

CMSC 313

COMPUTER ORGANIZATION

&

ASSEMBLY LANGUAGE

PROGRAMMING

LECTURE 15,

TOPICS TODAY

- **Dynamic memory allocation**



DYNAMIC MEMORY ALLOCATION



Dynamic Memory

C allows us to allocate memory in which to store data during program execution.

Like Java, dynamically allocated memory is take from the heap.

Dynamic memory has two primary applications

Dynamically allocating an array

based on some user input or file data

better than guessing and defining the array size in our code since it can't be changed

Dynamically allocating structs to hold data in some predetermined arrangement (a data structure)

Allows an “infinite” amount of data to be stored

Dynamic Memory Functions

These functions are used to allocate and free dynamically allocated heap memory and are part of the standard C library. To use these functions, include `<stdlib.h>`.

`void *malloc( size_t nrBytes );`

Returns a pointer to dynamically allocated memory on the heap of size `nrBytes`, or `NULL` if the request cannot be satisfied. The memory is uninitialized.

`void *calloc( int nrElements, size_t nrBytes );`

Same as `malloc( )`, but the memory is initialized to zero
Note that the parameter list is different

`void *realloc( void *p, size_t nrBytes);`

Changes the size of the memory pointed to by `p` to `nrBytes`. The contents will be unchanged up to the minimum of the old and new size. If the new size is larger, the new space is uninitialized. Returns a pointer to the new memory, or `NULL` if request cannot be satisfied in which case `*p` is unchanged.

`void free( void *p )`

Deallocates the memory pointed to by `p` which must point to memory previously allocated by calling one of the functions above. Does nothing if `p` is `NULL`.

`void*` and `size_t`

The `void*` type is C's generic pointer. It may point to any kind of variable, but may not be dereferenced. Any other pointer type may be converted to `void*` and back again without loss of information. `void*` is often used as parameter types to, and return types from, library functions.

`size_t` is an unsigned integral type that should be used (rather than `int`) when expressing “the size of something” (e.g. an int, array, string, or struct). It too is often used as a parameter to, or return type from, library functions. By definition, `size_t` is the type that is returned from the `sizeof( )` operator.

malloc() for arrays

malloc() returns a **void pointer** to uninitialized memory.

Good programming practice is to cast the **void*** to the appropriate pointer type.

Note the use of **sizeof()** for portable coding.

As we've seen, the pointer can be used as an array name.

```
int *p = (int *)malloc( 42 * sizeof(int));  
for (k = 0; k < 42; k++)  
    p[ k ] = k;  
for (k = 0; k < 42; k++)  
    printf("%d\n", p[ k ];
```

Exercise: rewrite this code using **p** as a pointer rather than an array name

calloc() for arrays

`calloc( )` returns a `void` pointer to memory that is initialized to zero.

Note that the parameters to `calloc( )` are different than the parameters for `malloc( )`

```
int *p = (int *)calloc( 42,  sizeof(int));  
for (k = 0; k < 42; k++)  
    printf("%d\n", p[k]);
```

realloc()

`realloc( )` changes the size of a dynamically allocated memory previously created by `malloc( )` or `calloc( )` and returns a `void pointer` to the new memory.

The contents will be unchanged up to the minimum of the old and new size. If the new size is larger, the new space is uninitialized.

```
int *p = (int *)malloc( 42 * sizeof(int));  
for (k = 0; k < 42; k++)  
    p[ k ] = k;
```

```
p = (int *)realloc( p, 99 * sizeof(int));  
for (k = 0; k < 42; k++)  
    printf( "p[ %d ] = %d\n", k, p[k]);  
for (k = 0; k < 99; k++)  
    p[ k ] = k * 2;  
for (k = 0; k < 99; k++)  
    printf("p[ %d ] = %d\n", k, p[k]);
```

Testing the returned pointer

`malloc( )`, `calloc( )` and `realloc( )` all return `NULL` if unable to fulfill the requested memory allocation.

Good programming practice dictates that the pointer returned should be validated

```
char *cp = malloc( 22 * sizeof( char ) );

if (cp == NULL) {
    fprintf( stderr, "malloc failed\n");
    exit( -12 );
}
```

assert()

Since dynamic memory allocation shouldn't fail unless there is a serious programming mistake, such failures are often fatal.

Rather than using `if` statements to check the return values from `malloc( )`, we can use the `assert( )` macro.

To use `assert( )`, you must `#include <assert.h>`

```
char *cp = malloc( 22 * sizeof( char ) );  
assert( cp != NULL );
```

How assert() works

The parameter to `assert` is any Boolean expression

```
assert( expression );
```

If the Boolean expression is `true`, nothing happens and execution continues on the next line

If the Boolean expression is `false`, a message is output to `stderr` and your program terminates

The message includes the name of the .c file and the line number of the `assert( )` that failed

`assert( )` may be disabled with the preprocessor directive `#define NDEBUG`

`assert( )` may be used for any condition including

Opening files

Function parameter checking (preconditions)

free ()

`free ( )` is used to return dynamically allocated memory back to the heap to be reused by later calls to `malloc ( )`, `calloc ( )` or `realloc ( )`

The parameter to `free ( )` must be a pointer previously returned by one of `malloc ( )`, `calloc ( )` or `realloc ( )`

Freeing a `NULL` pointer has no effect

Failure to free memory is known as a “memory leak” and may lead to program crash when no more heap memory is available

```
int *p = (int *) calloc(42, sizeof(int));  
  
/* code that uses p */  
free( p );
```

Dynamic Memory for structs

In JAVA

```
public class Person
{
    public int age;
    public double gpa;
}

// memory allocation
Person bob = new Person( );
bob.age = 42;
bob.gpa = 3.5;

// bob is eventually freed
// by garbage collector
```

In C

```
typedef struct person
{
    int age;
    double gpa;
} PERSON ;

/* memory allocation */
PERSON *pbob
    = (PERSON *)malloc(sizeof(PERSON));
pbob->age = 42;
pbob->gpa = 3.5;
...

/* explicitly freeing the memory */
free( pbob );
```

Dynamic Teammates

```
typedef struct player
{
    char name[20];
    struct player *teammate;
} PLAYER;

PLAYER *getPlayer( )
{
    char *name = askUserForPlayerName( );
    PLAYER *p = (PLAYER *)malloc(sizeof(PLAYER));
    strncpy( p->name, name, 20 );
    p->teammate = NULL;
    return p;
}
```

Dynamic Teammates (2)

```
int main ( ) {
    int nrPlayers, count = 0;
    PLAYER *pPlayer, *pTeam = NULL;
    nrPlayers = askUserForNumberOfPlayers( );
    while (count < nrPlayers) {
        pPlayer = getPlayer( );
        pPlayer->teammate = pTeam;
        pTeam = pPlayer;
        ++count;
    }
    /* do other stuff with the PLAYERS */

    return 0;
}
```

Dynamic Arrays

As we noted, arrays cannot be returned from functions.

However, pointers to dynamically allocated arrays may be returned.

```
char *getCharArray( int size )
{
    char *cp = (char *)malloc( size * sizeof(char));
    assert( cp != NULL);

    return cp;
}
```

Dynamic 2-D arrays

There are now three ways to define a 2-D array, depending on just how dynamic you want them to be.

```
int board[ 8 ] [ 8 ];
```

An 8 x 8 2-d array of int... Not dynamic at all

```
int *board[ 8 ];
```

An array of 8 pointers to int. Each pointer represents a row whose size is be dynamically allocated.

```
int **board;
```

A pointer to a pointer of ints. Both the number of rows and the size of each row are dynamically allocated.

NEXT TIME

- **Perils & Pitfalls in Dynamic Memory Allocation**
- **C Function Calls & Assembly Language**