

Nils Lukas

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Research Interests	Design secure and private Machine Learning systems in the presence of untrustworthy	
	1. Providers: Confidential computing via Homomorphic Encryption & Secret Sharing. 2. Data: Mitigate data poisoning during training & prompt injection during inference. 3. Models: Protect training data privacy through PII scrubbing & differential privacy. 4. Users: Control misuse by detecting generated (mis)information with watermarking.	
Education	University of Waterloo , Canada	2019 - 02/2024
	Ph.D. in Computer Science <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Advisor: Florian Kerschbaum▪ Thesis: Analyzing Threats of Large-Scale Machine Learning Systems▪ Thesis Awards: Top Mathematics Doctoral Prize & Alumni Gold Medal	
	RWTH-Aachen , Germany	2016 - 2018
	M.Sc. in Computer Science (<i>w/Distinction</i>)	10/2012 - 2016
	B.Sc. in Computer Science	
Honors & Awards	First Place at the NeurIPS'24 Watermarking Competition [4,400 USD] First Place at DGE Elite Hackathon, GITEX'24 [10,900 USD] Top Mathematics Doctoral Thesis, University of Waterloo [1080 USD] Alumni Gold Medal, One PhD Award Yearly, University of Waterloo Best Poster Award, Sponsored by David R. Cheriton [220 USD] Distinguished Contribution Award, Microsoft MLADS conference David R. Cheriton Scholarship, University of Waterloo [14 400 USD] Outstanding Reviewer, ICML'22 Best Poster Award, Sponsored by Rogers [720 USD]	2024 2024 2024 2024 2023 2023 2022, 2023 2022 2019
Conference Publications	[NeurIPS'25] Mask Image Watermarking AR: 24.5% (5290/21575) Runyi Hu, Jie Zhang, Shiqian Zhao, Nils Lukas , Jiwei Li, Qing Guo, Han Qiu, Tianwei Zhang. The Thirty-Ninth Annual Conference on Neural Information Processing Systems, 2025.	
	[EMNLP'25] SPIRIT: Patching Speech Language Models against Jailbreak Attacks AR: 22.2% (1811/8172) Amir Djanibekov, Nurdaulet Mukhituly, Kentaro Inui, Hanan Aldarmaki, Nils Lukas . Empirical Methods in Natural Language Processing (Main Conference), 2025.	
	[ICML'25] Optimizing Adaptive Attacks against Content Watermarks for Language Models AR: 26.9% (3260/12107) Abdulrahman Diaa, Toluwani Aremu, Nils Lukas . The Forty-Second International Conference on Machine Learning, 2025.	
	[ICML'25] Cowpox: Towards the Immunity of VLM-based Multi-Agent Systems AR: 26.9% (3260/12107) Yutong Wu, Jie Zhang, Yiming Li, Chao Zhang, Qing Guo, Han Qiu, Nils Lukas , Tianwei Zhang. The Forty-Second International Conference on Machine Learning, 2025.	
	[USENIX'24] PEPSI: Practically Efficient Private Set Intersection in the Unbalanced Setting AR: 19.1% (417/2176) Rasoul Mahdavi, Nils Lukas , Faezeh Ebrahimianghzani, Thomas Humphries, Bailey Kacsmar, John Premkumar, Xinda Li, Simon Oya, Ehsan Amjadian, Florian Kerschbaum. In the 33rd USENIX Security Symposium, 2024.	

[USENIX'24] AR: 19.1% (417/2176)	Fast and Private Inference of Deep Neural Networks by Co-designing Activation Functions Abdulrahman Diaa, Lucas Fenaux, Thomas Humphries, Marian Dietz, Faezeh Ebrahimianghzani, Bailey Kacsma, Xinda Li, Nils Lukas , Rasoul Akhavan Mahdavi, Simon Oya, Ehsan Amjadian, Florian Kerschbaum. In the 33rd USENIX Security Symposium, 2024.
[ICLR'24] AR: 30.8% (2250/7262)	Leveraging Optimization for Adaptive Attacks on Image Watermarks Nils Lukas , Abdulrahman Diaa, Lucas Fenaux, Florian Kerschbaum. In the Twelfth International Conference on Learning Representations, 2024.
[ICLR'24] AR: 30.8% (2250/7262)  Media Coverage	Universal Backdoor Attacks Benjamin Schneider, Nils Lukas , Florian Kerschbaum. In the Twelfth International Conference on Learning Representations, 2024.
[USENIX'23] AR: 29.2% (422/1444)	PTW: Pivotal Tuning Watermarking for Pre-Trained Image Generators Nils Lukas and Florian Kerschbaum. In the 32nd USENIX Security Symposium, 2023.
[S&P'23] AR: 17.0% (195/1147)  Distinguished Contribution Award at Microsoft MLADS	Analyzing Leakage of Personally Identifiable Information in Language Models Nils Lukas , Ahmed Salem, Robert Sim, Shruti Tople, Lukas Wutschitz, Santiago Zanella-Béguelin. In the 44th IEEE Symposium on Security and Privacy, 2023.
[S&P'22] AR: 14.5% (147/1012)	SoK: How Robust is Image Classification Deep Neural Network Watermarking? Nils Lukas , Edward Jiang, Xinda Li, Florian Kerschbaum. In the 43rd IEEE Symposium on Security and Privacy, 2022.
[ICLR'21] AR: 28.7% (860/2997)  Spotlight (Top 5%)	Deep Neural Network Fingerprinting by Conferrable Adversarial Examples Nils Lukas , Yuxuan Zhang, Florian Kerschbaum. The Ninth International Conference on Learning Representations, 2021.
[IH&MMSEC'21] AR: 40.3% (128/318)	On the Robustness of Backdoor-based Watermarking in Deep Neural Networks Masoumeh Shafeinejad, Nils Lukas , Jiaqi Wang, Xinda Li, Florian Kerschbaum. Proceedings of the 2021 ACM Workshop on Information Hiding and Multimedia Security, 2021.
[ACSAC'20] AR: 20.9% (104/497)	Practical Over-Threshold Multi-Party Private Set Intersection Rasoul Mahdavi, Thomas Humphries, Bailey Kacsma, Simeon Krastnikov, Nils Lukas , John Premkumar, Masoumeh Shafeinejad, Simon Oya, Florian Kerschbaum, Erik-Oliver Blass. Annual Computer Security Applications Conference (ACSAC), 2020.
[EuroS&P'20] AR: 20.9% (39/187)	Differentially Private Two-Party Set Operations Bailey Kacsma, Basit Khurram, Nils Lukas , Alexander Norton, Masoumeh Shafeinejad, Zhiwei Shang, Yaser Baseri, Maryam Sepehri, Simon Oya, Florian Kerschbaum. IEEE European Symposium on Security and Privacy (EuroS&P), 2020.
Journal Publications	[AIP'18] SunFlower: A new Solar Tower Simulation Method for use in Field Layout Optimization, Pascal Richter, Gregor Heiming, Nils Lukas , Martin Frank. AIP Conference Proceedings, Volume 2033, Issue 1, 2018.

Workshop Papers	[GenAI4Health]	Sanitizing Medical Documents with Differential Privacy using Large Language Models Rushil Thareja, Gautam Gupta, Preslav Nakov, Praneeth Vepakomma, Nils Lukas . 2025.
	[WMARK'25]	First-Place Solution to NeurIPS 2024 Invisible Watermark Removal Challenge Fahad Shamshad, Tameem Bakr, Yahia Salaheldin Shaaban, Noor Hazim Hussein, Karthik Nandakumar and Nils Lukas . The 1st Workshop on GenAI Watermarking, 2025.
	[WMARK'25]  Oral Presentation	Optimizing Adaptive Attacks against Content Watermarks for Language Models Abdulrahman Diaa, Toluwani Aremu, Nils Lukas . The 1st Workshop on GenAI Watermarking, 2025.
Working Papers		Differentially Private Inference for Large Language Models, Submitted. Rushil Thareja, Preslav Nakov, Praneeth Vepakomma, Nils Lukas . 2025.
		Mitigating Watermark Forgery in Generative Models via Randomized Key Selection, Submitted. Toluwani Aremu, Noor Hazim Hussein, Munachiso S Nwadike, Samuele Poppi, Jie Zhang, Karthik Nandakumar, Neil Zhenqiang Gong, Nils Lukas . 2025.
		Collaborative Threshold Watermarking, Submitted. Tameem Bakr, Anish Ambreth, Nils Lukas . 2025.
		Robust and Calibrated Detection of Authentic Multimedia Content, Submitted. Sarim Hashmi, Abdelrahman Elsayed, Mohammed Talha Alam, Samuele Poppi, Nils Lukas . 2025.
Research Talks	Adaptively Robust and Forgery-Resistant Watermarking	2025
	▪ Meta (FAIR), hosted by Hady Elsahar	
	Optimizing Adaptive Attacks against Content Watermarks	
	▪ DeepMind, hosted by David Stutz	2024
	▪ University of California, Berkeley, hosted by Dawn Song	2024
	Analyzing Leakage of Personal Information in Language Models	
	▪ Microsoft M365, hosted by Robert Sim	2024
	▪ Meta, hosted by Will Bullock	2023
	▪ MongoDB, hosted by Marilyn George and Archita Agarwal	2023
	How Reliable is Watermarking for Image Generators?	
	▪ Google, hosted by Somesh Jha	2023
	▪ University of California, Berkely, hosted by Dawn Song	2023
Keynotes	Aviation Future Week , hosted by Emirates, Dubai	2024
	Cyber Energy Leadership Forum , Abu Dhabi	2024
Work Experience	Assistant Professor , MBZUAI, Abu Dhabi, UAE	since 08/2024
	Research Intern , Royal Bank of Canada, Borealis AI, Toronto	2024
	▪ Vertical Federated Learning, hosted by Kevin Wilson	
	Research Intern , Microsoft Research, Cambridge, UK	2022
	▪ Privacy for Language Models, hosted by Shruti Tople & Lukas Wutschitz	
	Research Assistant , RWTH-Aachen, Aachen	2014 - 2018
	Student Researcher , DSA Daten- und Systemtechnik GmbH, Aachen	2016
	Software Engineer Intern , A.R. Bayer DSP Systeme GmbH, Düsseldorf	2012

Research Grants	Awarded	2025
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ [Etihad Airways] Conversational Booking Agents. PI: Nils Lukas, Co-PIs: Salem Lahlou, Alham Fikri, Martin Takac, Mingming Gong [450 000 USD] ▪ [United Al-Saqr Group] Privacy-preserving Brain Computer Interfaces. PI: Abdulrahman Mahmoud, Co-PIs: Nils Lukas, Elizabeth Churchill [136 000 USD] 	
Selected	Instructor , MBZUAI, UAE	2025
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ [TII Funding] GFlowNets for Fuzzing of Agentic Applications. Salem Lahlou & Nils Lukas [136 000 USD] ▪ [Amazon Special Call] AdvSim2Real: Simulating Adversarial Environments (EOI shortlisted), PI: Nils Lukas, Co-PI: Praneeth Vepakomma [100 000 USD] 	
Teaching	Teaching Assistant , University of Waterloo, Canada	2024
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CS458/658: Computer Security and Privacy ▪ CS246 - Object Oriented Programming 	
Service	Co-Instructor , RWTH-Aachen, Germany	2021
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Course: Data-driven Medicine 	
Area Chair	Program Committee	2026
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ International Conference on Learning Representations (ICLR) ▪ International Conference on Machine Learning (ICML) 	
Program Committee	Artifact Evaluation Committee	2025
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ACM Conference on Computer and Communications Security (CCS) ▪ IEEE Symposium on Security and Privacy (IEEE S&P) ▪ Recent Advances in Intrusion Detection (RAID) 	
Reviewer	Reviewer	2025
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NETYS ▪ ACM TheWebConf (WWW) ▪ International Conference on Learning Representations (ICLR) ▪ International World Wide Web Conference (TheWebConf) ▪ Recent Advances in Intrusion Detection (RAID) ▪ Neural Information Processing Systems (NeurIPS) ▪ International Conference on Machine Learning (ICML) ▪ The Conference on Information and Knowledge Management (CIKM) 	
Other	Sub-Reviewer , Proceedings on Privacy Enhancing Technologies (PETS)	2023
	Session Chair , IEEE Symposium on Security and Privacy (S&P)	
Student Board Member , Cybersecurity and Privacy Institute	Organization , Workshop on Semantic Web Solutions for Large-Scale Biomedical Data Analytics (SeWeBMeDA)	2018
	Chair for the invited faculty talk program , International Symposium on Trustworthy Foundation Models at MBZUAI	
School Advisory Committee on Appointments Liaison , CrySP Lab	Faculty Search Committee , Machine Learning Department at MBZUAI	2025
	Admission's Committee , MBZUAI Machine Learning Department	
School Advisory Committee on Appointments Liaison , CrySP Lab	Student Board Member , Cybersecurity and Privacy Institute	2024
	School Advisory Committee on Appointments Liaison , CrySP Lab	