Compiler Design

Lecture 17: Register allocation

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Graph Colouring Register Allocation (EaC§13)

Main idea

1. Build an interference graph (a.k.a. “conflict” graph)
    - Nodes = variables (virtual registers)
    - Edges = overlapping live ranges
2. Find a k-colouring of the graph
    - Colours = architectural registers

Interference graph

What is an interference graph? (also called *conflict* graph)

- Two values interfer if there exists a point in the program where both are simultaneously live
- If `x` and `u` interfer, they cannot occupy the same register

To compute interferences, we must know where values are live

- $\Rightarrow$ result of liveness analysis

Interference graph G

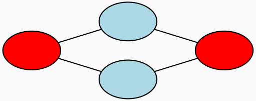
- Nodes in G represents variables (or virtual registers)
- Edges in G represents interference between two variables (or virtual registers)

k-colouring of conflict graph

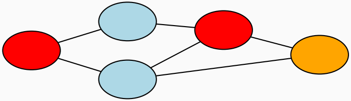
k-colourable graph

A graph G is *k-colourable* iff the nodes can be labelled (or colored) such that no edge in G connects two nodes with the same label (or color).

Examples:



2-colourable



3-colourable

If we can find a k-colouring of the interference graph, then all the nodes (variables) with the same colour can share the same architectural register, assuming at least k registers available.

Back to the main idea

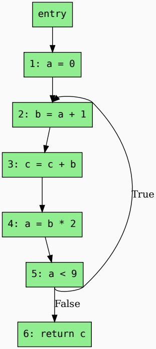
1. Build an interference graph
2. Find a k-colouring of the graph

1. Building interference graph

Pseudo-assembly:

```
    a = 0
L1: b = a + 1
    c = c + b
    a = b*2
    if (a<9) goto L1
    return c
```

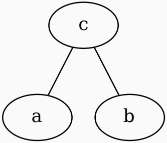
Control flow graph:


entry
1: a = 0
2: b = a + 1
3: c = c + b
4: a = b * 2
5: a < 9
True
False
6: return c

Liveness:

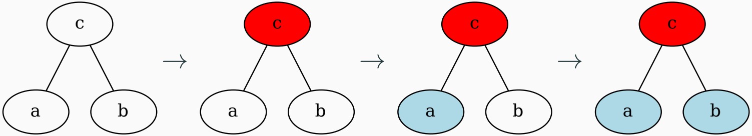
node	out	in
6		c
5	ac	ac
4	ac	bc
3	bc	bc
2	bc	ac
1	ac	c

Interference graph:



2. Graph colouring and register mapping

Graph colouring:



Virtual to architectural registers

Possible mapping:

- a → `$t0`
- b → `$t0`
- c → `$t1`

(pseudo-)assembly final code:

```
    $t0 = 0
L1: $t0 = $t0 + 1
    $t1 = $t1 + $t0
    $t0 = $t0*2
    if ($t0<9) goto L1
    return $t1
```

Job done! Or is it?

Challenges

- Graph colouring is NP-complete
    - Complexity is exponential
    - We don’t like such algorithms in our compilers!
- It might not be possible to colour a graph with k colours.
    - Need alternative strategy in these cases

Heuristic for Graph Colouring

Observations

Suppose we have k architectural registers (or k colours):

- Any vertex n that has fewer than k neighbours in the interference graph ($degree(n) < k$) can always be coloured!
- In such case, pick any colour not used by its neighbours — there must be one!

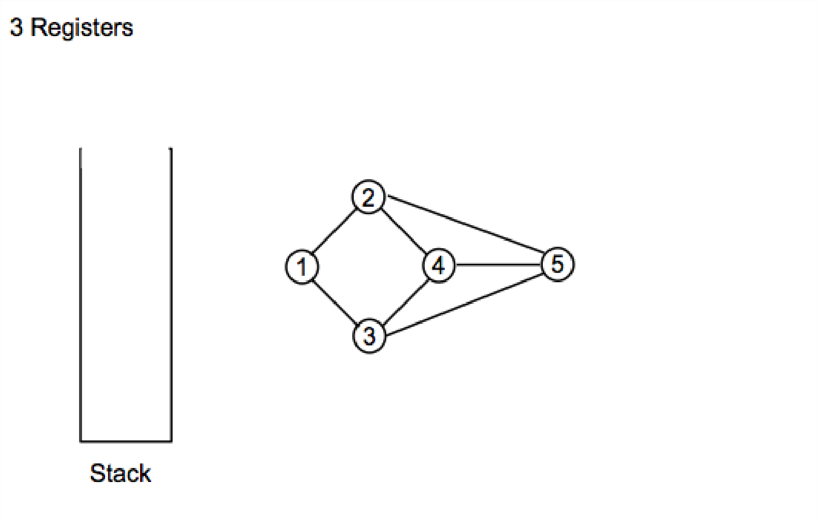
Sketch of an algorithm

- Pick any vertex n such that $degree(n) < k$ and put it on a stack
- Remove that vertex n and all connected edges from the graph
    - This may make some new nodes have fewer than k neighbours
- In the end, if some vertex n still has k or more neighbours, then spill the variable associated with n to memory
- Otherwise successively pop vertices off the stack and colour them in the lowest colour not used by some neighbour

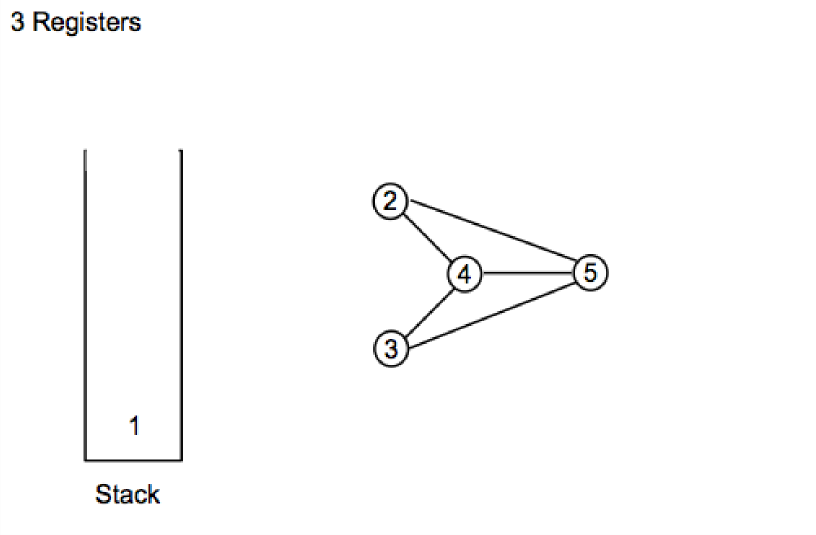
Chaitin's Algorithm (1982!)

1. While ∃ vertices with $< k$ neighbours in G
   - Pick any vertex n such that $degree(n) < k$ and put it on a stack
   - Remove that vertex and all connected edges from G
   - This will lower the degree of n's neighbours
2. If G is non-empty (all vertices have k or more neighbours) then:
   - Pick a vertex n (using some heuristic) and spill the variable associated with n
   - Remove vertex n from G, along with all connected edges
   - If this causes some vertex in G to have fewer than k neighbours, then go to step 1; otherwise, repeat step 2
3. Successively pop vertices off the stack and colour them in a colour not used by the neighbours

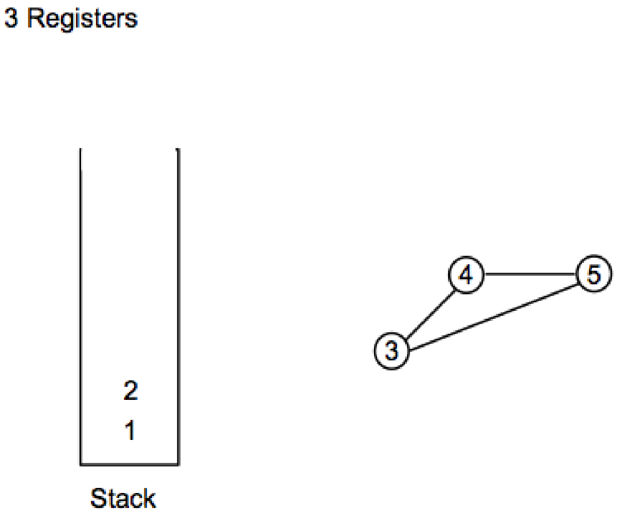
Example with 3 registers


3 Registers
Stack
1
2
3
4
5

Example with 3 registers


3 Registers
1
Stack
2
4
5
3

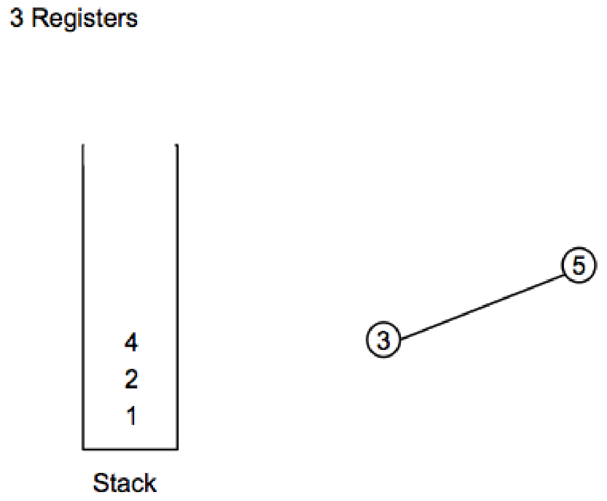
Example with 3 registers



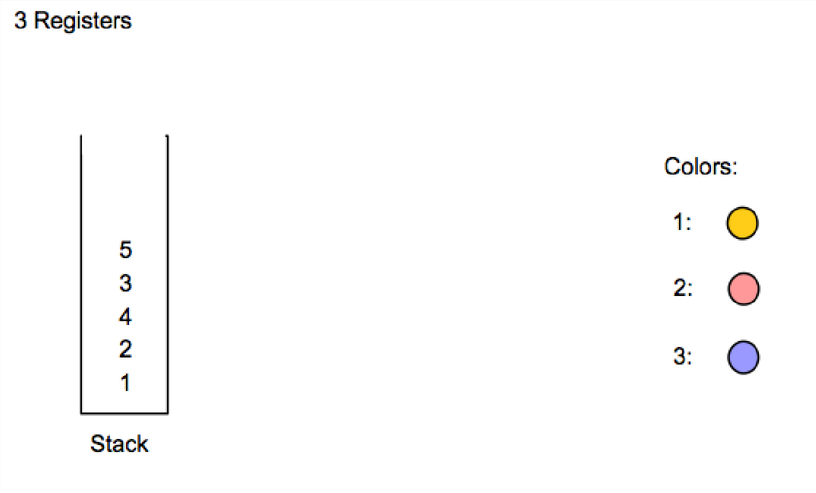
3 Registers

2
1
Stack
4
5
3

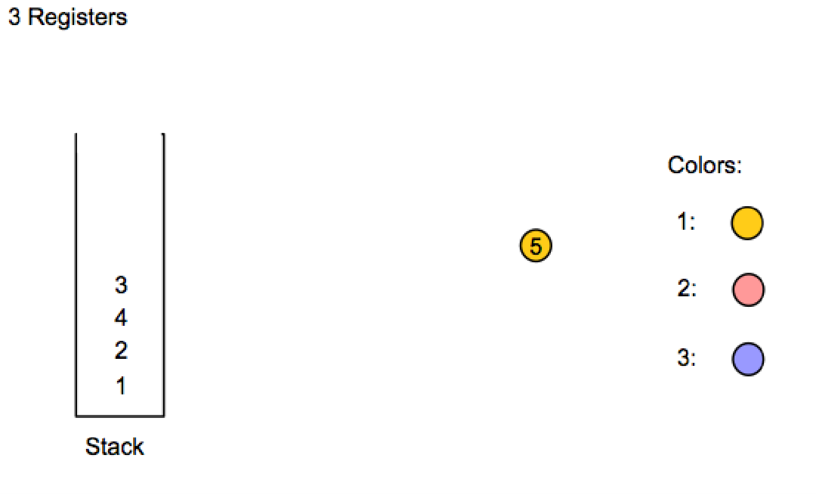
Example with 3 registers


3 Registers
4
2
1
Stack
3
5

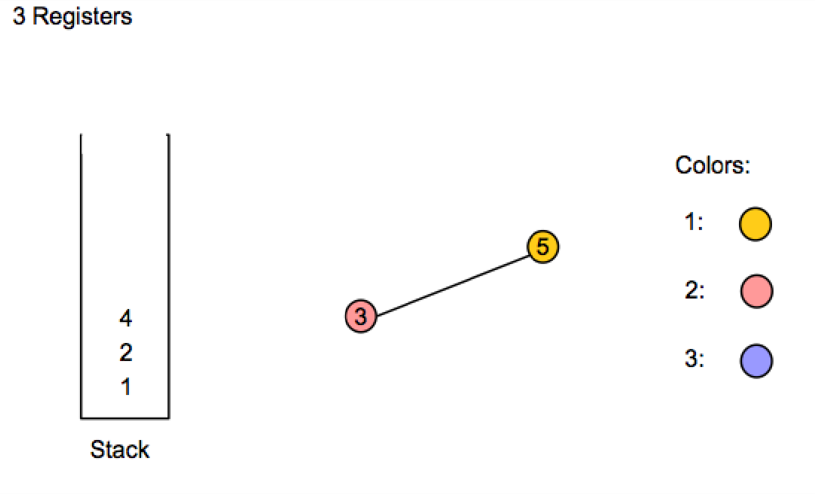
Example with 3 registers


3 Registers
5
3
4
2
1
Stack
Colors:
1: 🟡
2: 🔴
3: 🔵

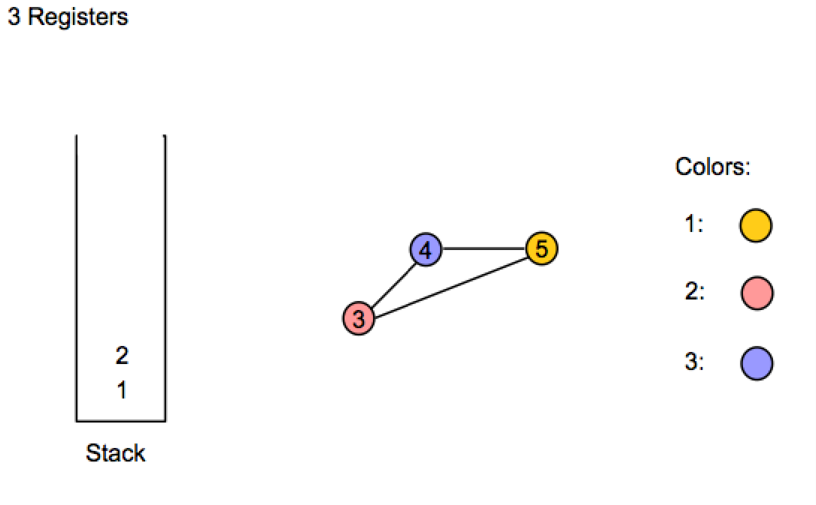
Example with 3 registers


3 Registers
3
4
2
1
Stack
5
Colors:
1:
2:
3:

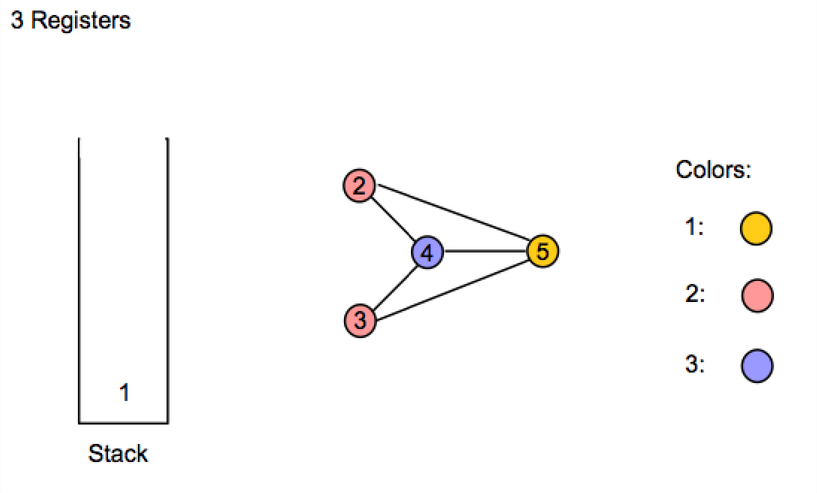
Example with 3 registers


3 Registers
4
2
1
Stack
3
5
Colors:
1:
2:
3:

Example with 3 registers


3 Registers
2
1
Stack
4
5
3
Colors:
1:
2:
3:

Example with 3 registers


3 Registers
1
Stack
2
4
5
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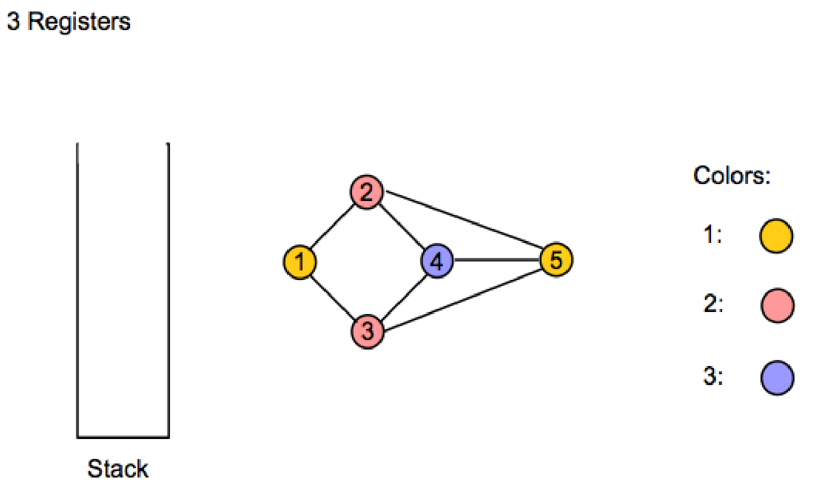
Colors:
1:
2:
3:

Example with 3 registers


3 Registers
Stack
2
1
4
5
3
Colors:
1:
2:
3:

Register Spilling

Need for register spilling

If it is not possible to find a k-colouring of the graph, we need to spill some variables in memory.

The idea is to map some variable to memory rather to register

- this is what our naive register allocator is doing (for all variables!)

(Other approaches are also possible (*e.g.* splitting live ranges) but this is the subject of a compiler optimization course.)

Choice of variable to spill

Choosing which variable to spill is critical for performance:

- extra load instructions for every use of the variable
- extra store instructions for every def of the variable.

The compiler should use a cost-benefit analysis to decide which variable to spill depending on:

- how often the variable is used/defined?
- how many other variables interfer with the variable?
- is the variable used in a loop?

For your project, simply pick the variable with highest connectivity as it is likely to increase the chances that the graph becomes k-colourable.

Spilling a variable requires a register

Original code (virtual registers):

```
...
add v0, v1, v2
...
```

After register alloc. (v1 spilled):

```
...
lw  $t0, -20($fp)
add $t3, $t0,$t2
...
```

We have a bit of a & situation: spilling **v1** uses a register!

However, the live range of the register used for spilling is very short!

⇒ it is not so bad.

source: ShadowThrust at Deviant Art, CC BY-SA 3.0

Two possible solutions:

- **Naive approach**: reserve a set of registers just for spilling purpose (*e.g.* {`$t0`}) and never use them for anything else
  - maximum number of such registers needed = maximum number of registers an instruction can use/def (three for MIPS)

- **Better approach**: every time a variable needs to be spilled, stop the register allocation process, and replace all the occurences of the spilled variable with a load/store instruction that uses a virtual register. Then re-run everything:
  - liveness analysis
  - inteference graph construction
  - register allocation

  Worst case scenario: $O(n^2)$

Linear Scan

Linear Scan

Uses notion of live interval.

Live range (recap):

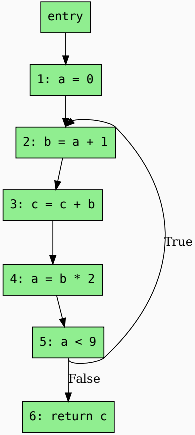
- the set of all program instructions where the variable is live.

Live interval:

- assumes program represented as a list of instructions
- smallest interval (from/to) of all program instructions that contains all the variable's live ranges
- this is an approximation of live range information which can be computed much faster.

Live intervals vs ranges

Control flow graph:


entry
1: a = 0
2: b = a + 1
3: c = c + b
4: a = b * 2
5: a < 9
True
False
6: return c

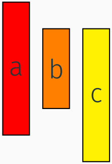
Live ranges:

$$a = \{1 \to 2; 4 \to 5; 5 \to 2\}$$

$$b = \{2 \to 3; 3 \to 4\}$$

$$c = \{1 \to 2; 2 \to 3; 3 \to 4; 4 \to 5; 5 \to 6; 5 \to 2\}$$

```
1:   a = 0
2:   b = a + 1
3:   c = c + b
4:   a = b*2
5:   if (a<9) goto 2
6:   return c
```



Live intervals:

$$a = [1; 5]$$

$$b = [2; 4]$$

$$c = [2; 6]$$

Approximates live ranges.

Computing live ranges:

- 👎 liveness analysis is time-consumming (fixed point algorithm)
- 👍 precise information

Computing live intervals:

- 👍 linear complexity
- 👎 approximates live ranges

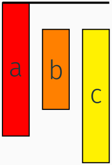
Allocation with Linear Scan and Live Intervals

Let's do register allocation with linear scan and live intervals.

Assuming three architectural registers:

- free registers: {$t0 $t1 $t2 }
- assigned registers: a=$t0 b=$t1 c=$t2

```
    a = 0
L1: b = a + 1
    c = c + b
    a = b*2
    if (a<9) goto L1
    return c
```



```
    $t0 = 0
L1: $t1 = $t0 + 1
    $t2 = $t2 + $t1
    $t0 = $t1*2
    if ($t0<9) goto L1
    return $t2
```

We are using three registers! Fine in this case, but can lead to spilling if there is a lot of register pressure.

Summary

Graph coloring:

- computes live ranges with liveness-flow analysis
- use graph colouring to assign registers
- produces efficient code but at the cost of compilation time

Linear Scan:

- uses live intervals
- assigns registers with a simple linear traversal of the code
- fast compile-time (used in JIT compiler!) but might produce less efficient code
  (previous example needs 3 registers vs. 2 with graph colouring)

Next lecture

- Instruction selection