

# Processes and Threads

# Learning Outcomes

- An understanding of fundamental concepts of processes and threads

# Major Requirements of an Operating System

- Interleave the execution of several processes to maximize processor utilization while providing reasonable response time
- Allocate resources to processes
- Support interprocess communication and user creation of processes

# Processes and Threads

- Processes:
  - Also called a task or job
  - Execution of an individual program
  - “Owner” of resources allocated for program execution
  - Encompasses one or more threads
- Threads:
  - Unit of execution
  - Can be traced
    - list the sequence of instructions that execute
  - Belongs to a process
    - Executes within it.

Execution snapshot of three single-threaded processes (No Virtual Memory)

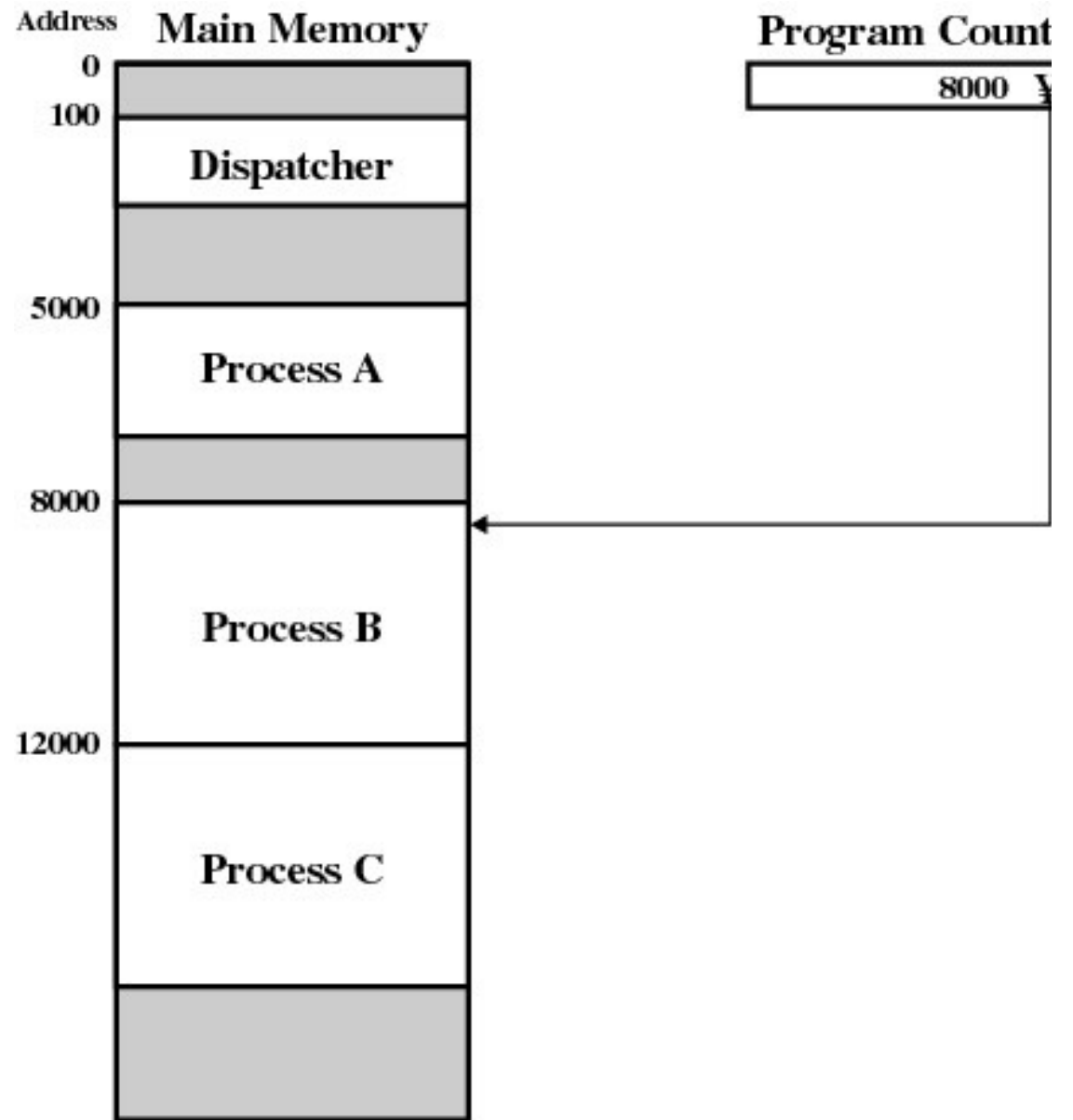


Figure 3.1 Snapshot of Example Execution (Figure 3 at Instruction Cycle 13

## Logical Execution Trace

5000  
5001  
5002  
5003  
5004  
5005  
5006  
5007  
5008  
5009  
5010  
5011

8000  
8001  
8002  
8003

12000  
12001  
12002  
12003  
12004  
12005  
12006  
12007  
12008  
12009  
12010  
12011

(a) Trace of Process A

(b) Trace of Process B

(c) Trace of Process C

5000 = Starting address of program of Process A

8000 = Starting address of program of Process B

12000 = Starting address of program of Process C

**Figure 3.2** Traces of Processes of Figure 3.1

## Combined Traces

(Actual CPU Instructions)

What are the shaded sections?

1	5000			27	12004		
2	5001			28	12005		
3	5002					-----	Time out
4	5003			29	100		
5	5004			30	101		
6	5005			31	102		
		-----	Time out	32	103		
7	100			33	104		
8	101			34	105		
9	102			35	5006		
10	103			36	5007		
11	104			37	5008		
12	105			38	5009		
13	8000			39	5010		
14	8001			40	5011		
15	8002					-----	Time out
16	8003			41	100		
		-----	I/O request	42	101		
17	100			43	102		
18	101			44	103		
19	102			45	104		
20	103			46	105		
21	104			47	12006		
22	105			48	12007		
23	12000			49	12008		
24	12001			50	12009		
25	12002			51	12010		
26	12003			52	12011		
						-----	Time out

100 = Starting address of dispatcher program

shaded areas indicate execution of dispatcher process;

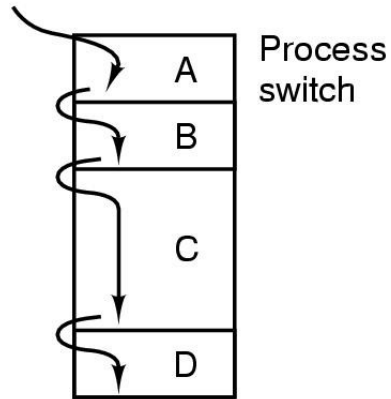
first and third columns count instruction cycles;

second and fourth columns show address of instruction being executed

**Figure 3.3 Combined Trace of Processes of Figure 3.1**

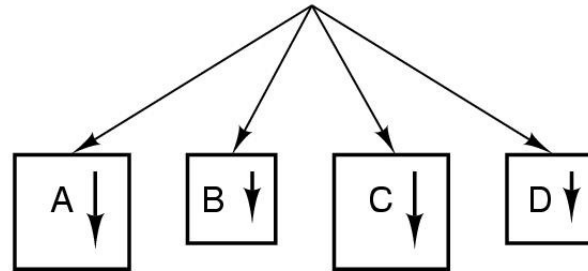
# Summary: The Process Model

One program counter

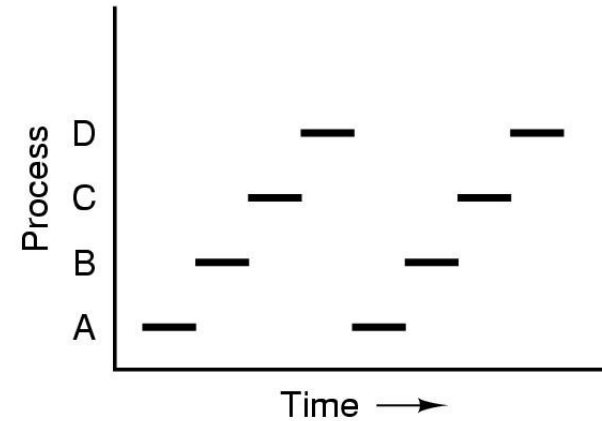


(a)

Four program counters



(b)



(c)

- Multiprogramming of four programs
- Conceptual model of 4 independent, sequential processes (with a single thread each)
- Only one program active at any instant



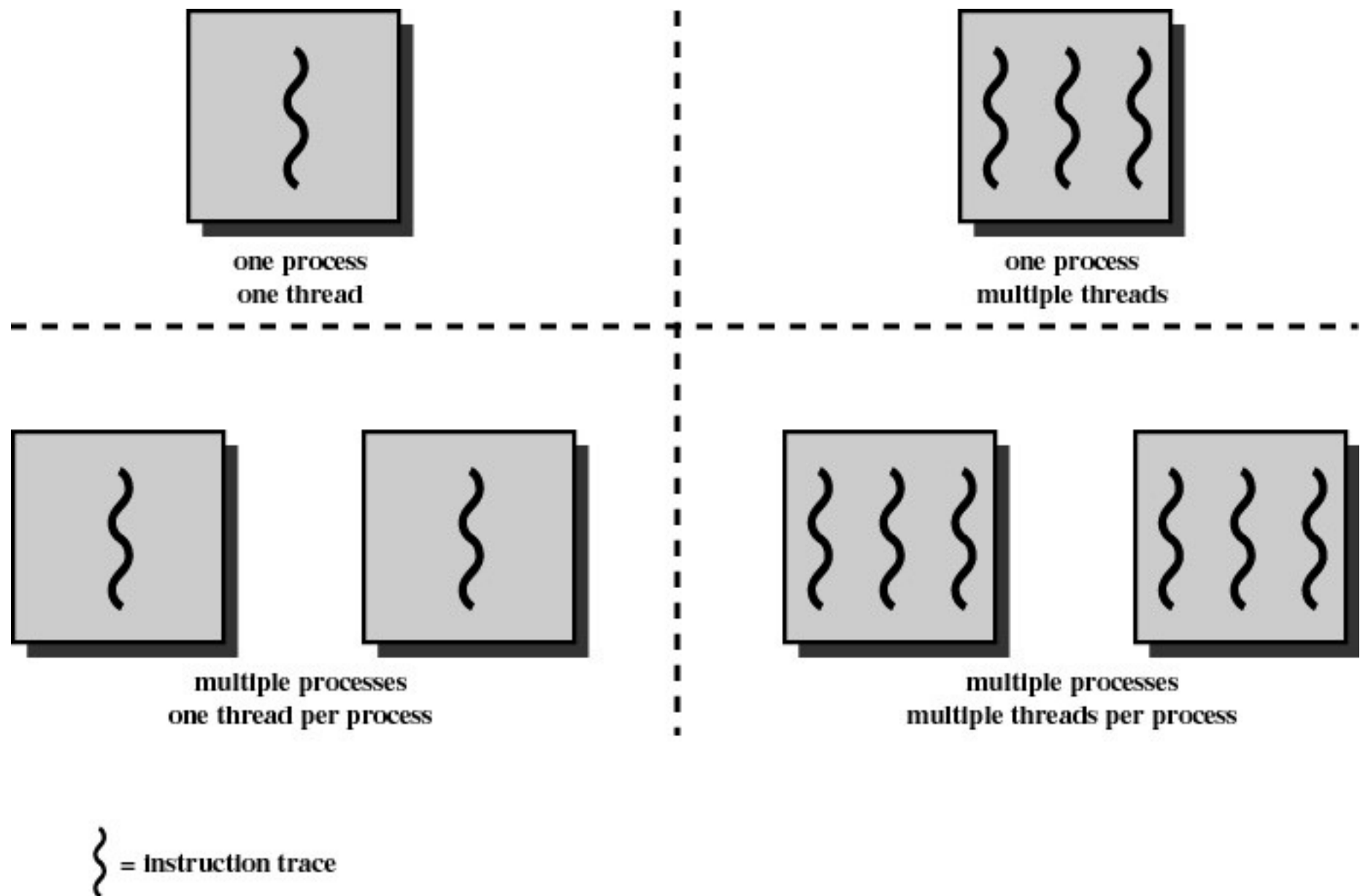


Figure 4.1 Threads and Processes [ANDE97]

# Process and thread models of selected OSES

- Single process, single thread
  - MSDOS
- Single process, multiple threads
  - OS/161 as distributed
- Multiple processes, single thread
  - Traditional UNIX
- Multiple processes, multiple threads
  - Modern Unix (Linux, Solaris), Windows

Note: Literature (incl. Textbooks) often do not cleanly distinguish between processes and threads (for historical reasons)

# Process Creation

## Principal events that cause process creation

1. System initialization
  - Foreground processes (interactive programs)
  - Background processes
    - Email server, web server, print server, etc.
    - Called a *daemon* (unix) or *service* (Windows)
2. Execution of a process creation system call by a running process
  - New login shell for an incoming ssh connection
3. User request to create a new process
4. Initiation of a batch job

Note: Technically, all these cases use the same system mechanism to create new processes.

# Process Termination

Conditions which terminate processes

1. Normal exit (voluntary)
2. Error exit (voluntary)
3. Fatal error (involuntary)
4. Killed by another process (involuntary)

# Implementation of Processes

- A processes' information is stored in a *process control block* (PCB)
- The PCBs form a *process table*
  - Reality can be more complex (hashing, chaining, allocation bitmaps,...)

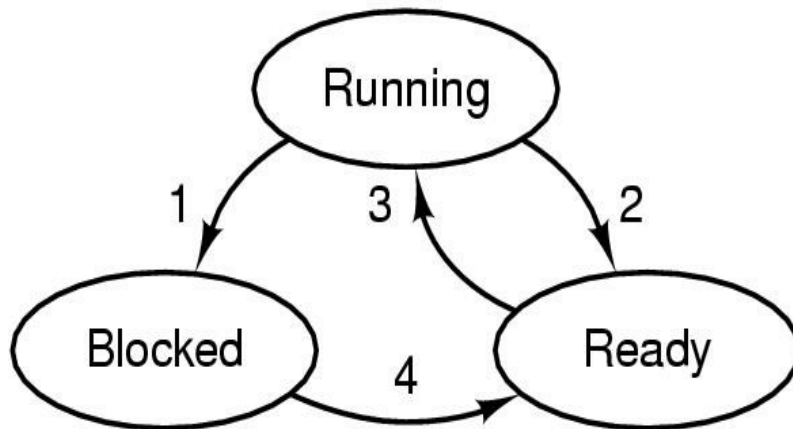
P7
P6
P5
P4
P3
P2
P1
P0

# Implementation of Processes

<b>Process management</b>	<b>Memory management</b>	<b>File management</b>
Registers Program counter Program status word Stack pointer Process state Priority Scheduling parameters Process ID Parent process Process group Signals Time when process started CPU time used Children's CPU time Time of next alarm	Pointer to text segment Pointer to data segment Pointer to stack segment	Root directory Working directory File descriptors User ID Group ID

Example fields of a process table entry

# Process/Thread States



1. Process blocks for input
2. Scheduler picks another process
3. Scheduler picks this process
4. Input becomes available

- Possible process/thread states
  - running
  - blocked
  - ready
- Transitions between states shown

# Some Transition Causing Events

## Running → Ready

- Voluntary **Yield()**
- End of timeslice

## Running → Blocked

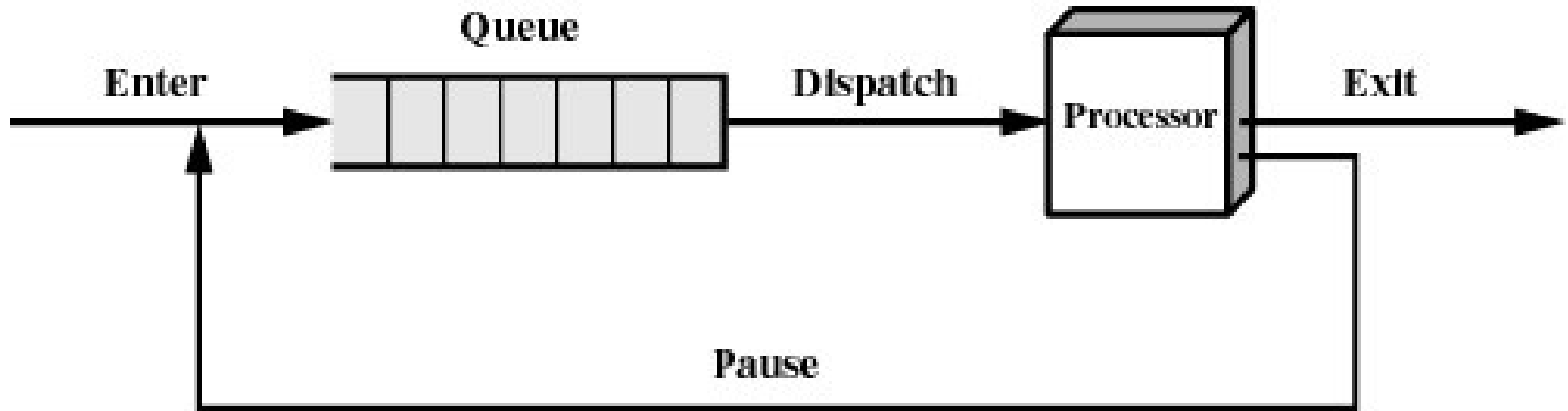
- Waiting for input
  - File, network,
- Waiting for a timer (alarm signal)
- Waiting for a resource to become available



# Scheduler

- Sometimes also called the *dispatcher*
  - The literature is also a little inconsistent on with terminology.
- Has to choose a *Ready* process to run
  - How?
  - It is inefficient to search through all processes

# The Ready Queue

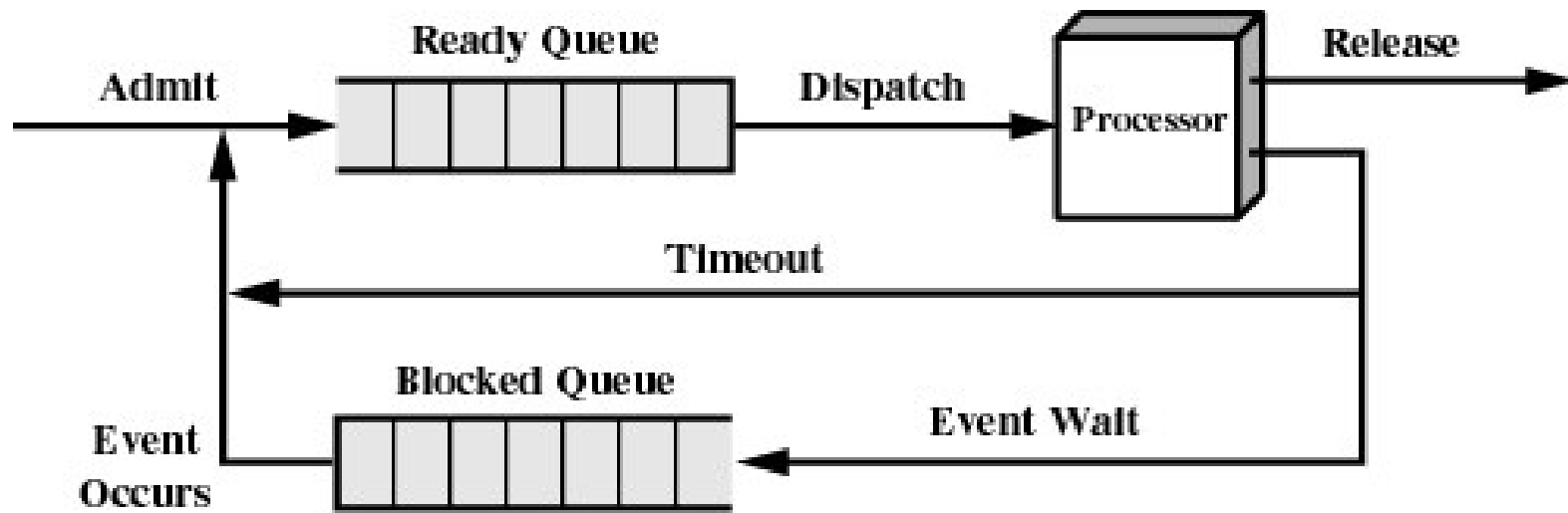


(b) Queuing diagram

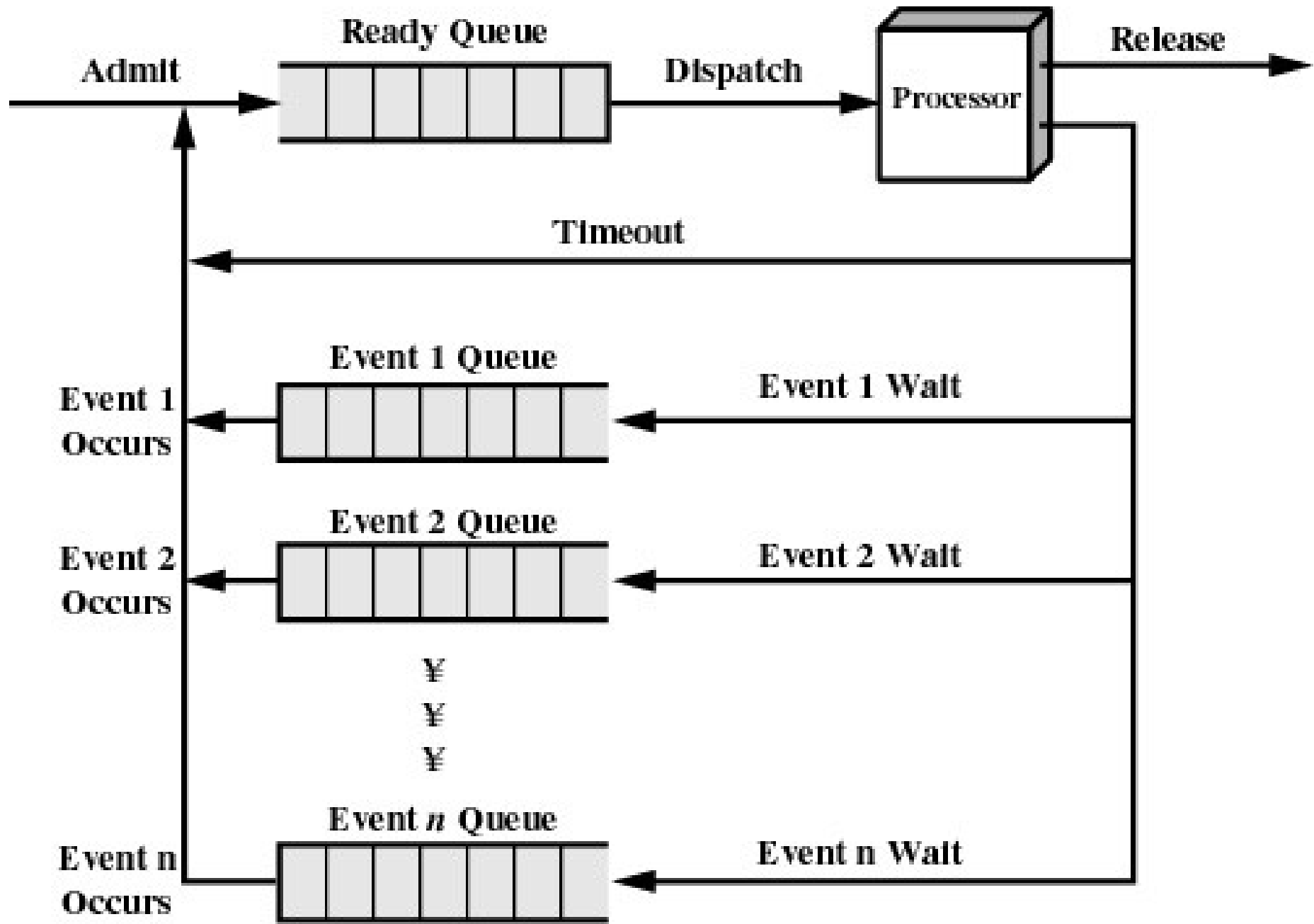
# What about blocked processes?

- When an *unblocking* event occurs, we also wish to avoid scanning all processes to select one to make *Ready*

# Using Two Queues



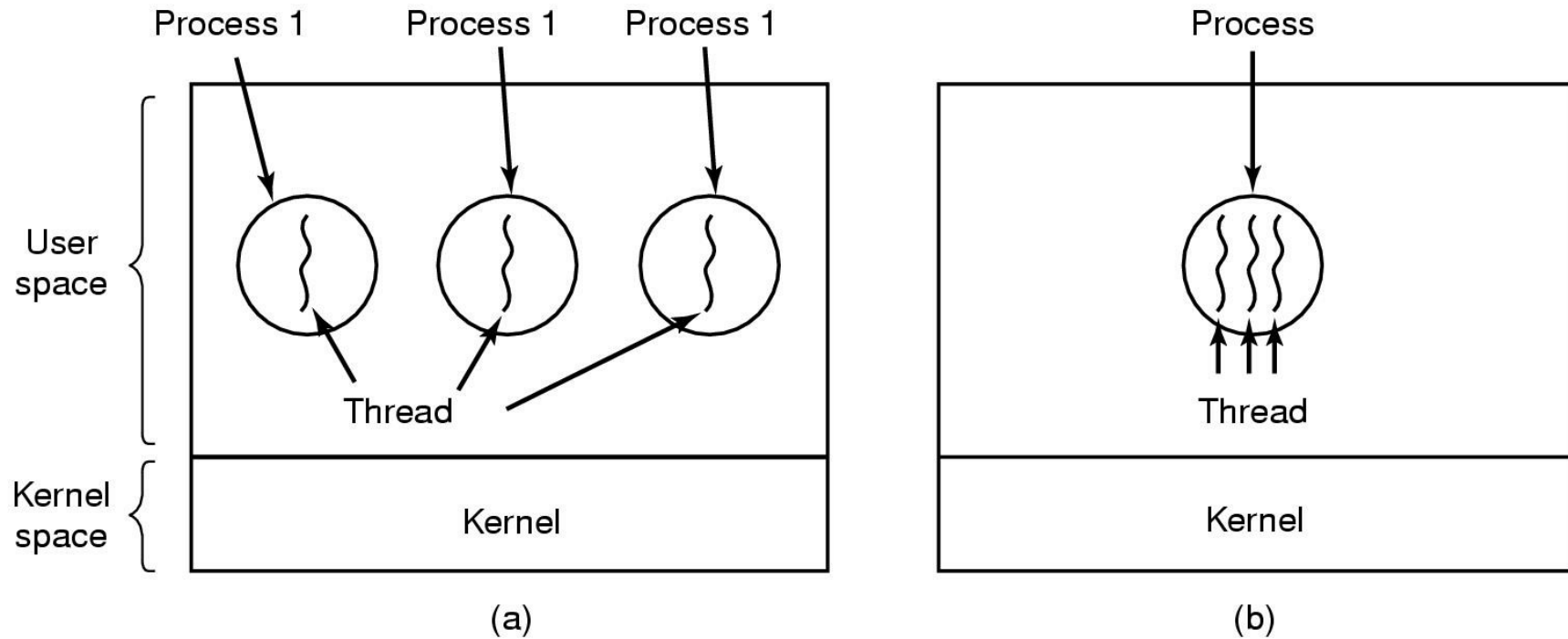
(a) Single blocked queue



(b) Multiple blocked queues

# Threads

## The Thread Model

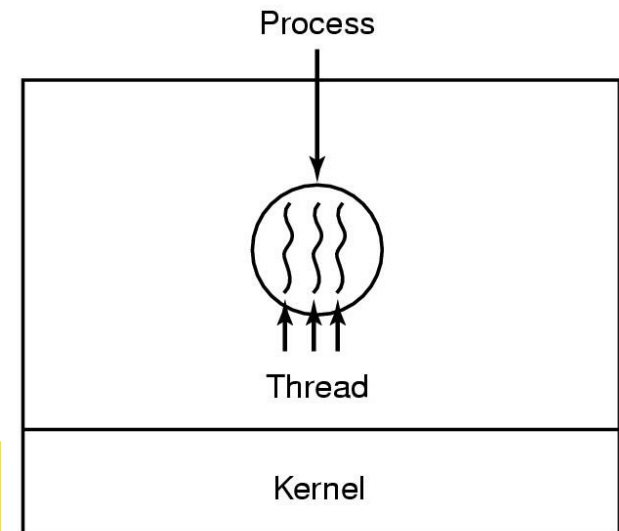


- (a) Three processes each with one thread
- (b) One process with three threads

# The Thread Model – Separating execution from the environment.

<b>Per process items</b>	<b>Per thread items</b>
Address space	Program counter
Global variables	Registers
Open files	Stack
Child processes	State
Pending alarms	
Signals and signal handlers	
Accounting information	

- Items shared by all threads in a process
- Items private to each thread



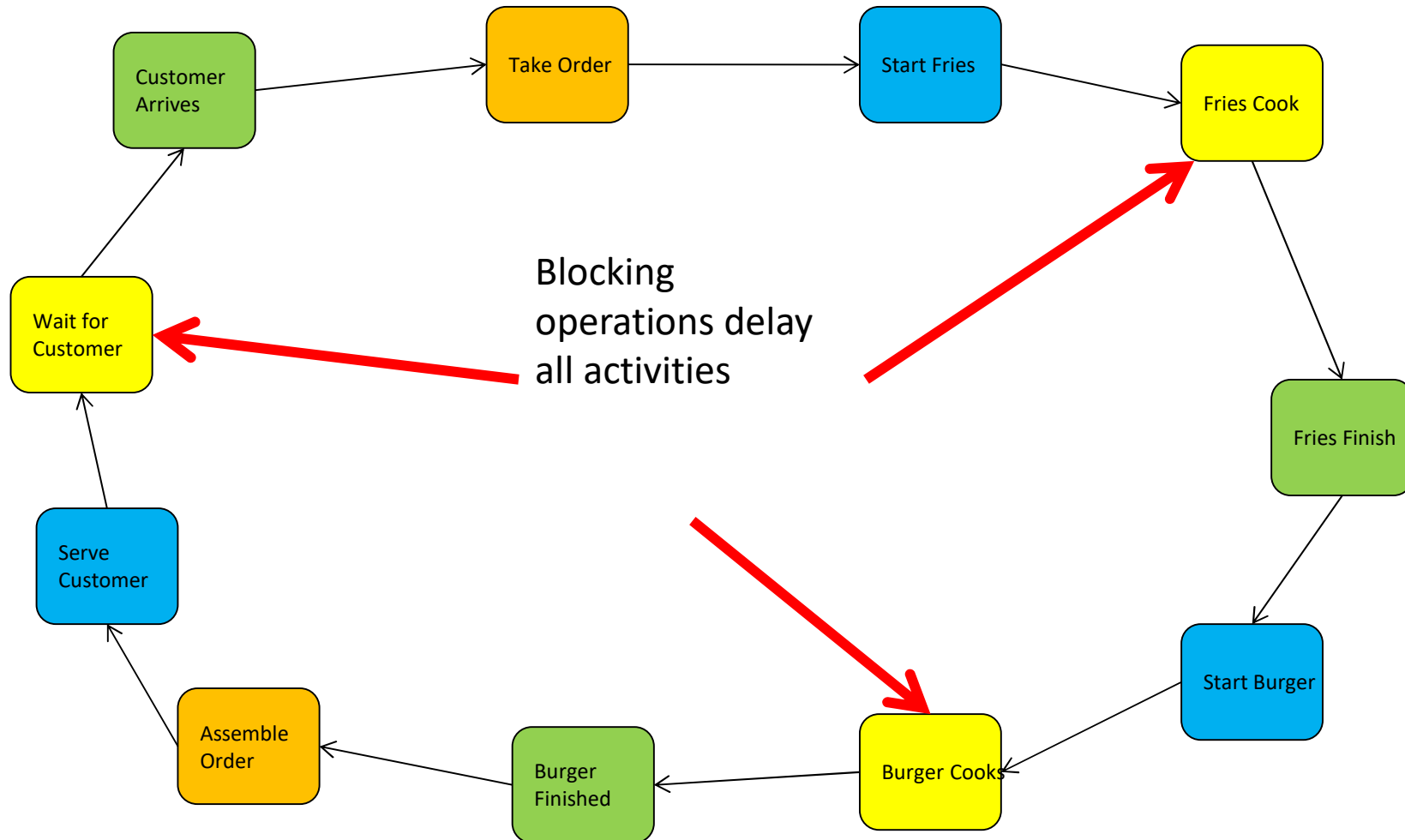
# Threads Analogy



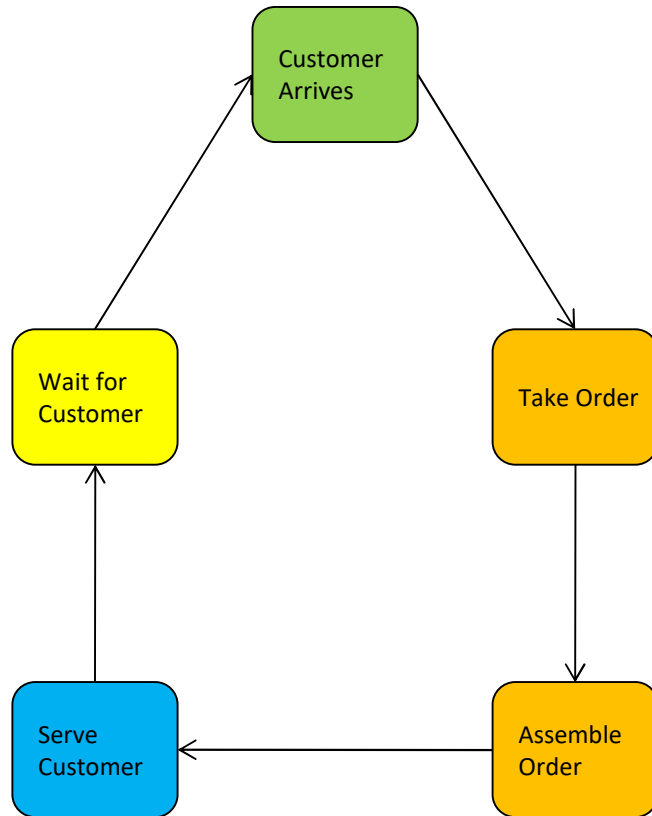
The Hamburger Restaurant



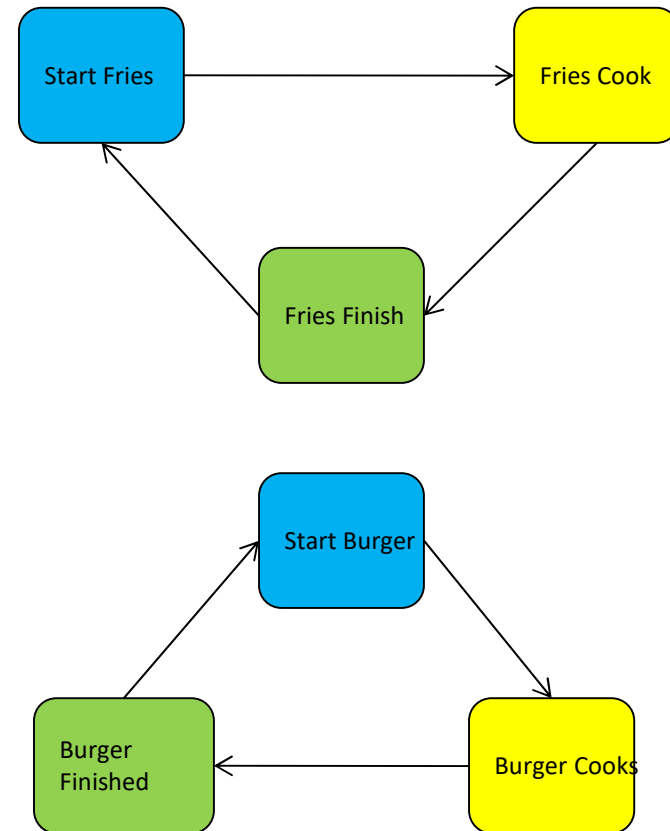
# Single-Threaded Restaurant



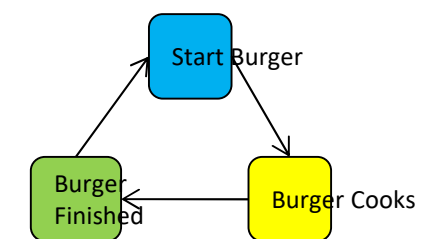
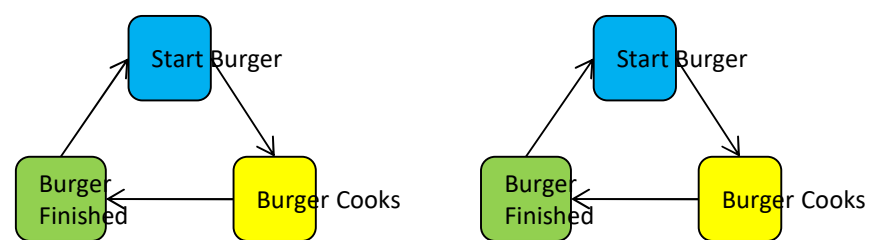
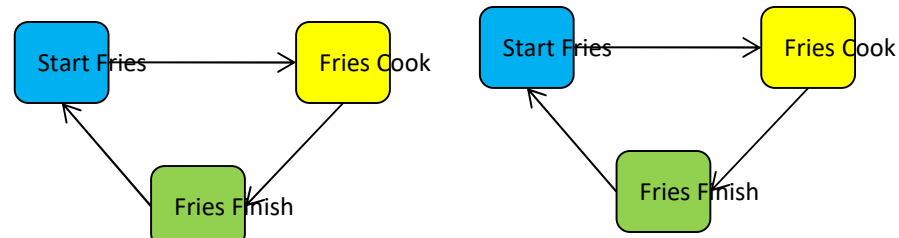
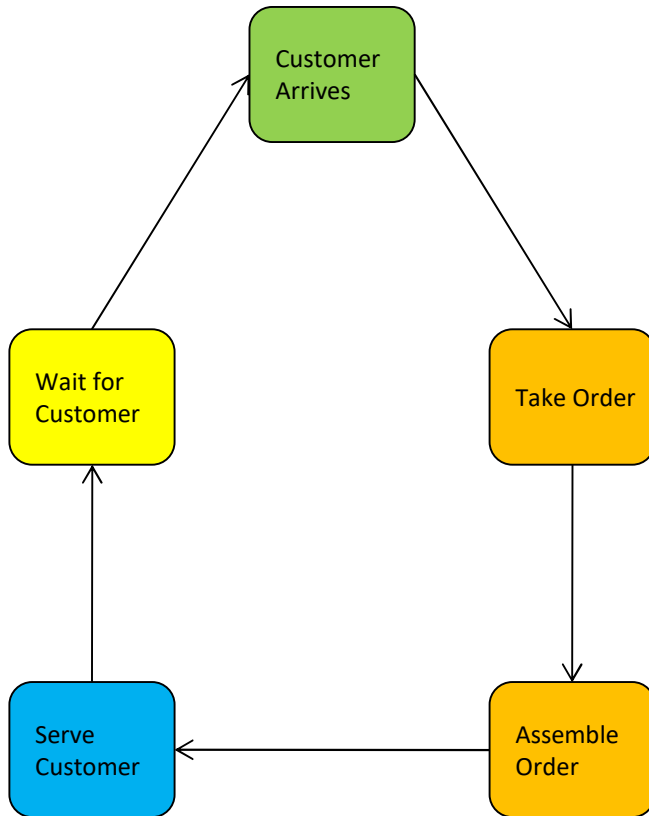
# Multithreaded Restaurant



Note: Ignoring synchronisation issues for now

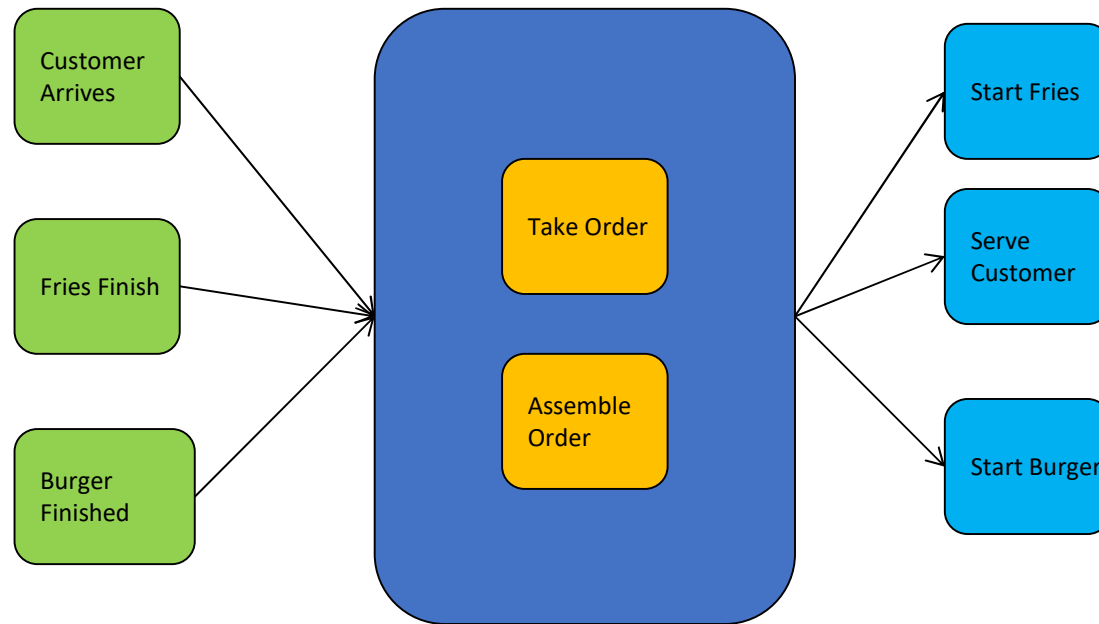


# Multithreaded Restaurant with more worker threads



# Finite-State Machine Model (Event-based model)

Input  
Events



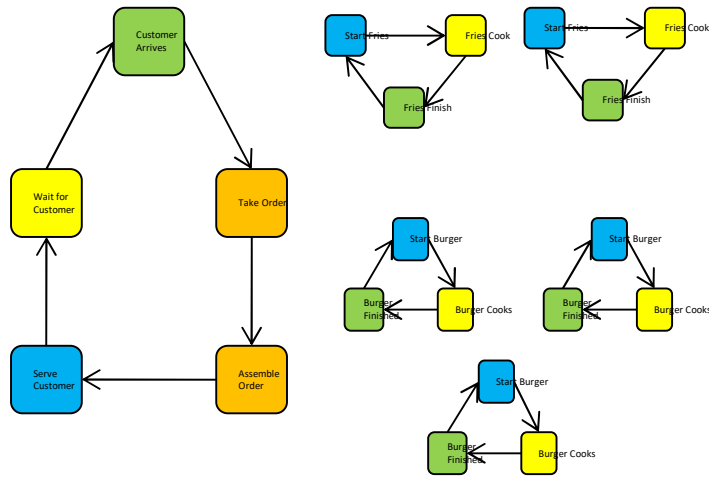
Non-Blocking  
actions



External  
activities

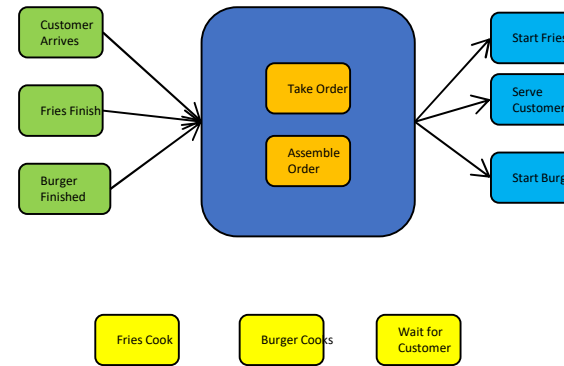
# Observation: Computation State

## Thread Model



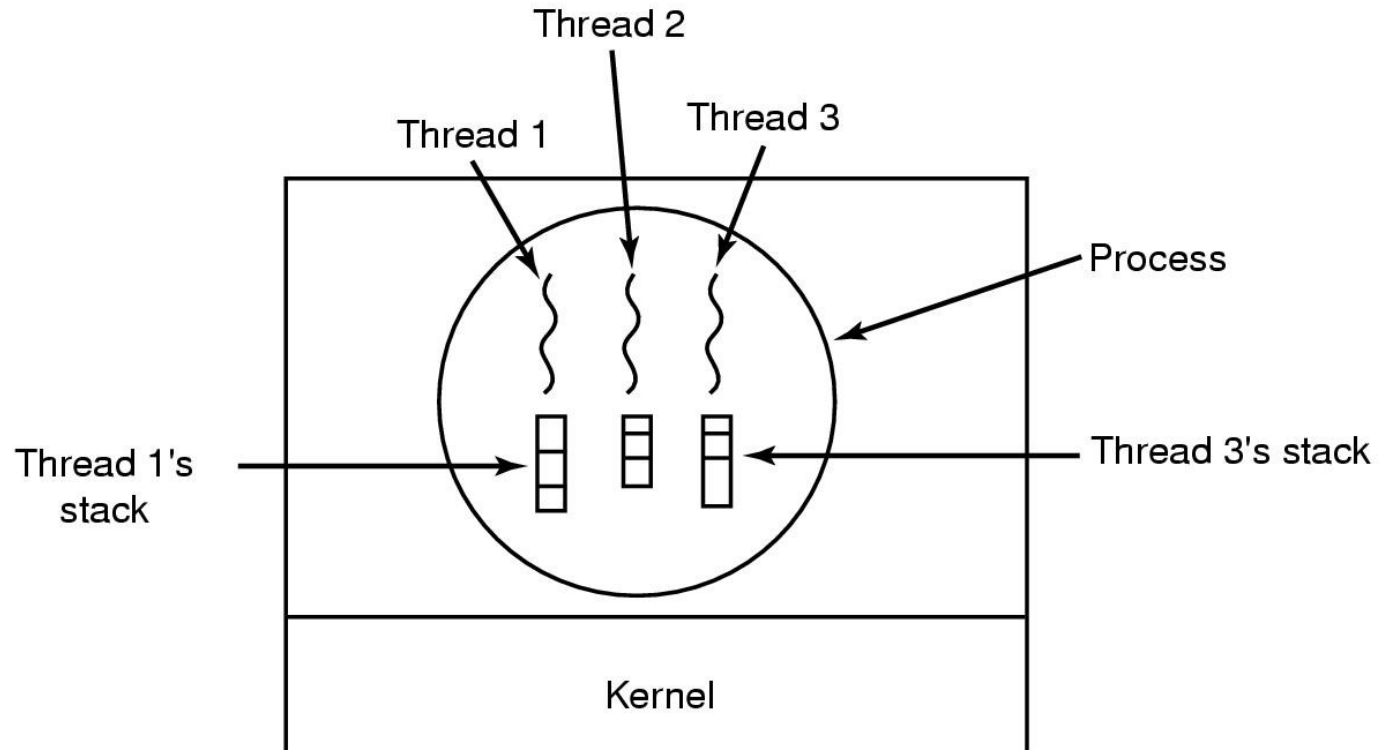
- State implicitly stored on the stack.

## Finite State (Event) Model



- State explicitly managed by program

# The Thread Model

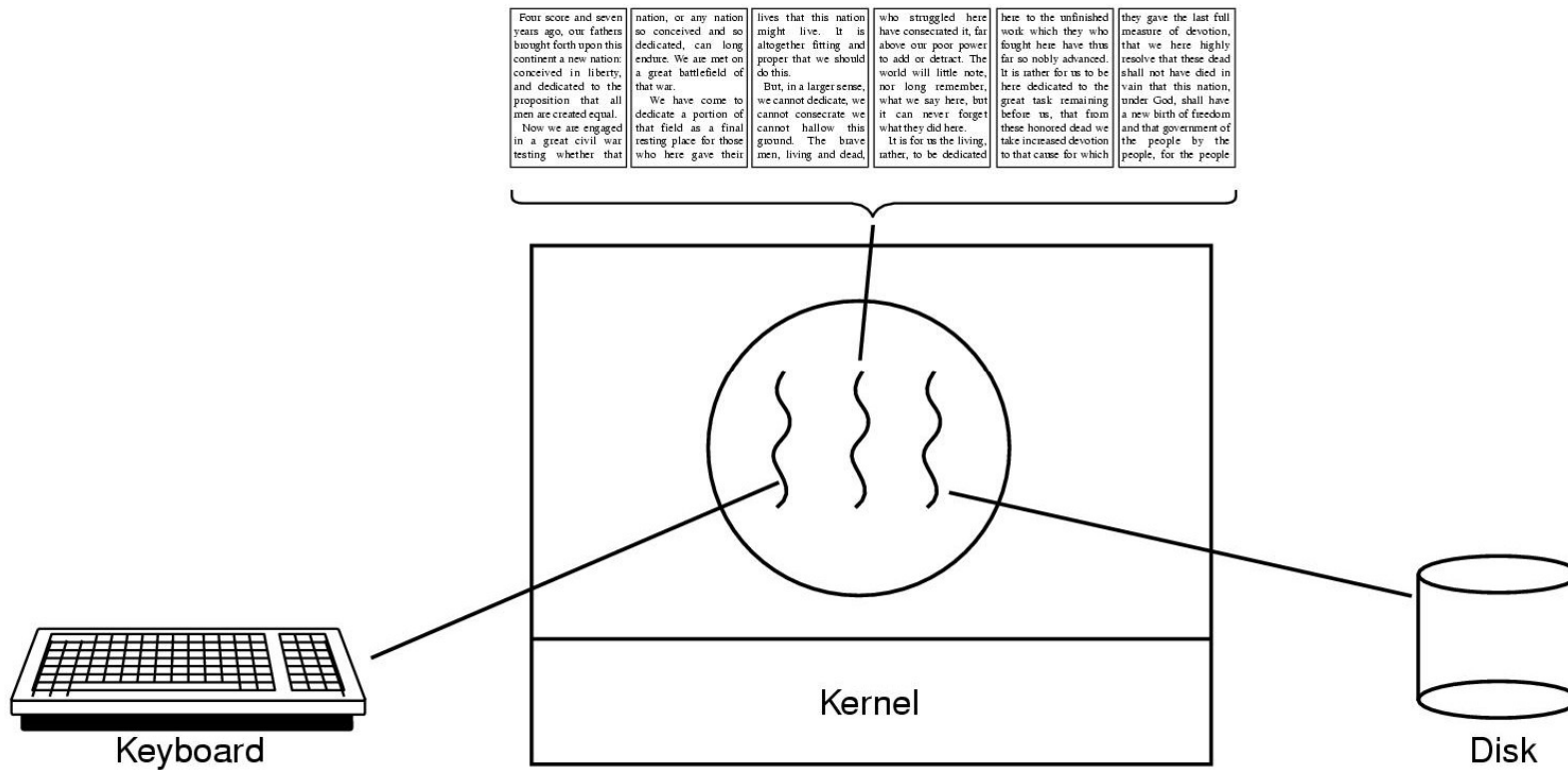


Each thread has its own stack

# Thread Model

- Local variables are per thread
  - Allocated on the stack
- Global variables are shared between all threads
  - Allocated in data section
  - Concurrency control is an issue
- Dynamically allocated memory (malloc) can be global or local
  - Program defined (the pointer can be global or local)

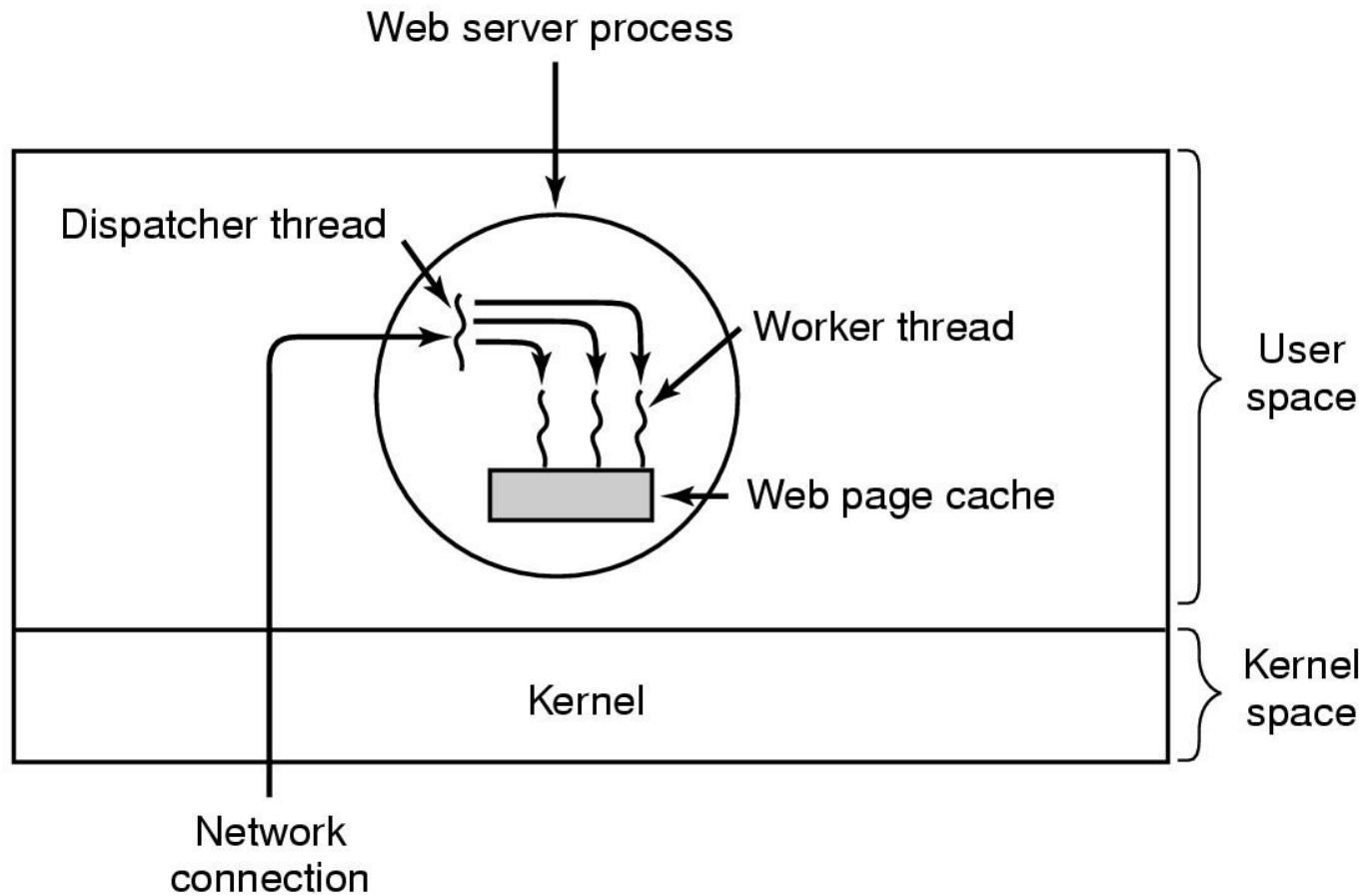
# Thread Usage



A word processor with three threads



# Thread Usage



A multithreaded Web server

# Thread Usage

```
while (TRUE) {  
    get_next_request(&buf);  
    handoff_work(&buf);  
}
```

(a)

```
while (TRUE) {  
    wait_for_work(&buf)  
    look_for_page_in_cache(&buf, &page);  
    if (page_not_in_cache(&page)  
        read_page_from_disk(&buf, &page);  
    return_page(&page);  
}
```

(b)

- Rough outline of code for previous slide
  - (a) Dispatcher thread
  - (b) Worker thread – can overlap disk I/O with execution of other threads

# Thread Usage

<b>Model</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>
Threads	Parallelism, blocking system calls
Single-threaded process	No parallelism, blocking system calls
Finite-state machine	Parallelism, nonblocking system calls, interrupts

Three ways to construct a server

# Summarising “Why Threads?”

- Simpler to program than a state machine
- Less resources are associated with them than a complete process
  - Cheaper to create and destroy
  - Shares resources (especially memory) between them
- Performance: Threads waiting for I/O can be overlapped with computing threads
  - Note if all threads are *compute bound*, then there is no performance improvement (on a uniprocessor)
- Threads can take advantage of the parallelism available on machines with more than one CPU (multiprocessor)