

**Due Date:** Thursday, Dec 8, 11:59pm (Late days may be used.)

This project can be done in groups of 2 students.

## 1 Introduction

This assignment introduces you to the principles of internetwork communication using the HTTP and TCP protocols, which form two of the most widely used protocols in today's Internet. In addition, the assignment will give you some insights into how to construct web services that are based on the popular REST [3, 4] architectural style, and show an example of how to implement a multi-threaded server.

## 2 Functionality

In this part of the assignment, you will implement a basic HTTP web server that provides access to web services and files. The web server should implement persistent connections as per the HTTP/1.1 [2] protocol.

### 2.1 System Status Web Service

The system status web service is a basic HTTP web service that publishes a Linux system's status as reported by the kernel via the /proc file system. The web service must provide this information in JSON [1] format.

The web service shall respond to requests for at least the following resources:

Service URL	Example JSON Output	Based On
/loadavg	<pre>{"total_threads": "174", "loadavg": ["0.00", "0.00", "0.03"], "running_threads": "1"}</pre>	/proc/loadavg
/meminfo	<pre>{"SwapTotal": "5799928", "SwapFree": "5793240", "MemFree": "2434304", ... }</pre>	/proc/meminfo

In addition, you must support query arguments as per RFC 2616, Section 3.2.2. You must support a 'callback' argument. If given, you must return proper syntax for a JavaScript function call in which the value of the field appears as function name and the JSON object appears as argument. You should check that the argument provided to the 'callback' field consists of only alphanumeric characters, underscore (\_), and periods (.). You must ignore all additional argument=value pairs. For example, a request to

/loadavg?callback=jsonp1258749550540&\_=1258749554624

would return `jsonp1258749550540({"total_threads": "174", "loadavg": ["0.00", "0.00", "0.03"], "running_threads": "1"})`.

(The second field `_` is ignored.)

Note that the order of the attributes within the returned JSON object (e.g., `SwapTotal`, `SwapFree`, etc.) is arbitrary. You can see a demo at <http://cs3214.cs.vt.edu:9011/loadavg> and <http://cs3214.cs.vt.edu:9011/meminfo>.

You should return appropriate error codes for requests to URLs you do not support.

## 2.2 Serving Files

Your web server should, like a traditional web server, support serving files from a directory (the 'root') in the server's file system. These files should appear under the `/files` URL. For instance, if the URL `/files/widget/plugins/jqplot.barRenderer.js` is visited, and the root directory is set to the parent directory (`widget`), the content of the file `widget/plugins/jqplot.barRenderer.js` should be served. You should return appropriate content type headers, based on the served file's suffix. Support at least `.html`, `.js`, and `.css` files; see `/etc/mime.types` for a complete list.

Make sure that you do not accidentally expose other files by ensuring that the request url does not contain `..`, such as `/files/../../../../../../../../etc/passwd`.

## 2.3 Synthetic Load Requests

A system's load average as well as its physical memory use (and the resulting statistics) are influenced by the actions and resource needs of the processes running on it. You should implement a set of paths that serve as entry points for synthetic load requests. When visited, your web server should induce a synthetic load that causes a change in a system's CPU or memory load (which would then be reflected in the data reported by the system status service.) You should implement the following synthetic load requests:

1. `/runloop` When this URL is visited, start a thread or process that spins (loops) for 15 seconds. This loop should be started in parallel, without delaying the response to this request. The expected result will be a temporary increase in the load average. Recall that the load average is a weighted average over samples that represent the number of ready or running threads.
2. `/allocanon` method should force the system to allocate physical memory devoted to anonymous virtual memory. "Anonymous" virtual memory is the memory backing a process's heap or areas mapped via `mmap`'s `MAP_ANONYMOUS` feature. It's called anonymous because it is not related to a known file on disk. Each request should result in the allocation of 64MB. If a system still has free physical memory, this should reduce the amount of physical memory by this much, which should be

displayed in the memory statistics. If physical memory is exhausted, the necessary physical memory will come from the eviction of pages holding either cached file data or anonymous memory.

Keep in mind that Linux, like all modern operating systems, allocates physical memory on demand. Use `mmap()` to design a function that has the desired effect. You should store a list of the blocks of memory you've allocated.

3. `/freeanon` method should force the system to deallocate a chunk of physical memory. To that end, you should `munmap()` the last block of memory you've allocated as a result of a visit to `/allocanon`.

If all pages of the virtual memory block are still present in physical memory at that time, the expected result is an increase in the amount of available physical memory.

All requests should respond with a short HTML message describing the outcome of the operation. This part of the project is intended to allow for demoing the sysstat web service, and is also intended to give you a deeper understanding of the concepts of CPU and memory load in a system using virtual memory.

## 2.4 Multiple Client Support

For all of the above services, your implementation should support multiple clients simultaneously. It must be able to accept new clients and process HTTP requests even while HTTP transactions with already accepted clients are still in progress. You should use a single-process, multiple-threads approach.<sup>1</sup> It is up to you whether you spawn new threads for every client, or use a thread pool. You may modify or reuse your thread pool implementation from project 5.

To test that your implementation supports multiple clients correctly, we will connect to your server, then delay the sending of the HTTP request. While your server has accepted one client and is waiting for the first HTTP request by that client, it must be ready to accept and serve additional clients. Your server may impose a reasonable limit on the number of clients it simultaneously serves in this way.

## 2.5 Robustness

Network servers are designed for long running use. As such, they must be programmed in a manner that is robust, even when individual clients send ill-formed requests, crash, delay responses, or violate the HTTP protocol specification in other ways. *No error incurred while handling one client's request should impede your server's ability to accept and handle future clients.*

---

<sup>1</sup>A multi-process approach is not acceptable. If you wish to explore an event-based approach, consult with me first.

## 2.6 Protocol Independence

The Internet is currently undergoing a transition from IPv4 to IPv6. This transition is spurred by the impending exhaustion of the IPv4 address space as well as by political mandates.

Since IPv4 addresses can only be used to communicate between IPv4-enabled applications, and since IPv6 addresses can only be used to communicate between IPv6-enabled applications, applications need to be designed to support both protocols and addresses, using whichever is appropriate for a particular connection. For a TCP/UDP server, this requires to accept connections both via IPv6 as well as via IPv4, depending on which versions are enabled on a particular system. For a TCP/UDP client, this requires to identify the addresses at which a particular server can be reached, and try them in order. Typically, if a server is reachable via both IPv4 and IPv6, the IPv6 address is tried first, then a fallback onto the IPv4 address is performed.

Ensuring protocol independence requires avoiding any dependence on a specific protocol in your code. Fortunately, the socket API was designed to support multiple protocols from the beginning as its designers foresaw that protocols and addressing mechanisms would evolve. For instance, the `bind()` and `connect()` calls refer to the addresses passed using the type `struct sockaddr *` which is an opaque type that could refer to either a IPv4 or IPv6 address.

To implement protocol independence, you need to avoid any dependence on a particular address family. Accordingly, you should use the `getaddrinfo(3)` or `getnameinfo(3)` functions to translate from symbolic names to addresses and vice versa and you should avoid the outdated functions `gethostbyname(3)`, `getaddrbyname(3)`, or `inet_ntoa(3)` or `inet_ntop(3)`.

An excellent tutorial on how to write protocol independent network code is given in this resource: <http://www.akkadia.org/drepper/userapi-ipv6.html> The information given in this guide replaces the (unfortunately) out of date chapter in our textbook.

Ensuring that your server can accept both IPv4 and IPv6 clients can be implemented using two separate sockets, one bound to either family. Two separate threads can then be devoted to these sockets to accept clients that connect using either of the two protocol families.

However, the Linux kernel provides a convenience feature that provides a simpler facility for accepting both IPv6 and IPv4 clients. This so-called dual-bind feature allows a socket bound to an IPv6 socket to accept IPv4 clients. Linux activates this feature if `/proc/sys/net/ipv6/bindv6only` contains 0. You may assume in your code that dual-bind is turned on.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup>I should point out, however, that this will make your code Linux-specific; truly portable socket code will need to resort to handling accepts on multiple sockets.

## 2.7 Relay Server

The use of network-address translation (NAT) that hides individual machines or even entire networks behind firewalls has grown significantly in the past years. This trend is motivated both by security concerns and by the aforementioned shortage of routable IPv4 addresses. Understanding the implications of NAT is a crucial skill for application developers for at least the foreseeable future.

Many, if not most, NAT setups allow connections to be initiated only from the inside of the firewall to the outside. The NAT device is typically the default gateway for the hosts behind the firewall, thus allowing it to monitor TCP connection requests to outside servers that pass through the gateway. The NAT device can then establish and keep up-to-date the necessary data structures to translate the addresses for this connection. Establishing the correct translation for incoming connections is more difficult: if a TCP connection request arrives on the public-facing interface of the NAT device, then the NAT device would need to know to which server on the inside to forward the request. This information needs to be provided by an administrator of the NAT device, making this approach unsuitable when administrative access is not granted.

A commonly used technique to circumvent this restriction is the use of relay servers. In this technique, a server located behind a firewall creates a TCP connection to a relay server, which is running on a machine that has a routable IP address. Clients then connect to the relay server, which forwards requests to the actual server and relays responses from the server to the clients.

You should implement the ability to provide an HTTP/1.1 service through a relay server. When run in relay server mode, your web service should initiate a TCP connection to the relay server, and then send a single line terminated by `\r\n` with a unique identifier, such as your SLO login or group number, which must consist of one or more alphanumeric characters. Subsequently, it should respond to HTTP/1.1 requests on that connection. The relay server will create a URL to which clients can connect, which includes that identifier as a prefix.

A relay server is running on `cs3214.cs.vt.edu`. Port 9050 is accepting connections from web services wishing to make use of the relay service. It accepts connections from HTTP clients on port 9051. Visit `http://cs3214.cs.vt.edu:9051/` to see a status page. If a web service connects and send 'prefix' as the first line of data in that connection, requests to `http://cs3214.cs.vt.edu:9051/prefix/loadavg` will be forwarded to the web service as requests for `/loadavg` (after stripping the prefix).

Note that all connections from `rlogin.cs.vt.edu` machines will appear as going to a port on machine `hn1.cs.vt.edu`, which is the DNS name of the public-facing interface of our NAT gateway behind which the machines of the `rlogin` cluster are located.

Like most NAT gateways, the gateway at `rlogin.cs.vt.edu` times out inactive connections after a set period. To ensure continuous reachability, your service should periodically reconnect if no request was processed within the time out interval (currently 300 seconds).

## 2.8 Widgets

Widgets are HTML elements that, when inserted into HTML documents, function as placeholders for enhanced information or functionality. This functionality is usually provided by supporting JavaScript code that interprets the widgets and their parameters. I have designed two small widgets that can interact with the web service you'll create. These widgets graphically display the load average and memory usage of the machine on which your service runs. They also include the functionality to access the synthetic load request entry points via appropriate AJAX requests.

You can find a demo of the widgets at <http://cs3214.cs.vt.edu:9011/files/index.html>. The files served from this directory are available on the course web site. Please consult the HTML code of this file for how to include the widgets into your own page for your testing and demonstration, as discussed in Section 4.3.

## 2.9 Minimum Requirements

The minimum requirements include the web service functionality discussed in Section 2.1 and support for multiple clients as discussed in Section 2.4. Robust error handling is also required. A test driver will check the minimum requirements.

These minimum requirements can be met using one-thread-per-client, HTTP/1.0-only implementation. Support for the relay server or protocol independence is not required to meet the minimum requirements.

## 2.10 Choice of Port Numbers and Relay Server Prefixes

Port numbers are shared among all processes on a machine. To reduce the potential for conflicts, use a port number that is 10,000 + last four digits of the student id of a team member.

If a port number is already in use, `bind()` will fail with `EADDRINUSE`. If you weren't using that port number before, someone else might have. Choose a different port number in that case. Otherwise, it may be that the port number is still in use because of your testing. Check that you have killed all processes you may have started while testing. Even after you have killed your processes, binding to a port number may fail for an additional 2 min period if that port number recently accepted clients. This timeout is built into the TCP protocol to avoid mistaking delayed packets sent on old connections for packets that belong to new connections using the same port number.

Choose the SLO login id of one team member as relay server prefix. When running in relay server mode, do not bind the socket to any port before connecting. This 'auto-bind'

strategy allows the OS to assign any available port, eliminating the potential for port conflicts.

### 3 Strategy

Make sure you understand the roles of DNS host names, IP addresses, and port numbers in the context of TCP communication. Study the roles of the necessary socket API calls.

You should exploit a layered design that separates your TCP support code from the HTTP layer. Such a design will be crucial to easily implement the relay server mode while minimizing the changes to the HTTP implementation.

For the TCP layer, make sure you handle short reads correctly, as discussed in lecture and in the book. To avoid byte ordering related bugs, avoid setting addresses directly in your program - use the `getaddrinfo()` function instead.

Since you will be using a multi-threaded design, use thread-safe versions of all functions.

Familiarize yourselves with the commands `wget(1)` and `curl(1)` and the specific flags that show you headers and protocol versions. These programs can be extremely helpful in debugging web servers.

Refresh your knowledge of `strace(1)`, which is an essential tool to debug your server's interactions with the outside world. Use `-s 1024` to avoid cutting off the contents of reads and writes (or `recv` and `send`). Don't forget `-f` to allow `strace` to follow spawned threads. A trick to easily verify that your Content-Length computation is correct is to issue the body of each HTTP response in a separate system call.

The book's student site contains an implementation of a tiny web server you may use as a starting point; you may also use the book's implementation of robust I/O to handle short reads. However, the book code is not implemented in a protocol-independent fashion. Study the examples provided on the course website instead.

## 4 Grading

### 4.1 Coding Style

Your service must be implemented in the C language. You should follow proper coding conventions with respect to documentation, naming, and scoping. You must check the return values of all system calls and library functions.

We will pay particular attention to how you separated the implementation of HTTP from your use of TCP sockets. We may use the `helgrind` checker to check your server for race

conditions. Your code should compile under `-Wall` without warnings, the use of the `-Werror` flag as part of `CFLAGS` should have become a habit by now.

## 4.2 Submission

You should submit a `.tar.gz` file of your project, which must contain a Makefile. Your project should build with `'make clean all'` This command must build an executable `'sysstatd'` that must accept the following command line arguments:

- `-p port` When given, your web service must run in server mode, accepting HTTP clients and serving HTTP requests on port `'port.'` Multiple connection must be supported.
- `-r relayhost:port` When given, your web service should connect to host `'relayhost'` on port `'port.'`. It should accept both fully-qualified host names and IPv4 addresses in dot notation.
- `-R path` When given, `'path'` specifies the root directory of your server, files in it are reachable under the `/files` prefix.

Submit a file called `'README'` that lists group members and briefly describes your DESIGN.

Please test that `'make clean'` removes all executables and object files. Issue `'make clean'` before submitting to keep the size of the tar ball small. Please use the `submit.pl` script or web page and submit as `'p6'`. Only one group member need submit.

## 4.3 Online Demonstration and Grade Breakdown

The provided test script will test that you meet the minimum requirements only.

To demo the relay server as well as the file serving and synthetic load request capability, you must schedule an online demo with teaching staff. If you've implemented relay mode, start your server on a rlogin cluster machine and connect to a relay server. In addition, start your server on your EC2 machine. Email to `cs3214-staff@cs.vt.edu` the URLs of the corresponding web pages that show the widget and synthetic load request integration. Once you receive a reply that we verified the correct functioning, you may shut down your service. You will be expected to fix any problems (including robustness issues) that arise during the demo.

This project will count for 120 points; meeting the minimum requirements will yield 40 points. The remaining points will be awarded for documentation/coding style, the online demo of your widget integration.



## 4.4 Extra Credit

For 25 points of extra credit, implement your own relay server.

Good Luck!

## References

- [1] Douglas Crockford. *Introduction to JSON*. <http://json.org/>.
- [2] Roy Fielding, Jim Gettys, Jeff Mogul, H. Frystyk, L. Masinter, P. Leach, and Tim Berners-Lee. Rfc 2616: Hypertext transfer protocol – http/1.1. <http://www.w3.org/Protocols/rfc2616/rfc2616.html>.
- [3] Roy T. Fielding and Richard N. Taylor. Principled design of the modern web architecture. *ACM Trans. Internet Technol.*, 2(2):115–150, May 2002.
- [4] Leonard Richardson and Sam Ruby. *RESTful web services*. O'Reilly, 2007.