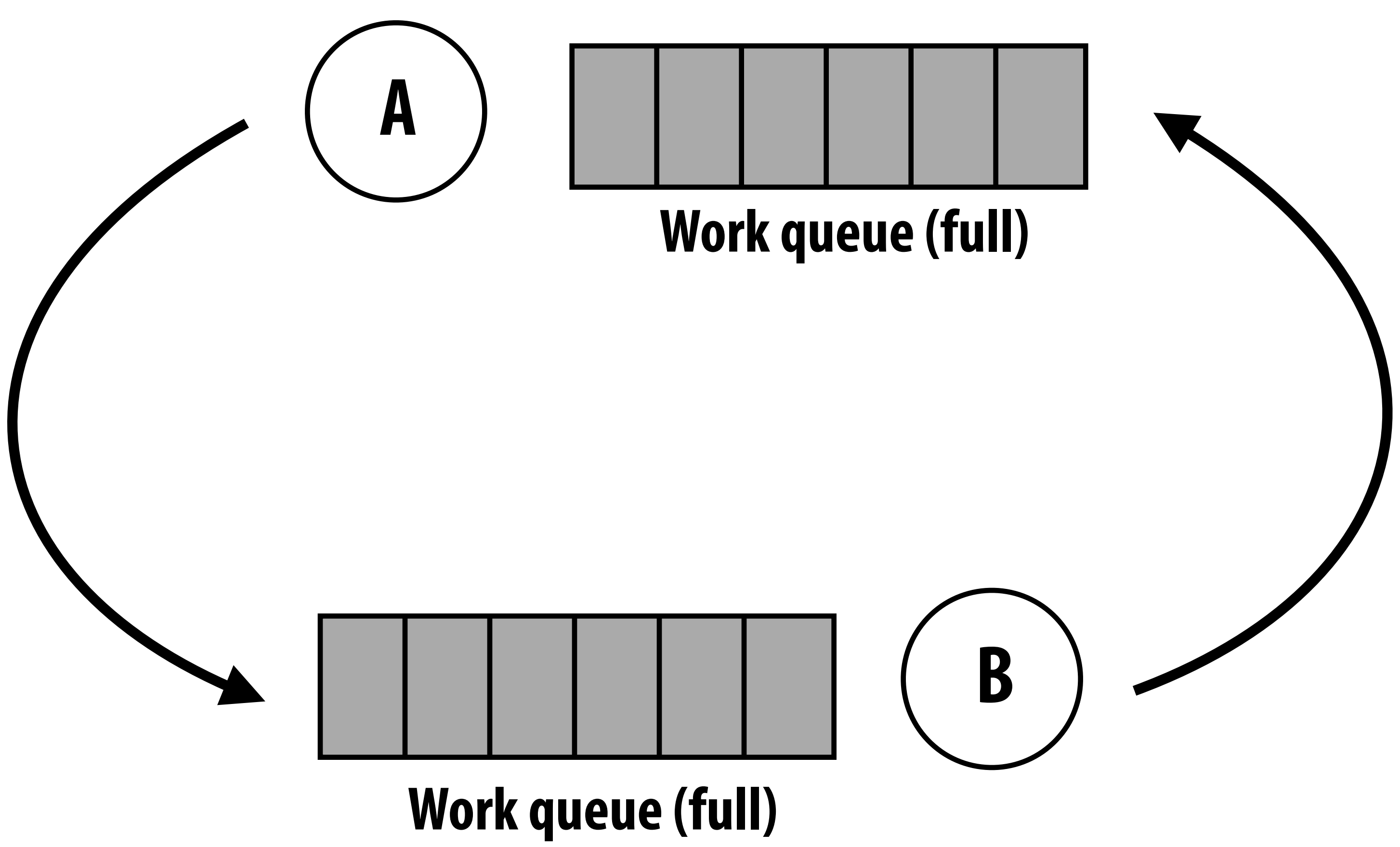
```
const int numEl = 1024;
float msgBuf1[numEl];
float msgBuf2[numEl];

int threadId getThreadId();

... do work ...


MsgSend(msgBuf1, numEl * sizeof(int), threadId+1, ...
MsgRecv(msgBuf2, numEl * sizeof(int), threadId-1, ...
```

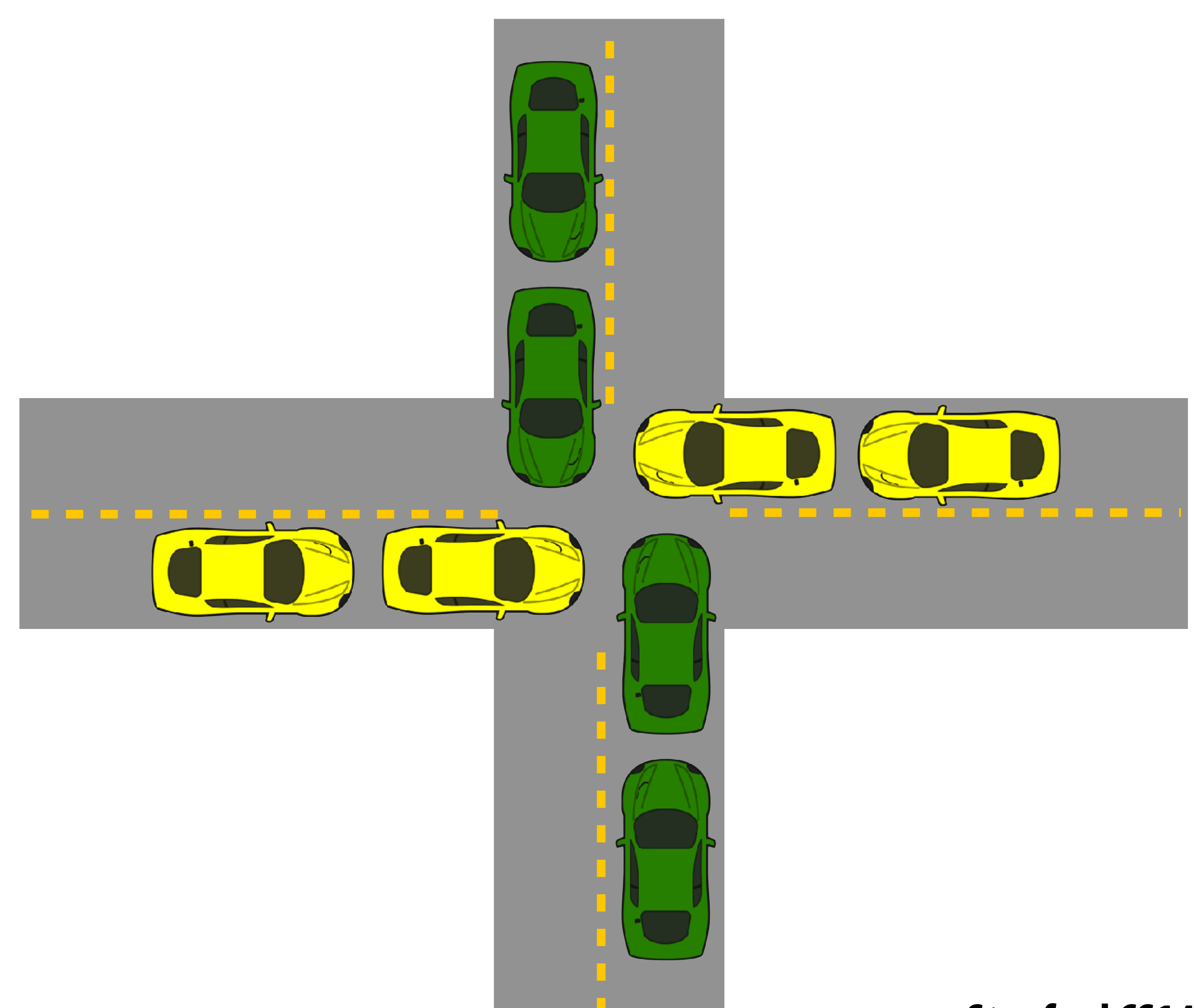
Every thread sends a message (blocking send) to the thread with the next higher id

Then thread receives message from thread with next lower id.

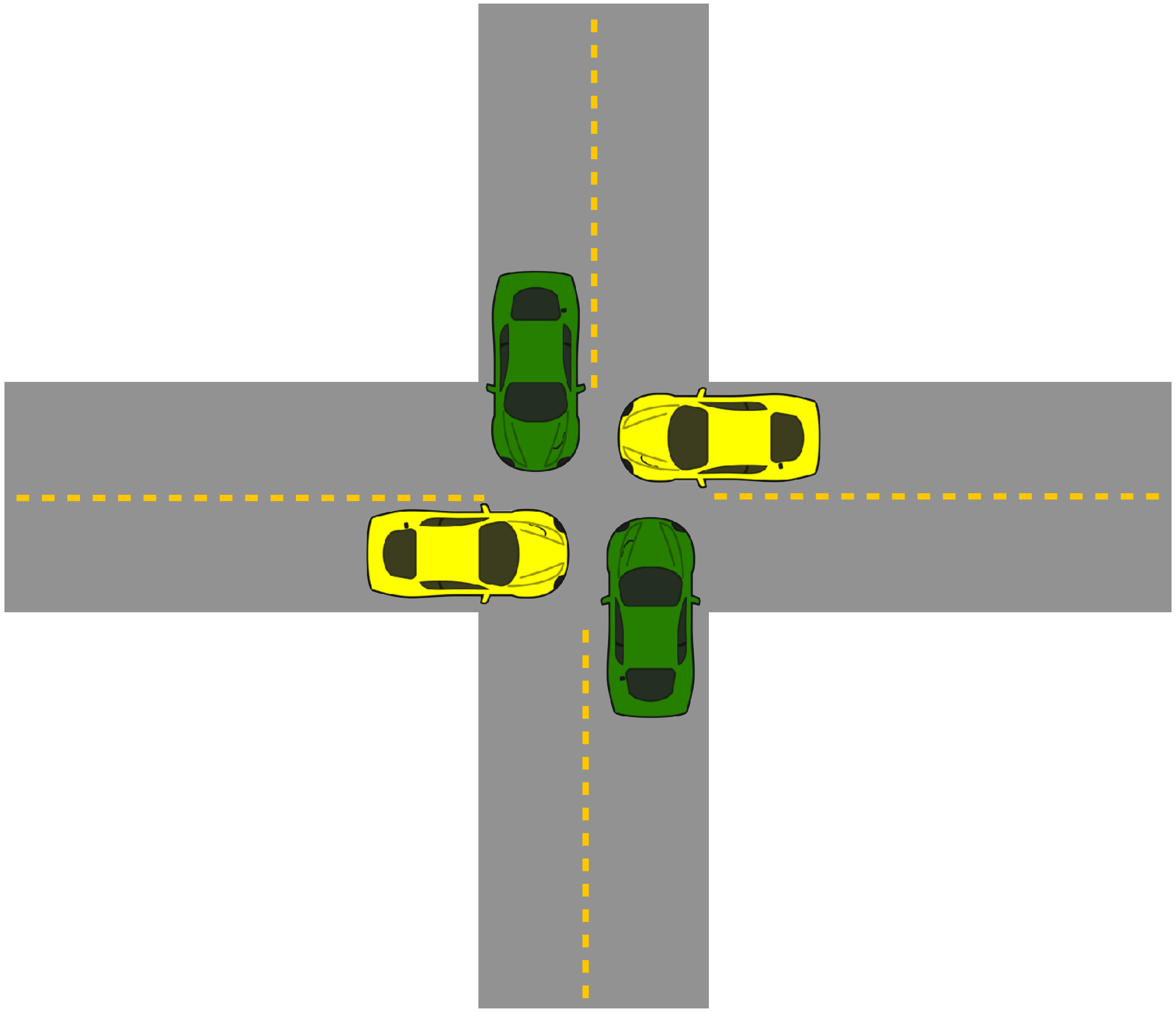
Required conditions for deadlock

1. Mutual exclusion: only one processor can hold a given resource at once
2. Hold and wait: processor must hold the resource while waiting for other resources it needs to complete an operation
3. No preemption: processors don't give up resources until operation they wish to perform is complete
4. Circular wait: waiting processors have mutual dependencies (a cycle exists in the resource dependency graph)

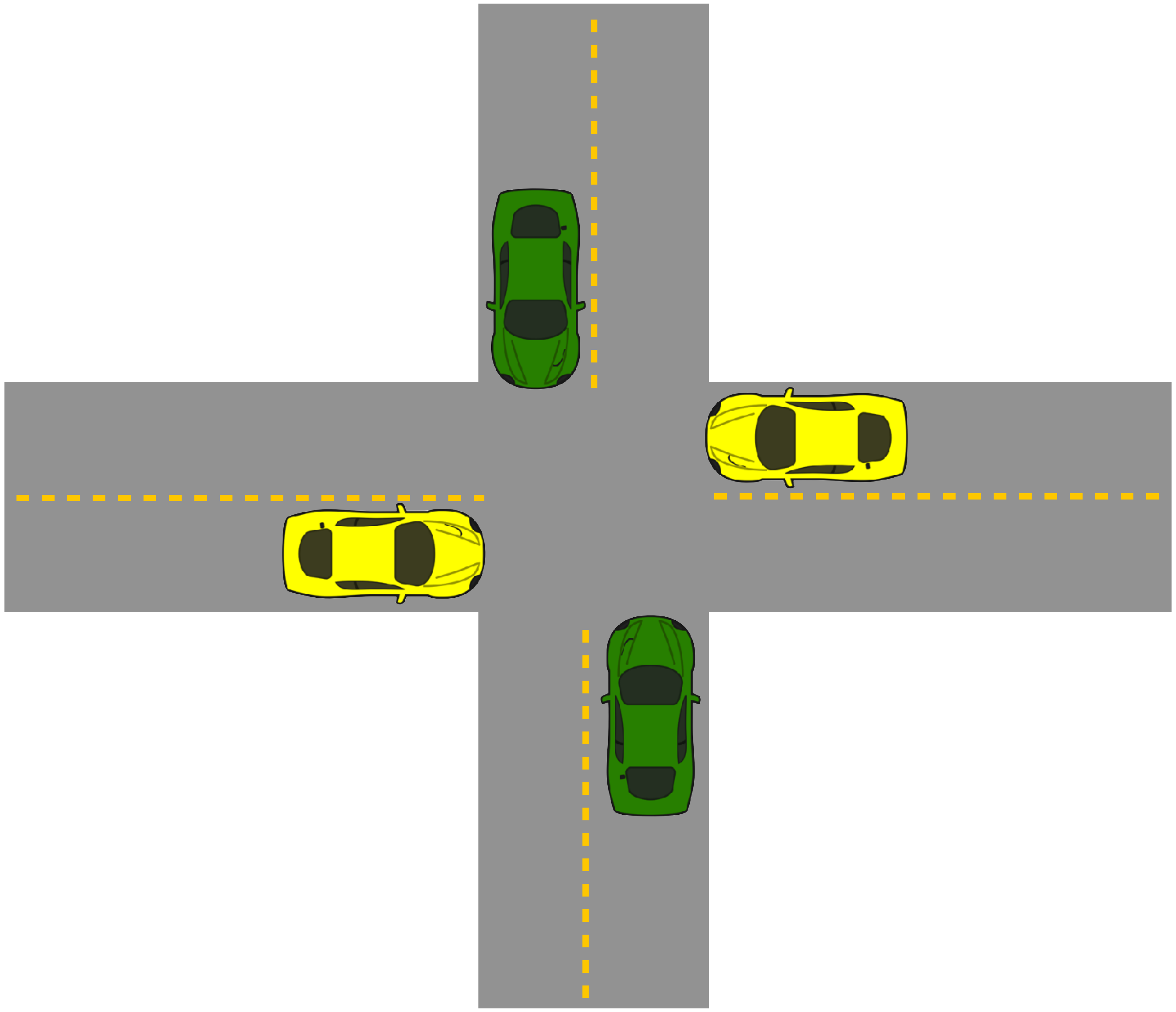




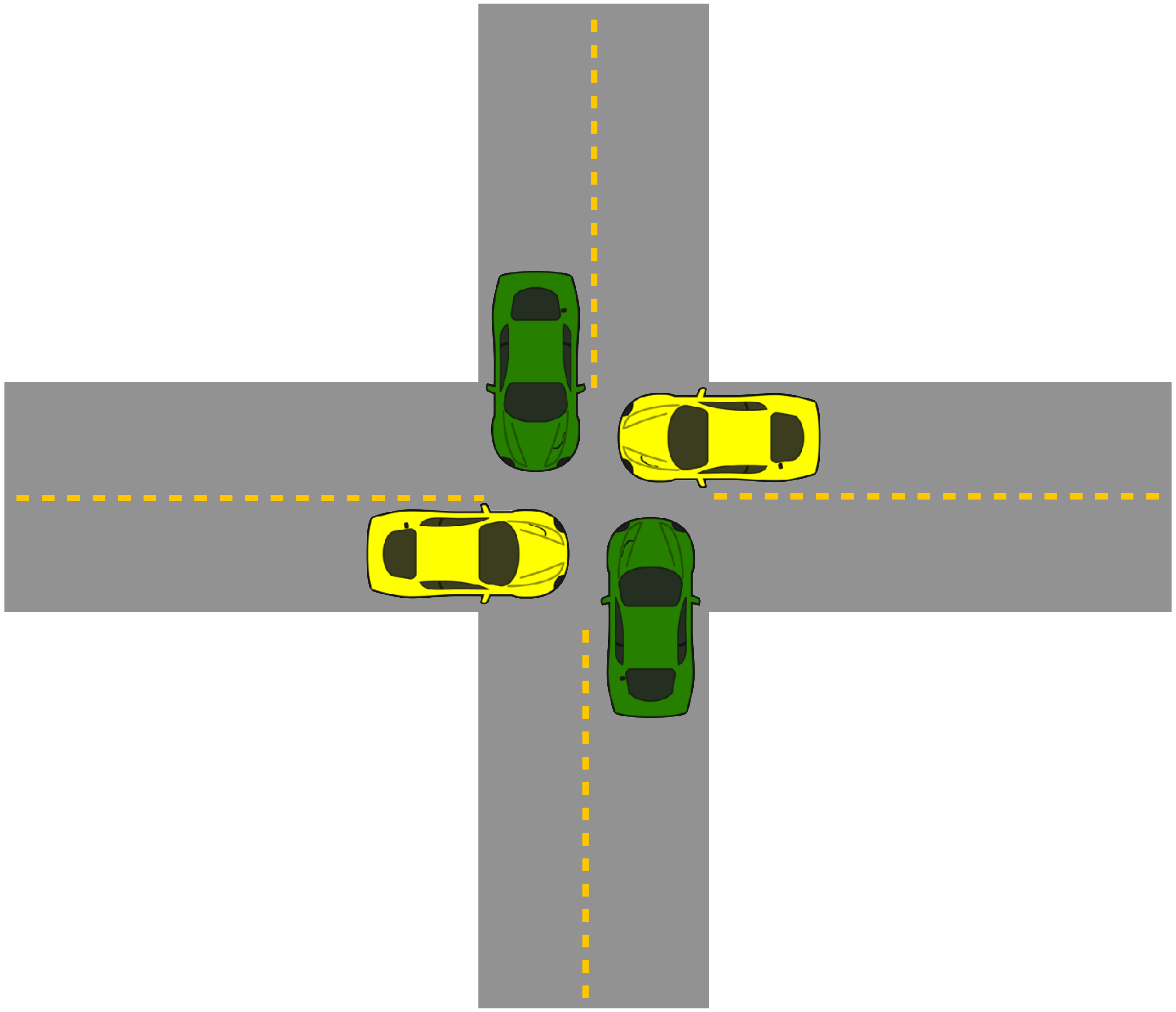
Livelock



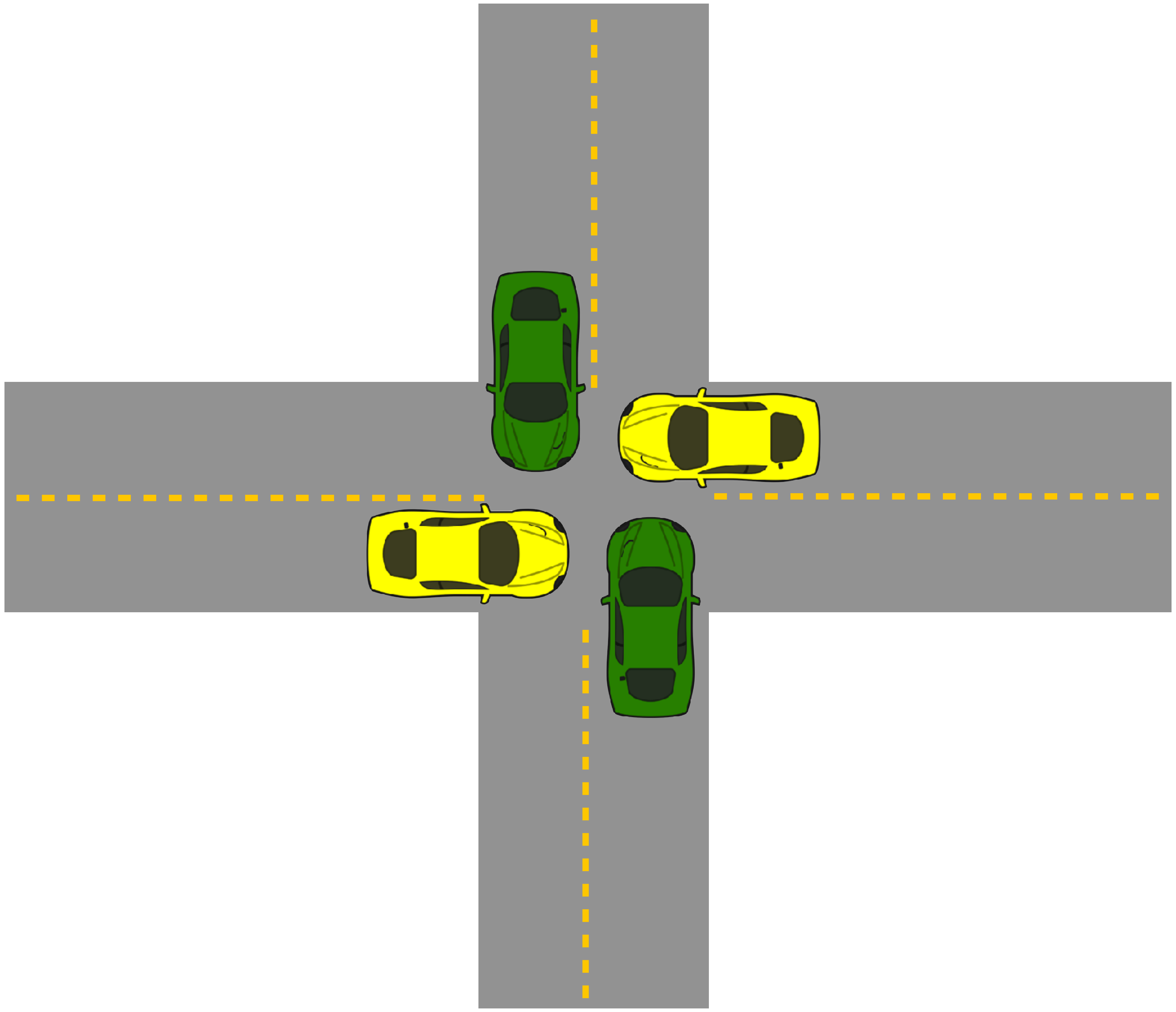
Livelock



Livelock



Livelock



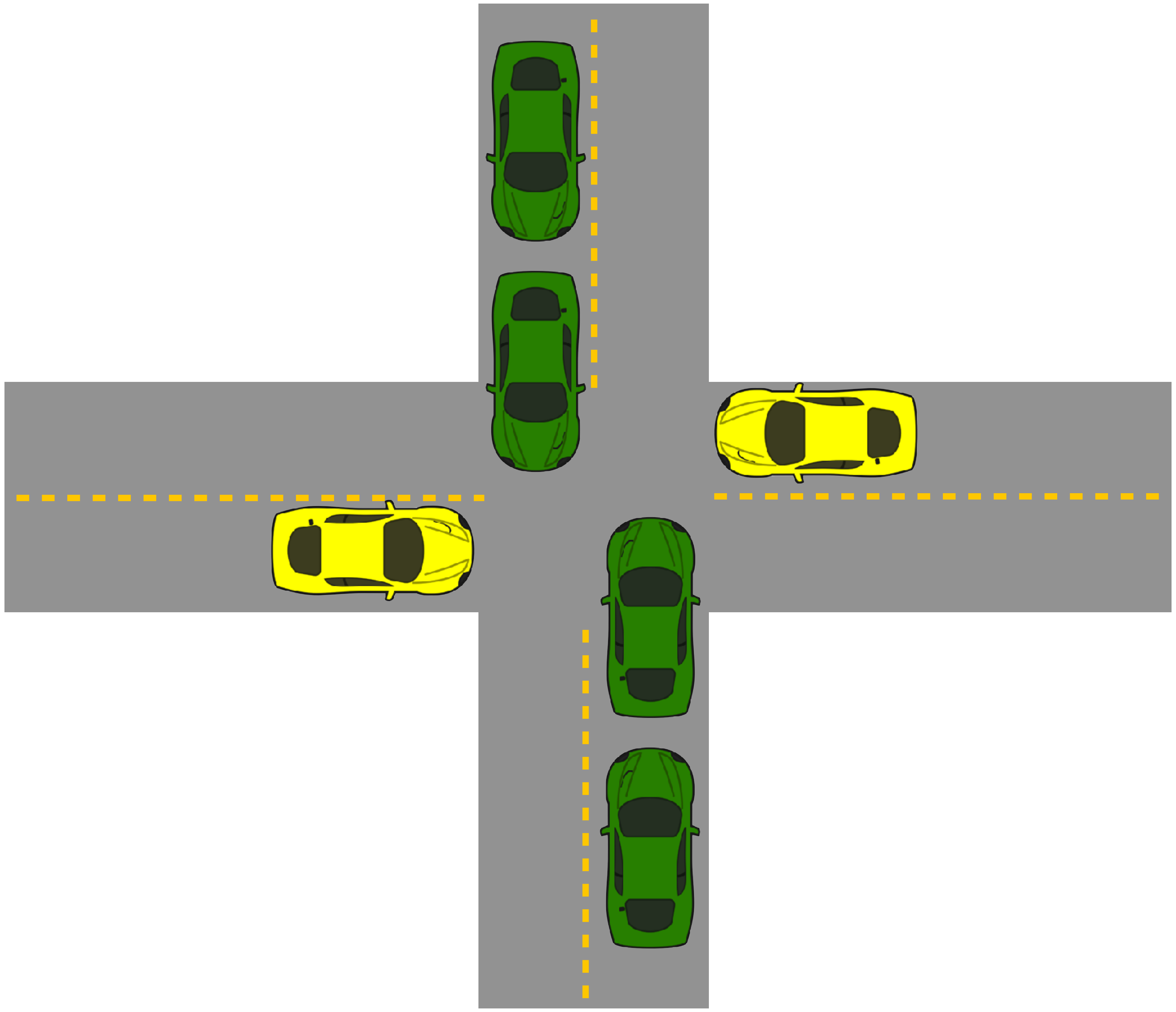
Livelock is a state where a system is executing many operations, but no thread is making meaningful progress.

Can you think of a good daily life example of livelock?

Computer system examples:

Operations continually abort and retry

Starvation



State where a system is making overall progress, but some processes make no progress.

(green cars make progress, but yellow cars are stopped)

Starvation is usually not a permanent state

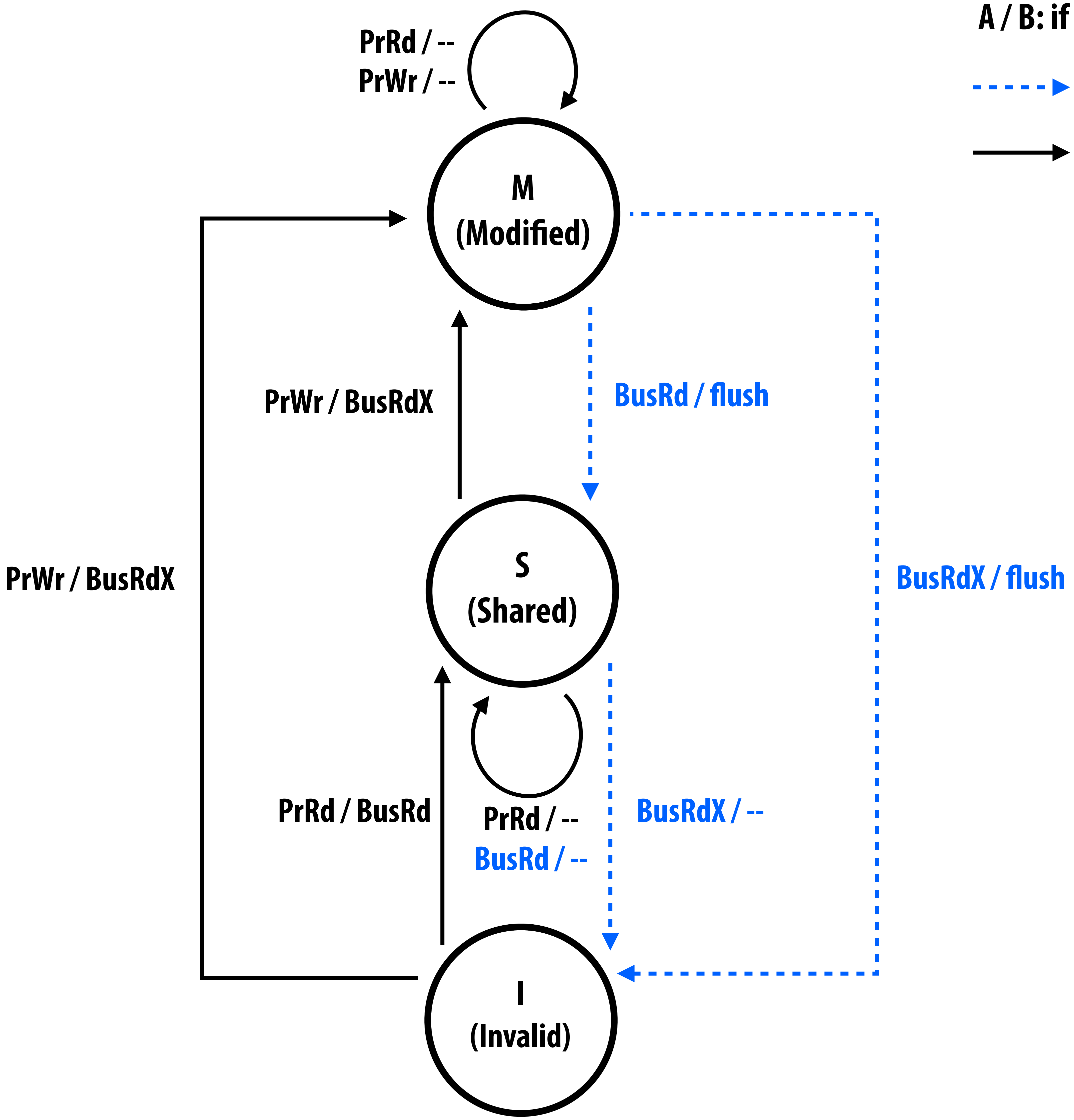
(as soon as green cars pass, yellow cars can go)

In this example: assume traffic moving left/right (yellow cars) must yield to traffic moving up/down (green cars)

Ok, let's get started…

(by reviewing lock implementations from last time)

Review: MSI state transition diagram *



A / B: if action A is observed by cache controller, action B is taken

Remote processor (coherence) initiated transaction

Local processor initiated transaction

flush = flush dirty line to memory

* Remember, all caches are carrying out this logic independently to maintain coherence

Example: testing your understanding

Consider this sequence of loads and stores to addresses X and Y by processors P0 and P1

Assume that X and Y reside on different cache lines, and contain the value 0 at the start of execution.

	What cache 0 does:	What cache 1 does:
P0: LD X	issue BusRd, load line X in S state	observe BusRd, do nothing (line is in I state)
P0: LD X	cache hit	do nothing
P0: ST X ← 1	issue BusRdX, load line X in M state	observe BusRdX, do nothing (line is in I state)
P0: ST X ← 2	cache hit	do nothing
P1: ST X ← 3	observe BusRdX, flush line X, move line to I state	issue BusRdX, load line X in M state
P1: LD X	observe BusRd, do nothing (line is in I state)	cache hit
P0: LD X	issue BusRd, load line X in S state	observe BusRd, flush line X, move to S state
P0: ST X ← 4	issue BusRdX, load line X in M state	observe BusRdX, move to I state
P1: LD X	observe BusRd, flush line X, move to S state	issue BusRd, load line X in S state
P0: LD Y	issue BusRd, load line Y in S state	observe BusRd, do nothing (line X is in I state)
P0: ST Y ← 1	issue BusRdX, load line Y in M state	observe BusRdX, do nothing (line X is in I state)
P1: ST Y ← 2	observe BusRdX, flush line Y, move to I state	issue BusRdX, load line Y in M state

Test-and-set based lock

Atomic test-and-set instruction:

```
ts R0, mem[addr]        // load mem[addr] into R0
                        // if mem[addr] is 0, set mem[addr] to 1
```

```
lock:       ts   R0, mem[addr]       // load word into R0
            bnz  R0, lock            // if 0, lock obtained


unlock:     st   mem[addr], #0       // store 0 to address
```

x86 cmpxchg

- **Compare and exchange (atomic when used with lock prefix)**

```
lock cmpxchg dst, src
```

often a memory address

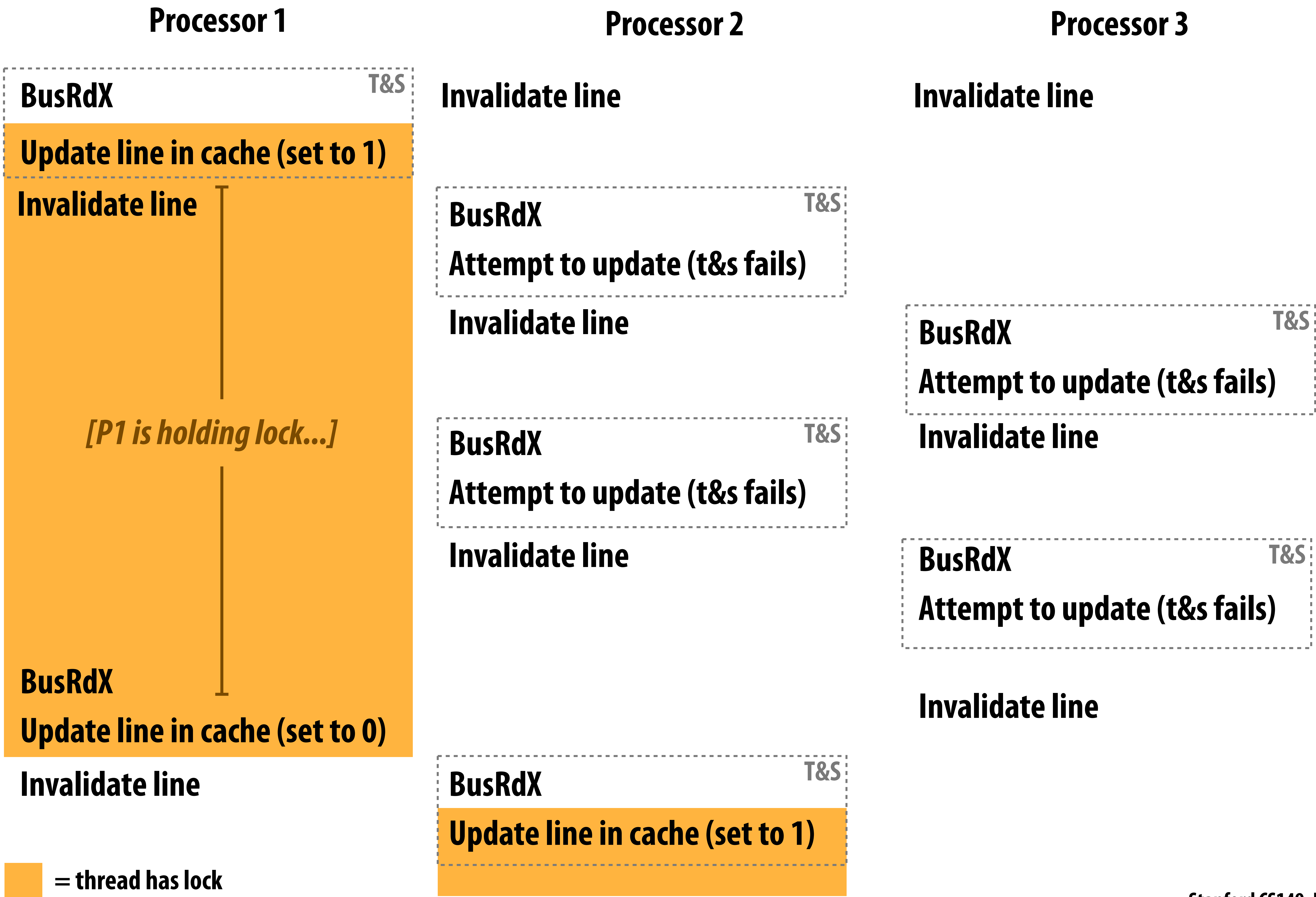
lock prefix (designates operation is atomic)

x86 accumulator register

```
if (dst == EAX)
    ZF = 1
    dst = src
else
    ZF = 0
    EAX = dst
```

flag register holds result of check

Test-and-set lock: consider coherence traffic



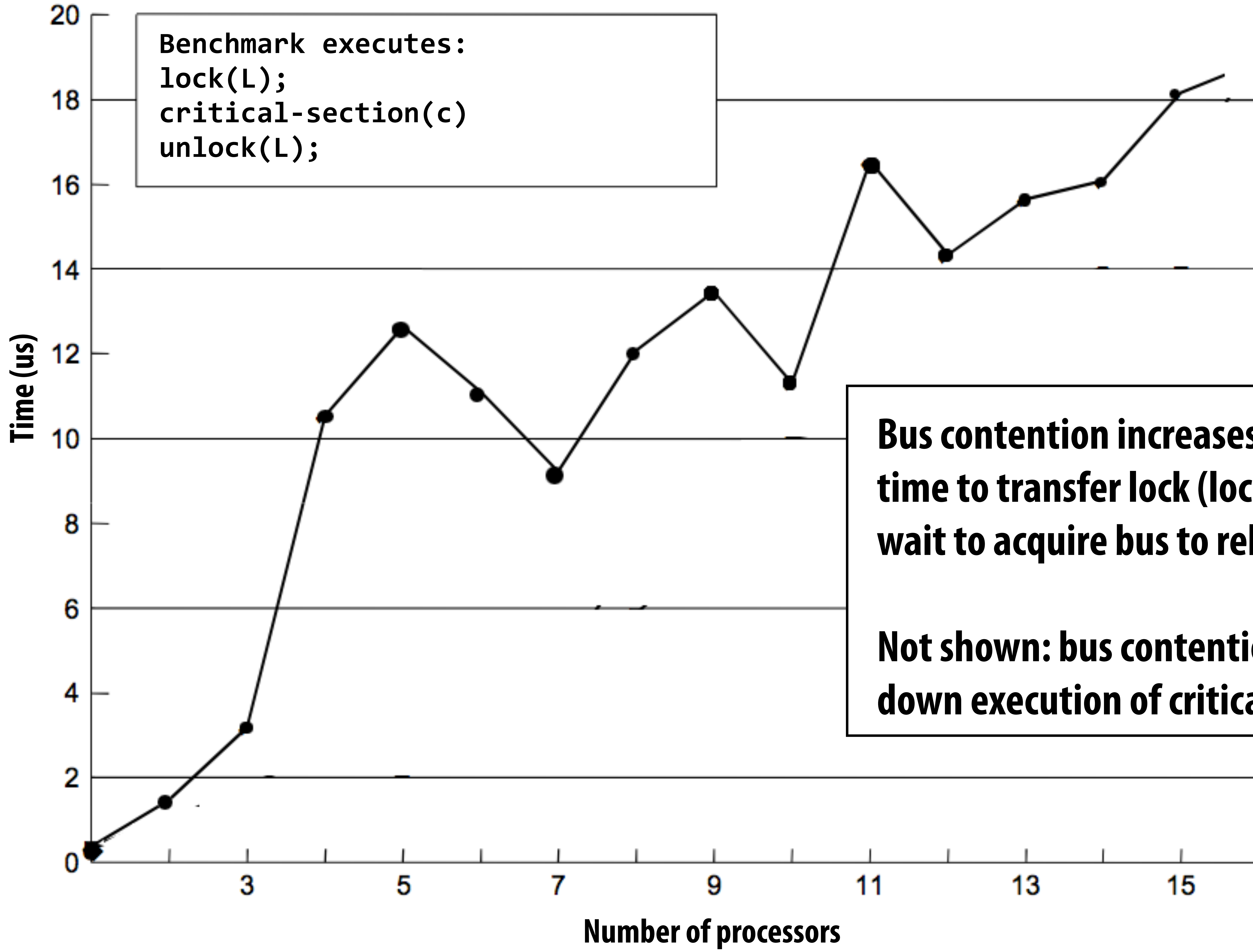
Check your understanding

- On the previous slide, what is the duration of time the thread running on P1 holds the lock?

- At what points in time does P1's cache contain a valid copy of the cache line containing the lock variable?

Test-and-set lock performance

Benchmark: execute a total of N lock/unlock sequences (in aggregate) by P processors
Critical section time removed so graph plots only time acquiring/releasing the lock



Bus contention increases amount of time to transfer lock (lock holder must wait to acquire bus to release)

Not shown: bus contention also slows down execution of critical section

Figure credit: Culler, Singh, and Gupta

Desirable lock performance characteristics

- **Low latency**
  - If lock is free and no other processors are trying to acquire it, a processor should be able to acquire the lock quickly
- **Low interconnect traffic**
  - If all processors are trying to acquire lock at once, they should acquire the lock in succession with as little traffic as possible
- **Scalability**
  - Latency / traffic should scale reasonably with number of processors
- **Low storage cost**
- **Fairness**
  - Avoid starvation or substantial unfairness
  - One ideal: processors should acquire lock in the order they request access to it

Simple test-and-set lock: low latency (under low contention), high traffic, poor scaling, low storage cost (one int), no provisions for fairness

Test-and-test-and-set lock

```
void Lock(int* lock) {
  while (1) {

    while (*lock != 0);            // while another processor has the lock…
                                   // (assume *lock is NOT register allocated)


    if (test_and_set(*lock) == 0)  // when lock is released, try to acquire it
      return;
  }
}

void Unlock(int* lock) {
   *lock = 0;
}
```

Test-and-test-and-set lock: coherence traffic

Processor 1

T&S
BusRdX
Update line in cache (set to 1)

[P1 is holding lock...]

BusRdX
Update line in cache (set to 0)
Invalidate line

Processor 2

Invalidate line

BusRd

[Many reads from local cache]

Invalidate line
BusRd
T&S
BusRdX
Update line in cache (set to 1)
Invalidate line

Processor 3

Invalidate line

BusRd

[Many reads from local cache]

Invalidate line
BusRd

T&S
BusRdX
Attempt to update (t&s fails)

= thread has lock

Test-and-test-and-set characteristics

- Slightly higher latency than test-and-set in <u>uncontended</u> case
  - Must test... then test-and-set
- Generates much less interconnect traffic
  - One invalidation, per waiting processor, per lock release (O(P) invalidations)
  - This is $O(P^2)$ interconnect traffic if all processors have the lock cached
  - Recall: test-and-set lock generated one invalidation per waiting processor <u>per test</u>
- More scalable (due to less traffic)
- Storage cost unchanged (one int)
- Still no provisions for fairness

Another impl: ticket lock

Main problem with test-and-set style locks: upon release, all waiting processors attempt to acquire lock using test-and-set

```
struct lock {
   int next_ticket;
   int now_serving;
};

void Lock(lock* l) {
  int my_ticket = atomic_increment(&l->next_ticket);   // take a "ticket"
  while (my_ticket != l->now_serving);                 // wait for number
}                                                      // to be called

void unlock(lock* l) {
  l->now_serving++;
}
```

No atomic operation needed to acquire the lock (only a read)

Result: only one invalidation per lock release (O(P) interconnect traffic)

Atomic operations provided by CUDA

```
int   atomicAdd(int* address, int val);
float atomicAdd(float* address, float val);
int   atomicSub(int* address, int val);
int   atomicExch(int* address, int val);
float atomicExch(float* address, float val);
int   atomicMin(int* address, int val);
int   atomicMax(int* address, int val);
unsigned int atomicInc(unsigned int* address, unsigned int val);
unsigned int atomicDec(unsigned int* address, unsigned int val);
int   atomicCAS(int* address, int compare, int val);
int   atomicAnd(int* address, int val);  // bitwise
int   atomicOr(int* address, int val);   // bitwise
int   atomicXor(int* address, int val);  // bitwise
```

(omitting additional 64 bit and unsigned int versions)

Implementing atomic fetch-and-op

Exercise: how can you build an atomic fetch+op out of atomicCAS()?

Example: atomic_min()

```
// atomicCAS:  ("compare and swap")
// performs the following logic atomically
int atomicCAS(int* addr, int compare, int val) {
   int old = *addr;
   *addr = (old == compare) ? val : old;
   return old;
}
```

```
int atomic_min(int* addr, int x) {
   int old = *addr;
   int new = min(old, x);
   while (atomicCAS(addr, old, new) != old) {
     old = *addr;
     new = min(old, x);
   }
}
```

What about these operations?

```
int  atomic_increment(int* addr, int x);   // for signed values of x
void lock(int* addr);
```

Load-linked, store conditional (LL/SC)

- **Pair of corresponding instructions (not a single atomic instruction like compare-and-swap)**
  - load_linked(x): load value from address
  - store_conditional(x, value): store value to x, if x hasn't been written to since corresponding load linked

- **Corresponding ARM instructions: LDREX and STREX**

- **How might LL/SC be implemented on a cache coherent processor?**

C++ 11 atomic<T>

- Provides atomic read, write, read-modify-write of entire objects
  - Atomicity may be implemented by mutex or efficiently by processor-supported atomic instructions (if T is a basic type)

- Provides memory ordering semantics for operations before and after atomic operations
  - By default: sequential consistency
  - See std::memory_order or more detail

```
atomic<int> i;
i++; // atomically increment i

int a = i;
// do stuff
i.compare_exchange_strong(a, 10);   // if i has same value as a, set i to 10
bool b = i.is_lock_free();          // true if implementation of atomicity
                                    // is lock free
```

Using locks

Example: a sorted linked list

```
struct Node {
   int value;
   Node* next;
};
```

```
struct List {
  Node* head;
};
```

What can go wrong if multiple threads operate on the linked list simultaneously?

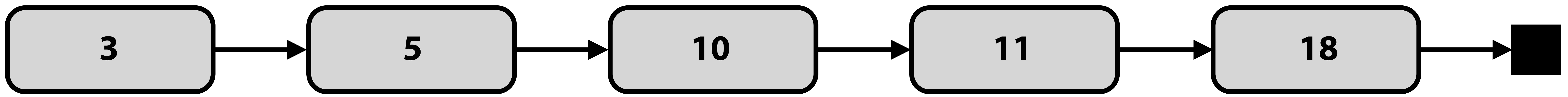
```
void insert(List* list, int value) {

   Node* n = new Node;
   n->value = value;

   // assume case of inserting before head of
   // of list is handled here (to keep slide simple)

   Node* prev = list->head;
   Node* cur = list->head->next;

   while (cur) {
     if (cur->value > value)
       break;

     prev = cur;
     cur = cur->next;
   }

   n->next = cur;
   prev->next = n;
}
```

```
void delete(List* list, int value) {

   // assume case of deleting first node in list
   // is handled here (to keep slide simple)

   Node* prev = list->head;
   Node* cur = list->head->next;

   while (cur) {
     if (cur->value == value) {
       prev->next = cur->next;
       delete cur;
       return;
     }

     prev = cur;
     cur = cur->next;
   }
}
```

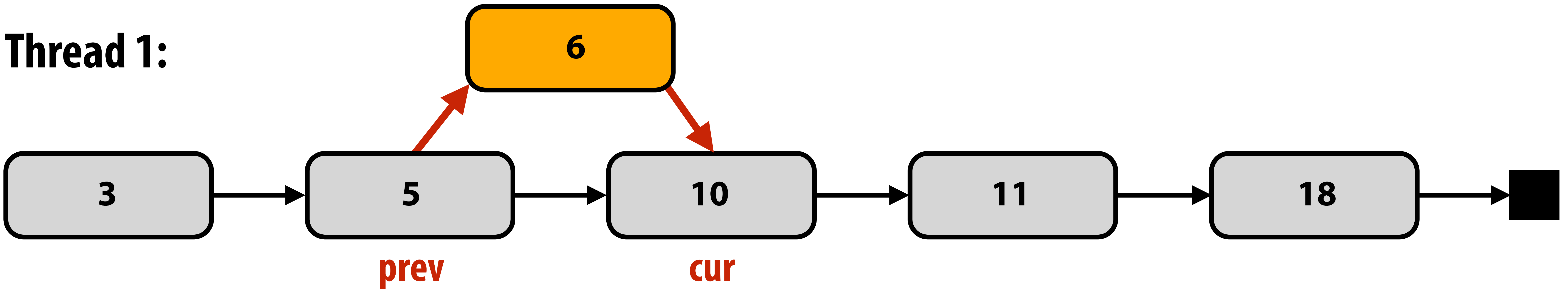
Example: simultaneous insertion

Thread 1 attempts to insert 6

Thread 2 attempts to insert 7



Thread 1:

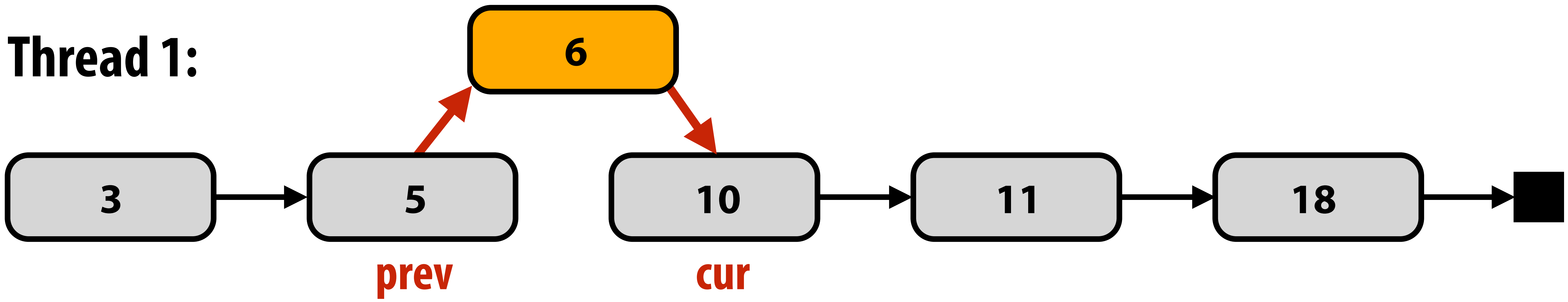


Example: simultaneous insertion

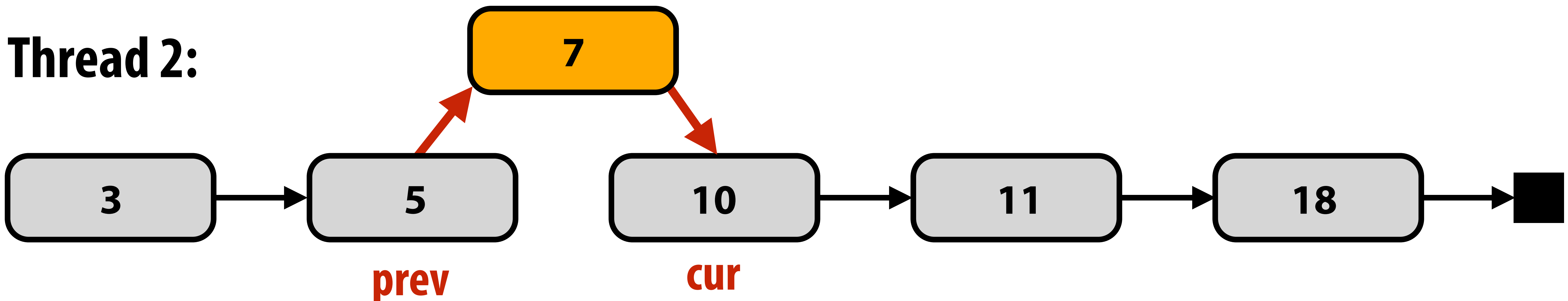
Thread 1 attempts to insert 6

Thread 2 attempts to insert 7

Thread 1:

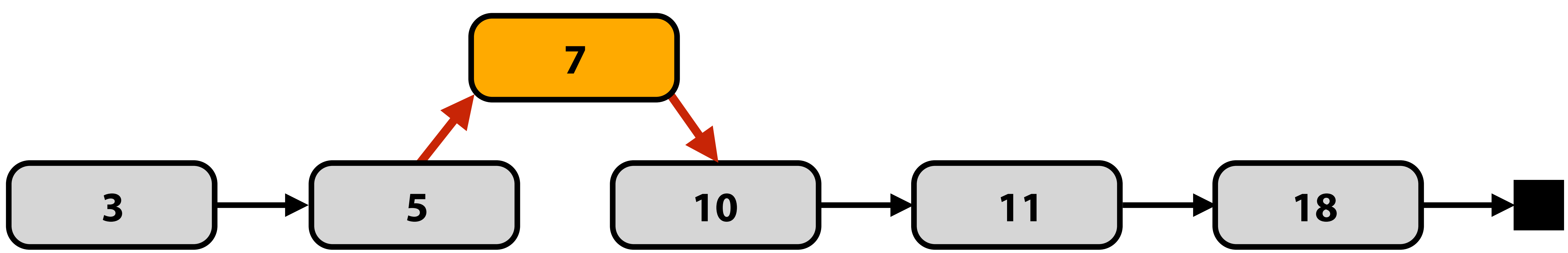


Thread 2:



Thread 1 and thread 2 both compute same prev and cur.
Result: one of the insertions gets lost!

Result: (assuming thread 1 updates `prev->next` before thread 2)

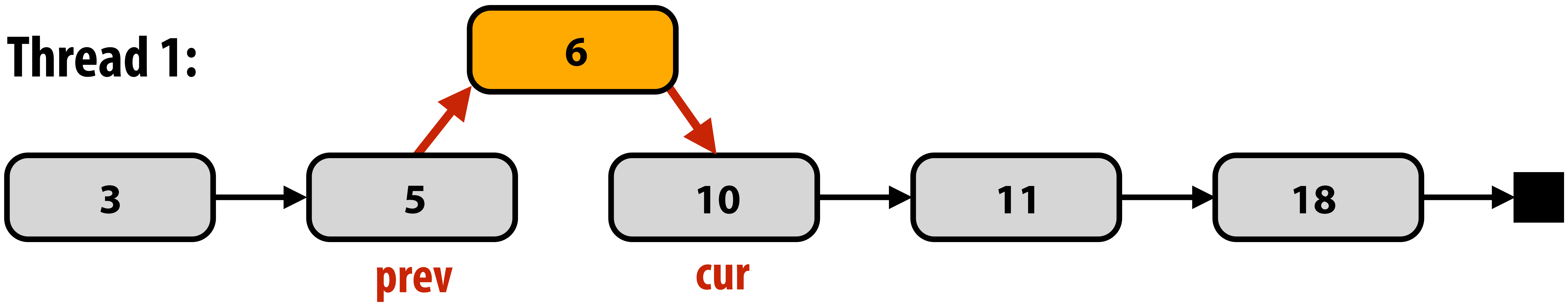


Example: simultaneous insertion/deletion

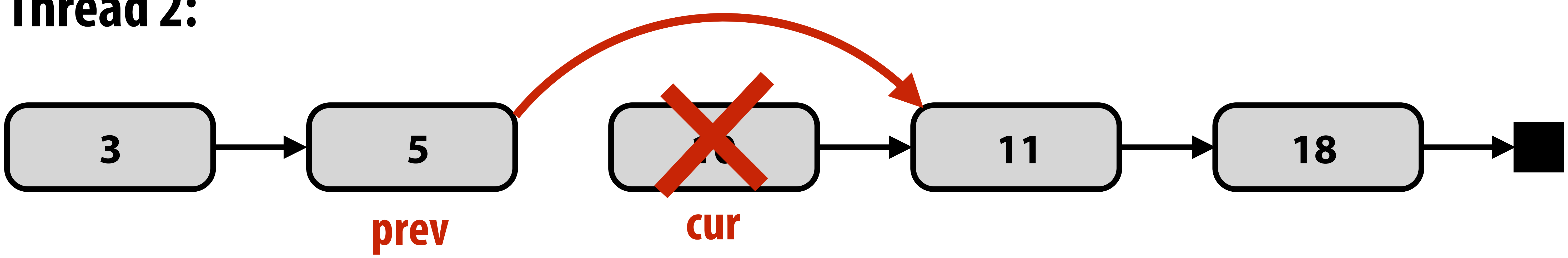
Thread 1 attempts to insert 6

Thread 2 attempts to delete 10

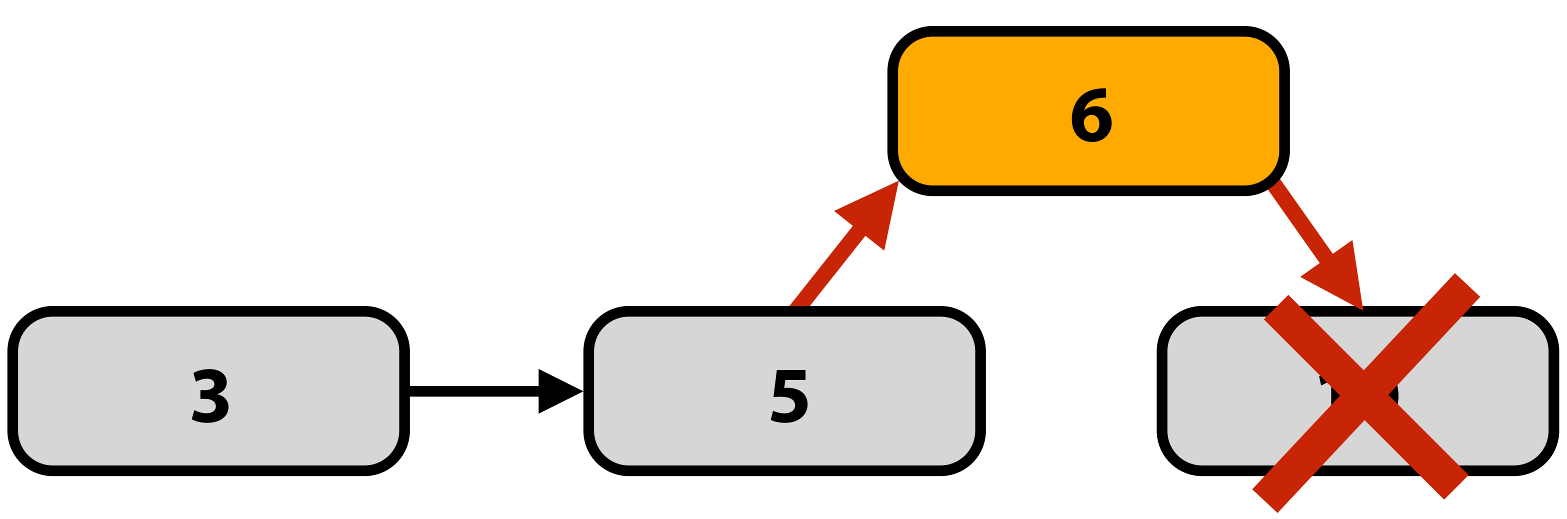
Thread 1:



Thread 2:



Possible result: (thread 2 finishes delete first)



Solution 1: protect the list with a single lock

```
struct Node {
    int value;
    Node* next;
};
```

```
struct List {
   Node* head;
   Lock  lock;
};
```

Per-list lock

```
void insert(List* list, int value) {

   Node* n = new Node;
   n->value = value;

   lock(list->lock);

   // assume case of inserting before head of
   // of list is handled here (to keep slide simple)

   Node* prev = list->head;
   Node* cur = list->head->next;

   while (cur) {
     if (cur->value > value)
       break;

     prev = cur;
     cur = cur->next;
   }
   n->next = cur;
   prev->next = n;
   unlock(list->lock);
}
```

```
void delete(List* list, int value) {

   lock(list->lock);

   // assume case of deleting first element is
   // handled here (to keep slide simple)

   Node* prev = list->head;
   Node* cur = list->head->next;

   while (cur) {
     if (cur->value == value) {
       prev->next = cur->next;
       delete cur;
       unlock(list->lock);
       return;
     }

     prev = cur;
     cur = cur->next;
   }
   unlock(list->lock);
}
```

Single global lock per data structure

- **Good:**
  - It is relatively simple to implement correct mutual exclusion for data structure operations (we just did it!)

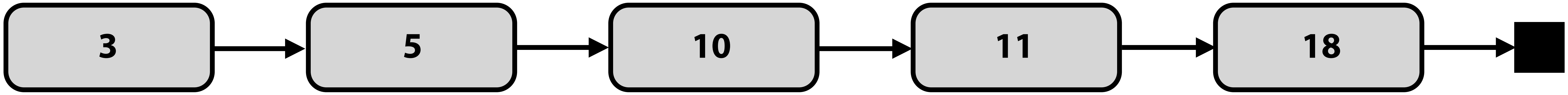
- **Bad:**
  - Operations on the data structure are serialized
  - May limit parallel application performance

Challenge: who can do better?

```
struct Node {
   int value;
   Node* next;
};

struct List {
  Node* head;
};
```

```
void insert(List* list, int value) {

   Node* n = new Node;
   n->value = value;

   // assume case of inserting before head of
   // of list is handled here (to keep slide simple)

   Node* prev = list->head;
   Node* cur = list->head->next;

   while (cur) {
     if (cur->value > value)
       break;

     prev = cur;
     cur = cur->next;
   }

   prev->next = n;
   n->next = cur;
}
```

```
void delete(List* list, int value) {

   // assume case of deleting first element is
   // handled here (to keep slide simple)

   Node* prev = list->head;
   Node* cur = list->head->next;

   while (cur) {
     if (cur->value == value) {
       prev->next = cur->next;
       delete cur;
       return;
     }

     prev = cur;
     cur = cur->next;
   }
}
```

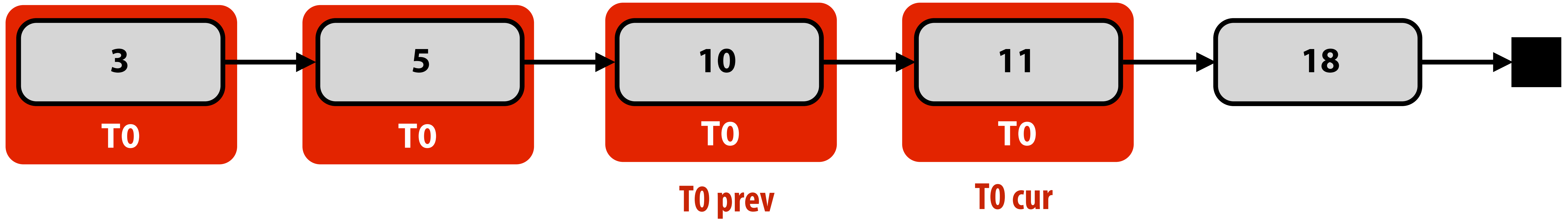


Hand-over-hand traversal

Credit: (Hal Boedeker, Orlanda Sentinel) American Ninja Warrior

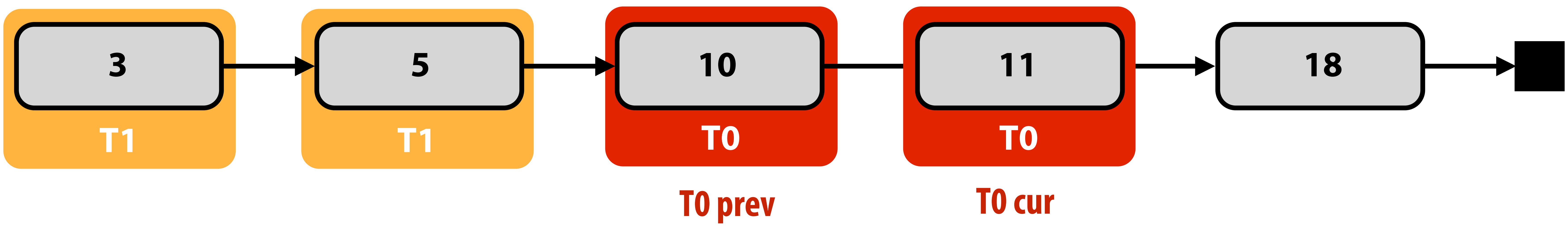
Solution 2: “hand-over-hand” locking

Thread 0: delete(11)



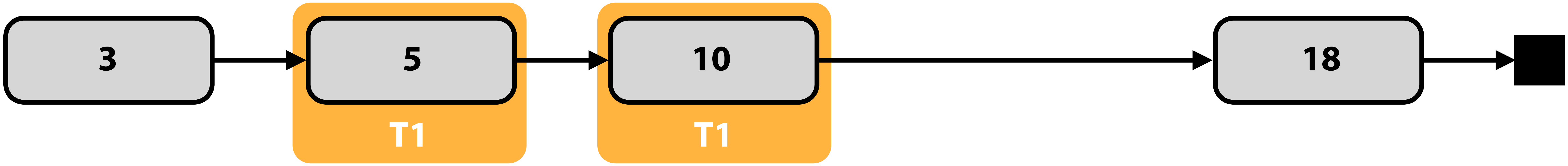
Solution 2: "hand-over-hand" locking

Thread 0: delete(11)
Thread 1: delete(10)



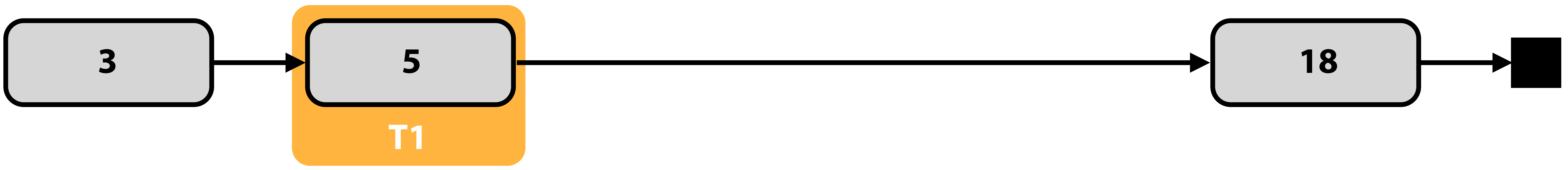
Solution 2: "hand-over-hand" locking

Thread 0: delete(11)
Thread 1: delete(10)



Solution 2: "hand-over-hand" locking

Thread 0: delete(11)
Thread 1: delete(10)



Solution 2: fine-grained locking

```
struct Node {
   int value;
   Node* next;
   Lock* lock;
};
```

```
struct List {
  Node* head;
  Lock* lock;
};
```

Challenge to students: there is way to further improve the implementation of insert(). What is it?

```
void insert(List* list, int value) {

   Node* n = new Node;
   n->value = value;

   // assume case of insert before head handled
   // here (to keep slide simple)

   Node* prev, *cur;

   lock(list->lock);
   prev = list->head;

   lock(prev->lock);
   unlock(list->lock);

   cur = prev->next;
   if (cur) lock(cur->lock);

   while (cur) {
     if (cur->value > value)
        break;

     Node* old_prev = prev;
     prev = cur;
     cur = cur->next;
     unlock(old_prev->lock);
     if (cur) lock(cur->lock);
   }

   n->next = cur;
   prev->next = n;

   unlock(prev->lock);
   if (cur) unlock(cur->lock);
}
```

```
void delete(List* list, int value) {

   // assume case of delete head handled here
   // (to keep slide simple)

   Node* prev, *cur;

   lock(list->lock);
   prev = list->head;

   lock(prev->lock);
   unlock(list->lock);

   cur = prev->next;
   if (cur) lock(cur->lock)

   while (cur) {
     if (cur->value == value) {
       prev->next = cur->next;
       unlock(prev->lock);
       unlock(cur->lock);
       delete cur;
       return;
     }

     Node* old_prev = prev;
     prev = cur;
     cur = cur->next;
     unlock(old_prev->lock);
     if (cur) lock(cur->lock);
   }
   unlock(prev->lock);
}
```

Fine-grained locking

- **Goal: enable parallelism in data structure operations**
  - Reduces contention for global data structure lock
  - In previous linked-list example: a single monolithic lock is overly conservative (operations on different parts of the linked list can proceed in parallel)
- **Challenge: tricky to ensure correctness**
  - Determining when mutual exclusion is required
  - Deadlock? (Self-check: in the linked-list example from the prior slides, why do you immediately that the code is deadlock free?)
  - Livelock?
- **Costs?**
  - Overhead of taking a lock each traversal step (extra instructions + traversal now involves memory writes)
  - Extra storage cost (a lock per node)
  - What is a middle-ground solution that trades off some parallelism for reduced overhead? (hint: similar issue to selection of task granularity)

Practice exercise (on your own time)

- **Implement a fine-grained locking implementation of a binary search tree supporting insert and delete**

```
struct Tree {
  Node* root;
};

struct Node {
   int value;
   Node* left;
   Node* right;
};

void insert(Tree* tree, int value);
void delete(Tree* tree, int value);
```

Lock-free data structures

Blocking algorithms/data structures

- A blocking algorithm allows one thread to prevent other threads from completing operations on a shared data structure indefinitely

- Example:
  - Thread 0 takes a lock on a node in our linked list
  - Thread 0 is swapped out by the OS, or crashes, or is just really slow (takes a page fault), etc.
  - Now, no other threads can complete operations on the data structure (although thread 0 is not actively making progress modifying it)

- An algorithm that uses locks is blocking regardless of whether the lock <u>implementation</u> uses spinning or pre-emption

Lock-free algorithms

- **Non-blocking algorithms are lock-free if <u>some</u> thread is guaranteed to make progress ("systemwide progress")**
  - In lock-free case, it is not possible to preempt one of the threads at an inopportune time and prevent progress by rest of system
  - Note: this definition does not prevent starvation of any one thread

Single reader, single writer <u>bounded</u> queue *

```
struct Queue {
  int data[N];
  int head;   // head of queue
  int tail;   // next free element
};

void init(Queue* q) {
   q->head = q->tail = 0;
}
```

```
// return false if queue is full
bool push(Queue* q, int value) {

   // queue is full if tail is element before head
   if (q->tail == MOD_N(q->head - 1))
     return false;

   q->data[q->tail] = value;
   q->tail = MOD_N(q->tail + 1);
   return true;
}

// returns false if queue is empty
bool pop(Queue* q, int* value) {

   // if not empty
   if (q->head != q->tail) {
     *value = q->data[q->head];
     q->head = MOD_N(q->head + 1);
     return true;
  }
  return false;
}
```

- Only two threads (one producer, one consumer) accessing queue at the same time
- Threads never synchronize or wait on each other
  - When queue is empty (pop fails), when it is full (push fails)

* Assume a sequentially consistent memory system for now
(or the presence of appropriate memory fences, or C++ 11 atomic<>)

Single reader, single writer <u>unbounded</u> queue *

Source: Dr. Dobbs Journal

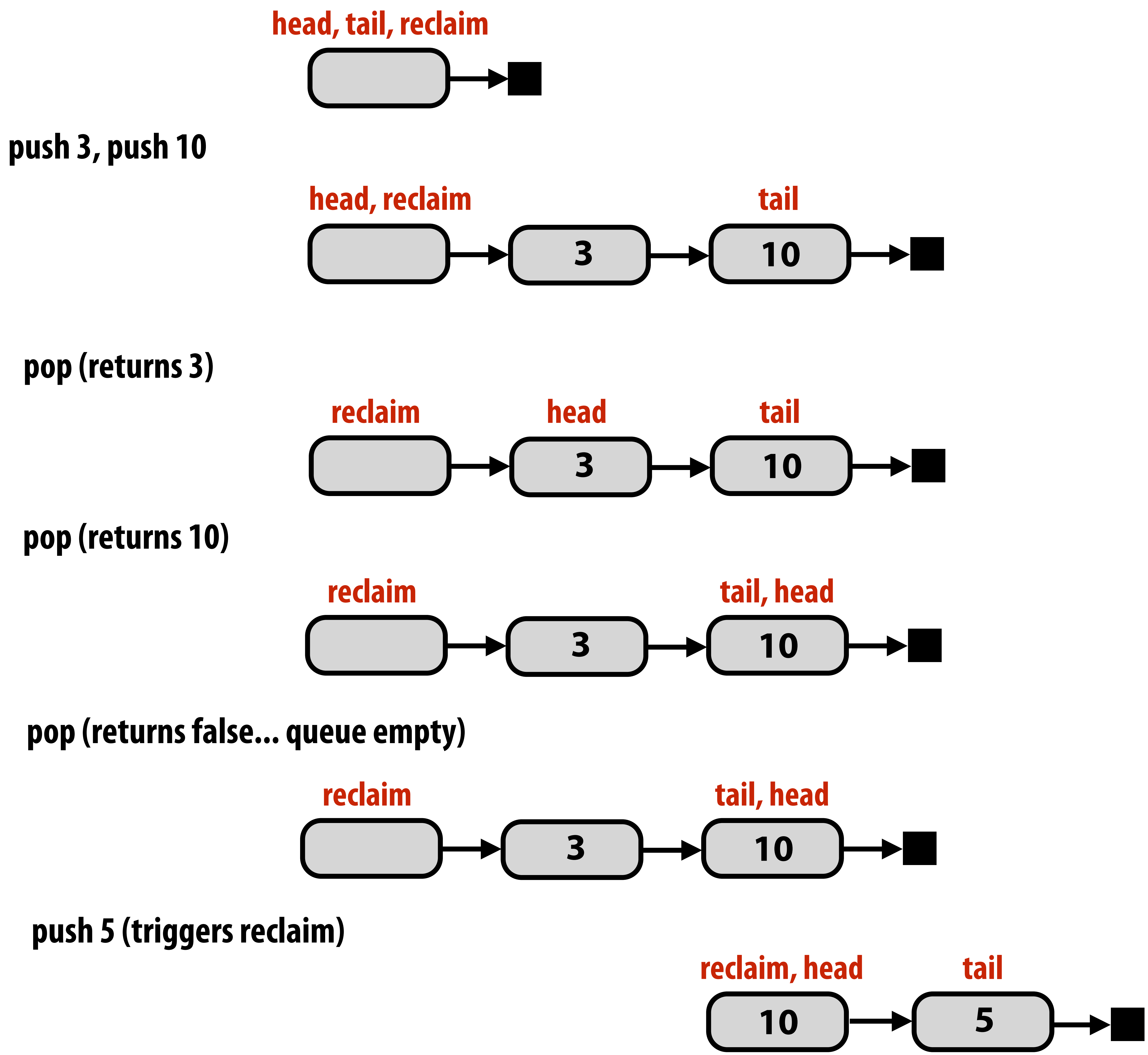
```
struct Node {
  Node* next;
  int   value;
};

struct Queue {
  Node* head;
  Node* tail;
  Node* reclaim;
};

void init(Queue* q) {
  q->head = q->tail = q->reclaim = new Node;
}
```

```
void push(Queue* q, int value) {

   Node* n = new Node;
   n->next = NULL;
   n->value = value;

   q->tail->next = n;
   q->tail = q->tail->next;

   while (q->reclaim != q->head) {
      Node* tmp = q->reclaim;
      q->reclaim = q->reclaim->next;
      delete tmp;
   }
}

// returns false if queue is empty
bool pop(Queue* q, int* value) {

   if (q->head != q->tail) {
     *value = q->head->next->value;
     q->head = q->head->next;
     return true;
   }
   return false;
}
```

- Tail points to last element added (if non-empty)
- Head points to element BEFORE head of queue
- Node allocation and deletion performed by the same thread (producer thread)

* Assume a sequentially consistent memory system for now
(or the presence of appropriate memory fences, or C++ 11 atomic<>)

Single reader, single writer unbounded queue



Lock-free stack (first try)

```
struct Node {
  Node* next;
  int   value;
};

struct Stack {
  Node* top;
};
```

```
void init(Stack* s) {
  s->top = NULL;
}

void push(Stack* s, Node* n) {
  while (1) {
    Node* old_top = s->top;
    n->next = old_top;
    if (compare_and_swap(&s->top, old_top, n) == old_top)
      return;
  }
}

Node* pop(Stack* s) {
  while (1) {
    Node* old_top = s->top;
    if (old_top == NULL)
      return NULL;
    Node* new_top = old_top->next;
    if (compare_and_swap(&s->top, old_top, new_top) == old_top)
      return old_top;
  }
}
```

Main idea: as long as no other thread has modified the stack, a thread's modification can proceed.

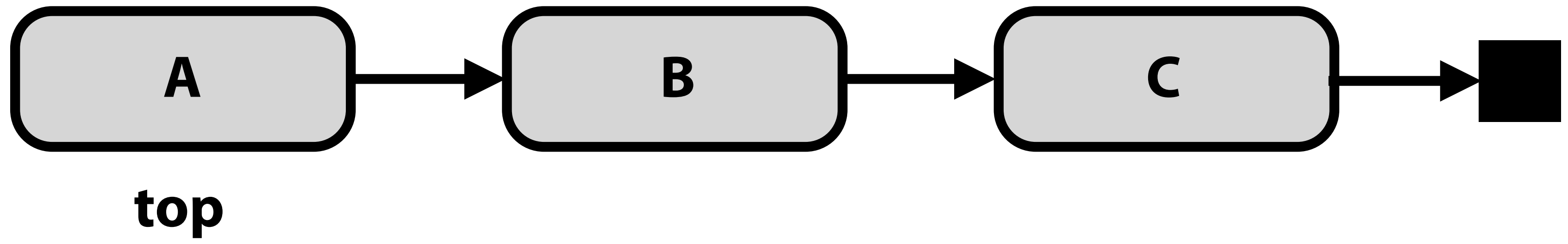
Note difference from fine-grained locking: In fine-grained locking, the implementation locked a part of a data structure. Here, threads do not hold lock on data structure at all.

* Assume a sequentially consistent memory system for now
(or the presence of appropriate memory fences, or C++ 11 atomic<>)

The ABA problem

Careful: On this slide A, B, C, and D are addresses of nodes, not value stored by the nodes!

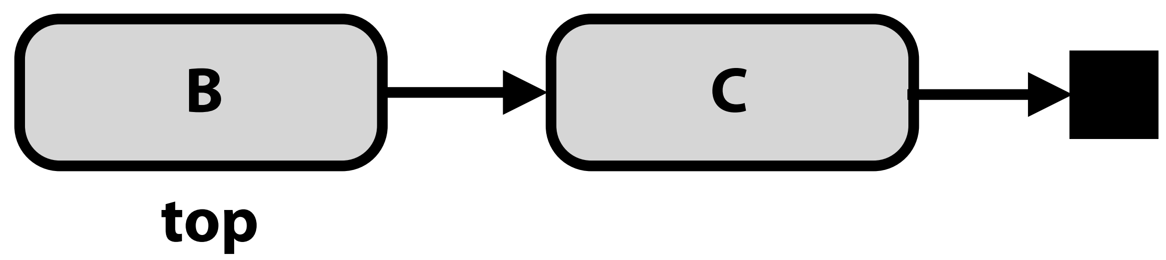
Thread 0 | **Thread 1**



begin pop() (local variable: old_top = A, new_top = B)

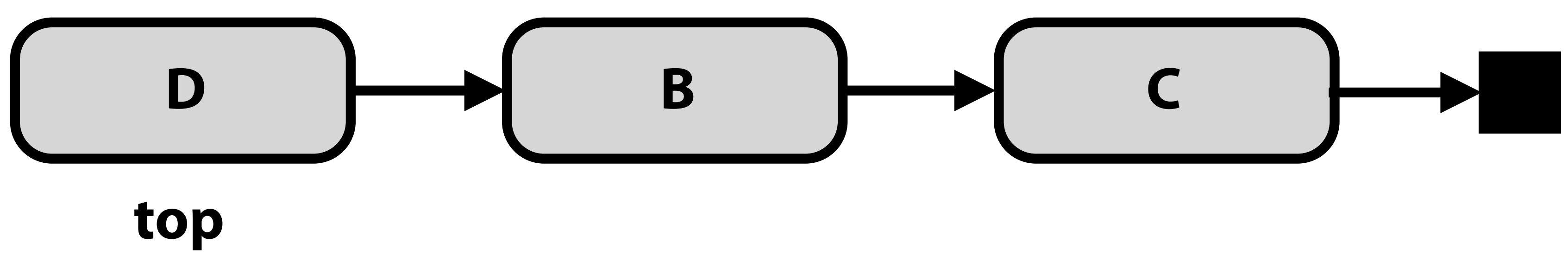
begin pop() (local variable old_top == A)

complete pop() (returns A)



begin push(D)

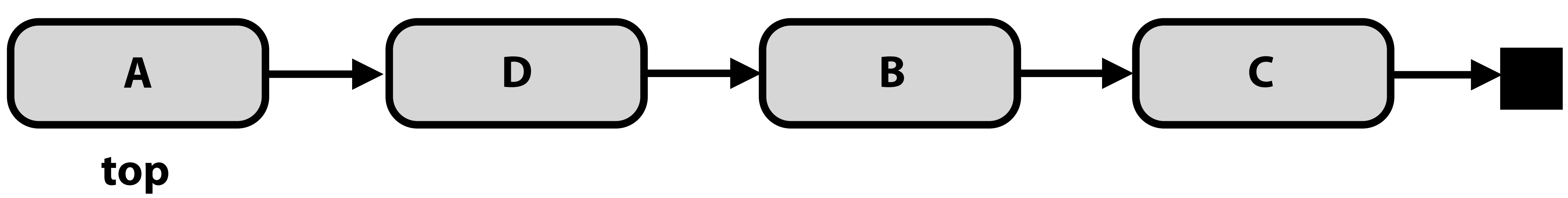
complete push(D)



modify node A: e.g., set value = 42

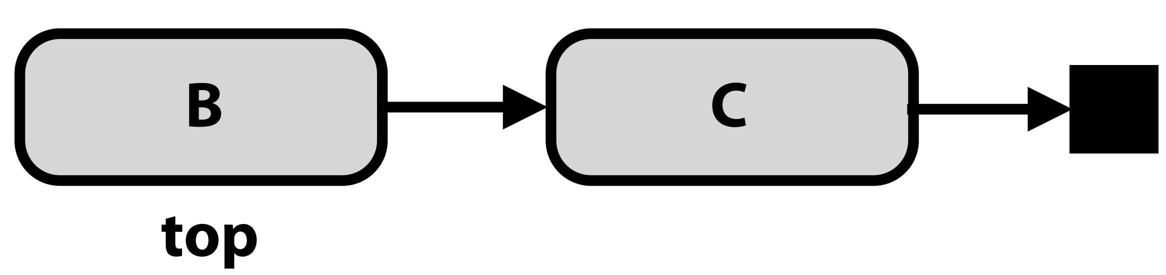
begin push(A)

complete push(A)



CAS succeeds (sets top to B!)

complete pop() (returns A)



Stack structure is corrupted! (lost D)

time

Lock-free stack using counter for ABA soln

```
struct Node {
  Node* next;
  int   value;
};

struct Stack {
  Node* top;
  int   pop_count;
};
```

```
void init(Stack* s) {
  s->top = NULL;
}

void push(Stack* s, Node* n) {
  while (1) {
    Node* old_top = s->top;
    n->next = old_top;
    if (compare_and_swap(&s->top, old_top, n) == old_top)
      return;
  }
}

Node* pop(Stack* s) {
  while (1) {
    int pop_count = s->pop_count;
    Node* top = s->top;
    if (top == NULL)
      return NULL;
    Node* new_top = top->next;
    if (double_compare_and_swap(&s->top,       top,       new_top,
                                &s->pop_count, pop_count, pop_count+1))
      return top;
  }
}
```

test to see if either have changed (assume function returns true if no changes)

- Maintain counter of pop operations
- Requires machine to support "double compare and swap" (DCAS) or doubleword CAS
- Could also solve ABA problem with careful node allocation and/or element reuse policies

Compare and swap on x86

- **x86 supports a "double-wide" compare-and-swap instruction**
  - Not quite the "double compare-and-swap" used on the previous slide
  - But could simply ensure the stack's count and top fields are contiguous in memory to use the 64-bit wide single compare-and-swap instruction below.

- **cmpxchg8b**
  - "compare and exchange eight bytes"
  - Can be used for compare-and-swap of two 32-bit values

- **cmpxchg16b**
  - "compare and exchange 16 bytes"
  - Can be used for compare-and-swap of two 64-bit values

Another problem: referencing freed memory

```
struct Node {
  Node* next;
  int   value;
};

struct Stack {
  Node* top;
  int   pop_count;
};
```

```
void init(Stack* s) {
  s->top = NULL;
}

void push(Stack* s, int value) {
  Node* n = new Node;
  n->value = value;
  while (1) {
    Node* old_top = s->top;
    n->next = old_top;
    if (compare_and_swap(&s->top, old_top, n) == old_top)
      return;
  }
}

int pop(Stack* s) {
  while (1) {
    Stack old;
    old.pop_count = s->pop_count;
    old.top = s->top;

    if (old.top == NULL)
      return NULL;

    Stack new_stack;
    new_stack.top = old.top->next;
    new_stack.pop_count = old.pop_count+1;

    if (doubleword_compare_and_swap(s, old, new_stack))
      int value = old.top->value;
      delete old.top;
      return value;
    }
  }
}
```

old top might have been freed at this point (by some other thread that popped it)

Hazard pointer: avoid freeing a node until it's known that all other threads do not hold reference to it

```
struct Node {
  Node* next;
  int value;
};

struct Stack {
  Node* top;
  int pop_count;
};

// per thread ptr (node that cannot
// be deleted since the thread is
// accessing it)
Node* hazard;

// list of nodes this thread must
// delete (this is a per thread list)
Node* retireList;
int   retireListSize;

// delete nodes if possible
void retire(Node* ptr) {
  push(retireList, ptr);
  retireListSize++;

  if (retireListSize > THRESHOLD)
     for (each node n in retireList) {
        if (n not pointed to by any
            thread's hazard pointer) {
           remove n from list
           delete n;
        }
     }
}
```

```
void init(Stack* s) {
  s->top = NULL;
}

void push(Stack* s, int value) {
  Node* n = new Node;
  n->value = value;
  while (1) {
    Node* old_top = s->top;
    n->next = old_top;
    if (compare_and_swap(&s->top, old_top, n) == old_top)
      return;
  }
}

int pop(Stack* s) {
  while (1) {
    Stack old;
    old.pop_count = s->pop_count;
    old.top = hazard = s->top;

    if (old.top == NULL) {
      return NULL;
    }

    Stack new_stack;
    new_stack.top = old.top->next;
    new_stack.pop_count = old.pop_count+1;

    if (doubleword_compare_and_swap(s, old, new_stack)) {
      int value = old.top->value;
      retire(old.top);
      return value;
    }
    hazard = NULL;
  }
}
```

Lock-free linked list insertion *

```
struct Node {                  struct List {
   int value;                    Node* head;
   Node* next;                 };
};
```

```
// insert new node after specified node
void insert_after(List* list, Node* after, int value) {

   Node* n = new Node;
   n->value = value;

   // assume case of insert into empty list handled
   // here (keep code on slide simple for class discussion)

   Node* prev = list->head;

   while (prev->next) {
     if (prev == after) {
       while (1) {
         Node* old_next = prev->next;
         n->next = old_next;
         if (compare_and_swap(&prev->next, old_next, n) == old_next)
            return;
       }
     }

     prev = prev->next;
   }
}
```

Compared to fine-grained locking implementation:

No overhead of taking locks

No per-node storage overhead

*** For simplicity, this slide assumes the *only* operation on the list is insert. Delete is more complex.**

Lock-free linked list deletion

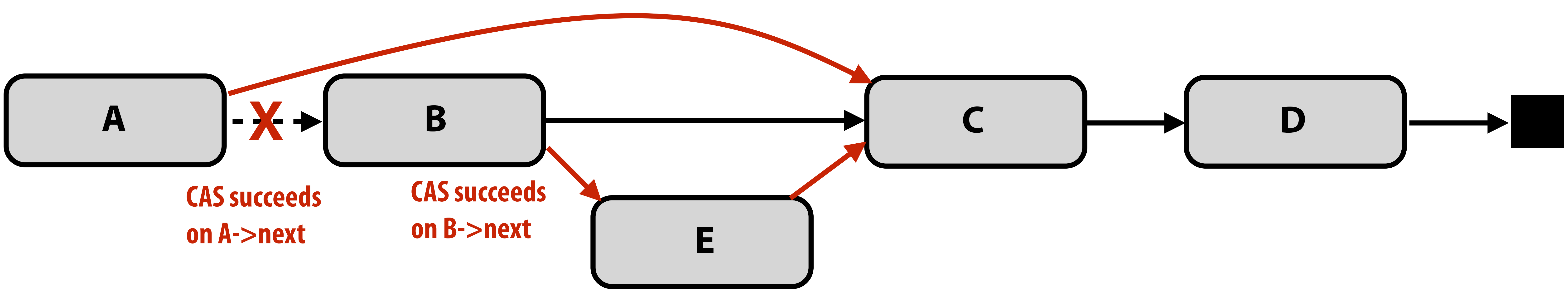
Supporting lock-free deletion significantly complicates data-structure

Consider case where B is deleted simultaneously with insertion of E after B.

B now points to E, but B is not in the list!

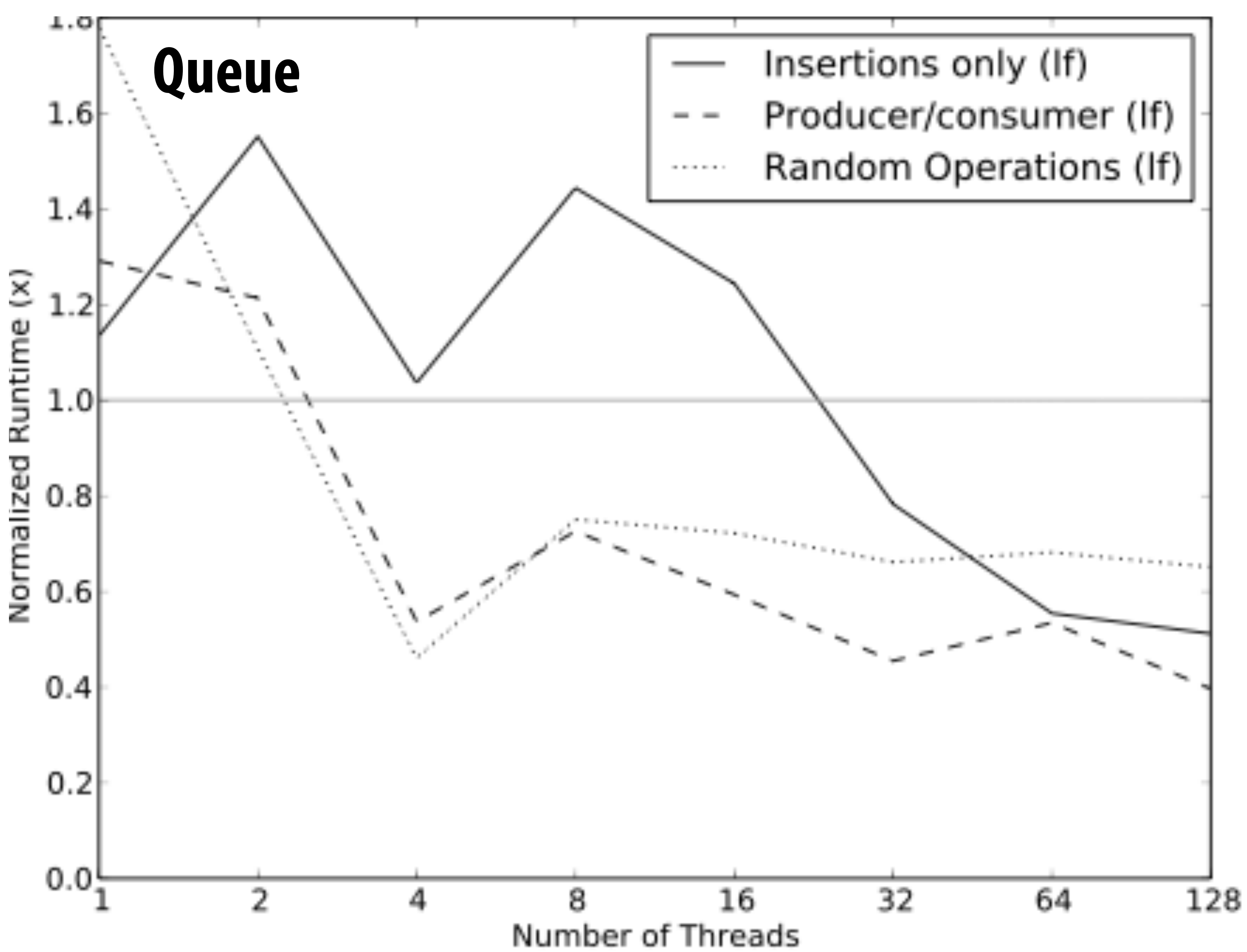
For the curious:

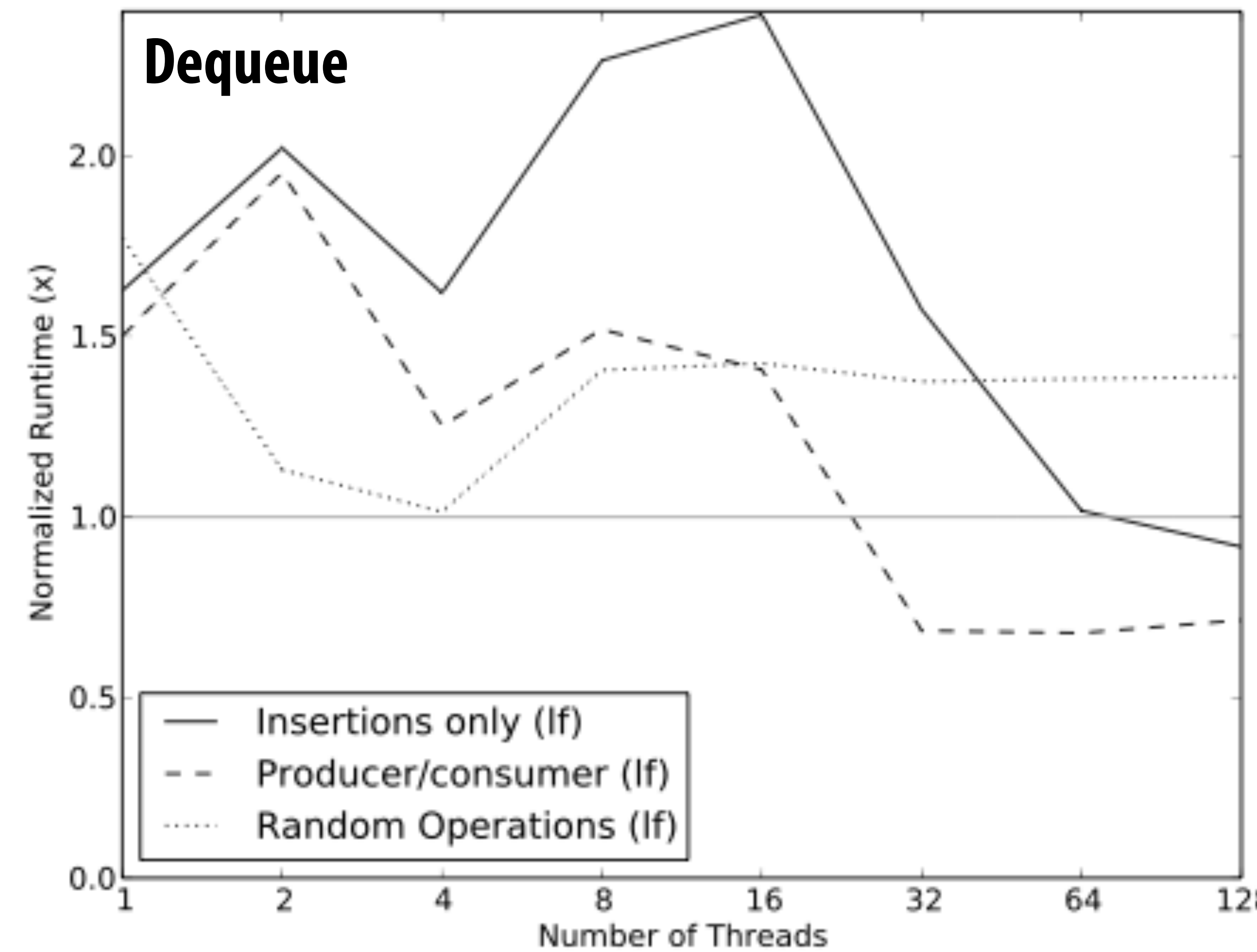
- Harris 2001. "A Pragmatic Implementation of Non-blocking Linked-Lists"
- Fomitchev 2004. "Lock-free linked lists and skip lists"

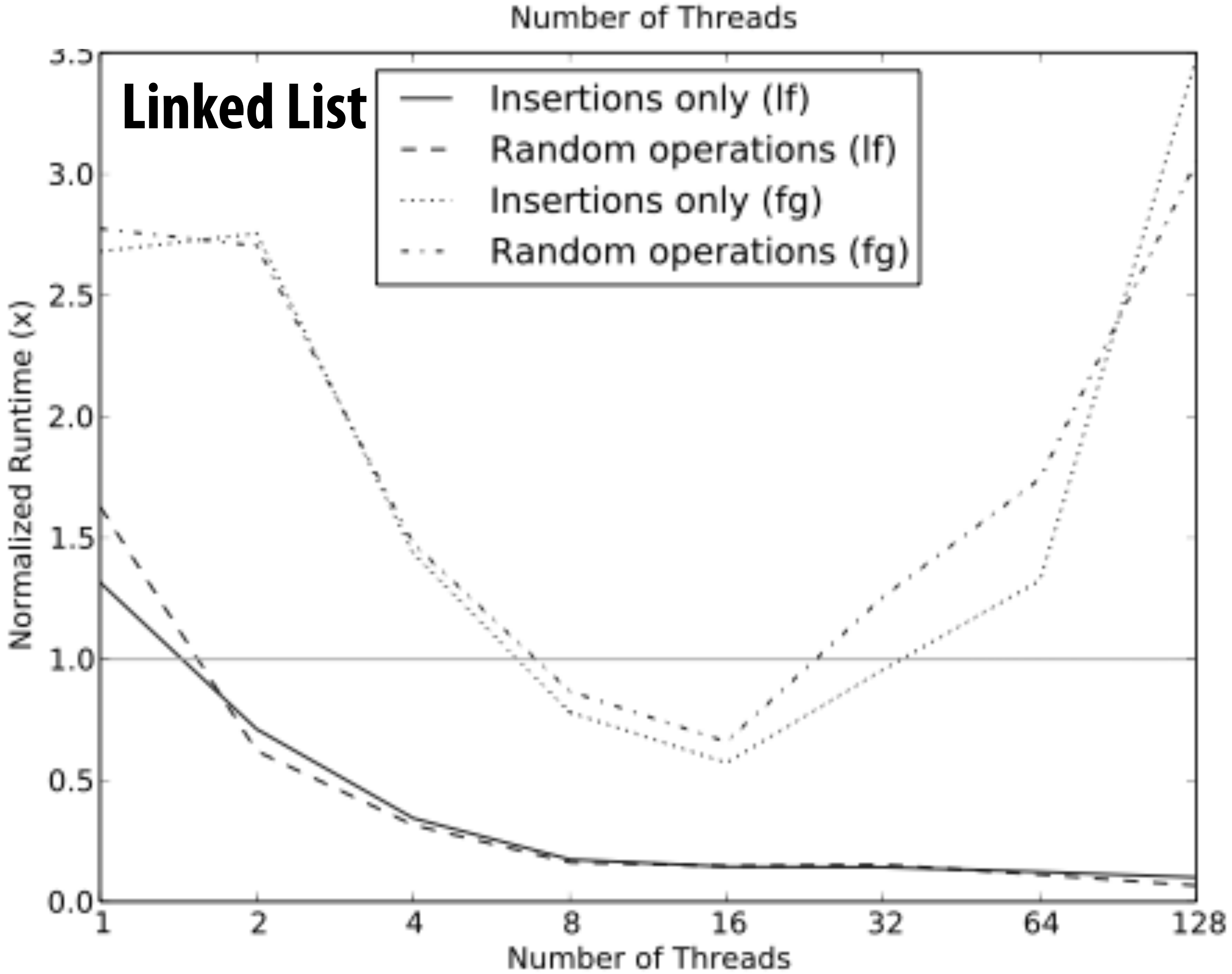


Lock-free vs. locks performance comparison

Lock-free algorithm run time normalized to run time of using pthread mutex locks







lf = "lock free"
fg = "fine grained lock"

Source: Hunt 2011. Characterizing the Performance and Energy Efficiency of Lock-Free Data Structures

In practice: why lock free data structures?

- When optimizing parallel programs in this class you often assume that only your program is using the machine
  - Because you care about performance
  - Typical assumption in scientific computing, graphics, machine learning, data analytics, etc.

- In these cases, well-written code with locks can sometimes be as fast (or faster) than lock-free code

- But there are situations where code with locks can suffer from tricky performance problems
  - Situations where a program features many threads (e.g., database, webserver) and page faults, pre-emption, etc. can occur while a thread is in a critical section
  - Locks create problems like priority inversion, convoying, crashing in critical section, etc. that are often discussed in OS classes

Summary

- Use fine-grained locking to reduce contention (maximize parallelism) in operations on shared data structures
  - But fine-granularity can increase code complexity (errors) and increase execution overhead
- Lock-free data structures: non-blocking solution to avoid overheads due to locks
  - But can be tricky to implement (and ensuring correctness in a lock-free setting has its own overheads)
  - Still requires appropriate memory fences on modern relaxed consistency hardware
- Note: a lock-free design does not eliminate contention
  - Compare-and-swap can fail under heavy contention, requiring spins

Preview: transactional memory

- Q. What was the role of the compare and swap in our lock-free implementations?

- A. Determining if another thread had modified the data structure while the calling thread was in the middle of an operation.

- Next time… transactional memory
  - A more general mechanism to allow a system to speculate that an operation will be successfully completed before another thread attempts to modify the structure
  - With mechanisms to "abort" an operation in the event another thread does.

More reading on lock-free structures

- Michael and Scott 1996. Simple, Fast and Practical Non-Blocking and Blocking Concurrent Queue Algorithms
    - Multiple reader/writer lock-free queue
- Harris 2001. A Pragmatic Implementation of Non-Blocking Linked-Lists
- Michael Sullivan's Relaxed Memory Calculus (RMC) compiler
    - https://github.com/msullivan/rmc-compiler
- Many good blog posts and articles on the web:
    - http://www.drdobbs.com/cpp/lock-free-code-a-false-sense-of-security/210600279
    - http://developers.memsql.com/blog/common-pitfalls-in-writing-lock-free-algorithms/