

Course Overview

Security (CT0657) 2026-27

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Objectives

Security (CT0657)

<https://www.unive.it/data/course/521675/programma>

This course aims at providing:

- knowledge of **attack** and **defence** techniques related to program exploitation, system, network and web security
- skills related to securing **real** systems and networks, developed through **practical exercises**

Programme

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<https://www.unive.it/data/course/521675/programma>

1. Background and tools
2. Program analysis
3. Program exploitation
4. System and network security
5. Web security (server side)
6. Web security (client side)

Material

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<https://www.unive.it/data/course/521675/programma>

- Course **official website** (with slides and on-line material):

<https://moodle.unive.it/course/view.php?id=26467>

- The course is mainly based on on-line material
For program exploitation you can refer to J. Erickson,
Hacking, the art of exploitation,
No starch press, 2008

Assessment

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<https://www.unive.it/data/course/521675/programma>

Written test (base mark)

Non-mandatory **assignments** (extra score)

- *Challenges* on attacking and securing IT systems and networks
- Bonus score with respect to the mark of the written test

Lab

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<https://www.unive.it/data/course/521675/programma>

Course is based on many practical examples and exercises

We will provide **docker containers** that can be run under Linux, Windows, Mac

Identical “[testbeds](#)” independently of the host operating system

- either [install docker](#)
- or use [Linux VM with docker](#)

Background and tools

1. Unix shell
2. sed and regular expressions
3. Python

Unix shell

Unix shell allows for **quickly** automating interaction with processes and data

Knowing the shell helps **understanding** interaction with programs (processes)

We revise basic Unix shell commands and concepts

Unix shell is the **simplest interface** to the operating systems

- **Execute** programs
- **Redirect** input/output
- **Connect** programs together
- Run **scripts**

We focus on **bash** (Bourne-again shell, pronounced *born-again*), successor of Bourne's shell **sh**

Basic commands (1)

ls: shows the **content** of current directory. -l displays long format; -a displays hidden (dot) files

file filename: shows the **type** of file named filename

pwd: (print working directory) shows the **path** of current working directory

mkdir name: creates a **new directory** in the current working one

cd path: (change directory) moves working directory to path

cat file: shows file **content**

cat f1 f2 f3: displays the **concatenation** of f1 f2 f3

echo "hello": prints "hello"

grep word file: looks for word in file and prints lines that contain it

Basic commands (2)

man command: shows command **man** **page**. Arrows up and down navigate, q exits, / searches (n next hit, N previous hit)

find path expression: looks for files in path (recursively) **matching** the specified expression

Ex.: `find / -name "*.c" -print`
prints all the file that ends with .c

sort file: **sort** lines of a text file

strings file: find printable **strings** in a (binary) file

Example:

```
$ strings /usr/bin/passwd | grep changed
password for '%s' changed by '%s'
%s: password expiry information changed.
passwd: password unchanged
$
```

Wildcards

***** : Matches any string, including the null string

? : Matches any single character

[...] : Matches any one of the enclosed characters; a pair of characters separated by a hyphen denotes a **range** expression

```
$ ls test[0-9].???  
test1.txt  test2.txt
```

NOTE: '.' at the start of a filename or immediately following a slash must be matched explicitly, unless the shell option **dotglob** is set

```
$ ls *bash*  
ls: cannot access '*bash*' ...  
$ ls .bash*  
.bash_logout  .bashrc  
$ shopt -s dotglob  
$ ls *bash*  
.bash_logout  .bashrc
```

Input from terminal

A typical behaviour of Unix shell commands is to **take input from the user** when no file is specified

ctrl-D is interpreted as End-of-File (EOF) and terminates the program

Example 1:

```
$ cat
Hello this is a test
Hello this is a test
(ctrl-D terminates)
$
```

Example 2 (grep):

```
$ grep work
I'm checking what happens when
grep is run without specifying
a filename!
How does this work?
How does this work?
ah: matching line are printed
out as expected!
(ctrl-D terminates)
$
```

Redirection

Fundamental Unix shell mechanism to **redirect** program input and output from/to a file

When output is **redirected to** a file (**symbol >**) any output from the program will be written to the file

When input is **redirected from** a file (**symbol <**) the content of the file will be sent as input to the program

Examples:

ls > tmpfile: write the content of the current folder into file tmpfile.
Check with `cat tmpfile`

grep shell < tmpfile: redirects the content of the file to the grep command.

NOTE: The behaviour is the same as **grep shell tmpfile**

Redirection (examples, see also [here](#))

With symbol **>>** we can **append** output to an existing file:

date >> tmpfile: appends current date to file tmpfile

Note: overwriting is done **silently** so be careful when using redirection with a single **>**

date > tmpfile: overwrites!

What happens if we redirect the output of a command that takes input from the terminal?

Example (cat):

```
$ cat > test.txt
Hello this is a test
of two lines
(ctrl-D)
$
```

⇒ input is written into file test.txt!

Redirecting stdout or stderr

In Unix there are **three** separate input/output streams:

- **stdin (0)**: standard input, where the program takes input
- **stdout (1)**: standard output, the normal program output
- **stderr (2)**: standard error, where the program prints error

1> and **2>** respectively redirect stdout and stderr

Example (hide errors):

```
$ ls
test1.txt  test2.txt
$ cat test*
cat: test1.txt: Permission denied
This is readable
$ cat test* 2> /dev/null
This is readable
$ cat test* 1> /dev/null
cat: test1.txt: Permission denied
```

Pipes

Fundamental mechanism for process **communication** in Unix

Similar to redirection but works between **two programs**

Channel between processes: a process can **write** to the pipe and another one can **read** from it

⇒ **combine** commands conveniently

In the Unix Shell, pipes are specified using symbol |

`cmd1 | cmd2 | ... | cmdn`,
executes all commands and the output of each command i is given as input to the next command $i+1$

The output of the last command is printed on the terminal

Pipes (examples, see also [here](#))

ls | grep test: shows all file names that contain word test

ls | grep test | sort -r: as before but file names are sorted in reverse alphabetical order (option -r). Notice that in this case we have three programs cooperating together;

ls | grep test | grep txt: shows all file names that contain both test and txt

Example:

```
$ ls | grep test | sort -r
test3.html
test2.txt
test1.txt
test.html
```

```
$ ls | grep test | grep txt
test1.txt
test2.txt
```

The Bandit wargame

Now you can **refine your shell skills**
solving levels (up to 9) of Bandit wargame:

<https://overthewire.org/wargames/bandit/>