Obfuscation – the production of noise modeled on an existing signal in order to make data or information more ambiguous, uncertain, and difficult to exploit – is particularly salient in the era of big data technologies. In concert with other technologies and tools, it offers a means of evading data surveillance, building privacy-respecting platforms without sacrificing utility, and improving security (including code obfuscation techniques). The April 2017 Workshop on Obfuscation will help to shape the nascent field of obfuscation – science, theory, and application – bringing together scientists, engineers, developers, humanists, social scientists, policymakers, and activists.

We will survey some of the existing and emerging applications and technologies, threat models and scenarios for which obfuscation offers solutions, tests and tools for studying the strengths and weaknesses of obfuscation approaches, new challenges and applications (such as authentication, intellectual property, and security), benchmarks and approaches to formalizing obfuscation strategies, and general best practices for design, implementation, and evaluation of obfuscating systems.

We are seeking a broad range of contributions, including demos, prototypes, academic papers (both theory and practice), ideas and proposals, design patterns, and talks. We welcome projects from the academic scientific research community, industry researchers and practitioners, and independent software producers and privacy activists. We will group the different types of participation into themed panels for a single-track, two-day workshop of presentations, discussion, and opportunities for collaboration.

We are not planning to publish a peer-reviewed proceedings. Instead, all attendees will produce a two page document explaining their project, concept, application, or challenge, which we will make available through the workshop website. This will create a broad cross-section of technical ideas and work on obfuscation and serve as inspiration, starting points, working examples, and key questions for the field going forward.

Please email the organizers, Finn Brunton and Helen Nissenbaum, at fb42@nyu.edu and hfn1@nyu.edu with abstracts, statements of interest, or product descriptions by November 28. Following committee review, we will reply by December 15 and circulate the completed schedule of the Workshop to participants by email and to the public on our website at obfuscationworkshop.io.