Project Proposal Guidelines

Submit your project proposals in PostScript, PDF, or MS Word format to 6857-submit@csail.mit.edu before lecture on the due date. We have provided templates for \LaTeX{} and Microsoft Word on the course website. Mark the top of each sheet with the names of your project group, the course number (6.857), and the date. Note that this assignment is to be completed with your project group (rather than your homework group, if they differ), which should consist of three or four people.

You are to submit a project proposal of approximately three pages. In it, describe:

- The topic you have chosen.
- A moderately detailed sketch of what you plan to do. This can change some, but you should have a pretty good idea of what sort of thing you would like to do. Describe whether your project is an implementation, a theoretical study, a design for some security system or protocol, etc., and details about your intended method of approach. What aspects of security are you focusing on? How are you going to investigate? If you are going to analyze data, what kind of tests or analysis will you perform, and what are you looking for? If you are going to implement a system, how (and will it be a full system or just a model)? If you are going to make a design, what aspects of the design will you focus on (and which will you ignore)?
- A timeline with major milestones of your project.
- A division of labor: which group member is responsible for what.
- If your project requires access to any resources you might need help in obtaining. We might be able to help you obtain them, or help you choose a different topic if your original idea is infeasible.
- Literature references that you think will be useful. You should attempt to list the all of the most important references you know about, so that we can suggest others. This isn’t a comprehensive bibliography, but try to have at least eight sources.

You can view this proposal as a bit like the introduction to your final paper (indeed, it can be revised and used as such).

A few things to think about:

- Many students try to do projects that are too ambitious. Try to estimate realistically how much time your project will take. We want the projects to be challenging and interesting (and appropriately hard for a three-to-four-person group), but manageable. The course staff might be able to advise you on this upon receiving your proposal, but start thinking about it now.
- Think about what you can do if you are unable to complete your intended project. Some projects can be scaled back easily. However, if you intend to look for a vulnerability in an existing system (for example), what will you do if you cannot find one?
- If you have any questions regarding ethics or legalities of a possible project, please contact the course staff as soon as possible to see if it is appropriate for this class.