CS/EE 3710

Computer Design Lab
Fall 2010

CS/EE 3710

- Computer Design Lab
  - T Th 3:40pm-5:00pm
    Lectures in WEB 110, Labs in MEB 3133 (DSL)
- Instructor: Erik Brunvand
  - MEB 3142
  - Office Hours: After class, when my door is open, or by appointment.
- TA: Michael Kingston
  - Office hours to be determined

CS/EE 3710

- Web Page - all sorts of information!
- http://www.eng.utah.edu/~cs3710
- Contact:
  - 3710@list.eng.utah.edu
    - Goes to everyone in the class
  - teach-3710@list.eng.utah.edu
    - Goes to instructor and Ta
- No textbook – I'll hand out stuff.
  - There's lots of good stuff linked to the web page

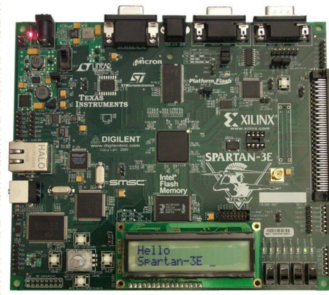
Prerequsites

- Digital Logic
  - CS/EE 3700 or equivalent
- Computer Architecture
  - CS/EE 3810 or equivalent
- First assignment is a review of these subjects!
  - It's on the web page now!
  - It's due on Thursday, September 2 at 5:00pm (hand in in class)

Class Goal

- Use skills from both 3700 and 3810 to build a moderately sized project
  - Specifically, a computer processor!
  - Based on a commercial RISC core
- Team projects – groups of 3 or 4
  - Each group will customize their processor for a particular application
    - You choose the application!
    - You choose the customizations!

Hardware Infrastructure



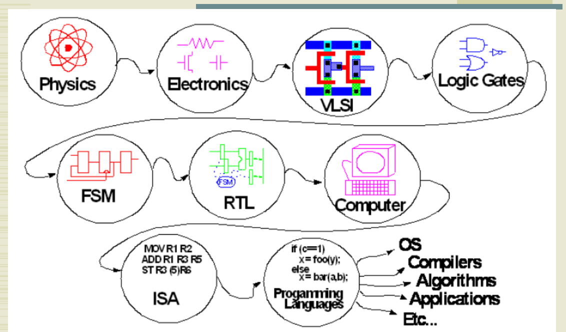
FPGA: Spartan-3E FPGA
500,000 gate equivalents,
plus 40Kbytes of onboard RAM
Clock: 50 MHz crystal clock oscillator
Memory: 128 Mbit Parallel Flash
16 Mbit SPI Flash
64 MByte DDR SDRAM
Connectors and Interfaces:
Ethernet 10/100 Phy
JTAG USB download
Two 9-pin RS-232 serial port
VGA output connector
PS/2- style mouse/keyboard port,
rotary encoder with push button
Four slide switches
Eight individual LED outputs
Four momentary-contact push buttons
100-Pin expansion connection ports
Three 6-pin expansion connectors
Display: 16 character - 2 Line LCD

- Spartan-3E "starter" Board from Xilinx

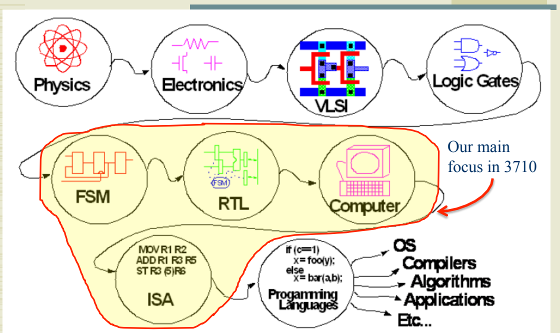
CAD Software

- Xilinx ISE WebPACK 12.2
  - Verilog system definition
  - Schematic capture
  - Verilog/Schematic simulation
  - Synthesis to the Spartan-3E
  - Mapping to the Spartan-3E
- This is installed on the DSL machines, in the CADE PC lab, and is free to install on your own machine
  - It's a BIG download though…

The Big Picture



The Big Picture



The Big Picture

- I'll hand out a Baseline ISA (it's on the web site)
  - Every group must implement these instructions
- There will be labs that require you to design and demonstrate steps along the way
- Each group will customize their processor
  - New instructions
  - New I/O
  - Other features
- End up demonstrating code running on your processor!

The Big Picture

- Design with a mix of schematics and Verilog
  - Design the datapath
    - ALU, register file, shifter, misc. registers, etc.
  - Design the control FSM
    - Remember Verilog state machine design from 3700?
  - Design the I/O system
    - Memory mapped I/O
    - VGA, PS/2, UART, LCD, etc.
- Use ISE for simulation/synthesis
- Processor runs on the Spartan-3E board

Verilog

- Plan on good Verilog coding style this semester!
  - Verilog is NOT a programming language!
  - Verilog is a Hardware Description Language
    - A huge number of Verilog errors are related to confusion between combinational and sequential descriptions
    - Think of the HW first, before coding
  - What is "good" Verilog?
    - I like excessive comments in the code
    - I like clear distinctions between seq. and comb. code
    - I like hierarchy
    - I like using a coding style that makes synthesis easy
    - I like using a purely synchronous clocking style in this class

Remember This?

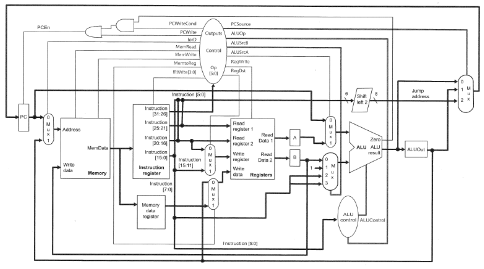
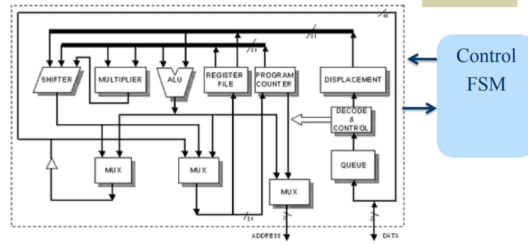
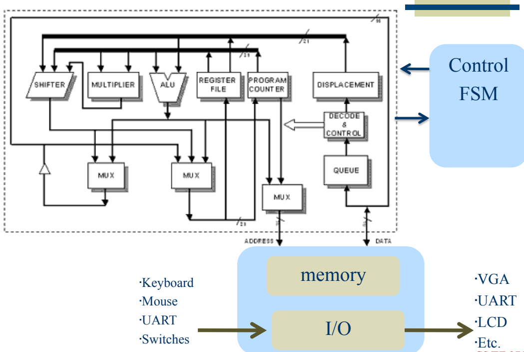


FIG 1.53 Multicycle MIPS microarchitecture. Reprinted from [Patterson04] with permission from Elsevier.

Generic Architecture



Generic Architecture



The Short-Term Picture

- Start with a review assignment
- Next assignment is a Finite State Machine (FSM) mapped to the Spartan-3E board
  - Thunderbird tail lights...
- Next assignment will be a very small processor
  - I'll hand out mips.v code from Weste/Harris
  - I'll hand out Verlog code for block RAMs
  - I'll hand out sample Fibonacci assembly code
  - You'll augment the processor with ADDI
  - You'll augment the processor with very simple I/O
  - You'll augment the Fibonacci code
- Then a VGA assignment
  - Everyone builds a VGA interface
  - VGA version of the Thunderbird…

The Medium Term Picture

- We'll hand out lab kits on Tuesday next week during class
  - We'll meet in the DSL, MEB 3133
- Be thinking about who to team up with
  - Teams will be 3-4 people
  - Good teams have a mix of complementary skills
- Start thinking about your project
  - Mid-term presentations
    - Present your plans and your design so far
    - All team members must participate and present

The Long Term Picture

- Once teams are formed (Late September)
  - Start working on your project
  - Start with baseline, augment for your application
  - Think about memory and I/O
  - Think about support software (assemblers, compilers, etc.)
  - Think about application software
- Whole thing due at the end of class
  - Demo day at the end of the semester
  - December 9th – 3:40-5:00pm

Design

- What is design?
  - Design is the progression from the abstract to the concrete
  - From the idea for the *SuperGizmoWidget* until you've actually got the real live hardware in your hands
  - How does one go from an idea to a product?
  - How does one go from a specification to a piece of hardware?

Exploit Abstraction

- Design from the top down!
- Start with an understanding of the complete system
  - The Big Picture!
- Break it into more manageable chunks
- Describe the chunks in more detail
- Continue until the chunks are easy enough that you can build them!

Actually…

- You can't really do things totally top-down or totally bottom-up
  - Top-down is usually the best place to start though
  - At some point you'll need to look at the details
- Learning when to switch views is important!
  - When do you switch between levels of abstraction?
  - Learn by doing and with practice

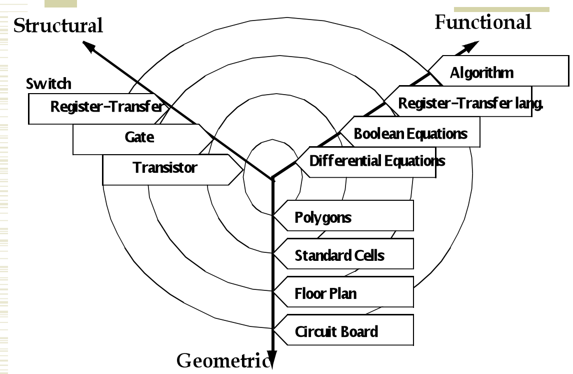
A Couple of Rules

- Don't build complex systems, build compositions of simple ones!
  - Use appropriate abstractions
  - Use hierarchy in your designs
- Don't reinvent the wheel
  - Exploit available resources
  - Find tools that will help you
  - Reuse modules when it makes sense
  - Avoid NIH syndrome! (This isn't CalTech…)

Digital Design Abstractions

- System Architecture
- Instruction Set Architecture (ISA)
- Register-Transfer Level
- Gates
  - Boolean logic, FPGAs, gate-arrays, etc…
- Circuits – transistors
- Silicon – mask data, VLSI

Another Look at Abstraction



When to Switch Levels?

- When do you switch to a new level in the abstraction hierarchy?
  - When does a collection of transistors look like a gate?
  - When does a collection of gates look like a register-transfer level module?
- Engineering judgement!
  - One mark of a good engineer is one who breaks things up at the appropriate level of abstraction!

Problems With Abstraction

- You may abstract away something important!
  - When you jump up a level you lose some info
  - When you jump down a level you may get swamped in the details
- Example: An appropriate collection of transistors doesn't always behave like a logic gate!
  - Slowly changing signals (slope, rise time, fall time)
  - Metastability
  - Other electrical effects
- You may also miss some possible optimizations

Design Validation

- It's hard to make sure that different models are describing the same thing!
- Write a behavioral model in C, then create a gate-level model in ISE. How do you know they're the same?
  - Simulation?
  - Correct-by-construction techniques?
  - Formal proofs?
  - Cross your fingers?

CAD Tools

- Mask Level
  - Magic, Mentor, Cadence, Spice, Spectre, etc.
- Gate Level
  - ISE, Mentor, Cadence, COSMOS, IRSIM, Espresso, MisII, etc.
- RT and up – "High-level" descriptions start to look a lot like software…
  - Verilog, VHDL, HardwareC,
  - ISE-XST, Synopsys, Ambit, Leonardo

High Level Synthesis

- Allows behavioral descriptions
- Larger and more complex systems can be designed
- Abstracts away low-level details
- Design cycle is shortened
- Correct by construction (if you trust the tools!)

Synthesis Drawbacks

- Larger circuits
- Slower circuits
- No innovative circuits
  - Of course, you can make counter-arguments to each of these drawbacks…

Synthesis Tools

- A whole bunch of different CAD tools
  - Quite complex
- ISE-XST from Xilinx
  - Targets Xilinx FPGAs in particular
  - You'll get to know the Xilinx CAD tools well!

Wrap Up

- 3710 is a project-based course
- Main Goals:
  - Learn about processor design from the ground up by building one
  - Learn about practical details of processor design
    - I/O, memory interfaces, assembly programming, etc.
  - Learn about processor support systems
    - assemblers, linkers, memory loaders, etc.
  - Get experience with a larger design
    - Teamwork
    - Verilog, schematics, CAD tools, hierarchical design, etc.
  - Have Fun!!!