

# CS107, Lecture 5

## From C Strings to Pointers

Reading: Essential C section 3

# C Strings As Parameters

When we pass a string as a parameter, it is passed as a **char \***. We can still operate on the string the same way as with a `char[]`. (*We'll see why today!*).

```
int doSomething(char *str) {  
    char secondChar = str[1];  
    ...  
}
```

```
// can also write this, but it is really a pointer  
int doSomething(char str[]) { ...
```

# Arrays of Strings

We can make an array of strings to group multiple strings together:

```
char *stringArray[5]; // space to store 5 char *s
```

We can also use the following shorthand to initialize a string array:

```
char *stringArray[] = {  
    "Hello",  
    "Hi",  
    "Hey there"  
};
```

# Arrays of Strings

We can access each string using bracket syntax:

```
printf("%s\n", stringArray[0]); // print out first string
```

When an array is passed as a parameter in C, C passes a *pointer to the first element of the array*. This is what **argv** is in **main**! This means we write the parameter type as:

```
void myFunction(char **stringArray) {
```

```
// equivalent to this, but it is really a double pointer
```

```
void myFunction(char *stringArray[]) {
```

# Practice: Password Verification

Write a function **verifyPassword** that accepts a candidate password and certain password criteria and returns whether the password is valid.

```
bool verifyPassword(char *password, char *validChars, char  
*badSubstrings[], int numBadSubstrings);
```

**password** is valid if it contains only letters in **validChars**, and does not contain any substrings in **badSubstrings**.

# Practice: Password Verification

```
bool verifyPassword(char *password, char *validChars, char
*badSubstrings[], int numBadSubstrings);
```

## Example:

```
char *invalidSubstrings[] = { "1234" };
```

```
bool valid1 = verifyPassword("1572", "0123456789",
    invalidSubstrings, 1); // true
```

```
bool valid2 = verifyPassword("141234", "0123456789",
    invalidSubstrings, 1); // false
```

# Common string.h Functions

Function	Description
<code>strlen(<i>str</i>)</code>	returns the # of chars in a C string (before null-terminating character).
<code>strcmp(<i>str1</i>, <i>str2</i>)</code> , <code>strncmp(<i>str1</i>, <i>str2</i>, <i>n</i>)</code>	compares two strings; returns 0 if identical, <0 if <i>str1</i> comes before <i>str2</i> in alphabet, >0 if <i>str1</i> comes after <i>str2</i> in alphabet. <i>strncmp</i> stops comparing after at most <i>n</i> characters.
<code>strchr(<i>str</i>, <i>ch</i>)</code> <code>strrchr(<i>str</i>, <i>ch</i>)</code>	character search: returns a pointer to the first occurrence of <i>ch</i> in <i>str</i> , or <i>NULL</i> if <i>ch</i> was not found in <i>str</i> . <i>strrchr</i> find the last occurrence.
<code>strstr(<i>haystack</i>, <i>needle</i>)</code>	string search: returns a pointer to the start of the first occurrence of <i>needle</i> in <i>haystack</i> , or <i>NULL</i> if <i>needle</i> was not found in <i>haystack</i> .
<code>strcpy(<i>dst</i>, <i>src</i>)</code> , <code>strncpy(<i>dst</i>, <i>src</i>, <i>n</i>)</code>	copies characters in <i>src</i> to <i>dst</i> , including null-terminating character. Assumes enough space in <i>dst</i> . Strings must not overlap. <i>strncpy</i> stops after at most <i>n</i> chars, and <u>does not</u> add null-terminating char.
<code>strcat(<i>dst</i>, <i>src</i>)</code> , <code>strncat(<i>dst</i>, <i>src</i>, <i>n</i>)</code>	concatenate <i>src</i> onto the end of <i>dst</i> . <i>strncat</i> stops concatenating after at most <i>n</i> characters. <u>Always</u> adds a null-terminating character.
<code>strspn(<i>str</i>, <i>accept</i>)</code> , <code>strcspn(<i>str</i>, <i>reject</i>)</code>	<i>strspn</i> returns the length of the initial part of <i>str</i> which contains <u>only</u> characters in <i>accept</i> . <i>strcspn</i> returns the length of the initial part of <i>str</i> which does <u>not</u> contain any characters in <i>reject</i> .

# Practice: Password Verification



```
verify_password.c
```



# Lecture Plan

- Searching in Strings 6
- **Practice:** Password Verification 13
- **Demo:** Buffer Overflow and Valgrind 16
- Pointers 19
- Strings in Memory 50
- Security and Overflows 88
- Live Session 110

```
cp -r /afs/ir/class/cs107/lecture-code/lect5 .
```

# Buffer Overflows

- We must always ensure that memory operations we perform don't improperly read or write memory.
  - E.g. don't copy a string into a space that is too small!
  - E.g. don't ask for the string length of an uninitialized string!
- The **Valgrind** tool may be able to help track down memory-related issues.
  - See [cs107.stanford.edu/resources/valgrind](https://cs107.stanford.edu/resources/valgrind)
  - We'll talk about Valgrind more when we talk about dynamically-allocated memory.

# Demo: Memory Errors



memory\_errors.c

# Lecture Plan

- Searching in Strings 6
- **Practice:** Password Verification 13
- **Demo:** Buffer Overflow and Valgrind 16
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```
cp -r /afs/ir/class/cs107/lecture-code/lect5 .
```

# Pointers

- A *pointer* is a variable that stores a memory address.
- Because there is no pass-by-reference in C like in C++, pointers let us pass around the address of one instance of memory, instead of making many copies.
- One (8 byte) pointer can refer to any size memory location!
- Pointers are also essential for allocating memory on the heap, which we will cover later.
- Pointers also let us refer to memory generically, which we will cover later.

# Memory

- Memory is a big array of bytes.
- Each byte has a unique numeric index that is commonly written in hexadecimal.
- A pointer stores one of these memory addresses.

Address	Value
	...
0x105	'\0'
0x104	'e'
0x103	'l'
0x102	'p'
0x101	'p'
0x100	'a'
	...

# Memory

- Memory is a big array of bytes.
- Each byte has a unique numeric index that is commonly written in hexadecimal.
- A pointer stores one of these memory addresses.

Address	Value
	...
261	'\0'
260	'e'
259	'l'
258	'p'
257	'p'
256	'a'
	...

# Looking Back at C++

How would we write a program with a function that takes in an **int** and modifies it? We might use *pass by reference*.

```
void myFunc(int& num) {  
    num = 3;  
}  
  
int main(int argc, char *argv[]) {  
    int x = 2;  
    myFunc(x);  
    printf("%d", x);    // 3!  
    ...  
}
```



# Looking Ahead to C

- All parameters in C are “pass by value.” For efficiency purposes, arrays (and strings, by extension) passed in as parameters are converted to pointers.
- This means whenever we pass something as a parameter, we pass a copy.
- If we want to modify a parameter value in the function we call and have the changes persist afterwards, we can pass the location of the value instead of the value itself. This way we make a copy of the *address* instead of a copy of the *value*.

# Pointers

```
int x = 2;
```

```
// Make a pointer that stores the address of x.
```

```
// (& means "address of")
```

```
int *xPtr = &x;
```

```
// Dereference the pointer to go to that address.
```

```
// (* means "dereference")
```

```
printf("%d", *xPtr);    // prints 2
```

# Pointers

A pointer is a variable that stores a memory address.

```
void myFunc(int *intPtr) {  
    *intPtr = 3;  
}
```

```
int main(int argc, char *argv[]) {  
    int x = 2;  
    myFunc(&x);  
    printf("%d", x);    // 3!  
    ...  
}
```

# Pointers

A pointer is a variable that stores a memory address.

```
void myFunc(int *intPtr) {  
    *intPtr = 3;  
}
```

```
int main(int argc, char *argv[]) {  
    int x = 2;  
    myFunc(&x);  
    printf("%d", x);    // 3!  
    ...  
}
```

STACK



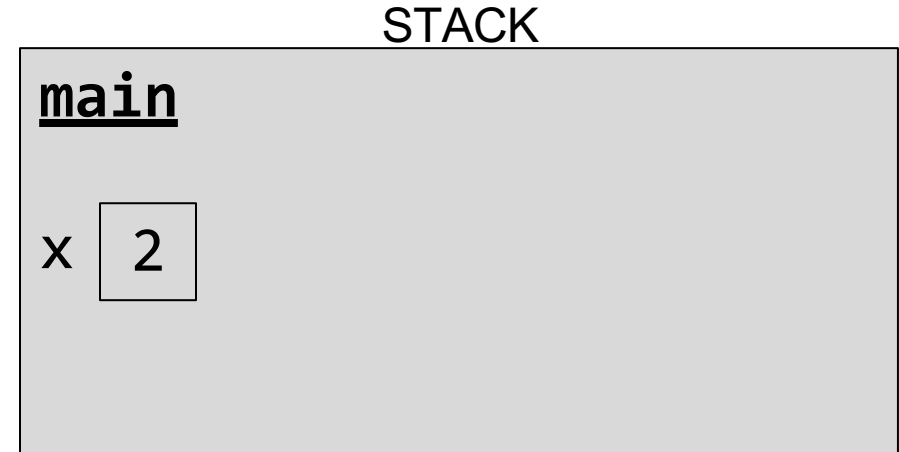
main

# Pointers

A pointer is a variable that stores a memory address.

```
void myFunc(int *intPtr) {  
    *intPtr = 3;  
}
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```
int main(int argc, char *argv[]) {  
    int x = 2;  
    myFunc(&x);  
    printf("%d", x);    // 3!  
    ...  
}
```

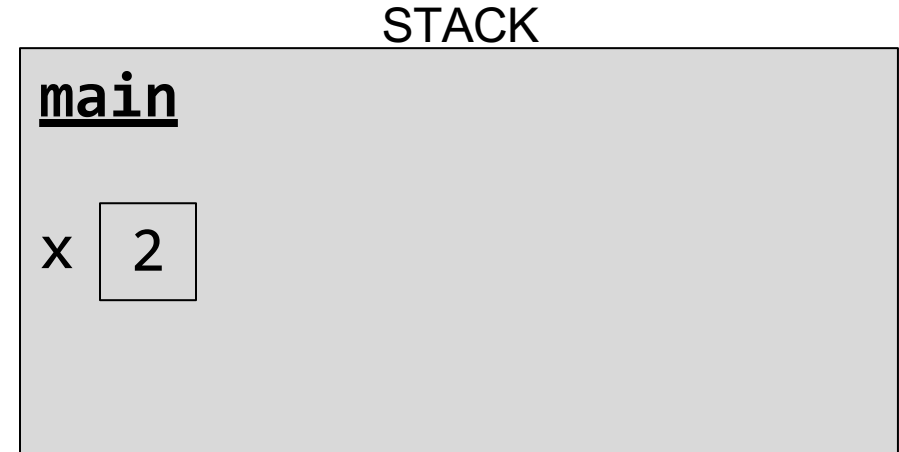


# Pointers

A pointer is a variable that stores a memory address.

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void myFunc(int *intPtr) {  
    *intPtr = 3;  
}
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```
int main(int argc, char *argv[]) {  
    int x = 2;  
    myFunc(&x);  
    printf("%d", x);    // 3!  
    ...  
}
```

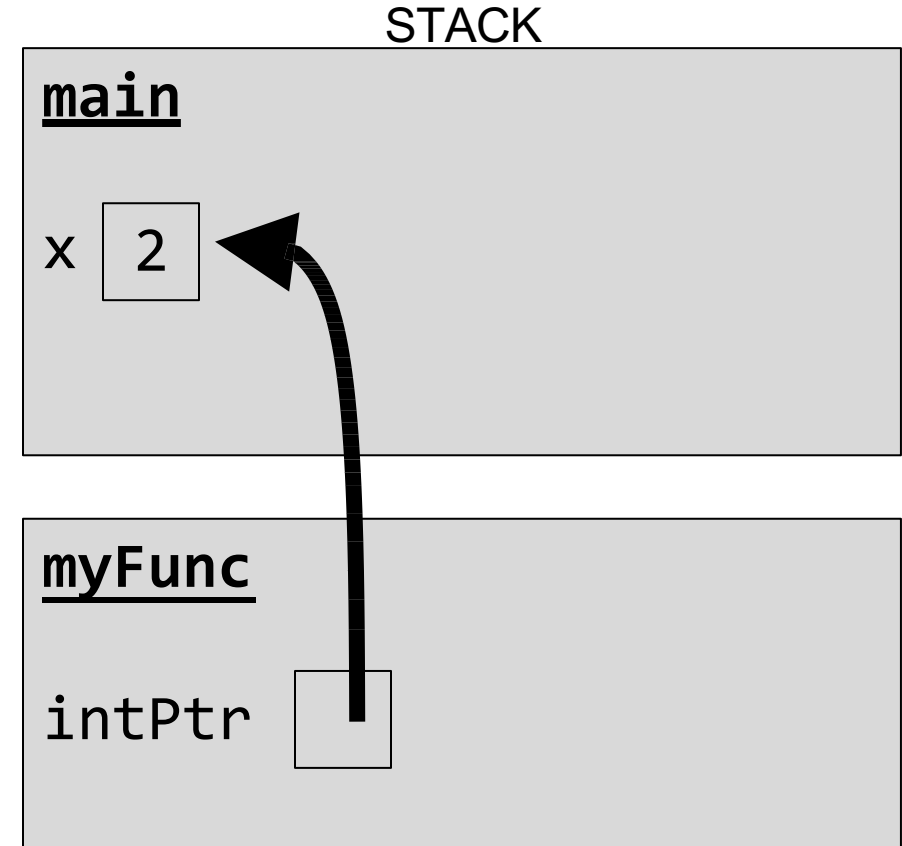


# Pointers

A pointer is a variable that stores a memory address.

```
void myFunc(int *intPtr) {  
    *intPtr = 3;  
}
```

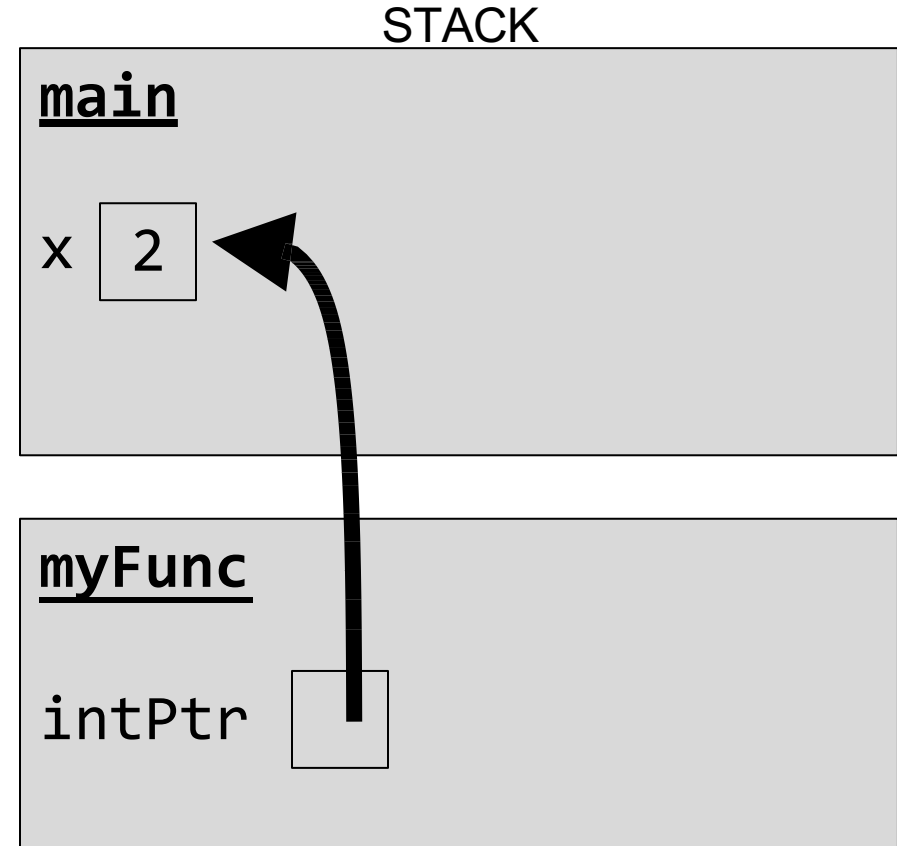
```
int main(int argc, char *argv[]) {  
    int x = 2;  
    myFunc(&x);  
    printf("%d", x);    // 3!  
    ...  
}
```



# Pointers

A pointer is a variable that stores a memory address.

```
void myFunc(int *intPtr) {  
    *intPtr = 3;  
}  
  
int main(int argc, char *argv[]) {  
    int x = 2;  
    myFunc(&x);  
    printf("%d", x);    // 3!  
    ...  
}
```

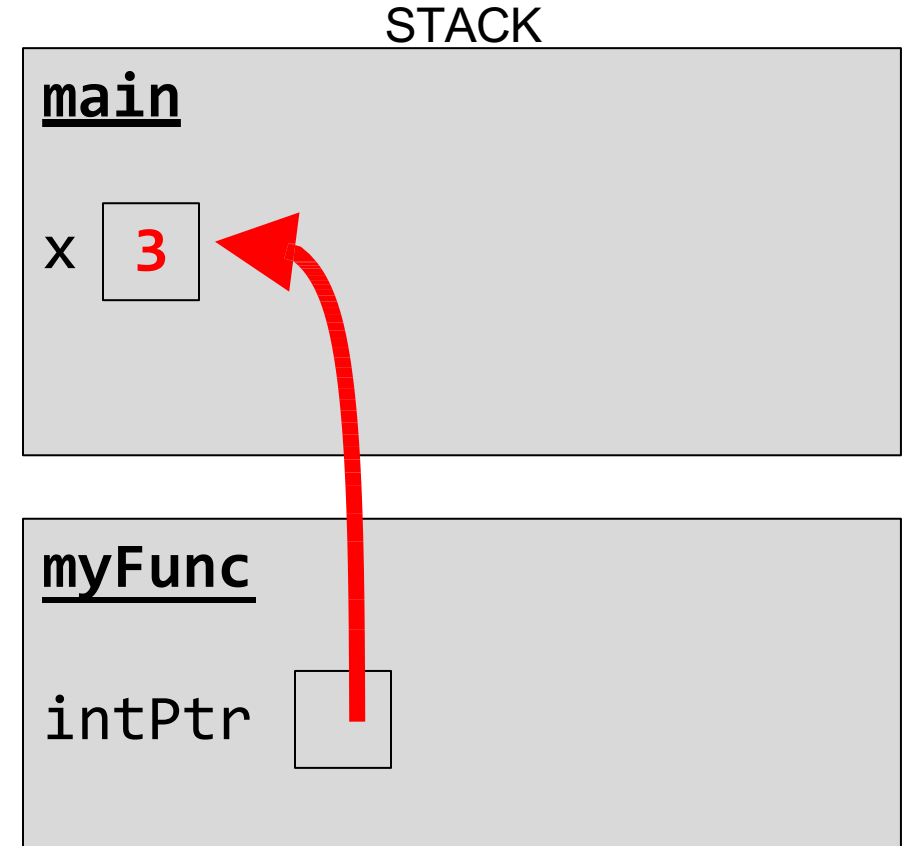




# Pointers

A pointer is a variable that stores a memory address.

```
void myFunc(int *intPtr) {  
    *intPtr = 3;  
}  
  
int main(int argc, char *argv[]) {  
    int x = 2;  
    myFunc(&x);  
    printf("%d", x);    // 3!  
    ...  
}
```

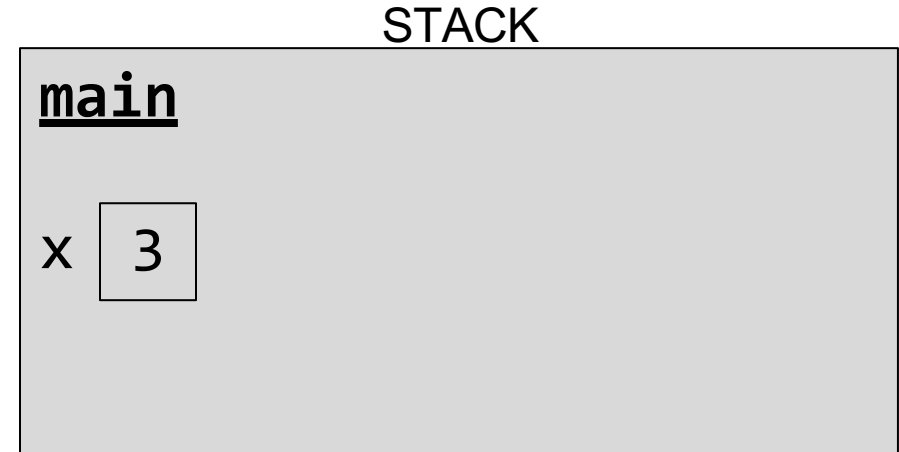


# Pointers

A pointer is a variable that stores a memory address.

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    *intPtr = 3;  
}
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```
int main(int argc, char *argv[]) {  
    int x = 2;  
    myFunc(&x);  
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    ...  
}
```

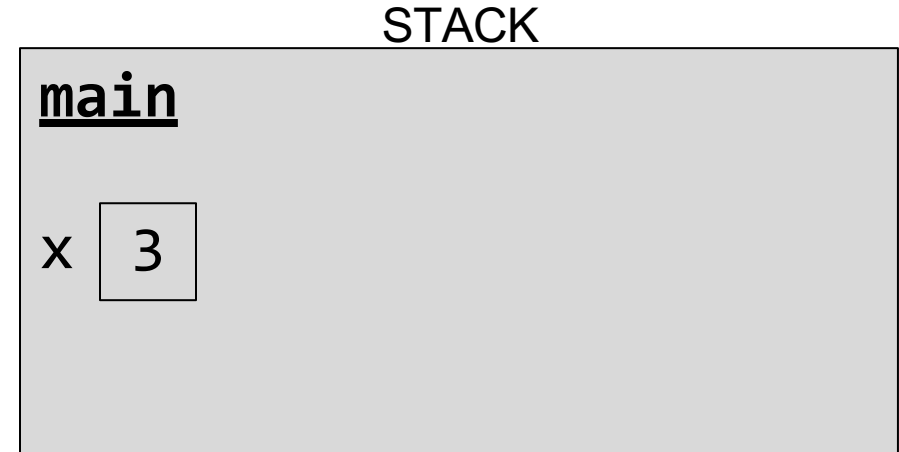


# Pointers

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    ...  
}
```



# Pointers

A pointer is a variable that stores a memory address.

```
void myFunc(int *intPtr) {  
    *intPtr = 3;  
}
```

```
int main(int argc, char *argv[]) {  
    int x = 2;  
    myFunc(&x);  
    printf("%d", x);    // 3!  
    ...  
}
```

main()



STACK	
Address	Value
x	0x1f0
	2
	...

# Pointers

A pointer is a variable that stores a memory address.

```
void myFunc(int *intPtr) {  
    *intPtr = 3;  
}
```

```
int main(int argc, char *argv[]) {  
    int x = 2;  
    myFunc(&x);  
    printf("%d", x);    // 3!  
    ...  
}
```

main()



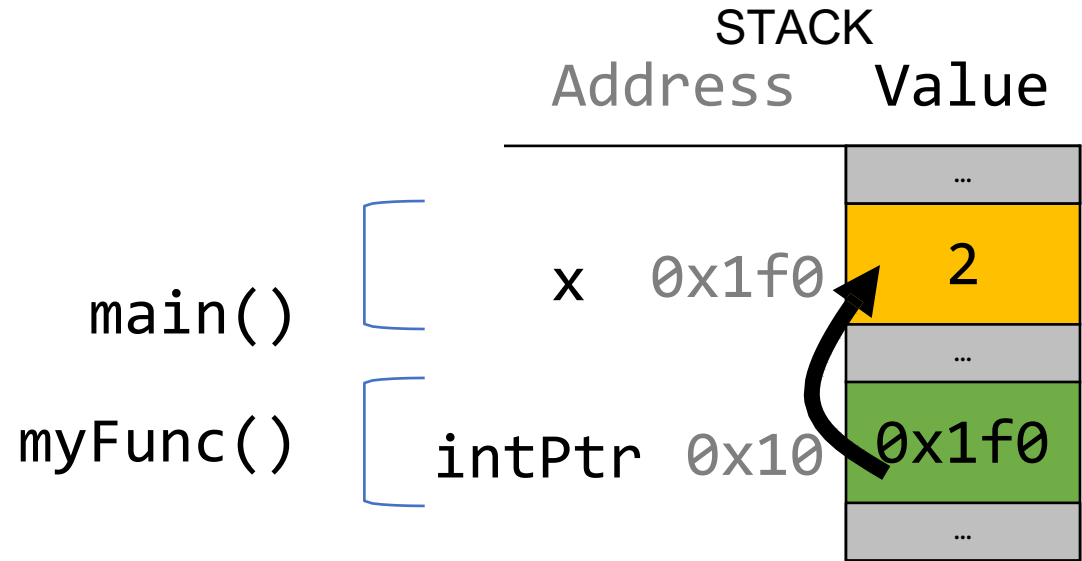
STACK	
Address	Value
x	0x1f0
	2
	...

# Pointers

A pointer is a variable that stores a memory address.

```
void myFunc(int *intPtr) {  
    *intPtr = 3;  
}
```

```
int main(int argc, char *argv[]) {  
    int x = 2;  
    myFunc(&x);  
    printf("%d", x);    // 3!  
    ...  
}
```

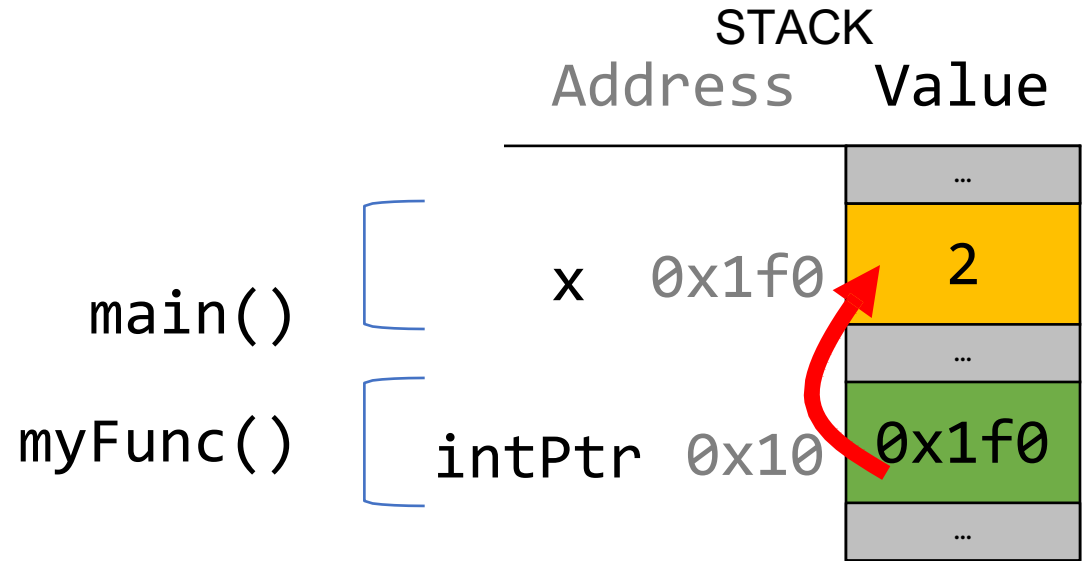


# Pointers

A pointer is a variable that stores a memory address.

```
void myFunc(int *intPtr) {  
    *intPtr = 3;  
}
```

```
int main(int argc, char *argv[]) {  
    int x = 2;  
    myFunc(&x);  
    printf("%d", x);    // 3!  
    ...  
}
```



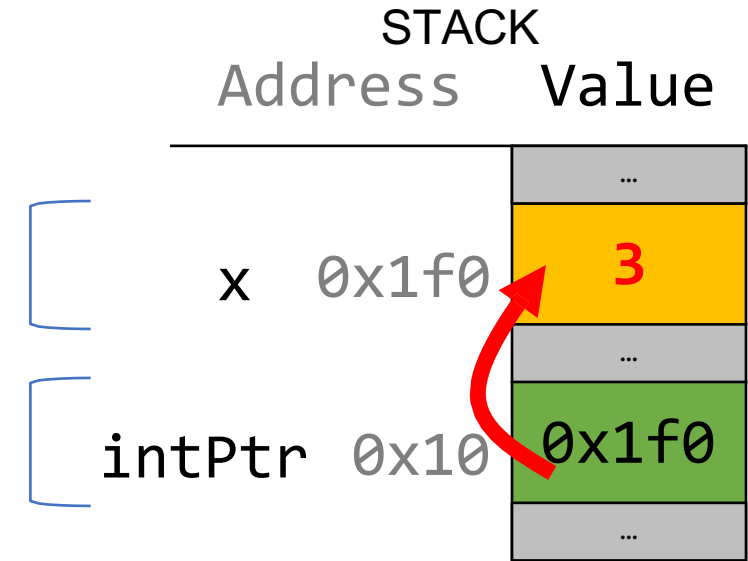
# Pointers

A pointer is a variable that stores a memory address.

```
void myFunc(int *intPtr) {  
    *intPtr = 3;  
}
```

```
int main(int argc, char *argv[]) {  
    int x = 2;  
    myFunc(&x);  
    printf("%d", x);    // 3!  
    ...  
}
```

main()  
myFunc()





# Pointers

A pointer is a variable that stores a memory address.

```
void myFunc(int *intPtr) {  
    *intPtr = 3;  
}
```

```
int main(int argc, char *argv[]) {  
    int x = 2;  
    myFunc(&x);  
    printf("%d", x);    // 3!  
    ...  
}
```

main()



STACK	
Address	Value
x	0x1f0
	3
	...

# Pointers

A pointer is a variable that stores a memory address.

```
void myFunc(int *intPtr) {  
    *intPtr = 3;  
}
```

```
int main(int argc, char *argv[]) {  
    int x = 2;  
    myFunc(&x);  
    printf("%d", x);    // 3!  
    ...  
}
```

main()



STACK	
Address	Value
x	0x1f0
	3
	...

# Pointers Summary

- If you are performing an operation with some input and do not care about any changes to the input, **pass the data type itself**. This makes a copy of the data.
- If you are modifying a specific instance of some value, **pass the location** of what you would like to modify. This makes a copy of the data's location.
- If a function takes an address (pointer) as a parameter, it can *go to* that address if it needs the actual value.

# Pointers

Without pointers, we would make copies.

```
void myFunc(int val) {  
    val = 3;  
}
```

```
int main(int argc, char *argv[]) {  
    int x = 2;  
    myFunc(x);  
    printf("%d", x);    // 2!  
    ...  
}
```

main()



STACK	
Address	Value
x	0x1f0
	2

# Pointers

Without pointers, we would make copies.

```
void myFunc(int val) {  
    val = 3;  
}
```

```
int main(int argc, char *argv[]) {  
    int x = 2;  
    myFunc(x);  
    printf("%d", x);    // 2!  
    ...  
}
```

main()



STACK	
Address	Value
x	0x1f0
	2

# Pointers

Without pointers, we would make copies.

```
void myFunc(int val) {  
    val = 3;  
}  
  
int main(int argc, char *argv[]) {  
    int x = 2;  
    myFunc(x);  
    printf("%d", x);    // 2!  
    ...  
}
```

main()  
myFunc()



STACK		Address	Value
			...
x	0x1f0		2
			...
val	0x10		2
			...

# Pointers

Without pointers, we would make copies.

```
void myFunc(int val) {  
    val = 3;  
}  
  
int main(int argc, char *argv[]) {  
    int x = 2;  
    myFunc(x);  
    printf("%d", x);    // 2!  
    ...  
}
```

main()  
myFunc()



STACK		
Address		Value
		...
x	0x1f0	2
		...
val	0x10	2
		...

# Pointers

Without pointers, we would make copies.

```
void myFunc(int val) {  
    val = 3;  
}  
  
int main(int argc, char *argv[]) {  
    int x = 2;  
    myFunc(x);  
    printf("%d", x);    // 2!  
    ...  
}
```

main()  
myFunc()



STACK		Value
Address		
		...
x	0x1f0	2
		...
val	0x10	3
		...



# Pointers

Without pointers, we would make copies.

```
void myFunc(int val) {  
    val = 3;  
}
```

```
int main(int argc, char *argv[]) {  
    int x = 2;  
    myFunc(x);  
    printf("%d", x);    // 2!  
    ...  
}
```

main()



STACK	
Address	Value
x	0x1f0
	2

# Pointers

Without pointers, we would make copies.

```
void myFunc(int val) {  
    val = 3;  
}
```

```
int main(int argc, char *argv[]) {  
    int x = 2;  
    myFunc(x);  
    printf("%d", x);    // 2!  
    ...  
}
```

main()



STACK	
Address	Value
x	0x1f0
	2

# Lecture Plan

- Searching in Strings 6
- **Practice:** Password Verification 13
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```
cp -r /afs/ir/class/cs107/lecture-code/lect5 .
```

# Strings In Memory

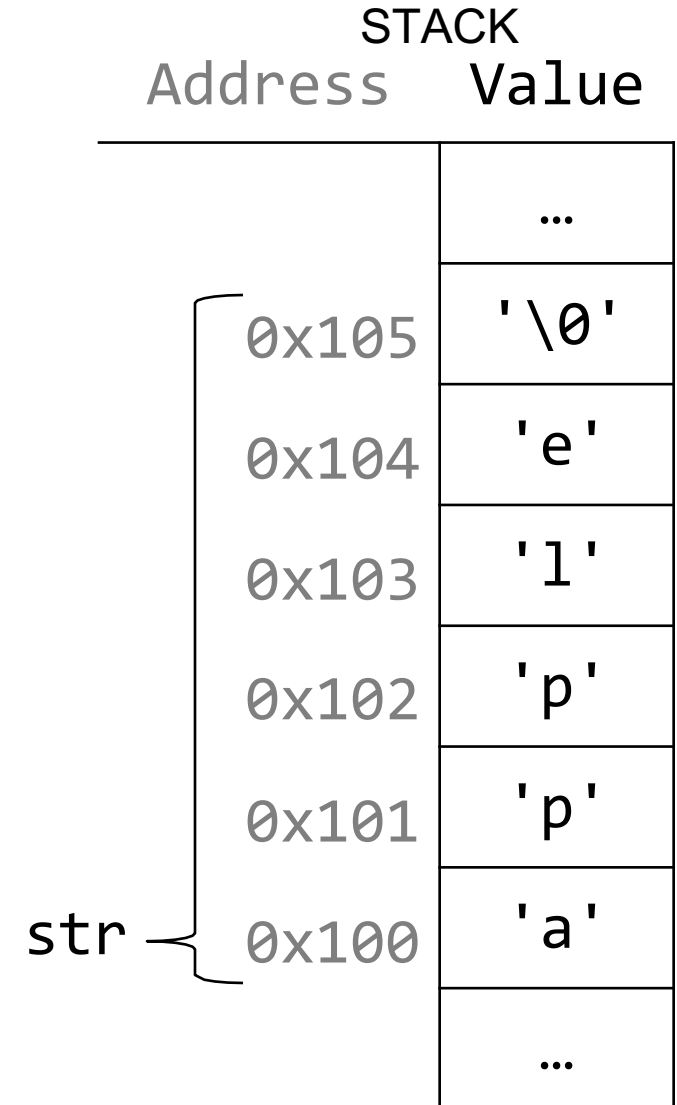
1. If we create a string as a **char[ ]**, we can modify its characters because its memory lives in our stack space.
2. We cannot set a **char[ ]** equal to another value, because it is not a pointer; it refers to the block of memory reserved for the original array.
3. If we pass a **char[ ]** as a parameter, set something equal to it, or perform arithmetic with it, it's automatically converted to a **char \***.
4. If we create a new string with new characters as a **char \***, we cannot modify its characters because its memory lives in the data segment.
5. We can set a **char \*** equal to another value, because it is a reassign-able pointer.
6. Adding an offset to a C string gives us a substring that many places past the first character.
7. If we change characters in a string parameter, these changes will persist outside of the function.

**String Behavior #1:** If we create a string as a `char[]`, we can modify its characters because its memory lives in our stack space.

# Character Arrays

When we declare an array of characters, contiguous memory is allocated on the stack to store the contents of the entire array. We can modify what is on the stack.

```
char str[6];  
strcpy(str, "apple");
```



**String Behavior #2:** We cannot set a `char[]` equal to another value, because it is not a pointer; it refers to the block of memory reserved for the original array.

# Character Arrays

An array variable refers to an entire block of memory. We cannot reassign an existing array to be equal to a new array.

```
char str[6];  
strcpy(str, "apple");  
char str2[8];  
strcpy(str2, "apple 2");  
  
str = str2;    // not allowed!
```

An array's size cannot be changed once we create it; we must create another new array instead.

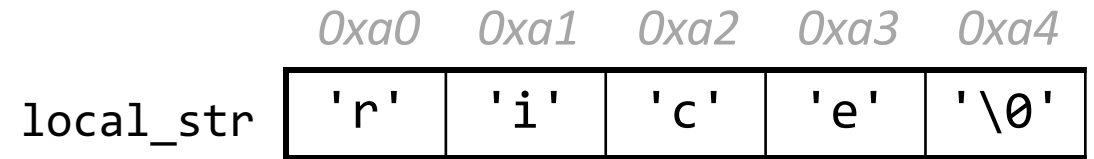
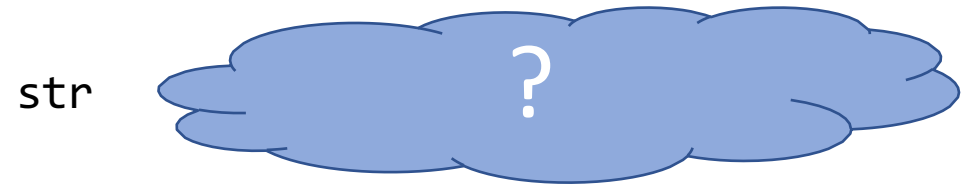


**String Behavior #3:** If we pass a `char[]` as a parameter, set something equal to it, or perform arithmetic with it, it's automatically converted to a `char *`.

# String Parameters

How do you think the parameter `str` is being represented?

```
void fun_times(char *str) {  
    ...  
}  
  
int main(int argc, char *argv[]) {  
    char local_str[5];  
    strcpy(local_str, "rice");  
    fun_times(local_str);  
    return 0;  
}
```



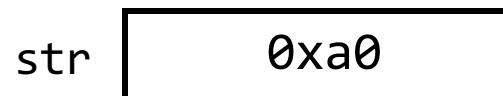
- A. A copy of the array `local_str`
- B. A pointer containing an address to the first element in `local_str`



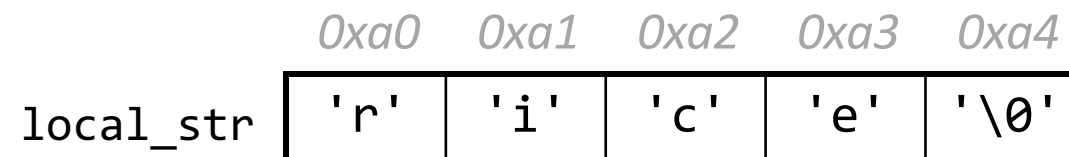
# String Parameters

How do you think the parameter `str` is being represented?

```
void fun_times(char *str) {  
    ...  
}
```



```
int main(int argc, char *argv[]) {  
    char local_str[5];  
    strcpy(local_str, "rice");  
    fun_times(local_str);  
    return 0;  
}
```

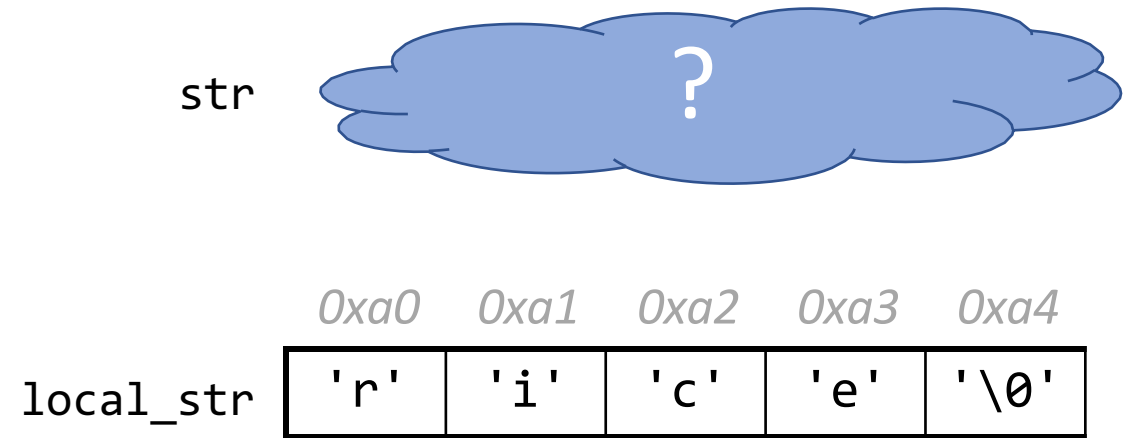


- A. A copy of the array `local_str`
- B.** A pointer containing an address to the first element in `local_str`

# char \* Variables

How do you think the local variable `str` is being represented?

```
int main(int argc, char *argv[]) {  
    char local_str[5];  
    strcpy(local_str, "rice");  
    → char *str = local_str;  
    ...  
    return 0;  
}
```



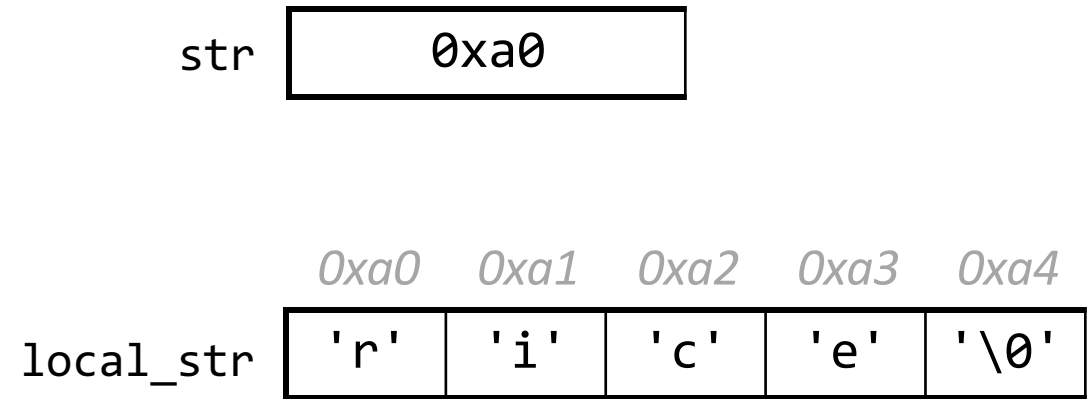
- A. A copy of the array `local_str`
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# char \* Variables

How do you think the local variable `str` is being represented?

```
int main(int argc, char *argv[]) {  
    char local_str[5];  
    strcpy(local_str, "rice");  
    → char *str = local_str;  
    ...  
    return 0;  
}
```

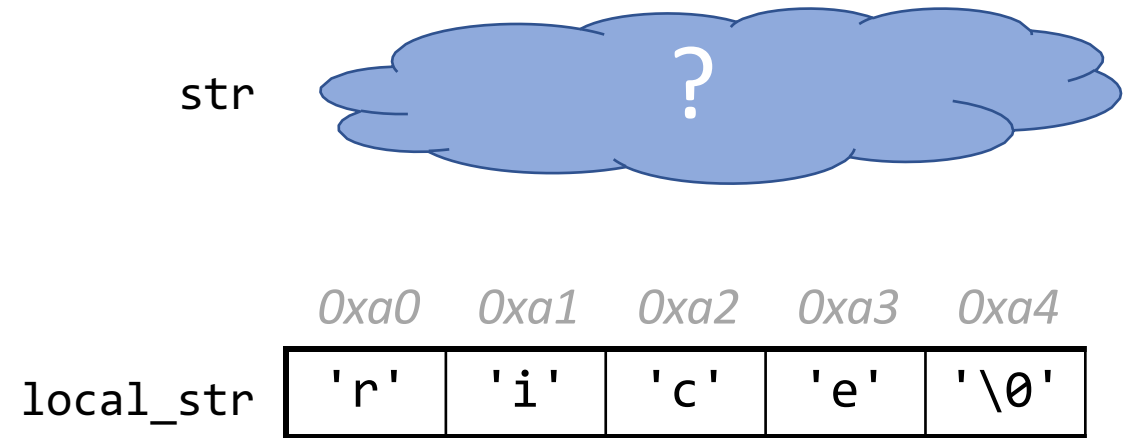


- A. A copy of the array `local_str`
- B.** A pointer containing an address to the first element in `local_str`

# char \* Variables

How do you think the local variable `str` is being represented?

```
int main(int argc, char *argv[]) {  
    char local_str[5];  
    strcpy(local_str, "rice");  
    → char *str = local_str + 2;  
    ...  
    return 0;  
}
```



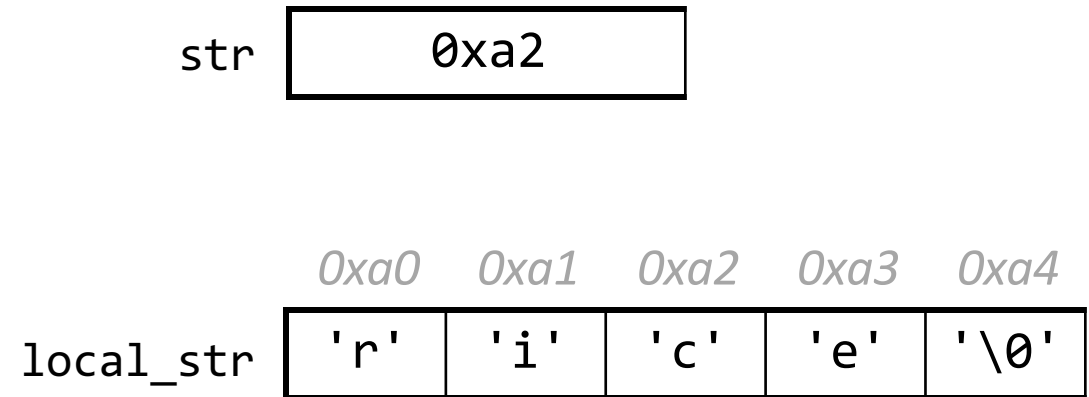
- A. A copy of part of the array `local_str`
- B. A pointer containing an address to the third element in `local_str`



# char \* Variables

How do you think the local variable `str` is being represented?

```
int main(int argc, char *argv[]) {  
    char local_str[5];  
    strcpy(local_str, "rice");  
    → char *str = local_str + 2;  
    ...  
    return 0;  
}
```



- A. A copy of part of the array `local_str`
- B.** A pointer containing an address to the third element in `local_str`

# String Parameters

All string functions take `char *` parameters – they accept `char[]`, but they are implicitly converted to `char *` before being passed.

- `strlen(char *str)`
- `strcmp(char *str1, char *str2)`
- ...
- `char *` is still a string in all the core ways a `char[]` is
  - Access/modify characters using bracket notation
  - Print it out
  - Use string functions
  - But under the hood they are represented differently!
- **Takeaway:** We create strings as `char[]`, pass them around as `char *`



**String Behavior #4:** If we create a new string with new characters as a `char *`, we cannot modify its characters because its memory lives in the data segment.

# char \*

There is another convenient way to create a string if we do not need to modify it later. We can create a char \* and set it directly equal to a string literal.

```
char *myString = "Hello, world!";  
char *empty = "";
```

```
myString[0] = 'h';
```

```
// crashes!
```

```
printf("%s", myString);
```

```
// Hello, world!
```

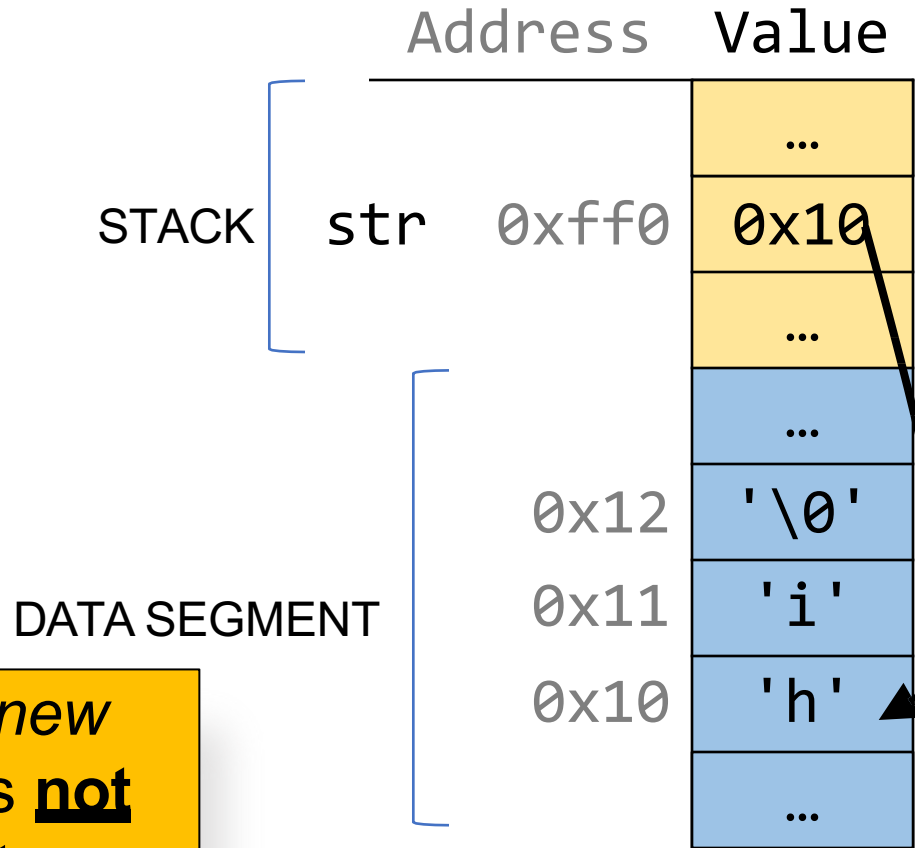
# char \*

When we declare a char pointer equal to a string literal, the characters are *not* stored on the stack. Instead, they are stored in a special area of memory called the “data segment”. We *cannot modify memory in this segment*.

```
char *str = "hi";
```

The pointer variable (e.g. **str**) refers to the *address of the first character of the string in the data segment*.

This applies only to creating *new* strings with char \*. This does **not** apply for making a char \* that points to an existing stack string.



# Memory Locations

For each code snippet below, can we modify the characters in **myStr**?

```
char myStr[6];
```

**Key Question:** where do its characters live? Do they live in memory we own? Or the read-only data segment?

# Memory Locations

For each code snippet below, can we modify the characters in **myStr**?

```
char *myStr = "Hi";
```

**Key Question:** where do its characters live? Do they live in memory we own? Or the read-only data segment?

# Memory Locations

For each code snippet below, can we modify the characters in **myStr**?

```
char buf[6];  
strcpy(buf, "Hi");  
char *myStr = buf;
```

**Key Question:** where do its characters live? Do they live in memory we own? Or the read-only data segment?

# Memory Locations

For each code snippet below, can we modify the characters in **myStr**?

```
char *otherStr = "Hi";  
char *myStr = otherStr;
```

**Key Question:** where do its characters live? Do they live in memory we own? Or the read-only data segment?

# Memory Locations

For each code snippet below, can we modify the characters in **myStr**?

```
void myFunc(char *myStr) {  
    ...  
}
```

**Key Question:** where do its characters live? Do they live in memory we own? Or the read-only data segment?

```
int main(int argc, char *argv[]) {  
    char buf[6];  
    strcpy(buf, "Hi");  
    myFunc(buf);  
    return 0;  
}
```



# Memory Locations

**Q:** Is there a way to check in code whether a string's characters are modifiable?

**A:** No. This is something you can only tell by looking at the code itself and how the string was created.

**Q:** So then if I am writing a string function that modifies a string, how can I tell if the string passed in is modifiable?

**A:** You can't! This is something you instead state as an assumption in your function documentation. If someone calls your function with a read-only string, it will crash, but that's not your function's fault :-)

**String Behavior #5:** We can set a `char *` equal to another value, because it is a reassign-able pointer.

# char \*

A **char \*** variable refers to a single character. We can reassign an existing **char \*** pointer to be equal to another **char \*** pointer.

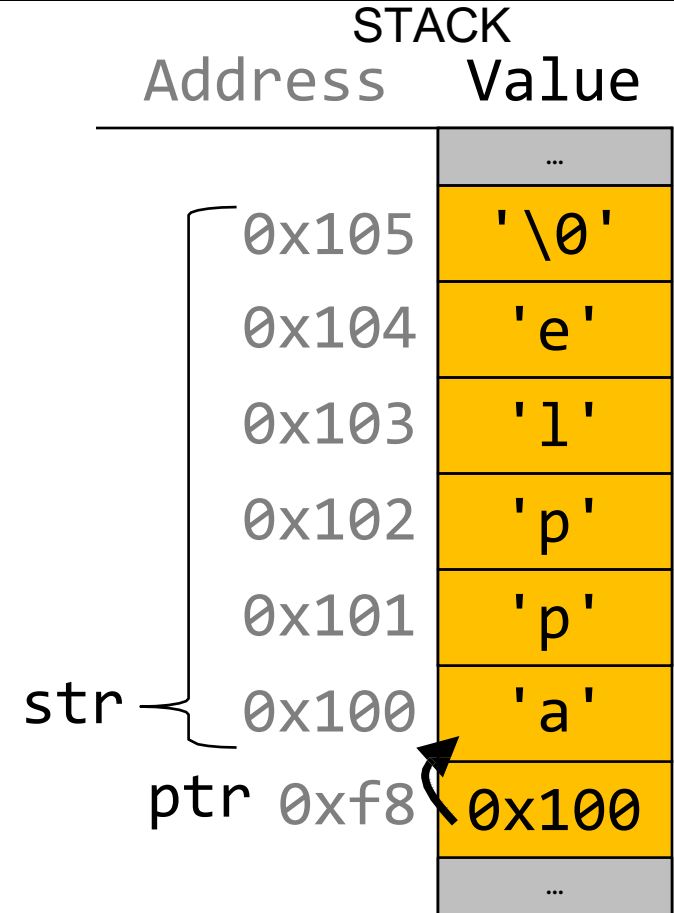
```
char *str = "apple";           // e.g. 0xffff0
char *str2 = "apple 2";       // e.g. 0xfe0
str = str2;                   // ok! Both store address 0xfe0
```

# Arrays and Pointers

We can also make a pointer equal to an array; it will point to the first element in that array.

```
int main(int argc, char *argv[]) {  
    char str[6];  
    strcpy(str, "apple");  
    char *ptr = str;  
    ...  
}
```

main()

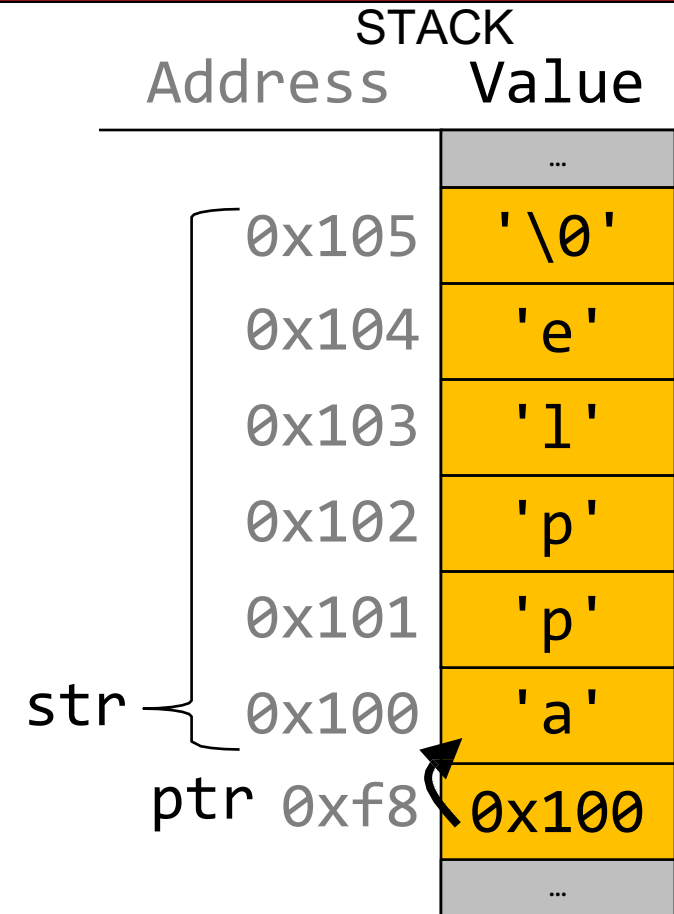


# Arrays and Pointers

We can also make a pointer equal to an array; it will point to the first element in that array.

```
int main(int argc, char *argv[]) {  
    char str[6];  
    strcpy(str, "apple");  
    char *ptr = str;  
  
    // equivalent  
    char *ptr = &str[0];  
  
    // confusingly equivalent, avoid  
    char *ptr = &str;  
    ...  
}
```

main()



**String Behavior #6:** Adding an offset to a C string gives us a substring that many places past the first character.

# Pointer Arithmetic

When we do pointer arithmetic, we are adjusting the pointer by a certain *number of places* (e.g. characters).

```
char *str = "apple"; // e.g. 0xff0
char *str2 = str + 1; // e.g. 0xff1
char *str3 = str + 3; // e.g. 0xff3

printf("%s", str); // apple
printf("%s", str2); // pple
printf("%s", str3); // le
```

TEXT SEGMENT	
Address	Value
	...
0xff5	'\0'
0xff4	'e'
0xff3	'l'
0xff2	'p'
0xff1	'p'
0xff0	'a'
	...

# char \*

When we use bracket notation with a pointer, we are performing *pointer arithmetic and dereferencing*:

```
char *str = "apple"; // e.g. 0xff0
```

```
// both of these add three places to str,  
// and then dereference to get the char there.  
// E.g. get memory at 0xff3.
```

```
char thirdLetter = str[3]; // 'l'
```

```
char thirdLetter = *(str + 3); // 'l'
```

TEXT SEGMENT	
Address	Value
	...
0xff5	'\0'
0xff4	'e'
0xff3	'l'
0xff2	'p'
0xff1	'p'
0xff0	'a'
	...

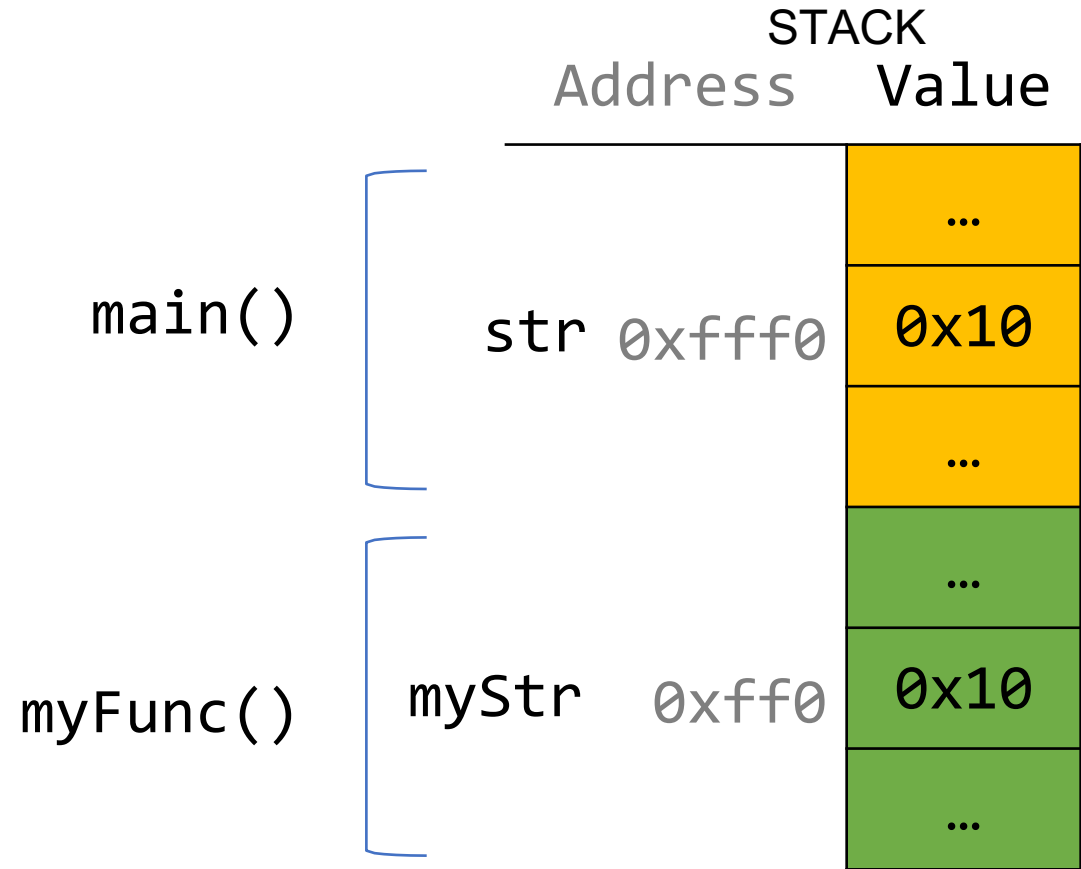


**String Behavior #7:** If we change characters in a string parameter, these changes will persist outside of the function.

# Strings as Parameters

When we pass a **char \*** string as a parameter, C makes a *copy* of the address stored in the **char \*** and passes it to the function. This means they both refer to the same memory location.

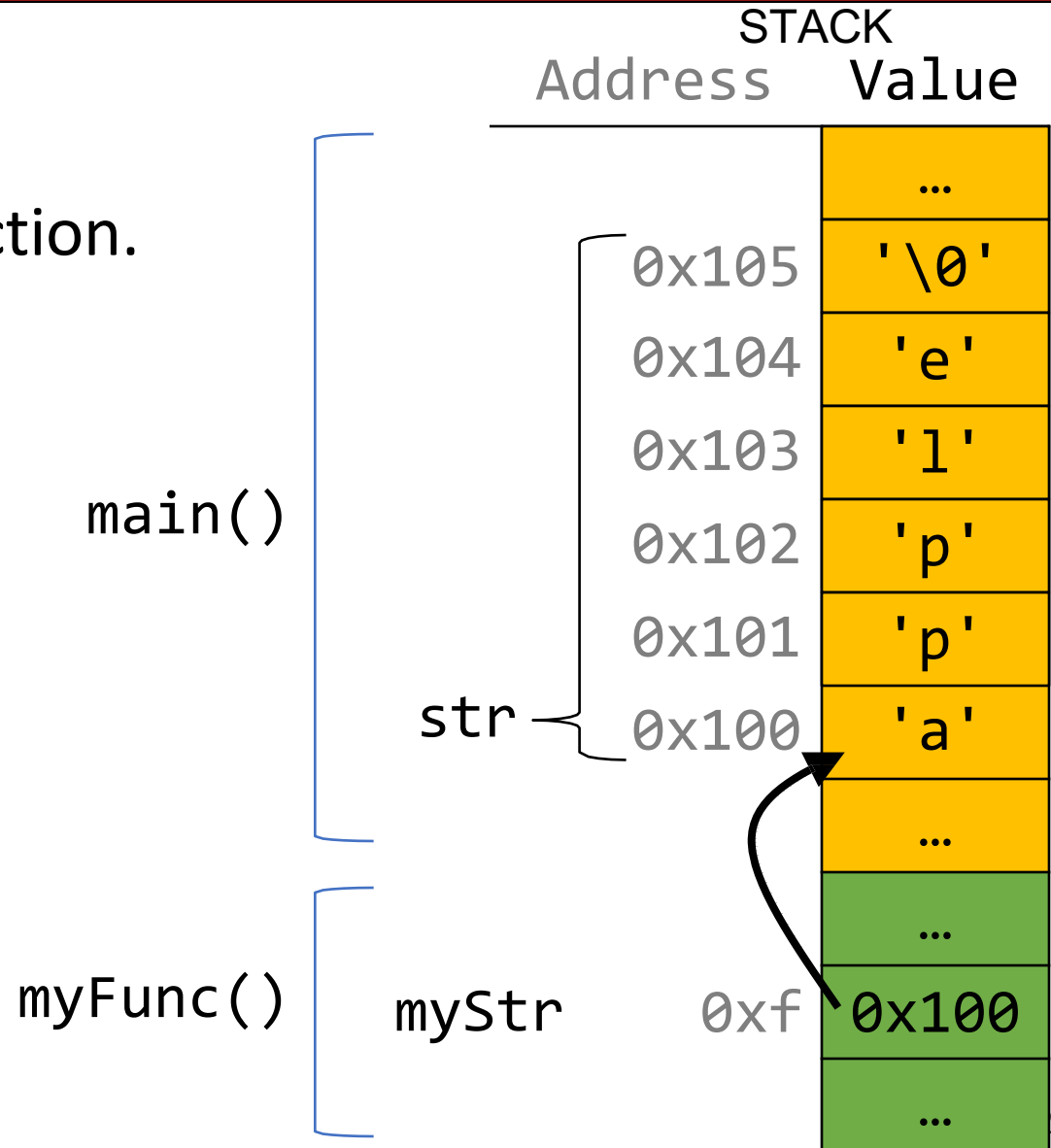
```
void myFunc(char *myStr) {  
    ...  
}  
  
int main(int argc, char *argv[]) {  
    char *str = "apple";  
    myFunc(str);  
    ...  
}
```



# Strings as Parameters

When we pass a **char array** as a parameter, C makes a *copy of the address of the first array element* and passes it (as a **char \***) to the function.

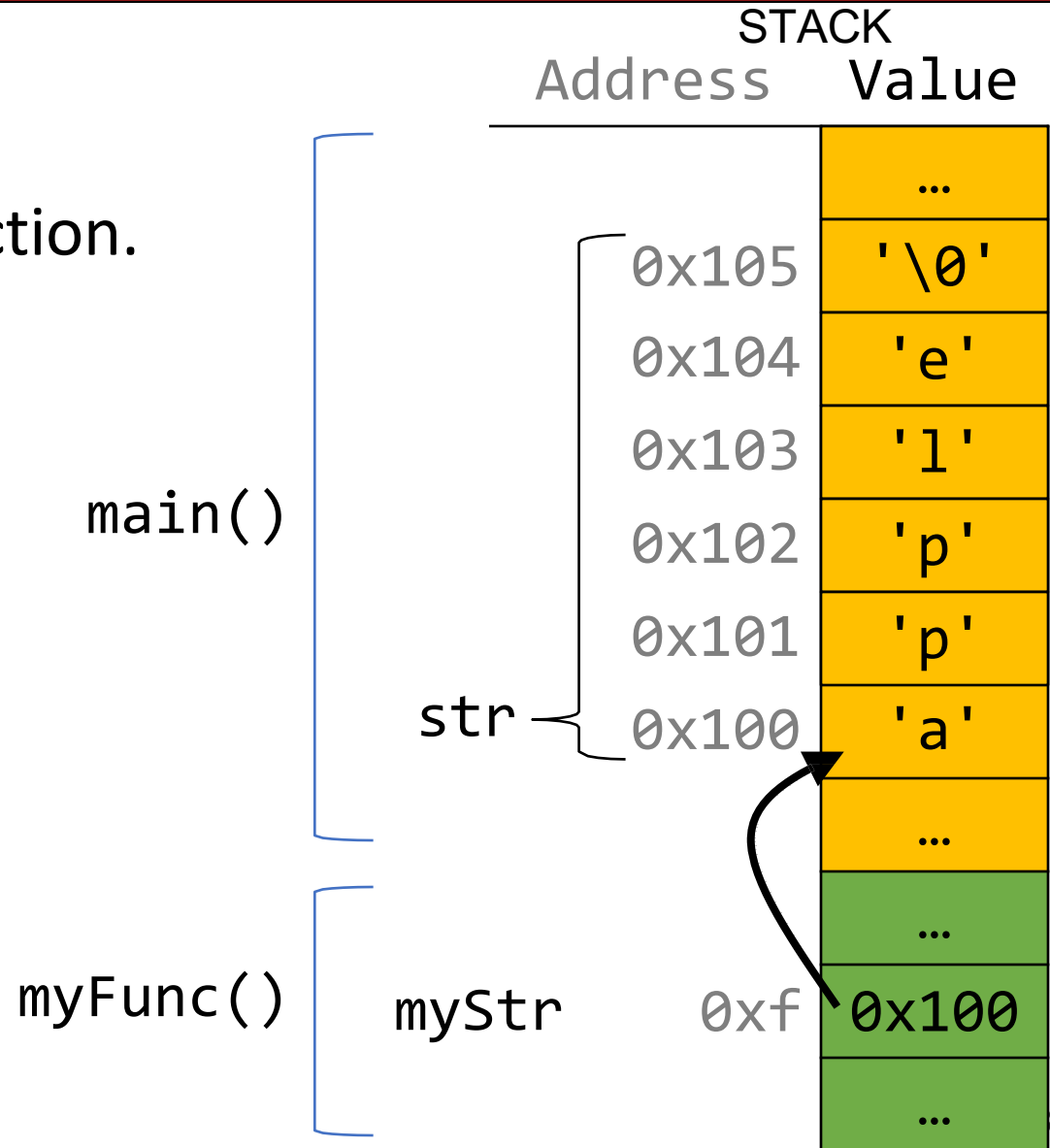
```
void myFunc(char *myStr) {  
    ...  
}  
  
int main(int argc, char *argv[]) {  
    char str[6];  
    strcpy(str, "apple");  
    myFunc(str);  
    ...  
}
```



# Strings as Parameters

When we pass a **char array** as a parameter, C makes a *copy of the address of the first array element* and passes it (as a **char \***) to the function.

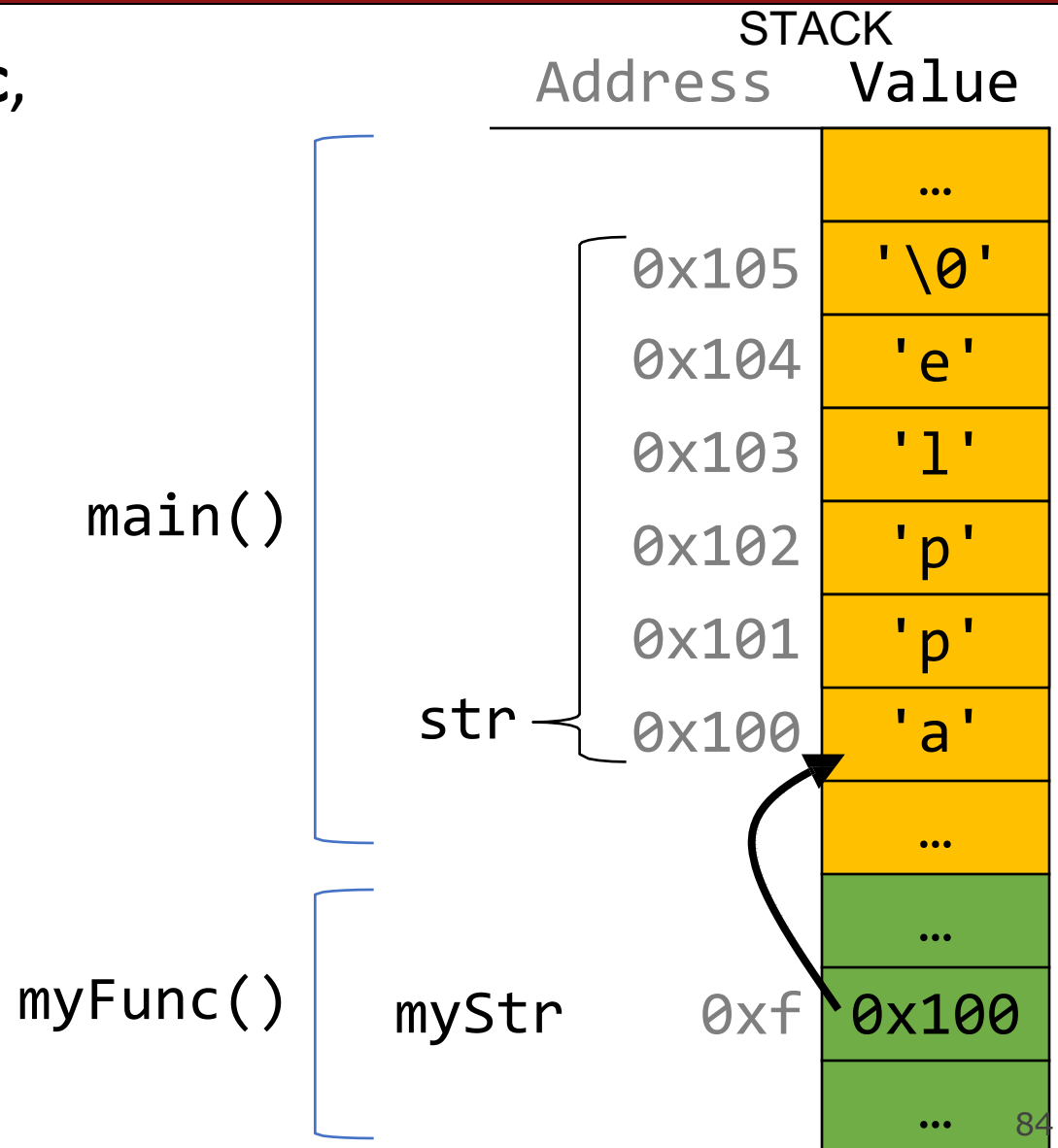
```
void myFunc(char *myStr) {  
    ...  
}  
  
int main(int argc, char *argv[]) {  
    char str[6];  
    strcpy(str, "apple");  
    // equivalent  
    char *strAlt = str;  
    myFunc(strAlt);  
    ...  
}
```



# Strings as Parameters

This means if we modify characters in **myFunc**, the changes will persist back in **main**!

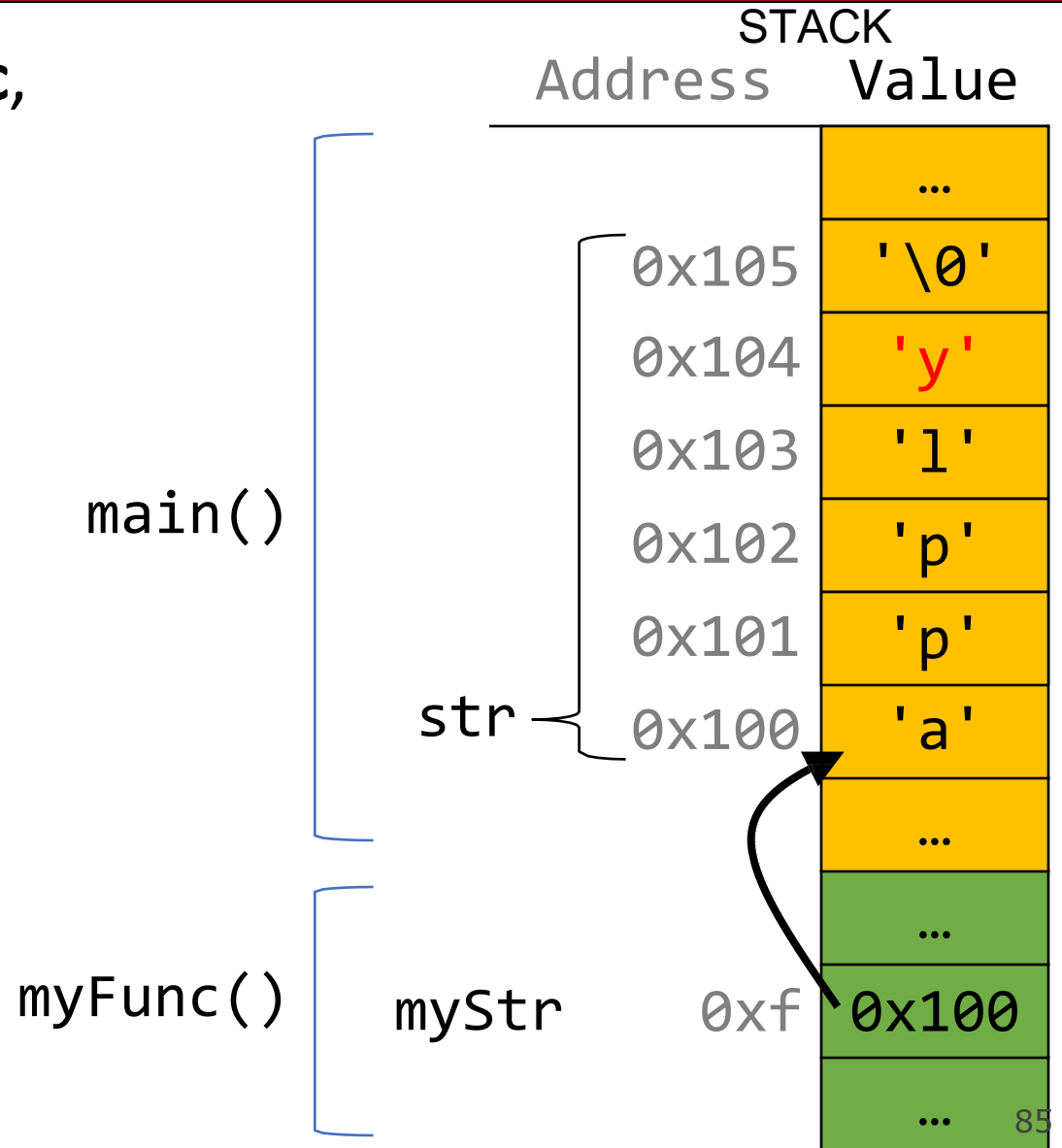
```
void myFunc(char *myStr) {  
    myStr[4] = 'y';  
}  
  
int main(int argc, char *argv[]) {  
    char str[6];  
    strcpy(str, "apple");  
    myFunc(str);  
    printf("%s", str); // apply  
    ...  
}
```



# Strings as Parameters

This means if we modify characters in **myFunc**, the changes will persist back in **main**!

```
void myFunc(char *myStr) {  
    myStr[4] = 'y';  
}  
  
int main(int argc, char *argv[]) {  
    char str[6];  
    strcpy(str, "apple");  
    myFunc(str);  
    printf("%s", str); // apply  
    ...  
}
```



# Strings In Memory

1. If we create a string as a **char[ ]**, we can modify its characters because its memory lives in our stack space.
2. We cannot set a **char[ ]** equal to another value, because it is not a pointer; it refers to the block of memory reserved for the original array.
3. If we pass a **char[ ]** as a parameter, set something equal to it, or perform arithmetic with it, it's automatically converted to a **char \***.
4. If we create a new string with new characters as a **char \***, we cannot modify its characters because its memory lives in the data segment.
5. We can set a **char \*** equal to another value, because it is a reassign-able pointer.
6. Adding an offset to a C string gives us a substring that many places past the first character.
7. If we change characters in a string parameter, these changes will persist outside of the function.

# Lecture Plan

• Searching in Strings	6
• <b>Practice:</b> Password Verification	13
• <b>Demo:</b> Buffer Overflow and Valgrind	16
• Pointers	19
• Strings in Memory	50
• <b>Security and Overflows</b>	<b>88</b>
• Live Session	110

```
cp -r /afs/ir/class/cs107/lecture-code/lect5 .
```



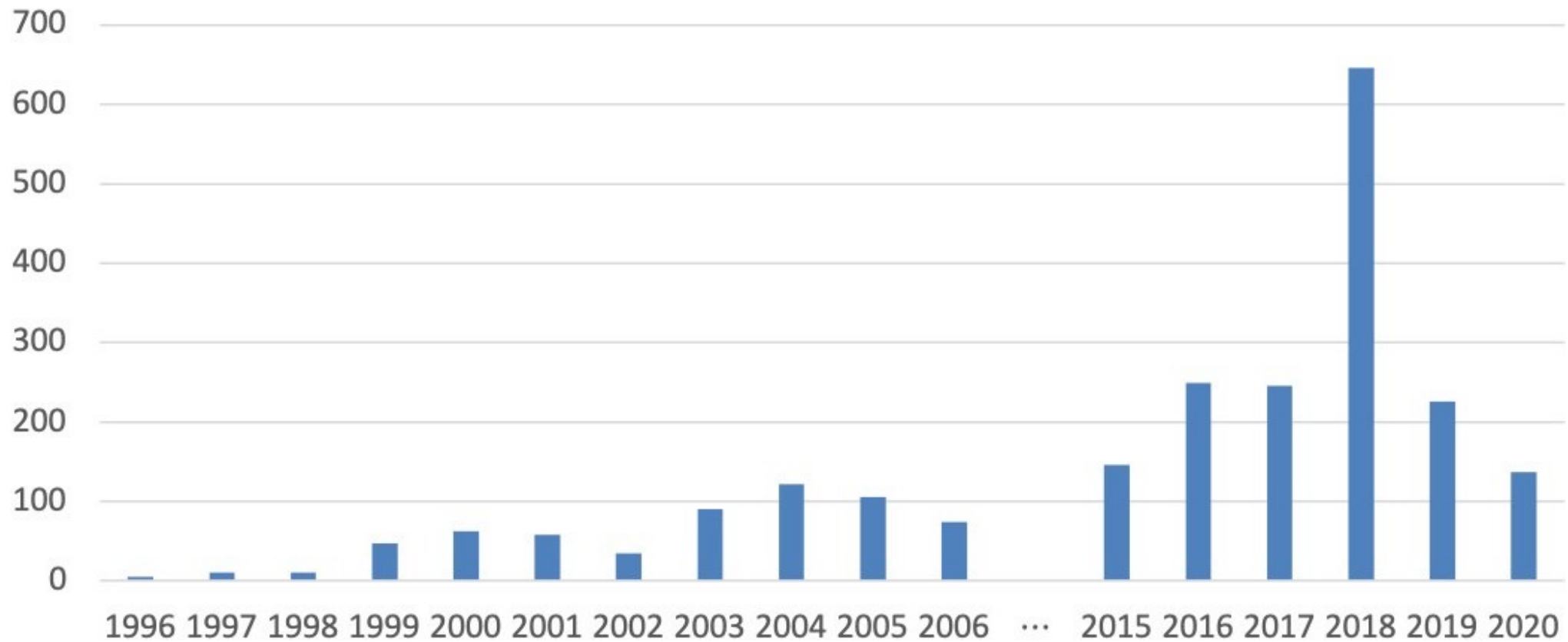
# Recall: Integer Overflow in Practice

- PSY – Gangnam Style
- The End of 32-bit Time aka January 13, 2038
- Gandhi in “Civilization”
- [Pacman Level 256](#)
- Make sure to reboot Boeing Dreamliners [every 248 days](#)
- Comair/Delta airline had to [cancel thousands of flights](#) days before Christmas
- [Reported vulnerability CVE-2019-3857](#) in libssh2 may allow a hacker to remotely execute code
- [Donkey Kong Kill Screen](#)

# Assignment 1: Ariane-5 Case Study

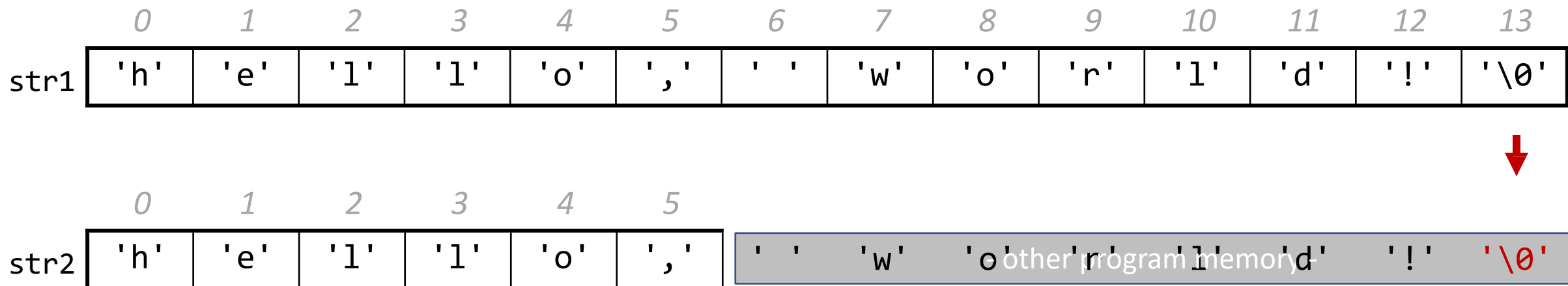


# Integer Overflow in the National Vulnerability Database

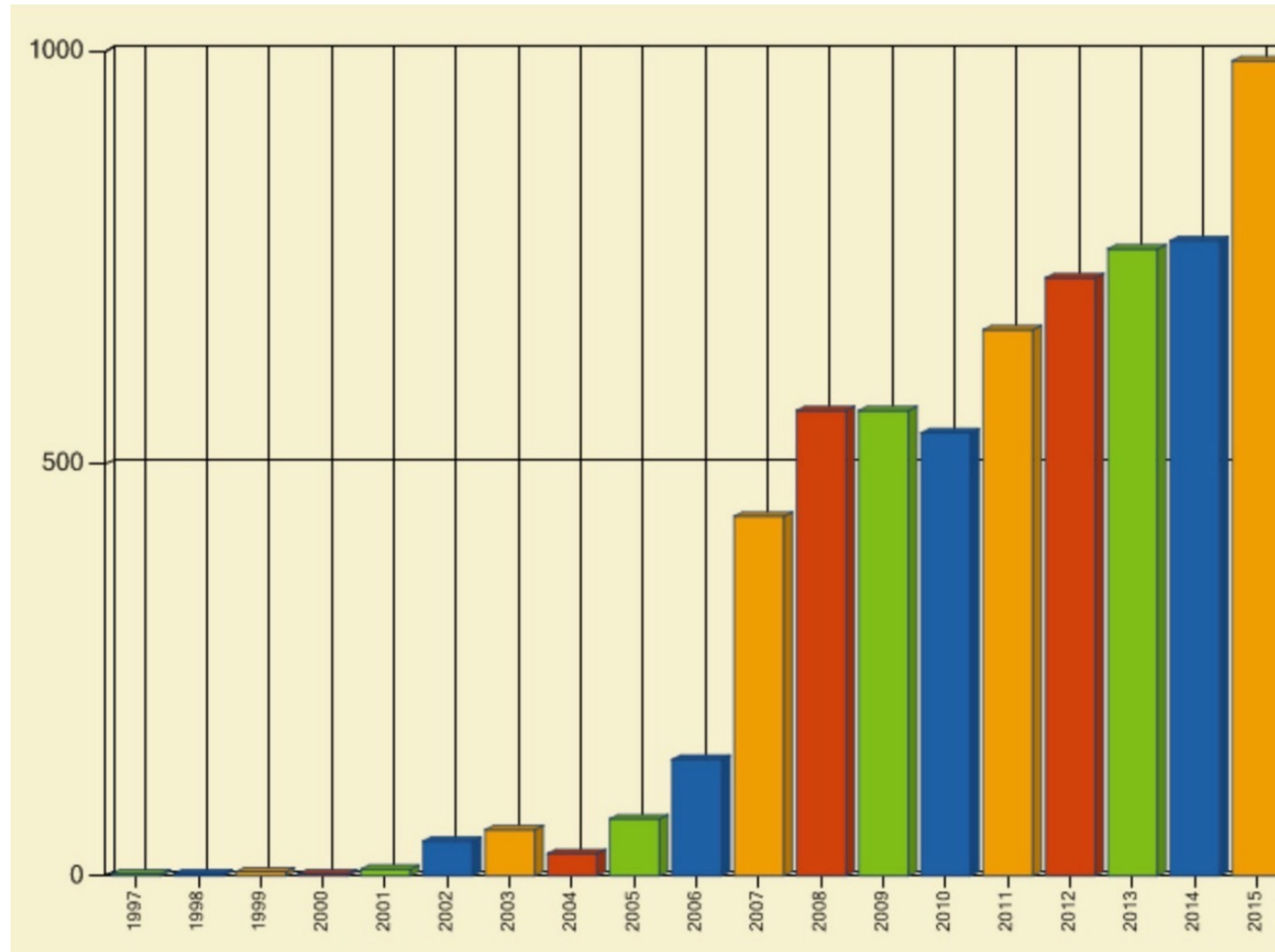


# Recall: Buffer Overflows

```
char str1[14];  
strcpy(str1, "hello, world!");  
char str2[6];  
strcpy(str2, str1); // not enough space - overwrites other  
memory!
```



# Buffer Overflow Vulnerabilities are Very Common



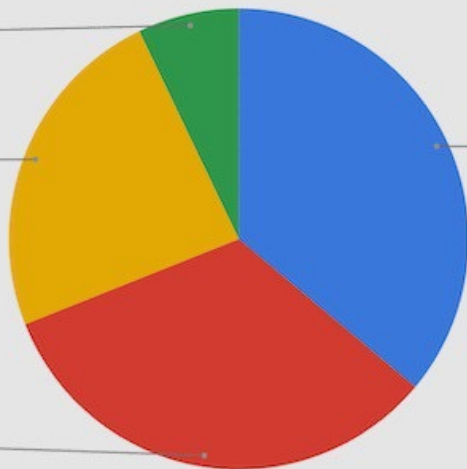
# ~70% of serious bugs for Chrome and Microsoft are related to memory safety

High+, impacting stable

Security-related assert  
7.1%

Other  
23.9%

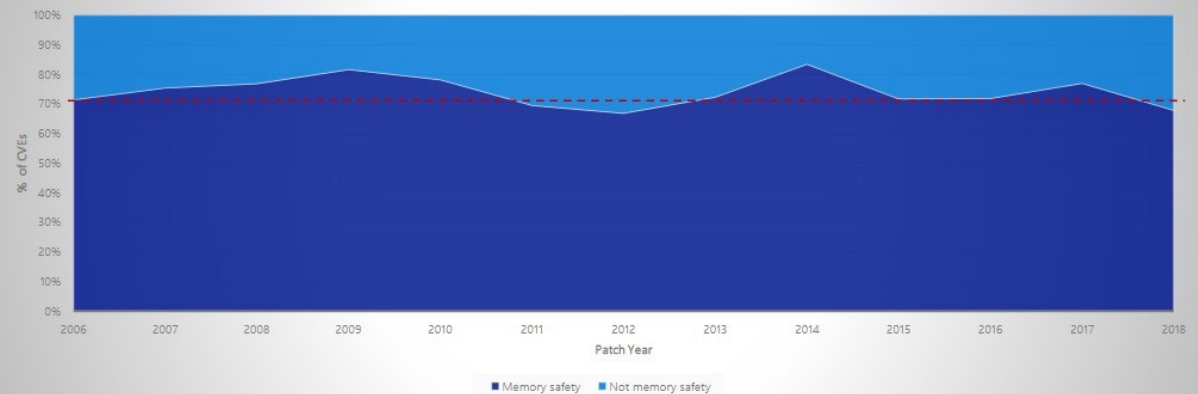
Other memory unsafety  
32.9%



Use-after-free  
36.1%

We closely study the root cause trends of vulnerabilities & search for patterns

% of memory safety vs. non-memory safety CVEs by patch year



Memory safety issues include buffer overflows ...

# How can we fix buffer overflows?

Idea 1: Constant Vigilance (While Programming)

- Check all buffers and trace their possible modifications

```
void printCapitalized(char *str1) {  
    // make a copy first  
    char buf[BUF_SIZE];  
    strcpy(buf, str1);  
    ...  
}
```

# How can we fix buffer overflows?

Idea 1: Constant Vigilance (While Programming)

- Check all buffers and trace their possible modifications
- Scrutinize functions that do not include bounds checking
  - common offenders include strcpy, printf, sprintf

```
int sprintf(char *str, const char *format, ...)
```



# How can we fix buffer overflows?

Idea 1: Constant Vigilance (While Programming)

- Check all buffers and trace their possible modifications
- Scrutinize functions that do not include bounds checking
  - Some library functions later deprecated for this reason

MAN page for `gets()`:

*“Never use `gets()`. Because it is impossible to tell without knowing the data in advance how many characters `gets()` will read, and because `gets()` will continue to store characters past the end of the buffer, it is extremely dangerous to use. It has been used to break computer security. Use `fgets()` instead.”*

# How can we fix buffer overflows?

## Idea 1: Constant Vigilance (While Programming)

- Check all buffers and trace their possible modifications
- Scrutinize functions that do not include bounds checking
- Consider use of strn- functions like strncpy
  - These functions will not write more than the size you specify
  - *However*, they do not ensure that strings are null-terminated
  - Use them, but use with care

# How can we fix buffer overflows?

Idea 1: Constant Vigilance (While Programming)

- Check all buffers and trace their possible modifications
- Scrutinize functions that do not include bounds checking
- Consider use of strn- functions like strncpy

Conclusion: Constant vigilance is necessary but not sufficient in the struggle to identify & fix buffer overflows

# How Can We Fix Overflows?

## Idea 2: Testing

- Valgrind: Your Greatest Ally
- Write your own tests
- Consider writing tests *before* writing the main program

✨ [cs107.stanford.edu/testing.html](https://cs107.stanford.edu/testing.html) ✨

# How Can We Fix Overflows?

## Idea 3: Documentation (Written by You)

- Document your assumptions about what will be stored in the buffer
- This will allow others (including your future self) to write better tests

# How Can We Fix Overflows?

## Idea 4: Documentation & MAN Pages (Written by Others)

“The `strcpy()` function copies the string pointed to by `src`, including the terminating null byte (`'\0'`), to the buffer pointed to by `dest`. The strings may not overlap, and the destination string must be large enough to receive the copy.

Beware of buffer overruns! (See BUGS.) ...

### BUGS

If the destination string of a `strcpy()` is not large enough, then anything might happen. Overflowing fixed-length string buffers is a favorite cracker technique for taking complete control of the machine. Any time a program reads or copies data into a buffer, the program first needs to check that there's enough space. This may be unnecessary if you can show that overflow is impossible, but be careful: programs can get changed over time, in ways that may make the impossible possible.”

# Memory Safe Systems Programming

## Idea 5: Choose your Tools & Languages Carefully

Existing code bases or requirements for a project may dictate what tools you use. Knowing C is crucial – it is and will remain widely used.

When you you are choosing tools for systems programming, consider languages that can help guard against programmer error.

- Rust (Mozilla)
- Go (Google)
- Project Verona (Microsoft)

# Why Should We Fix Overflows?

- Why should I fix overflows?
  - So that my program doesn't crash



# Why Should We Fix Overflows?

- Why should I fix overflows?
  - So that my program doesn't crash
  - So that my program works and accomplishes its goal

# Why Should We Fix Overflows?

- Why should I fix overflows?
  - So that my program doesn't crash
  - So that my program works and accomplishes its goal
- So that I can protect others who use and interact with my code
- So that I can be a good computer scientist

# Plan For Today

**Lecture 5 takeaway:** C strings are pointers and arrays; understanding how pointers and arrays work help us better understand C string behavior. C strings are error-prone, and issues like buffer overflows can arise!

# Review

- Parameters in C are passed by value; if we pass something as a parameter, we pass a copy of it
- Therefore, if a function tries to change the value of a parameter itself, this will always change its local copy, not the original:

```
void myFunc(SOME_TYPE param) {  
    param = ... // changes local copy  
    ...  
}  
  
int main(int argc, char *argv[])  
    { SOME_TYPE x = ...  
    myFunc(x);  
    // x will always be the same here  
    ...  
}
```

# Review

- If we wish to have another function modify some local variable, we must pass *its location* (address). Thus, we pass a copy of its address, not the value.
- The function can then dereference that address and modify what's there, and the changes will persist.

```
void myFunc(SOME_TYPE *param) {  
    *param = ... // changes original copy  
    ...  
}
```

```
int main(int argc, char *argv[])  
{ SOME_TYPE x = ...  
  myFunc(&x);  
  // x will be changed here  
  ...  
}
```

# Arrays vs. Pointers

- When you create an array, you are making space for each element in the array.
- When you create a pointer, you are making space for an 8 byte address.
- Arrays "decay to pointers" when you perform arithmetic or pass as parameters.
- You cannot set an array equal to something after initialization, but you can set a pointer equal to something at any time.
- `&arr` does nothing on arrays, but `&ptr` on pointers gets its address
- `sizeof(arr)` gets the size of an array in bytes, but `sizeof(ptr)` is always 8

# 1. Pointer arithmetic

```
1 void func(char *str) {
2     str[0] = 'S';
3     str++;
4     *str = 'u';
5     str = str + 3;
6     str[-2] = 'm';
7 }
8 int main(int argc, const char *argv[]) {
9     char buf[] = "Monday";
10    printf("before func: %s\n", buf);
11    func(buf);
12    printf("after  func: %s\n", buf);
13    return 0;
14 }
```

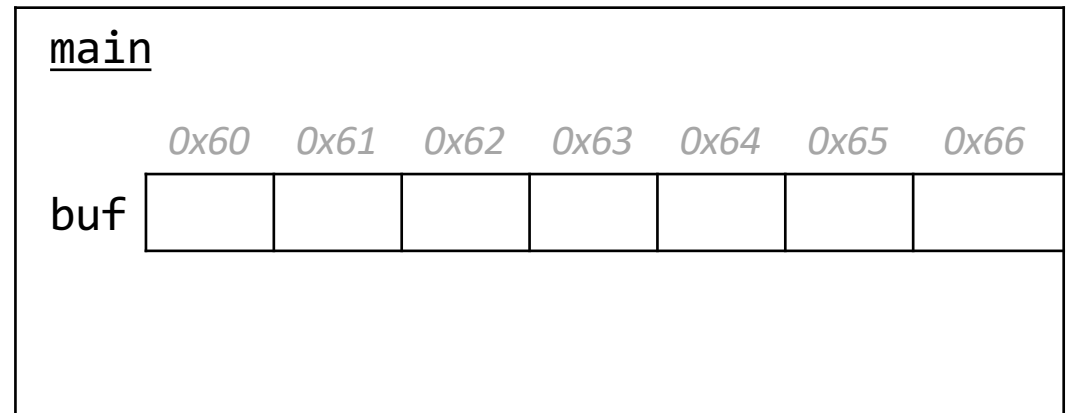
- Will there be a compile error/segfault?
- If no errors, what is printed?

- **Draw memory diagrams!**
- **Pointers** store addresses! Make up addresses if it helps your mental model.



# 1. Pointer arithmetic

```
1 void func(char *str) {
2     str[0] = 'S';
3     str++;
4     *str = 'u';
5     str = str + 3;
6     str[-2] = 'm';
7 }
8 int main(int argc, const char *argv[]) {
9     char buf[] = "Monday";
10    printf("before func: %s\n", buf);
11    func(buf);
12    printf("after  func: %s\n", buf);
13    return 0;
14 }
```



- Draw memory diagrams!
- Pointers store addresses! Make up addresses if it helps your mental model.



# 2. Code study: strncpy

STRCPY(3)

Linux Programmer's Manual

STRCPY(3)

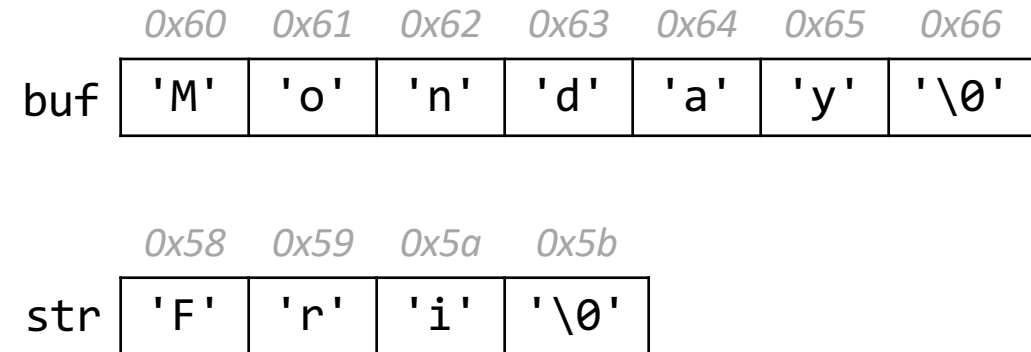
## DESCRIPTION

The `strncpy()` function is similar, except that at most `n` bytes of `src` are copied. **Warning:** If there is no null byte among the first `n` bytes of `src`, the string placed in `dest` will not be null-terminated.

If the length of `src` is less than `n`, `strncpy()` writes additional null bytes to `dest` to ensure that a total of `n` bytes are written.

A simple implementation of `strncpy()` might be:

```
1 char *strncpy(char *dest, const char *src, size_t n) {
2     size_t i;
3     for (i = 0; i < n && src[i] != '\0'; i++)
4         dest[i] = src[i];
5     for ( ; i < n; i++)
6         dest[i] = '\0';
7     return dest;
8 }
```



What happens if we call `strncpy(buf, str, 5);`?



# 2. Code study: strncpy

STRCPY(3)

Linux Programmer's Manual

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## DESCRIPTION

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A simple implementation of `strncpy()` might be:

```
1 char *strncpy(char *dest, const char *src, size_t n) {
2     size_t i;
3     for (i = 0; i < n && src[i] != '\0'; i++)
4         dest[i] = src[i];
5     for ( ; i < n; i++)
6         dest[i] = '\0';
7     return dest;
8 }
```

	0x60	0x61	0x62	0x63	0x64	0x65	0x66
buf	'M'	'o'	'n'	'd'	'a'	'y'	'\0'

	0x58	0x59	0x5a	0x5b
str	'F'	'r'	'i'	'\0'

dest	<input type="text"/>
src	<input type="text"/>
n	<input type="text" value="5"/>
i	<input type="text"/>

What happens if we call `strncpy(buf, str, 5);`?

# 3. char\* vs char[] exercises

Suppose we use a variable `str` as follows:

```
// initialize as below  
A. str = str + 1;  
B. str[1] = 'u';  
C. printf("%s", str)
```

For each of the following initializations:

- Will there be a compile error/segfault?
- If no errors, what is printed?

1. `char str[7];`  
`strcpy(str, "Hello1");`

2. `char *str = "Hello2";`

3. `char arr[7];`  
`strcpy(arr, "Hello3");`  
`char *str = arr;`

4. `char *ptr = "Hello4";`  
`char *str = ptr;`



# 3. char\* vs char[] exercises

Suppose we use a variable `str` as follows:

```
// initialize as below  
A. str = str + 1;  
B. str[1] = 'u';  
C. printf("%s", str)
```

For each of the following initializations:

- Will there be a compile error/segfault?
- If no errors, what is printed?

1. `char str[7];`  
`strcpy(str, "Hello1");`

Line A: Compile error  
(cannot reassign array)

2. `char *str = "Hello2";`

Line B: Segmentation fault  
(string literal)

3. `char arr[7];`  
`strcpy(arr, "Hello3");`  
`char *str = arr;`

Prints `eulo3`

4. `char *ptr = "Hello4";`  
`char *str = ptr;`

Line B: Segmentation fault  
(string literal)

# 4. Bonus: Tricky addresses

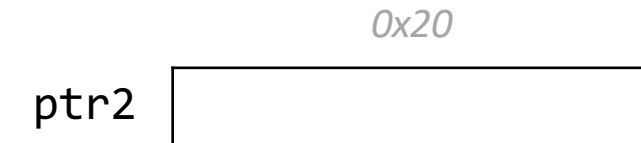
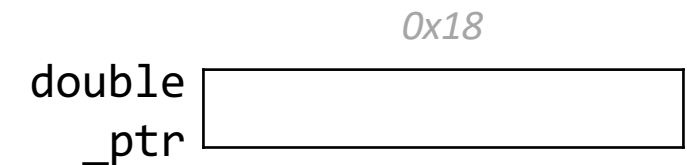
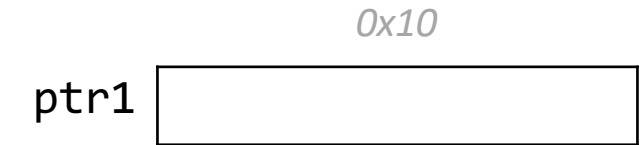
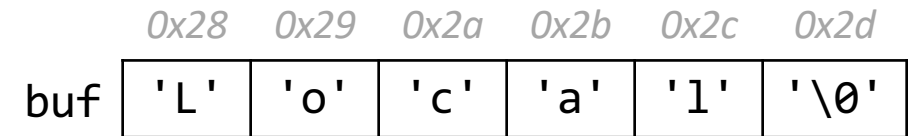
```
1 void tricky_addresses() {
2     char buf[] = "Local";
3     char *ptr1 = buf;
4     char **double_ptr = &ptr1;
5     printf("ptr1's value:      %p\n", ptr1);
6     printf("ptr1's deref      : %c\n", *ptr1);
7     printf("          address:   %p\n", &ptr1);
8     printf("double_ptr value: %p\n", double_ptr);
9     printf("buf's address:     %p\n", &buf);
10
11     char *ptr2 = &buf;
12     printf("ptr2's value:      %s\n", ptr2);
13 }
```

What is stored in each variable? (We cover double pointers more in Lecture 6)



# 4. Bonus: Tricky addresses

```
1 void tricky_addresses() {
2   char buf[] = "Local";
3   char *ptr1 = buf;
4   char **double_ptr = &ptr1;
5   printf("ptr1's value:      %p\n", ptr1);
6   printf("ptr1's deref      : %c\n", *ptr1);
7   printf("          address:   %p\n", &ptr1);
8   printf("double_ptr value: %p\n", double_ptr);
9   printf("buf's address:     %p\n", &buf);
10
11   char *ptr2 = &buf;
12   printf("ptr2's value:      %s\n", ptr2);
13 }
```



While Line 10 raises a compiler warning, functionally it will still work—because pointers are **addresses**.