

# CSE 333

## Lecture 8 - low-level I/O

**Hal Perkins**

Department of Computer Science & Engineering

University of Washington



# Administrivia

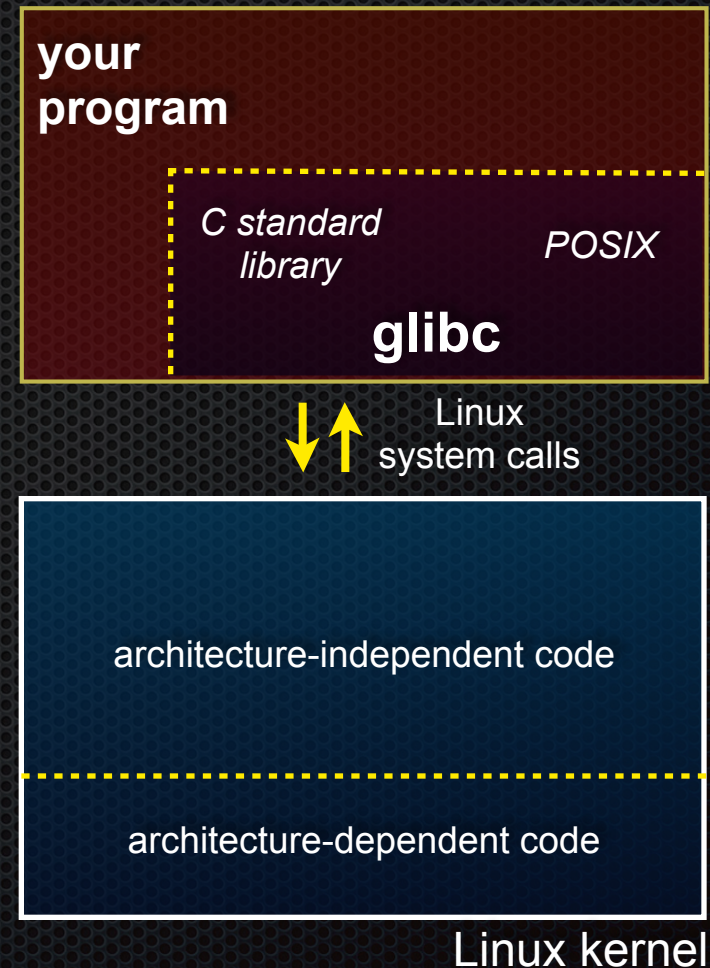
HW1 due tomorrow night, so ...

No new exercise today!

# Lower-level file access

Remember this picture?

- your program can access many layers of APIs
  - ▶ C standard library
  - ▶ POSIX compatibility API
  - ▶ underlying OS system calls



# So far...

You've used the C standard library to access files

- specifically, `fopen`, `fread`, `fwrite`, `fclose`, `fseek`
  - ▶ these provide a (`FILE *`) stream abstraction

These are convenient and portable...

- but, they are *buffered*
- and, they are implemented by using lower-level OS calls

# Lower-level file access

Most UNIX-en support a common set of lower-level file access APIs

- open, read, write, close, fseek
  - ▶ similar in spirit to their fopen (etc.) counterparts
  - ▶ but, lower-level and unbuffered
    - (well, unbuffered from user's perspective; OS does its own buffering at least for disk blocks)
  - ▶ and, less convenient
- you will have to use these for network I/O, so we might as well learn them now

# open / close

To open a file...

- pass in the filename and access mode, similar to fopen
- get back a “file descriptor”
  - ▶ similar to a (FILE \*) from fopen, but is just an int

```
#include <fcntl.h>

...

int fd = open("foo.txt",
              O_RDONLY);
if (fd == -1) {
    perror("open failed");
    exit(EXIT_FAILURE);
}

...

close(fd);
```

# Reading from a file

```
ssize_t read(int fd, void *buf, size_t count);
```

- returns the # of bytes read
  - ▶ might be fewer bytes than you requested (!!!)
  - ▶ returns 0 if you're at end-of-file
  - ▶ return -1 on error
- warning: read has some very surprising error modes!

# read() error modes

On error, the “errno” global variable is set

- you need to check it to see what kind of error happened

What errors might read() encounter?

- EBADF -- bad file descriptor
- EFAULT -- output buffer is not a valid address
- EINTR -- read was interrupted, please try again
  - ▶ argh!!!
- and many others



# How to read() n bytes

```
#include <errno.h>
#include <unistd.h>

...

char *buf = ...;
int bytes_left = n;
int result = 0;

while (bytes_left > 0) {
    result = read(fd, buf + (n-bytes_left), bytes_left);
    if (result == -1) {
        if (errno != EINTR) {
            // a real error happened, return an error result
        }
        // EINTR happened, do nothing and loop back around
        continue;
    }
    bytes_left -= result;
}
```

# Other low-level functions

Read the man pages to learn about:

- **write()** -- write data
- **fsync()** -- flush data to the underlying device
- **opendir()**, **readdir()**, **closedir()** -- get a directory listing
  - ▶ make sure you read the section 3 version, e.g.:
    - man 3 opendir
  - ▶ kind of painful to use

# A useful cheat-sheet

From a CMU systems programming course:

<http://www.cs.cmu.edu/~guna/15-123S11/Lectures/Lecture24.pdf>

See you on Friday!