# CSE 451: Operating Systems
# Spring 2012

## Module 25
## Virtual Machine Monitors

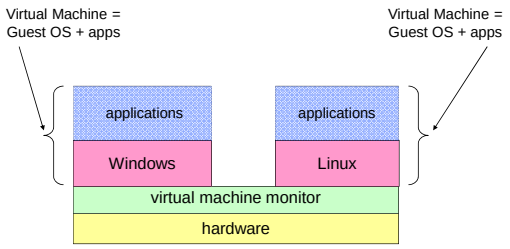
**Ed Lazowska**
**lazowska@cs.washington.edu**
**Allen Center 570**

## What do VMMs enable?

- Running multiple operating systems (called "guest OS's") and their applications on a single physical computer, as if each were running on its own private virtual computer
- Efficient – mostly direct execution, rather than simulation
- Contemporary examples
  - VMware
  - Microsoft's VirtualPC / VirtualServer
  - Parallels (Mac)
  - Xen




## VMM structure







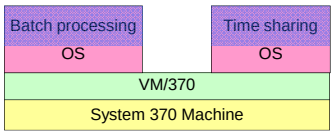
## Basic ideas

- Guest OS runs in user mode
- When any kind of interrupt / exception / trap occurs, we'll end up in the VMM rather than the guest OS
- VMM simulates state changes that would have been made by the hardware, then restarts VM at the guest OS handler address
  - E.g., stuffs the saved PC where the architecture says it should be
- When the guest OS tries to execute a privileged instruction
  - VMM gets control, simulates effect of privileged instruction
    - VMM knows that guest OS was in virtual kernel mode so the attempted operation is OK




## VMM History

- Conceived by IBM in the late 1960's
  - CP-40, CP-67, VM/360
- Sold continuously since then
- Used first for OS development and debugging, then for time sharing (multiple single-user OS's, plus a few single-job batch OS's), eventually for server consolidation







## VMMs Today

- OS development and debugging
- Software compatibility testing
- Running software from another OS
  - Or, OS version
- Virtual infrastructure for Internet services (server consolidation)
- Examples
  - Run Windows on your Mac, or MacOS on your PC
  - VMware in CSE 451
  - Amazon's Elastic Compute Cloud (EC2)

## Comparing the Unix and VMM APIs

| | UNIX | VMM |
|---|---|---|
| **Storage** | File system | (virtual) disk |
| **Networking** | Sockets | (virtual) Ethernet |
| **Memory** | Virtual Memory | (virtual) Physical memory |
| **Display** | /dev/console | (virtual) Keyboard, display device |

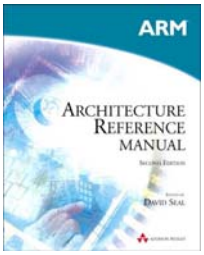



## Possible Implementation Strategy: Complete machine emulation

- The VMM implements the complete hardware architecture in software

```
while(true) {
  Instruction instr = fetch();

  // emulate behavior in software
  instr.emulate();
}
```

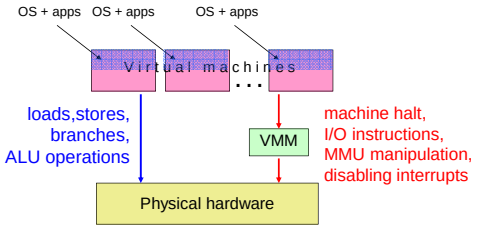



Drawback: This is **really** slow




## Practical alternative: VMM gets control on privileged instructions only

- Treat guest operating systems (and their apps) like an application
  - Guest OS (and its apps) run in user mode
  - Most instructions execute natively on the CPU
  - Privileged instructions are trapped and emulated





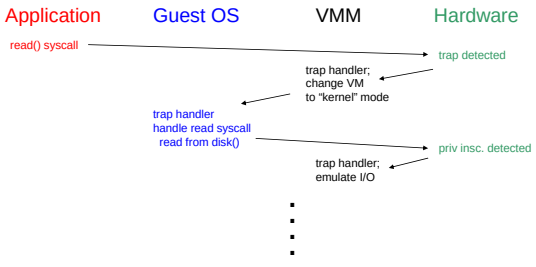


## Virtualizing the User/Kernel Boundary

- Both the guest OS **and** applications run in (physical) user-mode
- For each virtual machine, the VMM keeps a software mode bit:
  - During a system call, switch to "kernel" mode
  - On system call return, switch to "user" mode
- What does the VMM do if a VM executes a privileged instruction while in virtual user mode?
- What does the VMM do if a VM executes a privileged instruction while in virtual kernel mode?




## Tracing Through a File System Read







## Questions, to clarify …

- What if the I/O could be handled from the buffer cache?
- Does the VMM handle a VM's I/O request synchronously?
- There are a zillion different types of disks (and networks and …) … Do the device drivers for these reside in the guest OS or in the VMM?

## A possible “gotcha”

- All instructions that modify hardware state must be privileged (so that VMM can get control, modify the virtual hardware state for that guest, and not modify the physical hardware state)
- Example: Suppose the ERET instruction (return to a user process after handling an exception) is not privileged
  - ERET sets the PC to the saved PC, and sets CPU mode to user
  - There doesn’t seem to be a reason to prevent user processes from doing this (even if there’s no reason for them to want to)

Why would this be a problem for a VMM?




## x86

- Conditions for an architecture to be virtualizable were defined in 1974
- x86 architecture did not satisfy these conditions!
  - Many reasons, but most of them stem from instructions that have different behavior in user mode and kernel mode, and that don’t trap when executed in user mode
- Approach: binary re-writing
  - When a code page is loaded, scan it, looking for offending instructions
  - Patch these to cause a fault
  - Remember the instruction that used to be there




## Other approaches

- Hardware: Both Intel (VT-x) and AMD (AMD-V) have developed virtualization extensions to the architecture (starting ~2006)
- Paravirtualization: Export a slight modification of the hardware; port the OS to this new hardware




## Memory

- VMM’s also utilize memory protection (in addition to privileged instructions) to do their job
- Have not described how memory is virtualized by a VMM, creating “virtual physical memory” for the guest OS’s
- Approach involves the VMM futzing with the page tables in the guest OS’s