

# Blue Team Module 1:

## Introduction to Networking with Netcat and Wireshark

By: Andrew Kerr <[www.andrewjkerr.com](http://www.andrewjkerr.com)>

### Introduction

The Internet is one of my favorite places. You can read news, keep in touch with friends, and, most importantly, laugh at doge memes. But, how exactly does the Internet work? In this module, we'll take a look at some of the underlying technologies that make the Internet function as well as some of the tools that we can use to interact and analyze those technologies.

### Module

#### OSI Model

Perhaps the best place to start to understand networking is the OSI model. While the OSI model is just a conceptual model, the abstraction layers allow for a basic understanding of the communication system that the internet uses. Figure 1 below presents the seven layers along with examples of each.

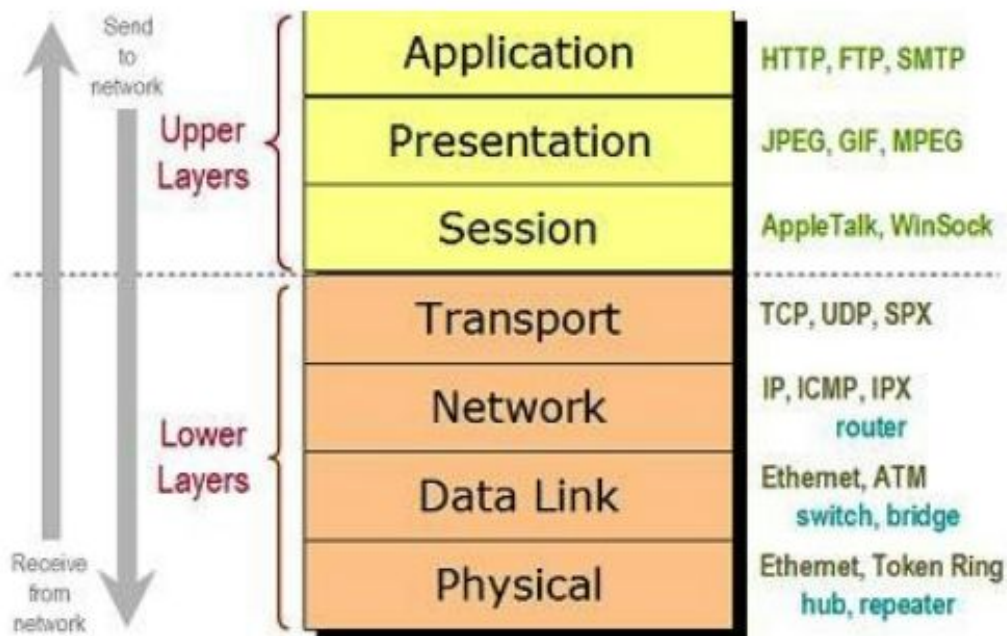


Figure 1: The OSI Model (image source: about.com)

While it is important to have a fundamental understanding of all seven layers, for the purpose of this module, we will be focusing on the Transport and Network layers.

## IP Packets

Like we learned last week, computers can only understand 1s and 0s. So, when we send data from one computer to another, we need to figure out how to break up the data and make sure that all of the data actually gets there - we don't want an email that's missing an entire sentence!

In older dial-up systems, the modems used something like morse code to send data. How it would work is that the 1s and 0s were translated into sounds, like in morse code, that the phone lines could easily send and the modem would decode the tones as a 1 or a 0. Pretty neat huh?

Today, we thankfully don't use sounds or dial-up, but we still have to use 1s and 0s in order for the computer to understand the data that we're sending/receiving. And, since we're sending massive amounts of data, the issue of breaking up the data and delivering all of it to the receiving computer is even more complicated.

Enter packets. Residing in layer 3 (network) of our OSI model, a packet is just a formatted unit of data that's carried by a network that will be routed from the source to the destination. Each packet contains two types of data: control information and a payload. The control information is the information necessary to actually deliver the packet. For example, the source and destination addresses and sequencing information is included within the control information. Typically, the control information is stored in the header and/or the trailer while the payload comes in between.

While there are many different types of packets, the kind we'll be focusing on is the Internet Protocol (IP) packet - specifically IPv4. Each IP packet contains a header (Figure 2) and a payload (to be discussed later).

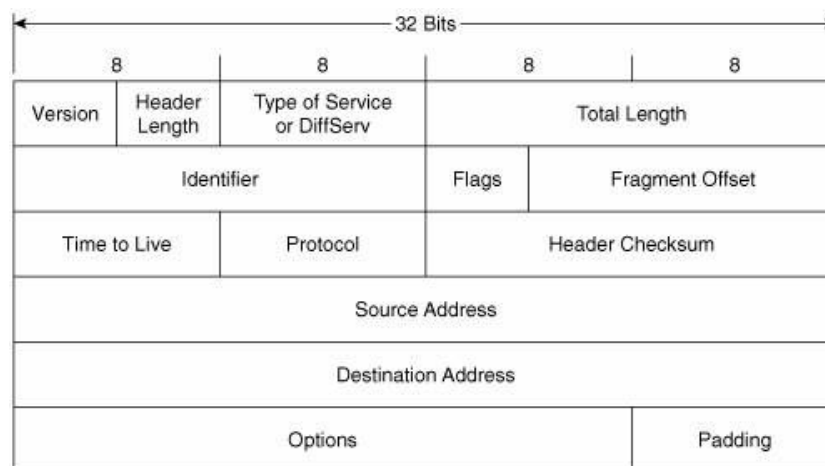


Figure 2: IP Packet Header (source: mycertstudies.com)

As you can see, each IP packet header contains the necessary control information (most importantly the source address and destination address) and will allow for the payload to get to the right place.

## TCP/IP

Now that we've covered the header, we can talk about the payload. While there are a few different types of payloads we could talk about, we'll be discussing the Transmission Control Protocol (TCP) as TCP is so common that the entire IP suite is normally referred to as TCP/IP.

Remember when we said that we needed to break up the data and make sure that all of the data gets to the destination? TCP will do this for us. How TCP works is that it will accept data from a data stream, break it up into data chunks, and adds a TCP header which will create a TCP segment (Figure 3). This TCP segment is then sent as the payload of the IP packet.

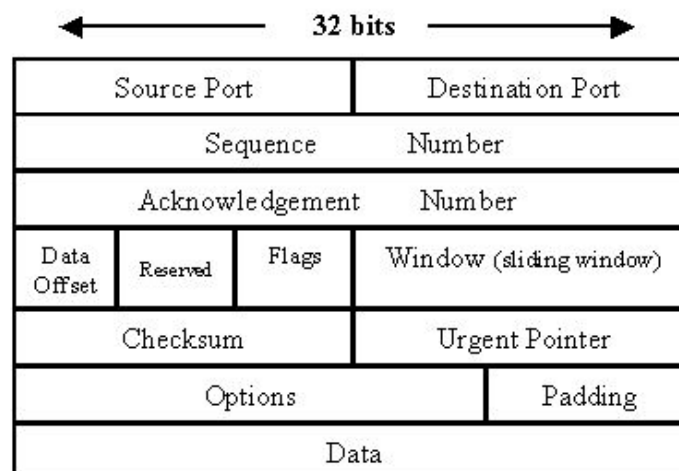


Figure 3: TCP Segment (source: techrepublic.com)

One of the most important differences between TCP and other payload protocols is that TCP is ordered and error checked. In order for our TCP segments to be delivered in order, we see a "Sequence Number" in the segment header that will allow the receiver to reconstruct the data, carried in the data section, in the correct order. When the receiver receives a TCP segment, it will send an "Acknowledgment Number" back to the sender that will be the sequence number of the next segment to send. The error checking of TCP segments is done with the "Checksum" part of the header and, if the received segment does not match the checksum being sent, the receiver will ask the sender to resend that segment.

Remember how I said that TCP was really common? Well, here's how common TCP is: a *lot* of different applications/services use TCP (HTTP, SSH, FTP, SSL just to name a few). So, how does TCP know which application/service to route the segment to?

In order to introduce how this is done, think about the mailboxes for apartment complexes/dorms. Each apartment most likely has the same address, but each apartment has a different apartment number. For this example, let's assume the apartment complex is at 123 SANDERS ST and your apartment number was 456. The address 123 SANDERS ST would get your mail to your apartment complex, but you also need to specify APT #456 in order for your mail to be placed in the correct mailbox.

With TCP/IP, the IP packet only specifies the IP address (123 SANDERS ST in our example), but we need to specify which application to deliver (APT #456). We can do this with port numbers. Each TCP header contains a source and destination port number which is the Internet socket ("mailbox") that the data should be delivered to. Common port numbers are 80 (HTTP), 20/21 (FTP), 25 (SMTP), and 443 (SSL).

## ICMP

Another type of payload for IP packets that is important to know is the Internet Control Message Protocol (ICMP). The biggest difference between TCP and ICMP is that ICMP is normally not used (but can be!) to exchange data between systems and is mainly used with diagnostic tools such as ping and traceroute. Since ICMP is normally not used to transmit data, the ICMP header (Figure 4) is normally the only part of the ICMP segment.

Offsets	Octet	0								1								2								3							
Octet	Bit	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
0	0	Type								Code								Checksum															
4	32	Rest of Header																															

Figure 4: ICMP Segment Header (source: wikipedia.org)

The important sections to pay attention to are the first two bytes: the type and code. The type identifies the control message and the code is a description of that message. For example, a type of 3 with a code of 1 means that the destination was unreachable (type) because the destination host was unreachable (code). We'll be taking a look at some ICMP segments in the next section.

## Introducing Wireshark

Now that we've learned about TCP/IP and ICMP, we can start taking a look at some of the segments and packets we've been talking about using a free tool called Wireshark. Wireshark describes itself as “the world's foremost network protocol analyzer” and will allow you to analyze the data going over your network. In our case, we'll be using it to analyze ICMP (in this section) and TCP (in a later section) segments. (Just a reminder, I'll be using the VMs distributed at the first meeting.)

On Kali Linux, let's go ahead and start up Wireshark in the background by opening up a shell and using the command `wireshark &`. This will open up a Wireshark window as shown in Figure 5.

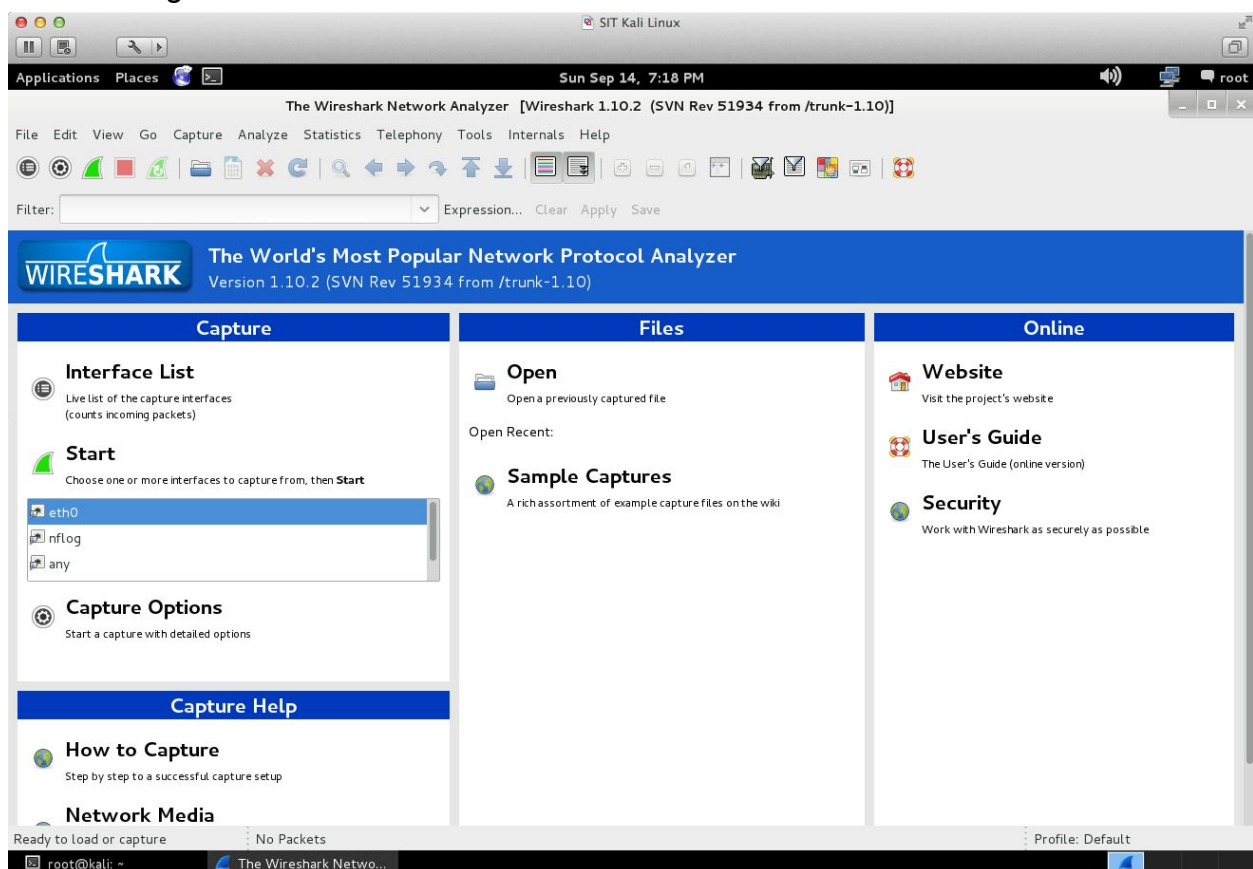


Figure 5: Wireshark Start Screen

Now that we have started Wireshark, let's start our first capture. Select eth0 from the interface list under the “Start” button and then press “Start”. You should see a window like in Figure 6.

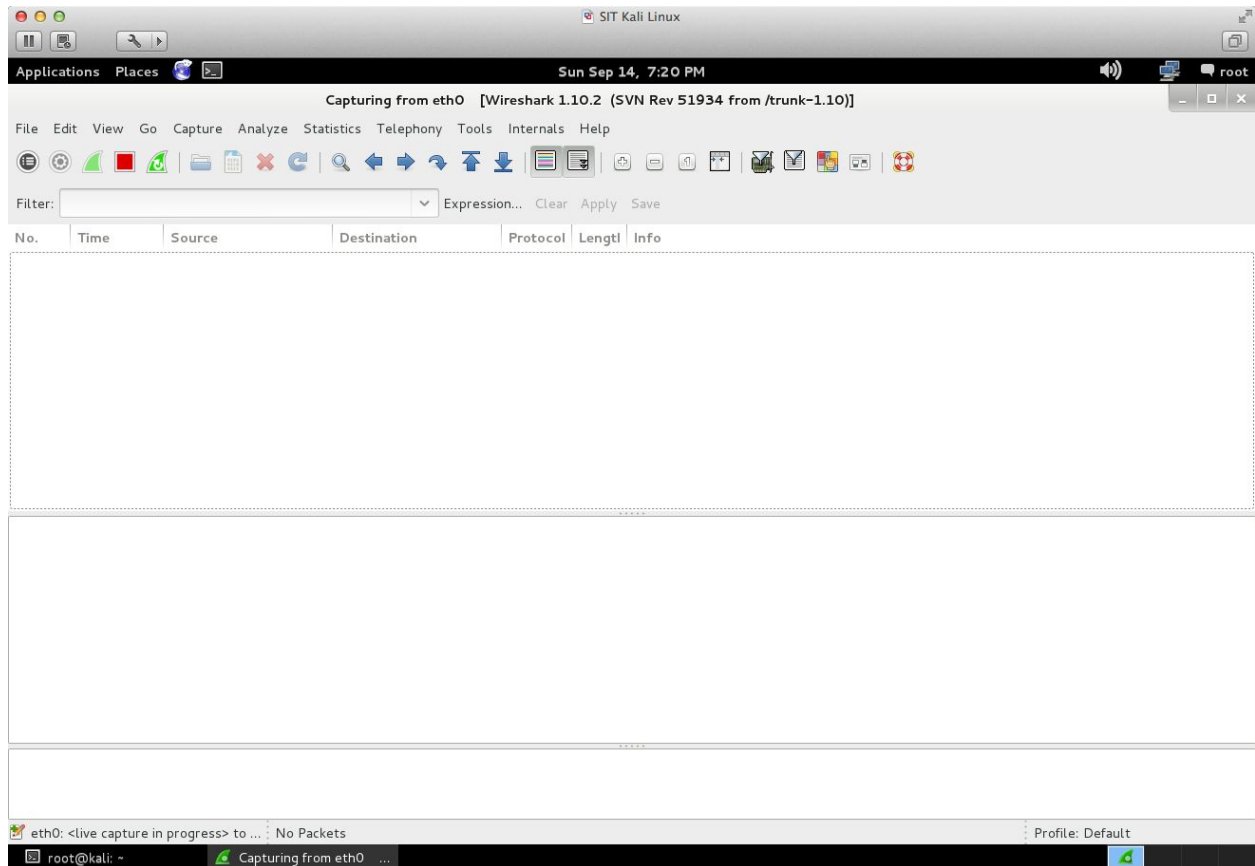


Figure 6: Wireshark Capture Window

Let's get started by looking at some ICMP segments. Open up your terminal again and type ``ping 74.125.224.80`` and let it run for a few seconds before killing it with `ctrl+c`. You should see something like in Figure 7.



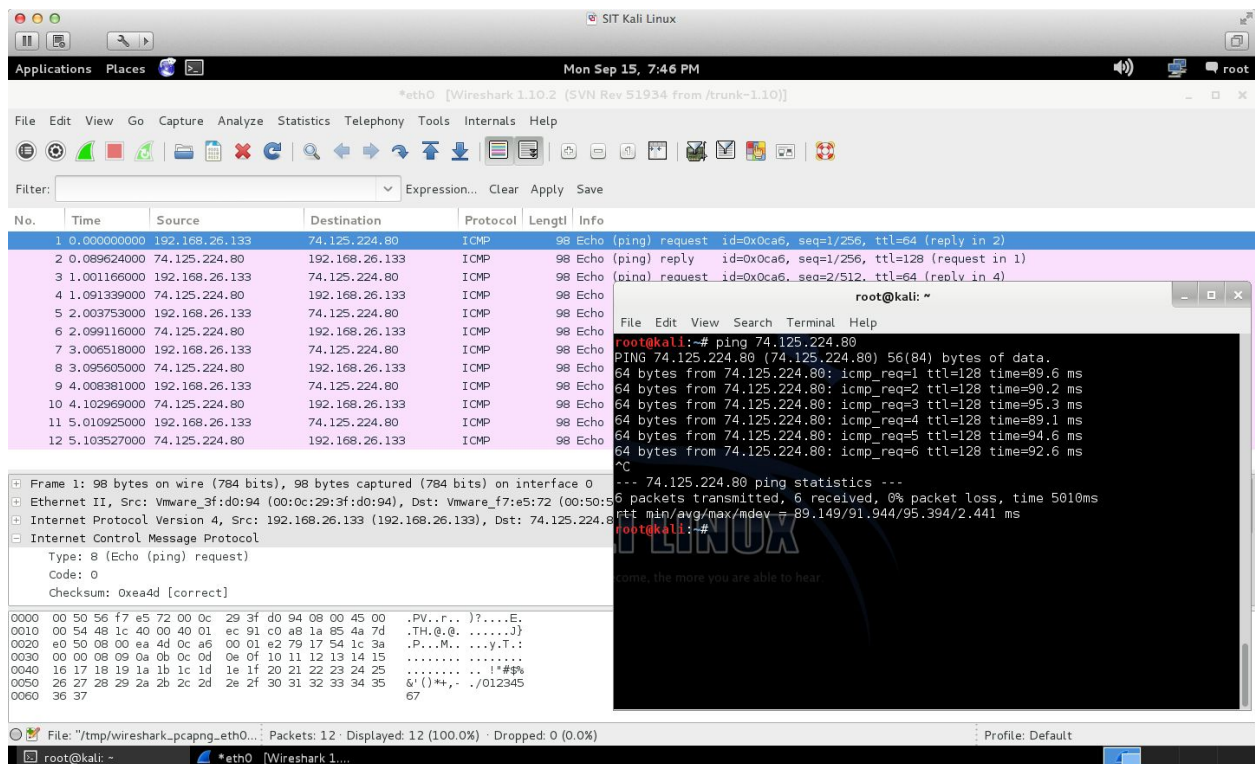


Figure 7: Our Wireshark capture from ping

Now, if we look at our packet capture we can see two IPs sending packets back and forth - 192.168.26.133 and 74.125.224.80. If we look closer, we can see in the info column that, when 192.168.26.133 was the source, it was an “Echo (ping) request” and, when 74.125.224.80 was the source, it was an “Echo (ping) reply”. How does Wireshark know about whether it was a request or a reply?

Well, remember when we talked about the types and codes? That’s how! If you look in the panel in the middle that has a dropdown for “Internet Control Message Protocol” and expand the content, you can see that Wireshark has extracted the information from the ICMP header and displayed it in an easy to read fashion. Now that we’ve gotten acquainted with Wireshark, let’s move onto another very important tool - Netcat.

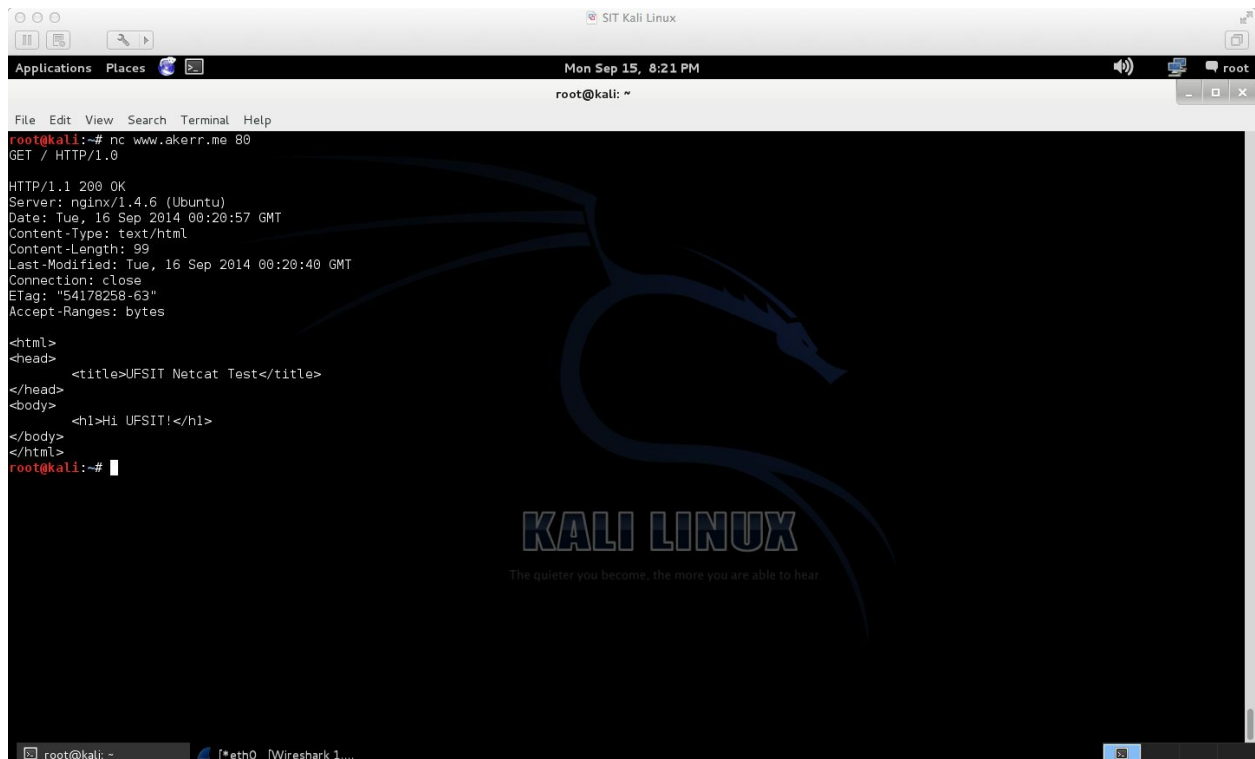
## Introducing Netcat

As stated in the introduction, Netcat is the “tcp/ip swiss army knife” because it has so much functionality in regards to TCP/IP. There have been a lot of different reimplementations, such as Ncat from the Nmap Project, but we will be using Netcat for this document.

To demonstrate how Netcat works, let’s open up a shell and type ``nc www.akerr.me 80``

and press enter. You should have been bumped down to a newline which means that Netcat is now waiting for input to send to the connected server. So, what should we say?

Well, if we recall from above, TCP port 80 is the port for HTTP. Using Netcat, we can send a HTTP GET request to the server and see what we get back. To do this, just type `GET / HTTP/1.0` and press enter twice to send the request to the server. You should see something like in Figure 8.

A screenshot of a Kali Linux terminal window. The window title is "SIT Kali Linux". The terminal shows a netcat listener on port 80 of www.akerr.me. It receives a GET request for / HTTP/1.0. The response is an HTTP 200 OK from an nginx/1.4.6 server, dated Tue, 16 Sep 2014 00:20:57 GMT. The content type is text/html and the length is 99 bytes. The response body contains HTML code: <title>UFSIT Netcat Test</title> and <h1>Hi UFSIT!</h1>. The terminal background features the Kali Linux logo and the text "KALI LINUX The quieter you become, the more you are able to hear".

```
root@kali:~# nc www.akerr.me 80
GET / HTTP/1.0

HTTP/1.1 200 OK
Server: nginx/1.4.6 (Ubuntu)
Date: Tue, 16 Sep 2014 00:20:57 GMT
Content-Type: text/html
Content-Length: 99
Last-Modified: Tue, 16 Sep 2014 00:20:40 GMT
Connection: close
ETag: "54178258-63"
Accept-Ranges: bytes

<html>
<head>
  <title>UFSIT Netcat Test</title>
</head>
<body>
  <h1>Hi UFSIT!</h1>
</body>
</html>
root@kali:~#
```

Figure 8: The response from the server

As you can see, we got a response back from the server! However, how should we interpret this?

Well, HTTP responses are broken up into a “response header” and a “response body”. The response header (Figure 9) contains the response code (in this case, it’s “200 OK”), the date, the server, and more. One important thing to note is the “content type”. For this request, the content type is “text/html” and, if we look in the response body (Figure 10), we can see it’s just HTML code!



```
HTTP/1.1 200 OK
Server: nginx/1.4.6 (Ubuntu)
Date: Tue, 16 Sep 2014 00:20:57 GMT
Content-Type: text/html
Content-Length: 99
Last-Modified: Tue, 16 Sep 2014 00:20:40 GMT
Connection: close
ETag: "54178258-63"
Accept-Ranges: bytes
```

Figure 9: The Response Headers

```
<html>
<head>
  <title>UFSIT Netcat Test</title>
</head>
<body>
  <h1>Hi UFSIT!</h1>
</body>
</html>
```

Figure 10: The Response Body

What we just did with Netcat was essentially what a web browser does when it visits a site using HTTP: connects to the server over port 80, does a GET request, and displays the response body. And, sure enough, if we go to [www.akerr.me](http://www.akerr.me) we see that the response body is there (Figure 11)!



Figure 11: Why hello there

Now that we know now Netcat and Wireshark works, let's combine them together to take a look at TCP segments!

## Changing Network Adapter to Host-only

In order to follow the rest of the document, you'll need to change the VM's network adapter to Host-only. What this will do is create a network that is completely contained within the host computer (as the name implies.) This network will be isolated from the general internet and will allow Wireshark to only capture the packets that the VMs are exchanging making our captures much easier to analyze. (Note: your VMs will not be able to access the Internet using a Host-only adapter.)

If you're using VirtualBox, you can change your network adapter to Host-only by going to the VM's settings, clicking on the Network tab, and selecting Host-only from the dropdown for the "Attached to" option (Figure 12).

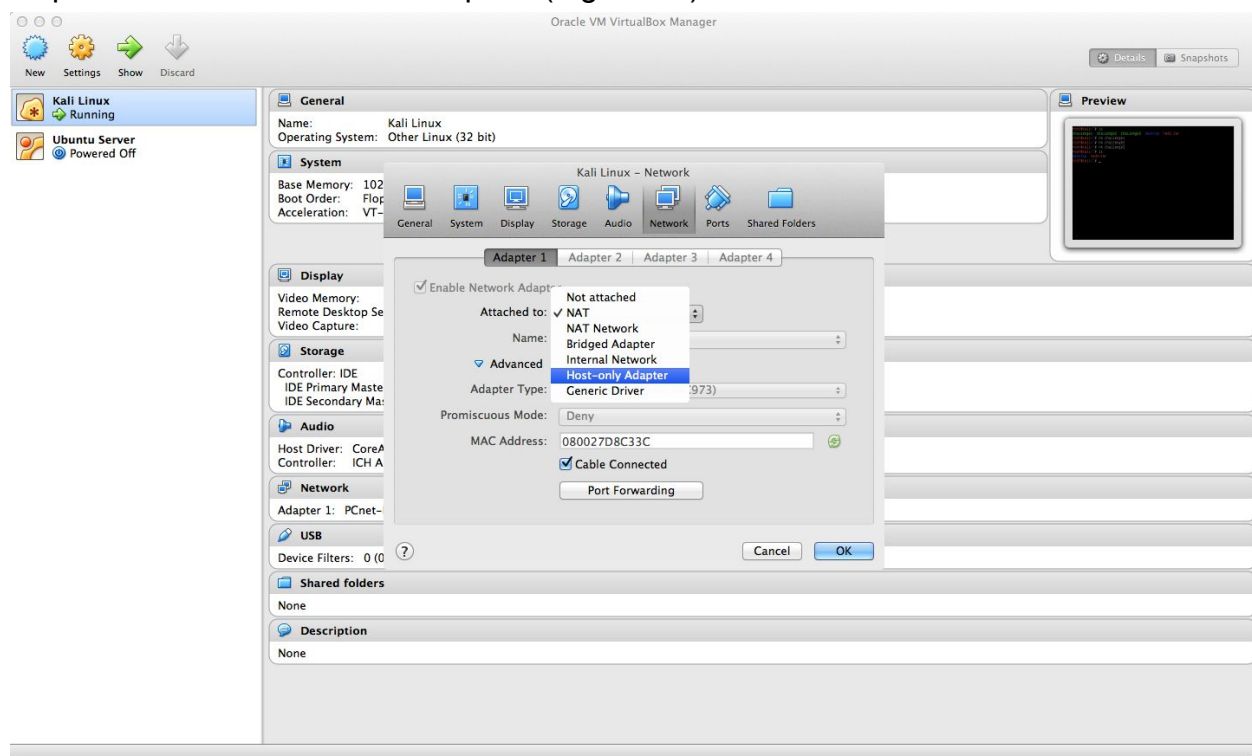


Figure 12: Changing to Host-only Adapter

If your VM needs to access the Internet, I would recommend switching back to the NAT adapter.

## Wireshark

Now that we have a general idea of how TCP/IP packets are structured, let's use Netcat to send some information from one VM to another while running a Wireshark capture.

Like before, let's start up Wireshark on Kali Linux by using ``wireshark &`` and find your ip

address by using `ifconfig`. Once you have your ip address, create an Netcat listener on port 31337 by using `nc -l -p 31337`. What this listener will do is essentially “listen” for a client to connect on port 31337. And, using Ubuntu Server, we’ll connect to our Netcat listener by using `nc <kali-ip-address> 31337`.

On your Ubuntu Server VM, you’ll see that now you’re on a blank newline which means that you’re connected! Go ahead and type HELLO and press enter. You should see HELLO appear on your Kali Linux terminal too (Figure 13).

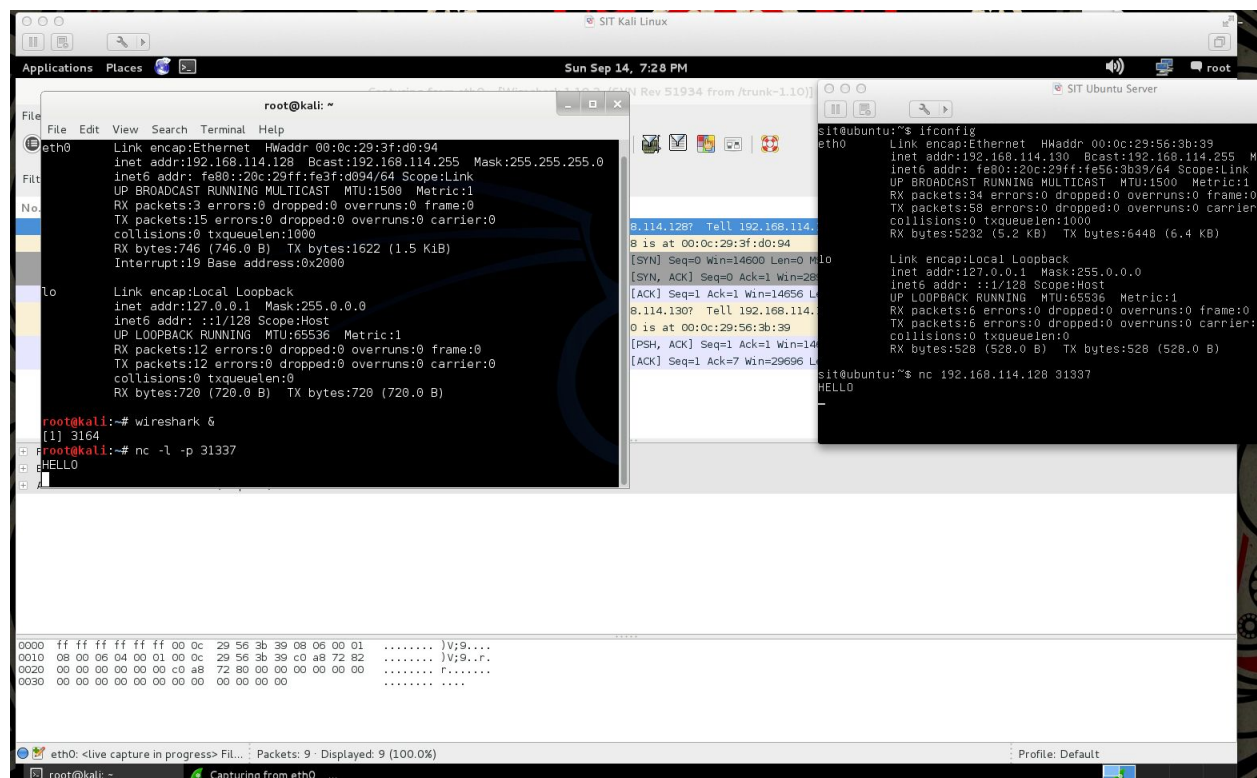


Figure 13: It worked!

If you see HELLO on both your Kali Linux and Ubuntu Server shells, it worked! And, we finally have some packets to analyze in Wireshark (Figure 14).

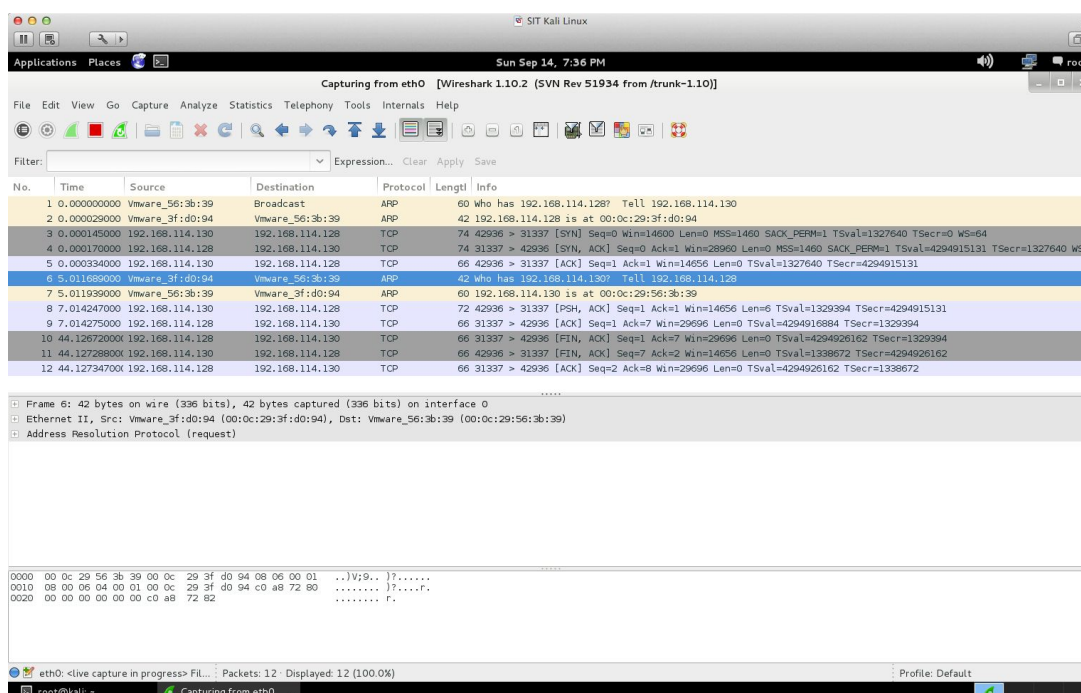


Figure 14: Packets!

Looking at our capture list, we have a few ARP packets that don't belong to our Netcat demo. To filter these out, let's go ahead and find the first packet involved in our Netcat demo. The best way to find a packet involved would be to look for the first TCP packet that has a source IP address of our Ubuntu Server VM and the destination IP address of our Kali Linux VM and right click on the line and select "Follow TCP Stream" (Figure 15).

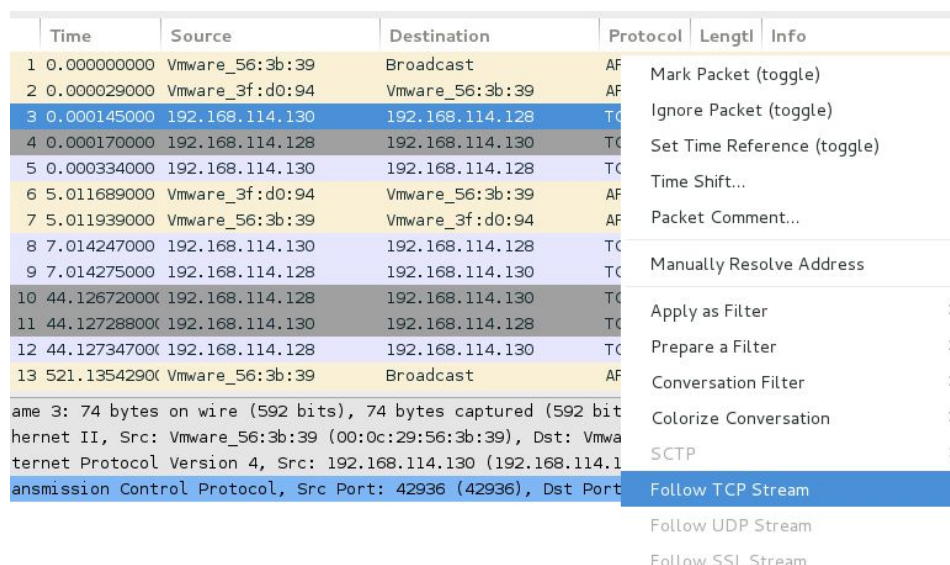


Figure 15: Following a TCP Stream

You should see a window pop up with the TCP Stream Content (in this case, it should just be HELLO - Figure 16) and the packets in the Capture Window should be only those related to our Netcat demo.

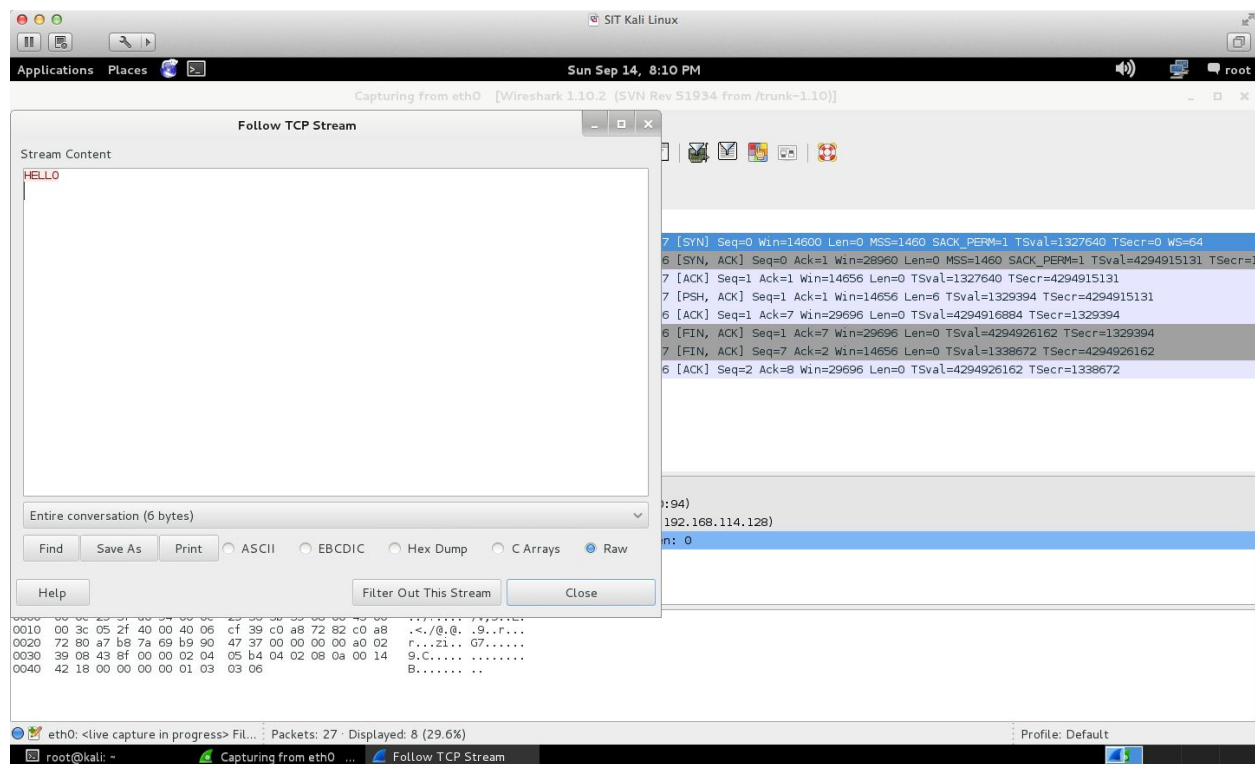


Figure 16: Our Netcat demo's TCP stream

One question that we should answer here is how exactly does Wireshark determine our Stream Content? Well, recall back to our TCP packet structure. The information from the data section of the TCP packets from our TCP stream is what Wireshark displays in the Stream Content. Pretty neat, huh?

## Exercises

There will be three exercises to go along with this module. All three exercises are designed to showcase different features of Wireshark and may or may not get harder with difficulty. The exercises will be available at the UFSIT meeting on Wednesday September 17, 2014 from 1900-2100 in CSE E309.

## Conclusion

While we covered a lot of content in this module, we only scratched the surface in terms of networking, Netcat, and Wireshark. Netcat is a really really cool utility (check out [“Netcat Without Netcat” from HakTip](#)) and Wireshark has a [ton of cool features](#) that we didn't even discuss, but now you know enough about the basics to start doing cool

things with Netcat and Wireshark! If you're hungry for more Wireshark, check out sample pcaps available for download here: <http://wiki.wireshark.org/SampleCaptures>.

## **Recommended Resources**

If you're looking for more information on networking in general, Wikipedia hopping is probably the best way that you can learn more, so here are some links to get you started:

- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/OSI\\_model](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/OSI_model)
- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transmission\\_Control\\_Protocol](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transmission_Control_Protocol)
- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet\\_Protocol](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet_Protocol)
- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet\\_protocol\\_suite](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet_protocol_suite)
- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet\\_Control\\_Message\\_Protocol](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet_Control_Message_Protocol)

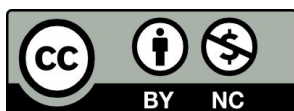
Netcat:

- Netcat Cheat Sheet by Ed Skoudis:  
[https://www.sans.org/security-resources/sec560/netcat\\_cheat\\_sheet\\_v1.pdf](https://www.sans.org/security-resources/sec560/netcat_cheat_sheet_v1.pdf)
- How To Use Netcat to Establish and Test TCP and UDP Connections on a VPS by Justin Ellingwood:  
<https://www.digitalocean.com/community/tutorials/how-to-use-netcat-to-establish-and-test-tcp-and-udp-connections-on-a-vps>

Wireshark:

- Wireshark User's Guide: [https://www.wireshark.org/docs/wsug\\_html\\_chunked/](https://www.wireshark.org/docs/wsug_html_chunked/)
- Wireshark Sample Captures: <http://wiki.wireshark.org/SampleCaptures>

This module was written by [Andrew Kerr](#) for the [University of Florida Student InfoSec Team](#).



This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License. To view a summary of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/> and to view the full license, visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/legalcode>.