Computer Security
ENEE 657

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What are the odds that you will get hacked tomorrow?
How Vulnerable Are You To Malware?

• We systematically measured amount of malware on 4 million hosts in 44 countries

• Top 5:
  – South Korea, India, Saudi Arabia, China, Malaysia, Russia

• United States: 10th safest

Range of adversary capabilities
Perceived vs. objective security

Understanding Computer Security

Security Measurements + Inference and Prediction + (Adversarial) Machine Learning
About Your Instructor

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My Story

• 2000s: Carnegie Mellon University
  – Ph.D. in distributed systems

• 2010: Symantec Research Labs

• Since 2013: UMD
  – Maryland Cybersecurity Center (MC2)
ENEE 657 in a Nutshell

• ENEE 657 is a graduate-level security course
  – Learn by reading, explaining and doing
  – Project oriented: develop to a degree that would merit publication in one of the workshops associated with the USENIX Security Symposium 2020

• Aims to prepare you for research in security
  – Not a tutorial or comprehensive course on these topics
  – Instead, exploring a range of topics to illustrate some of the current research challenges
  – Targeted at students who want to conduct research in the area or who are more generally interested in security as it applies to their fields

Who Can You Trust?

• Where is the request “from”?
  – The user? The workstation? The application? The network channel? All of the above?
  – Which of these actors do you trust?
Ken Thompson

ACM Turing Award, 1983

“Reflections on Trusting Trust”

• What software can we trust?

• Example: any operating system includes a program checking whether users are allowed to log in
  – "login" or "su" in Unix
  – Is the login binary from Windows/Mac OS/Ubuntu/etc. trustworthy?
  – Does it send your password to someone?
  – Does it have backdoor for a “special” remote user?

• Can’t trust the binary, so check source code or write your own, recompile

• Does this solve problem?
“Reflections on Trusting Trust” – cont’d

• Who wrote the compiler?

• Compiler looks for source code that looks like the login process, inserts backdoor into it

• Ok, inspect the source code of the compiler... Looks good? Recompile the compiler!

• Does this solve the problem?

```
... c = next( );
if(c != '"
    return(c);
    c = next( );
if(c == '
        return('"
    if(c== 'n')
        return('n');
    if(c == 'v')
        return('v');
    ...
```

“Reflections on Trusting Trust” – cont’d

• The UNIX login program is compiled by a C compiler
  – The C compiler was also compiled by an (older) C compiler
• Aside: how does the compiler handle special characters?

```
... c = next( );
if(c != '"
    return(c);
    c = next( );
if(c == '
        return('"
    if(c== 'n')
        return('n');
    if(c == 'v')
        return('v');
    ...
```

In future versions of the compiler: use the special character

When adding a new special character to the C language, must specify the character code
“Reflections on Trusting Trust” – cont’d

• The compiler is written in C ...

```c
compiler(S) {
    if (match(S, "login-pattern")) {
        compile (login-backdoor)
        return
    }
    if (match(S, "compiler-pattern")) {
        compile (compiler-backdoor)
        return
    }
    .... /* compile as usual */
}
```

In future versions of the compiler: the backdoor no longer appears in the source code.

“Reflections on Trusting Trust” – cont’d

“The moral is obvious. You can't trust code that you did not totally create yourself. (Especially code from companies that employ people like me.)”
Range of Adversary Capabilities

- **Attack targets**: clients, servers, networks, applications, users

- Example **attack methods**:
  - **End-hosts (or devices)**: install malware
  - **LAN**: read, replay, insert, delete, block messages
  - **Internet**: send spam, conduct distributed denial of service attacks
  - **Applications**: exploit vulnerabilities
  - **Data**: steal/corrupt secret data, plant invalid data
  - **Users**: conduct social engineering attacks

Aside: Is Hardware Secure?

- **Malicious device firmware**
  - Some HW functionality is actually implemented in SW
  - Do you trust device firmware to come from legitimate vendor?
  - Is firmware free of vulnerabilities?

- **Malicious hardware**
  - HW is as complex as SW and is designed using SW tools
  - Do you know where each HW component comes from?
  - Can you authenticate your HW?
  - Could the CAD tools have introduced a backdoor (HW trojan)?
Cybercrime in the Real World

- Botnets
  - Worker bots running in the background on millions of compromised hosts
  - Bot master sending instructions to worker bots via command & control nodes
  - Possible instructions: propagate, send spam, conduct DDoS, mine Bitcoin

- Pay-per-Install (PPI)
  - “Affiliate” programs rewarding miscreants for installing malware on end-hosts
  - Useful for bootstrapping botnets, sending spam, staging denial of service attacks, performing click fraud, hosting scam websites

- Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS)
  - Instruct a botnet to direct a large amount of traffic to the target
  - Leverage protocols that can amplify traffic (e.g. NTP, DNS)

Desirable Security Properties

- Authenticity
- Confidentiality
- Integrity
- Availability
- Accountability and non-repudiation
- Access control
- Privacy
...
Correctness versus Security

• System **correctness**: system satisfies specification
  – For reasonable input, get reasonable output

• System **security**: system properties preserved in face of attack
  – For unreasonable input, output not completely disastrous

• Main difference: intelligent adversary trying to subvert system and to evade defensive techniques

Have You Ever Given/Received Security Advice?

Did it improve security?
To Patch Or Not To Patch?

• Common advice:
  – **Educate** users about the importance of patching software vulnerabilities

![Bar Chart]


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**Security Advice:** Perceived effectiveness ≠ Actual effectiveness

ENEE 657 Logistics

ENEE 657 In A Nutshell

• Course objectives
  – Gain thorough grounding in computer security
    • Understand attacks and defenses
    • Learn to reason about their effectiveness in the real world
  – Prepare you to collaborate with security researchers
    • Think critically about recent advances in security
    • Learn how to discuss security topics intelligently

• What ENEE 657 is not
  – A course on cryptography
  – A course on theoretical security
ENEE 657 Course Content

• Topics
  – Fundamental security principles
    • Vulnerability exploits and defenses against exploitation
    • Privilege separation
    • Confinement
  – Security measurements (on global scale)
    • Why it’s (still) hard to detect malware
    • How cryptography fails in practice
  – Making security predictions (with machine learning)
    • Vulnerability exploitation
    • Data breaches
  – Security of machine learning
    • Evasion attacks
    • Poisoning attacks

• This is a systems-oriented course
  – Semester-long project: substantial programming component
  – Project goal: depth and quality adequate for publication in a workshop at USENIX Security

This is a Graduate Course

• Learning the material in this course requires participation
  – This is not a sit-back-and-listen kind of course
  – Understanding the assigned readings is required for understanding the topics
  – In-class discussions are part of your grade

• You are responsible for holding up your end of the educational bargain
  – I expect you to attend classes and to complete reading assignments
  – I expect you to try things out for yourself
  – I expect you to know how to find research literature on security topics
    • The required readings provide starting points
  – I expect you to manage your time
    • In general there will be assignments due before each lecture
Homeworks

- Goal: refresh background material
  - Buffer overflow
  - Data analytics

- First homework
  - Will introduce the material on Wednesday
  - Homework will be due on September 6th

Reading Assignments

- Readings: 1-2 papers before each lecture
  - Not light reading – some papers require several readings to understand
  - Check course web page (still in flux) for next readings and links to papers

- Paper critiques: post a critique of each paper on Piazza
  - Provide feedback on at least 2 critiques from other students, to start the debate
  - More on this later

- In-class paper discussions: debate contributions and weaknesses
  - Structured discussion, inspired by competitive debating
  - Open discussion with whole class afterward
  - More on this later

- Discussion summaries: scribe posts summary to Piazza
  - More on this later
Course Projects

• **Pilot project**: two-week individual projects
  - Goal is to create a proof of concept
  - Propose projects by September 9th
  - Submit report by September 23rd
  - Peer reviews: provide feedback (on Piazza) for at least 2 project reports from other students

• **Group project**: ten-week group project
  - Deeper investigation of promising approaches
  - Submit written report and present findings during last week of class
  - 2 checkpoints along the way (schedule on the course web page)
  - Form teams and propose projects by September 30th

Pre-Requisite Knowledge

• Good programming skills

• Ability to come up to speed on advanced security topics
  - Basic knowledge of security (CMSC 414, ENEE 457 or equivalent) is a plus
    • The first module ('Fundamental principles') will provide some basic background
  - The assigned readings provide the content of interest

• Ability to come up to speed on data analytics
  - Several readings will provide good examples of measurement studies
    • Understand these techniques and apply them in your projects!
Policies

• “Showing up is 80% of life” – Woody Allen
  – You can get an “A” with a few missed assignments, but reserve these for emergencies (conference trips, waking up sick, etc.)
  – Notify the instructor if you need to miss a class, and submit your assignment on time

• UMD’s Code of Academic Integrity applies, modified as follows:
  – Complete your critiques entirely on your own. After you hand in your critiques, you are welcome (and encouraged) to discuss them with others
  – Discuss the problems and concepts involved in the project and homeworks, but produce your own implementations
  • Group projects are the result of team work
  • You can post code snippets on Piazza (e.g. to ask a question), but don’t post the whole program listing

• See class web site for the official version

Grading Criteria

• Components of the grade
  – 5% Background homework
  – 25% Written paper critiques
  – 30% Participation (in-class discussion, contributions to topic summaries)
  – 40% Projects
  – 10% Potential bonus points

• Expectations
  – You must do all the required readings
  – You can explain the contributions and weaknesses of the papers you read
  – You produce a working implementation for your project, and you must understand how the implementation works
Review of Lecture

• What did we learn?
  – Determining whether we can trust software is a tricky business
  – Methods and motivations of attackers
  – Perceived security != Objective security
    • "If you cannot measure it, you cannot improve it" – Lord Thompson

• I want to emphasize
  – This is systems course, not a pen-and-paper course
  – You will be expected to build a real, working, system

• What’s next?
  – Reading assignment: Saltzer and Schroeder (see http://ter.ps/enee657)
  – Memory corruption and vulnerability exploits